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THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR, NO. 2283

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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ALL POLITICS POLL: The Best & Worst OF POLITICS IN 2025

Prime Minister Mark Carney, a rookie to the world of elected politics who single-handedly turned the Liberals' fortunes around by winning a strong minority government last April, has been picked as this year's most valuable politician in *The Hill Times'* 27th annual All Politics Poll. Lots more to read on p. 18. Story by Marlo Glass.



Some of this year's stand-outs in federal politics: Prime Minister Mark Carney, top left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, Liberal MP Corey Hogan, Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed, Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, Justice Minister Sean Fraser, Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, bottom left, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne, Liberal MP Karina Gould, Conservative MP Jasraj Hallan, Bloc MP Jean-Denis Garon, and Senator Peter Boehm. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

NEWS

It's like 'the Monroe Doctrine on steroids': Canadian politicians react to Trump's new 'very chilling' national security strategy

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY

A new national security strategy by United States President Donald Trump's Republican administration threatens to make Canada "a vassal state" and "needs to be put on the reading list" of every MP, says Lloyd Axworthy, who served as foreign affairs minister in then-prime minister Jean Chrétien's Liberal government from 1996 to 2000.

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NEWS

Lack of primary care so 'chronic' that patients don't talk about it, says Liberal MP and doctor Powlowski

BY TESSIE SANCI

The difficulty in accessing primary care is so prevalent that patients don't even bring it up, says Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski, a medical doctor who also works in a walk-in clinic in his northern Ontario riding when he isn't in Ottawa.

"I think when I see people, they don't have a lot of time there," said Powlowski (Thunder

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Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

‘We have a point of vulnerability here’: Senator Quinn wants to reaffirm Canadian sovereignty of tiny Bay-of-Fundy island



CSG Senator Jim Quinn, a former Coast Guard member, wants the federal government to make American visitors present official identification when they visit the Canadian-owned Machias Seal Island: “We have to be realistic with how do we deal with potential challenges on our border,” he said. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

New Brunswick Senator **Jim Quinn** is hoping to make waves about who owns a tiny island in the Bay of Fundy, but he says this isn’t Hans Island 2.0.

“I am not going to compare it to that situation,” Quinn told *Heard on the Hill* by phone on Dec. 10, harkening to the longstanding dispute between Canada and Denmark over who owned a small, uninhabited island known as Hans in the high Arctic (it was resolved in 2022 by splitting ownership down the middle).

Today’s island in question is Machias Seal Island, located southwest of New Brunswick’s Grand Manan Island. According to Quinn, the land mass—roughly 550 metres long and 250 metres wide—is the only disputed area, that I am aware of, between the United States and Canada.

Quinn first visited this “little jewel of an island” over 40 years ago as “a young guy working on the deck of a Coast Guard ship delivering supplies to the lighthouse keeper,” he told *HOH*.

The Canadian Coast Guard still staffs the lighthouse where the only visitors—aside from thousands of nesting birds—are U.S. tourists who are not required to present official identification.

This is one of two issues Quinn wants to see fixed, he said. The other is some misinformation about the island’s ownership.

“There’s two providers of tours [to Machias Island]: one from Grand Manan, and one from the state of Maine. The state of Maine advert would infer that it’s a piece of Maine.”

Quinn highlights this in his Dec. 3 written question on the Senate’s Order Paper.

“Why does the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, as the land administrator, issue a permit to the Bold Coast Charter Company to visit the Machias Seal Island Migratory Bird Sanctuary? The company is a U.S.-based tour operator that actively describes Machias Seal Island as part of the state of Maine,” reads Quinn’s question.

“How does the Government of Canada reconcile the decision to issue a permit to an American company, and display its name on the Department of the Environment—Canadian Wildlife Service website given Canada’s sovereignty over the New Brunswick Island?”

Quinn wants to bring this “distant” territorial issue to the front burner given “the current political situation between the two countries.”

“We have a point of vulnerability here with respect to people being able to come from the United States onto Canadian soil and not have any need for ID of any sort,” Quinn told *HOH*.

“We have to be realistic with how do we deal with potential challenges on our border.”

While the Senate has 60 days to respond to a written Order Paper question, Quinn is hoping that there’s “cause for change in how that thing is advertised,” and, second, that the feds would consider options for validating visitors.

“Perhaps there’s a role that the lighthouse keepers can play in helping [Border Services] with respect to ensuring the ID of people coming to the island,” suggested Quinn.

Names of current, former Conservative MPs floated for B.C. party leadership



While rookie Conservative MP Ellis Ross, left, has confirmed he will not run for the leadership of the British Columbia Conservative Party, former federal MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay, centre, and new Conservative MP Aaron Gunn have not ruled out their intentions. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Stuart Benson, and courtesy of LinkedIn

One week after the British Columbia Conservatives ousted leader **John Rustad**, the names of a handful of current and former federal Conservatives were being floated as potential successors.

A petition was started last week endorsing former federal Conservative cabinet minister **Kerry-Lynne Findlay**. Titled “Kerry-Lynne Findlay for Premier,” the online petition, which was accepting donations, touts the former three-term MP’s credentials, including most recently as Official Opposition Whip from 2023 until earlier this year when she was defeated in the riding of South Surrey—White Rock, B.C. by Liberal **Ernie Klassen**, as former chair of federal party Leader **Pierre Poilievre**’s leadership team in that province, and “as a Cabinet Minister in **Stephen Harper**’s Conservative Government.” The *Surrey Now-Leader* reported on Dec. 10 that “Findlay has not officially declared her intention to run.”

Meanwhile, rookie MP **Aaron Gunn** posted on X on Dec. 10 that he’ll make his intentions known before Dec. 25. “I’ve had a lot of people reach out—community leaders, supporters, everyday British Columbians, and my constituents—encouraging me to run to be the next Premier of British Columbia. While I haven’t made a final decision, I am seriously considering doing so,” wrote the MP for North Island-Powell River, B.C. “I’ll be making my decision before Christmas.”

However, another first-time MP, **Ellis Ross**—himself a former B.C. MLA—put to bed any rumours that he is considering a run. “Thank you for all your messages of support in terms of possibly running for the leader of the BC Conservatives” he said in a Facebook video on Dec. 10. “But I will not be running for the leadership position for a variety of reasons” he said, citing, chiefly, his wife’s opposition to the idea.

Press gallery reminds staffers of media relations expectations



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, with U.S. President Donald Trump in Sharm El-Sheikh, Egypt, on Oct. 13, 2025. Photograph courtesy of Instagram

The Parliamentary Press Gallery executive has twice recently had to remind ministerial staffers about what’s expected in their interactions with the media.

According to the minutes shared with press gallery members on Dec. 9 of the executive committee’s Oct. 23 meeting, the board received a reply from Prime Minister **Mark Carney**’s chief of staff, **Marc-André Blanchard**, to a letter PPG president **Mia Rabson** had sent him about the lack of reporters on Carney’s last-minute flight to Egypt on Oct. 13.

In his letter, Blanchard “explained the exclusion was due to issues securing an appropriate Canadian Armed Forces plane on such short notice,” which the PPG board conceded was “unique”

circumstances, but also “inappropriate for the prime minister to be travelling abroad without any Canadian reporters in his presence. Rabson stressed that this sort of thing should never happen again.”

Similarly, Rabson and PPG vice-president **Boris Proulx** held “a briefing of sorts with the current complement of directors of communication and press secretaries,” in which the reporters educated the political staffers about “what it means to speak on background with a reporter—and how comms staff shouldn’t automatically assume something is on background.” Other topics for discussion included preferred locations for press conferences such as the National Press Theatre, and not outside the grounds of the Hill.

Senator Farah Mohamed, André Picard, Nik Nanos receive honours



ISG Senator Farah Mohamed pictured on Oct. 23, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Independent Senator **Farah Mohamed**, *Globe and Mail* columnist **André Picard**, and pollster **Nik Nanos** were among 63 Canadians who received “mixed honours” including Orders of Canada and Meritorious Service Medals at a ceremony hosted by Governor General **Mary Simon** at Rideau Hall on Dec. 11.

Mohamed received a medal for her work founding and running the non-profit G(irls)20, which she was doing prior to being appointed to the Senate this past March.

Other medal recipients include **Michael McCallum** who served as chief of the United States Defense Intelligence Agency Liaison in Ottawa from 2017-2021; and **Christophe Raisonier**, the driving force behind building the Amicitia France-Canada Monument at Ottawa’s Beechwood national cemetery.

Picard and Nanos were each made a member of the Order of Canada, Picard in recognition for his commitment “to keeping Canadians safe, informed and healthy,” as *The Globe and Mail*’s health columnist; and Nanos for being “a frequent and trusted adviser to media and industry, and a champion of public engagement in the democratic process,” according to a press release.

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Building Canada's Digital Future: Why High-Performing, Trusted, and Energy- Efficient Networks Matter More Than Ever

Canada is entering a new era of nation-building. From clean-energy corridors and critical-minerals projects to modern rail and port infrastructure, the federal government—through Budget 2025 and the launch of the Major Projects Office to propel large investment announcements—has committed to a decade of large-scale investment.

But these projects can't succeed without world-class digital backbones that not only connect people, but also underpin every modern industry—such as sensors monitoring safety at a mining site, autonomous systems managing a port terminal, and advanced AI driving efficiencies in energy projects.

In today's economy, the best networks are not defined by speed alone. They also need to deliver high performance, trust, coverage, and energy efficiency. These qualities support Canada's ability to innovate, attract investment, ensure that growth is both inclusive and sustainable, and bridges the digital divide to underserved communities.

The Government of Canada's Digital Charter, Innovation and Skills Plan, and 2030 Emissions Reduction Plan emphasize that technology leadership, inclusion, and sustainability are pillars of long-term prosperity. Achieving these goals depends on resilient networks that combine performance with responsibility, and which enable advanced manufacturing, clean-energy systems, smart mobility, and secure public-service delivery across every region.

At the same time, artificial intelligence is emerging as a national growth engine and is poised to transform industries from healthcare to manufacturing. But its success depends on the strength of the networks that enable it.

Recent industry commentary has underscored that Canada's AI ambitions will only succeed if supported by robust digital infrastructure. Advanced, high-capacity, and low-latency networks are essential for delivering AI solutions, connecting data, compute, and users in real time. For Canada to turn its research advantage into commercial leadership, digital infrastructure must evolve in lockstep with AI innovation.

Canada's digital transformation will depend on AI, cloud and networks engineered to perform, optimized to save, built to connect communities, and designed to be trusted.

High performance: Powering the digital economy

High performance today means more than speed. It means capacity, reliability, and resilience. As digitalization accelerates, networks must deliver consistent quality and support the exponential growth in mobile data traffic while remaining energy-efficient and secure.

Modern multi-band radios—which combine advanced hardware with AI and cloud—help to improve throughput, optimize spectrum use, and lower operating costs. These innovations allow operators to expand coverage and capacity while reducing the amount of equipment and site infrastructure required.

For example, Ericsson's AIR triple-band Massive MIMO (multiple inputs multiple outputs) radios combine three spectrum bands in a single unit, doubling downlink and tripling uplink capacity—a clear advance in both capacity and coverage. The broader Massive MIMO portfolio expands throughput and cell-edge performance without adding new sites, an important efficiency lever for large geographies like Canada.

Ericsson's collaboration with telco operators globally demonstrates how in some cases modernization achieves measurable results: 20 to 25 per cent power savings efficiency gains while supporting a 96 per cent increase in 5G traffic.

Energy efficiency: Supporting Canada's sustainability journey

Energy efficiency is now a defining measure of network leadership; it's both a business and environmental imperative. Studies show that energy costs account for 15 to 20 per cent of



total network operating expenses, making efficiency central to performance and profitability.

Ericsson's Breaking the Energy Curve framework allows operators to expand capacity while reducing energy use per transmitted bit. This is accomplished through three actions: sustainable network evolution, expand and modernize the network and operate intelligently. For example, modernizing low-traffic, remote sites with energy-adaptive radios and AI-driven power management can cut emissions and costs while maintaining coverage across Canada's 10 million square kilometres.

Through its partnership with the Government of Canada's Net-Zero Challenge, Ericsson is helping align optimizing and expanding coverage where needed, telecom modernization with national clean-energy goals.

Trust: The foundation of a digital society

As Canada transforms its economy and public services, trust and security are essential to progress. Every data exchange and connected device depends on networks that are resilient, transparent, and secure by design.

Ericsson embeds security at every stage through its Security Reliability Model (SRM), ensuring protection is built in, not added later. This model spans the full telecom ecosystem, supported by continuous monitoring and threat detection to maintain operational integrity.

Adherence to global standards such as 3GPP, ISO/IEC 27001, and NESAS/SCAS reinforces confidence in the confidentiality, integrity, and reliability of Ericsson networks. Recognition as one of Canada's Top International Corporate Citizens in 2025 by Corporate Knights underscores Ericsson's broader commitment to ethical, transparent, and sustainable business practices—key ingredients of public trust in a digital society.

Trusted networks protect infrastructure, safeguard data, and enable a secure, resilient, and inclusive digital future for Canada.

Ericsson's contribution to Canada's digital leadership

Ericsson's commitment to Canada goes beyond technology deployment; it's an investment in the country's innovation ecosystem, workforce, and long-term competitiveness. Over the past year, the company has significantly expanded its footprint through new research and development (R&D) partnerships with government, industry, and academia.

In October, Ericsson announced a US\$3 billion partnership with Export Development Canada (EDC) to expand the global reach of 5G, Cloud RAN, AI and to create new opportunities for Canadian companies within Ericsson's global partner network.

This follows a \$634.8 million R&D agreement with the Government of Canada in November 2024 under the Strategic Innovation Fund, a five-year commitment focused on developing advanced communications technologies and creating high-value Canadian jobs.

These partnerships will create and upskill hundreds of roles at Ericsson's R&D centres in Ottawa and Montréal, enhance collaboration with Canadian universities, and boost participation in global supply chains.

In September, Ericsson expanded its research collaboration with Concordia University, backed by an NSERC Alliance grant, to enhance cloud-native mobile network security. Recently, Ericsson, Saab, and Calian agreed to explore collaboration in advanced, secure communications systems. As technology evolves and reshapes defense, secure, unified systems are vital for Canada's resilience and public safety—especially for coordinating first responders during disasters.

These efforts show a long-term commitment to positioning Canada as a leader in telecom innovation, AI, quantum research and building a resilient digital economy with trust technology.

A shared path toward digital and sustainable leadership

Canada stands at a pivotal moment in its digital transformation. The nation's ambitions for economic growth, sustainability, and global competitiveness depend on a network foundation that is high-performing, energy-efficient, and trusted.

Ericsson's collaboration with Canadian partners—spanning modernization, energy innovation, and security—reflects a shared commitment to building that foundation. From next-generation radio technology that expands capacity and coverage to AI-driven network intelligence that lowers energy use to security-by-design principles that protect data and infrastructure, these advances form the backbone of a connected, low-carbon economy.

Artificial intelligence and cloud are converging with telecommunications. Networks serve as the delivery system for AI by connecting data, devices, and decisions in real time—and high-performing networks provide the speed and capacity that AI needs. Energy-efficient networks make that intelligence sustainable, and trusted networks ensure it remains secure.

As government and industry pursue inclusive, sustainable growth, the networks that link communities and power AI will define Canada's success.



NEWS

Budget bill waits for House's January return as 'slow' session comes to a close

The Liberals' budget implementation bill completed second reading on Dec. 10, and will be considered by the House Finance Committee after the House returns in the new year.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A slow session of Parliament that wrapped up last week with the budget bill unable to reach study stage at committee could be indicative of the pace of the legislative process when the House returns in January 2026 as the minority Liberals seek to govern without a formal partner, say party strategists.

"I would say a fair amount got done, but clearly, stuff got stuck before the finish line. There was a lot of stuff that moved. There were a lot of bills they got to committees, but just things got very slow getting them to the finish line, getting them passed at third reading," said Liberal strategist Jonathan Kalles, who is vice-president of Quebec for McMillan Vantage.

"You have all these different bills that are at different phases of the process, and you would hope that [when MPs] come back in January, things will pick up. Although I wouldn't say that I'm optimistic for that."

The House adjourned on Dec. 12, and is scheduled to return on Jan. 26, 2026.

Bill C-15, the government's budget bill, made some progress through the House during the final week before the winter break, although it wasn't able to get to committee. The bill completed second reading on Dec. 10, and will be considered by the House Finance Committee when the House returns in the new year.

Kalles told *The Hill Times* that he doesn't think the Conservatives want an election, but argues they will obstruct "as much as they can everything going on in Parliament." Moving forward on legislation is more difficult for the Liberals without a co-operation deal with the NDP, said Kalles.

The Liberals have been without a formal ally in the House since the supply-and-confidence agreement between that party and the NDP ended in Septem-



To help pass legislation, Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured, is 'going to have to find dance partners on a case-by-case basis,' says Garry Keller, a vice-president at StrategyCorp, and a former Conservative Hill staffer. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Jonathan Kalles, vice-president of Quebec for McMillan Vantage, says, 'either parties are going to have to be somewhat more flexible and negotiable, or we're going to wind up in an election campaign.' Photograph courtesy of X



Garry Keller, a vice-president at StrategyCorp, says Bill C-15 is 'an example of the wider challenge that the government is going to have in getting its legislative agenda passed.' Photograph courtesy of Garry Keller



Olivier Cullen, director of strategy for Blackbird Strategies, says, 'We saw, even on the budget, how fragile this minority [government] is.' Photograph courtesy of Olivier Cullen

ber 2024. Without that deal, the Liberals no longer have the same power to shut down debate on bills in order to move them through the legislative process.

However, a supply-and-confidence deal is the exception, rather than the rule, according to Kalles.

"The [Justin] Trudeau government was in power from 2019 to 2021 without a supply-and-confidence agreement, and each of the opposition parties supported different things at different times, and that's true when [Stephen] Harper had minority governments, where it was a case-by-case basis," said Kalles.

"Either parties are going to have to be somewhat more flexible and negotiable, or we're going to wind up in an election campaign. At some point when it's completely paralyzed, those are the two choices. You un-stuck it, or you go to elections."

Garry Keller, a vice-president at StrategyCorp and a former

senior parliamentary adviser to then-prime minister Harper, told *The Hill Times* that there was a lot in Bill C-15 that wasn't loved by opposition parties.

One source of controversy regarding the bill is a provision that would grant cabinet ministers the power to exempt any individual or firm from nearly any federal law—excluding for the Criminal Code—for up to six years.

Keller said it's the job of opposition parties to hold the government to account, and to ensure accountability and transparency in Parliament.

"If you're serious about getting the bill passed, this bill is going to require some amendment. I think it's an example of the wider challenge that the government is going to have in getting its legislative agenda passed," said Keller.

"[Carney is] going to have to find dance partners on a case-by-case basis."

During the session, six bills received royal assent. Five of them—Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act; Bill C-6, the Appropriation Act No. 1, 2025-26 (royal assent on June 26); Bill C-7, Appropriation Act No. 2, 2025-26; Bill C-202, an act to amend the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development Act (supply management)—all received royal assent on June 26. The sixth bill, Bill S-1001, an act to authorize Gore Mutual Insurance Company to apply to be continued as a body corporate under the laws of the Province of Quebec, received royal assent on Nov. 20.

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.), told *The Hill Times* that the new Liberal government is trying to find its feet.

"It's been a struggle passing legislation, generally, but I was

surprised to see bills like C-5 and others get through as quickly as they did. I understand the necessity for bills like that to move, but it's a little confusing why things like that would happen quickly, where, the budget Implementation Act is moving slowly," he said.

"There's a lot of details [in Bill C-15]. There's a lot of fine print, so I think it has to go through a rigorous process. And that's why we have democracy and people who are responsible for ensuring the state of the country's affairs is all well in order."

Cullen said there's "trepidation amongst the government," and the Liberals need to be careful working with other parties to ensure that they have the votes they need.

"We saw, even on the budget, how fragile this minority is. It's only a few seats short of majority, but those few seats are extremely important. That just shows the lack of cooperation amongst the other parties. And there's a lot of games being played," Cullen said.

In the last week before the winter break, other key activity in the House included MPs voting down an opposition motion seeking to pin down the Liberals on pipeline construction. On Dec. 9, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River—Crowfoot, Alta.) put forward a motion asking the House to "take note" of the memorandum of understanding recently signed between Ottawa and Alberta, and to support the construction of one or more pipelines enabling the export of at least one million barrels a day of low-emission bitumen. Poilievre later amended the motion to include a reference to providing the opportunity for Indigenous rightsholders to participate in consultation processes, and to engage with British Columbia.

The amended motion was defeated by a margin of 196 to 139, with Liberal, Bloc Québécois, Greens and NDP MPs voting against it.

Following the vote, the Conservatives argued in a press release that, by voting 'no', the Liberal causes proved that Carney "has no intention to build a much-needed pipeline to the Pacific."

"Instead of joining in the spirit of collaboration to get their promised pipeline built, the Liberals rejected their own agreement, even after Conservatives amended the language to incorporate more language from the MOU itself," said the statement.

Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) condemned the Conservative motion as "a cheap political stunt" while speaking to reporters on the Hill on Dec. 9.

"The Conservatives are trying to cherry pick, to divide. What they should be talking about is the entire MOU. That is what the government of Alberta signed up for—the entire MOU. It is what we have signed up for—the entire MOU. People can have issues with particular pieces, but we are supportive of the entire MOU," he said.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.)

Continued on page 28



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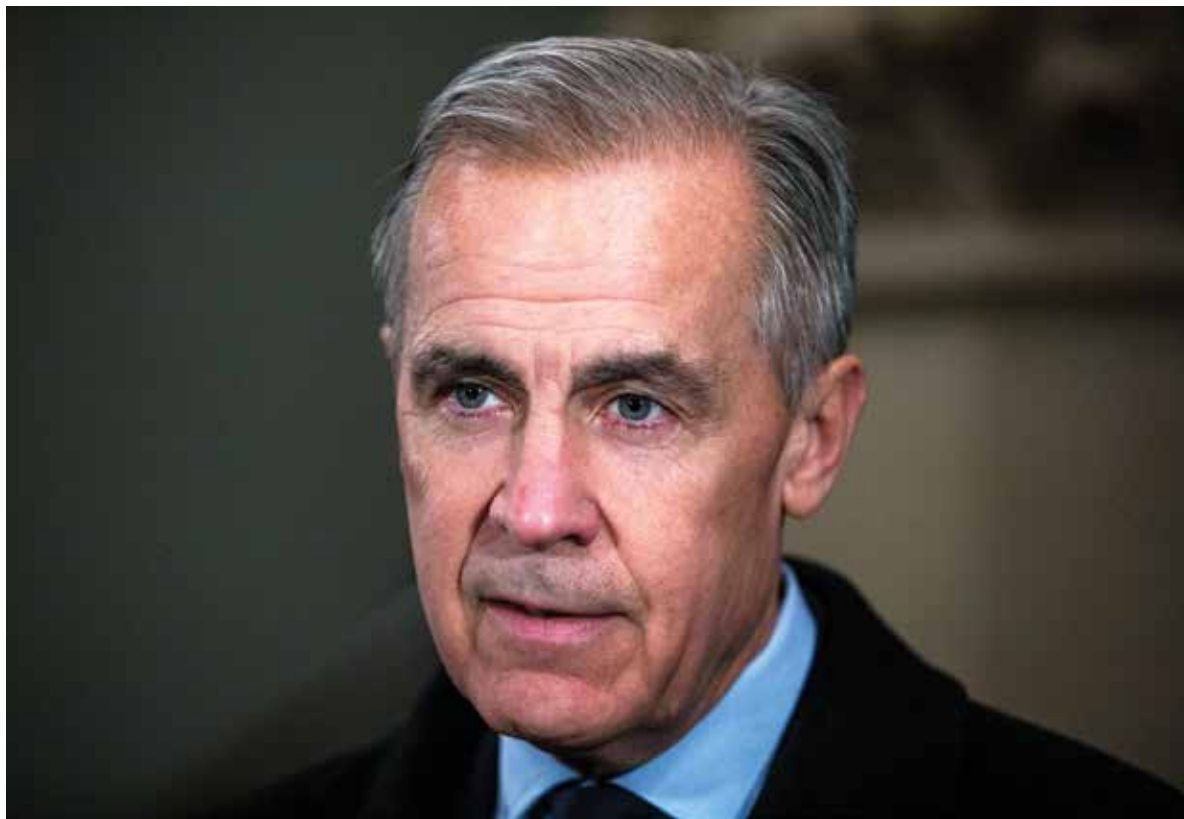
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NEWS



To help protect Canada's steel industry, Prime Minister Mark Carney announced new measures in November, including for imposition of a global 25 per cent tariff on targeted imported steel-derivative products such as wind towers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Renewable energy sector adds concerns about wind-tower costs to steel industry crisis talks: 'there's a ton of urgency'

The tightened tariff rate quotas for steel imports from non-free trade agreement partners will come into force on Dec. 26.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Ottawa's plans to limit imports of foreign steel may also drive up the cost of electricity as wind towers become more costly, warn representatives of the renewable energy sector who are hurrying to voice their message to Ottawa before the measures come into force later this month.

"There's a ton of urgency," said Fernando Melo, senior director of public affairs and federal policy with the Canadian Renewable Energy Association (CanREA). "We are going very hard on this, but we're also under time pressure."

To help protect Canada's steel industry—one of the most

heavily hurt sectors during the current trade war with the United States—Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) announced a plan on Nov. 26 to tighten the tariff rate quotas (TRQs) for steel imports from non-free trade agreement partners from 50 per cent to 20 per cent of 2024 levels.

TRQs are government-set limits on the amount of steel products that can enter this country each quarter without incurring a 50-per-cent surtax. By lowering the TRQ, even less steel will be able to enter Canada without the application of the surtax.

Canada will also impose a global 25-per-cent tariff on targeted imported steel-derivative products such as wind towers, prefabricated buildings, fasteners, and wires. The new measures will come into effect on Dec. 26.

Melo told *The Hill Times* that he's concerned about the direct mention of "wind towers" in Carney's announcement. He argued Canada does not have the domestic capacity to meet the needs of current and planned wind projects without some foreign inputs because Canada only has one domestic producer of wind

turbine towers, which is based in Quebec.

"We have such a big country, and these are such large objects, that we can't necessarily get them from point A to point B, when



Fernando Melo, senior director of public affairs and federal policy with the Canadian Renewable Energy Association, says wind towers are so big that 'we can't necessarily get them from point A to point B.'

Photograph courtesy of Fernando Melo

point B is in British Colombia ... because that manufacturer is in Quebec," he said.

"With a tariff immediately applied to these [towers] ... we're about to see massive price spikes to the point where no one can make any money, and we're about to have layoffs because these projects won't go forward."

The renewable energy industry secures its supply chains years before projects are built, which means towers ordered years ago will be on the hook if their costs jump up because of tariffs, according to Melo.

CanREA is urging Ottawa to create a remission process for projects that are contracted and under construction, and for those that are being submitted to Ontario's LT2 procurement process by Dec. 18.

"It's largely just so that we have time as an industry to pivot and be able to address that," he said.

"We're asking for them to be thoughtful in how this tariff is applied, and to work with industry on developing a better understanding of the domestic supply chain and opportunities there."

CanREA is represented on the federal lobbyists' registry by consultants Roberto Chávez, Vanessa Lamarre, and Teodora Durca of Sussex Strategy, and in-house by Vittoria Bellissimo, the firm's president and CEO.

Steel industry in crisis during trade war

Since Carney was sworn in as prime minister this past March, the organization that's communicated with him the most has been ArcelorMittal Dofasco, a steel fabricator in Hamilton, Ont. ArcelorMittal Dofasco filed nine reports for communications with Carney between March 28 and Oct. 4, according to the lobbyists' registry.

Other groups related to steel that have communicated with Carney include the Canadian Steel Producers Association, which communicated with him on Oct. 25; Sorel Forge, a Quebec steel distributor, which communicated with him on July 15, on July 30 and on Aug. 20; and with United Steelworkers, which communicated with Carney on July 16.

Canada's steel industry has been hit hard by a 50-per-cent tariff on steel and aluminum imposed by the White House. Trade talks have been stalled since October, when U.S. President Donald Trump was angered by an anti-tariff ad, sponsored by the Ontario government and featuring the voice of former U.S. president Ronald Reagan, that aired on American television.

The Hill Times reached out to ArcelorMittal Dofasco and to the CSPA to ask for the latest on how the industry is faring under the tariff war, and their asks of the federal government, but interviews could not be arranged before deadline.

Following Carney's November announcement, Unifor—Canada's largest union in the private sector, representing 320,000 workers—issued a press release calling the measures a welcome step, but cautioned that "they must translate into immediate supports that stabilize jobs today while preparing our industries for the future."

Lana Payne, Unifor's national president, told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on Dec. 10 Ontario's anti-tariff TV ad was "just one more excuse for Presi-

dent Trump to dodge negotiating a fair deal."

"The pause in talks also paused the sector-by-sector negotiation tactic pushed by the U.S., an approach Unifor warned would surrender critical leverage and leave workers in targeted sectors exposed as auto and lumber were being left out of those sector negotiations," said Payne in the email, adding that Canada should not rush into an agreement it could later regret.

"Our message has never wavered: no deal is better than a bad deal that harms the industrial economy of Canada and fails to protect Canadian workers and their jobs. We are also seeing the impact of Trump's tariffs, which are now hurting the U.S. economy, especially the manufacturing sector. The economic damage to American businesses, workers, farmers, and consumers is becoming harder to ignore," said Payne.

In the domestic steel industry's recent signal of woes, Algoma Steel, a steel production firm in Sault Ste. Marie, Ont., confirmed on Dec. 1 a plan to lay off approximately 1,000 staff effective March 23, 2026, as it permanently shuts down its blast furnace and coke-making operations.

United Steelworkers condemned Algoma's layoffs in a Dec. 4 press release, calling the news "an embarrassment for the federal government" because of support the company received from Ottawa. In September, the Liberal government announced \$400-million in loans to Algoma Steel, which go along with an additional \$100-million from the Ontario government.

"This must be a lesson that we never forget: when governments sign agreements to support industry, they must ensure transparent commitments to job security and job growth," said Marty Warren, national director of United Steelworkers, in the press release.

Meg Gingrich, United Steelworkers' administrative assistant to the national director, who leads tariff and trade efforts, told *The Hill Times* that her group's advocacy messages to Ottawa at this time include finding ways to protect the domestic market. She also said that greater clarity is needed when it comes to federal government support for specific companies.

"While we supported the injections of cash essentially to keep [Algoma Steel] operating, the lack of any transparency or accountability over any conditions that were attached to that—that's something that's a real problem for us," she said.

"Our understanding is these layoffs were probably coming at some point, but we wanted measures in there to ensure that they would be done through attrition, that ... as many people would remain employed as possible. And it was done completely in secret, and we have no sense of what was agreed to there."

If the federal government is handing out millions of dollars to support steel companies, Gingrich argued conditions should be attached, such as employment guarantees in order to protect jobs.

"Some of those things would be protected under the collective agreement, but we'd want to ensure that they're really prioritizing rehiring people in the community and trying to minimize any sort of disruption to ... the community or to the membership," she said.

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The Hill Times



Conservative MP John Brassard chairs the House Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics Committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

House Ethics Committee to review Lobbying Act in 2026 after AI study, says chair Brassard

The committee hasn't conducted a statutory review since 2012, and Conservative MP John Brassard says members 'should be anxious about updating and modernizing' the legislation. It came into effect in 2008, and by law should be reviewed every five years.

BY HUNTER CRESSWELL

The House Ethics Committee is set to start the long-overdue review of the Lobbying Act sometime in the new year after wrapping up its current study into challenges posed by artificial intelligence and its regulation, says chair and Conservative MP John Brassard.

"We haven't had the Lobbying Act studied since 2012," Brassard (Barrie South—Innisfil, Ont.) told *The Lobby Monitor* on Nov. 24. "So [Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger is] anxious. I think everyone here should be anxious about updating and modernizing the Lobby Act, as well, and so I guess she's going to be number one witness that day."

The act, which came into force in 2008, regulates the lobbying profession and those who practice it. By law, it should be reviewed every five years meaning it should have been updated in 2017 and 2022.

On Sept. 17, the House Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics Committee (ETHI) unanimously agreed to begin assessing the Lobbying Act's effectiveness in ensuring transparency and ethical conduct in lobbying activities. Liberal vice-chair Linda Lapointe (Rivière-des-Mille-Îles, Que.) made the motion.

"A review of the Lobbying Act is long overdue, and I am hopeful that a 2026 review leads to meaningful changes to Canada's lobbying regime," Bélanger said in a statement provided to *The Lobby Monitor* on Dec. 2.

"I remain committed to helping Parliament strengthen transparency and accountability in lobbying. I continue to build on the recommendations I shared with Parliament in 2021 and look forward to presenting these to ETHI."

Bélanger last appeared before the committee on Oct. 6 where she said that she is pleased that a review of the act will be studied by the committee.

During that meeting, Bélanger recommended that the act be amended to require lobbyists to register by default. Currently, corporations can claim that their staff don't do enough lobbying to require reporting on the federal lobbyists' registry which is why Bélanger said she would like to see groups have to register "by default" if they want to talk policy with officials.

She also stated that she currently must forward all cases of lobbying misconduct to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police for investigation, but she would like the discretion to issue fines, require professional training, or prohibit someone from lobbying temporarily in certain cases.

Bélanger also recommends that more forms of communication between lobbyists and federal officials be reported to the registry instead of only communications that were oral and arranged in advance, which is how the act is written now.

Also during the Oct. 6 meeting, Brassard requested that Bélanger provide a list of witnesses that she suggests the committee invite to testify during the review of the Lobbying Act.

According to the document obtained by *The Lobby Monitor*, Bélanger recommends that ETHI hear from Jean-François Routhier, commissioner of lobbying of Quebec; Cathryn Motherwell, commissioner of integrity and registrar of lobbyists of Ontario; Michael Harvey, information and privacy commissioner and registrar of lobbyists of British Columbia; and Pauline Bertrand, policy analyst for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development.

Bélanger also suggested that the committee hear about the act from the RCMP by invitation through Public Safety Canada.

Committee meetings featuring these suggested witnesses have not been announced.

Along with the list of suggested witnesses, Bélanger included data that ETHI members requested. The registry shows a steady increase in the number of distinct registrations from 4,072 during the 2012-13 fiscal year to 8,829 in 2024-25.

The data also shows a rise in the number of active lobbyists on a year-to-year basis. There were 6,321 registered lobbyists during the 2024-15 fiscal year and that has increased to 8,934 in 2024-25.

This article was published first in *The Lobby Monitor*, the news service that government relations specialists rely on to keep them ahead, insightful, and prepared. *The Hill Times*



The giving season is about generosity, connection, and community—and for many Canadians, it's a time to support the causes and organizations they care about.

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Editorial

Editorial

Buckle up Canada, we're in for an even rougher ride with Trump

United States President Donald Trump's new national security strategy, released on Dec. 4, has been met with shock and outrage in Canada's federal political world.

The 33-page document promises "to restore American pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere." It plans to position the United States of America as being "pre-eminent in the Western Hemisphere as a condition of our security and prosperity—a condition that allows us to assert ourselves confidently where and when we need to in the region." This is a problem for Canada because we're part of the Western Hemisphere.

The strategy also threatens to make Canada "a vassal state," said Lloyd Axworthy, former foreign affairs minister under prime minister Jean Chrétien, to *The Hill Times* in today's issue.

Axworthy said that the idea of the U.S. being "the rulers of the Western Hemisphere" will have implications for Canada, including those affecting Arctic sovereignty, defence, and security. He said every MP should read the document in which Trump promises the U.S. "will continue to develop every dimension of our national strength, and we will make America safer, richer, freer, greater and more powerful than ever before."

Axworthy said that the security strategy illustrates "the United States no longer has a commitment to collaborative, co-operative multilateralism," and has taken an "our-way-or-the-highway approach in the Western Hemisphere."

The document states that "the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere." It's a reference to the 1823 Monroe Doctrine, courtesy of then-U.S. president James Monroe, which opposed European colonialism in the Western Hemisphere.

Peter MacKay, a former foreign affairs minister under then-prime minister Stephen Harper, described the U.S. national security strategy as "the Monroe Doctrine on steroids" and said, given that Trump wants to significantly boost American military presence in the Western Hemisphere, he wonders if we are entering "a Cold War with the United States." MacKay called the document "very chilling." He also said Canada should accelerate plans for submarines, fighter planes, and drones.

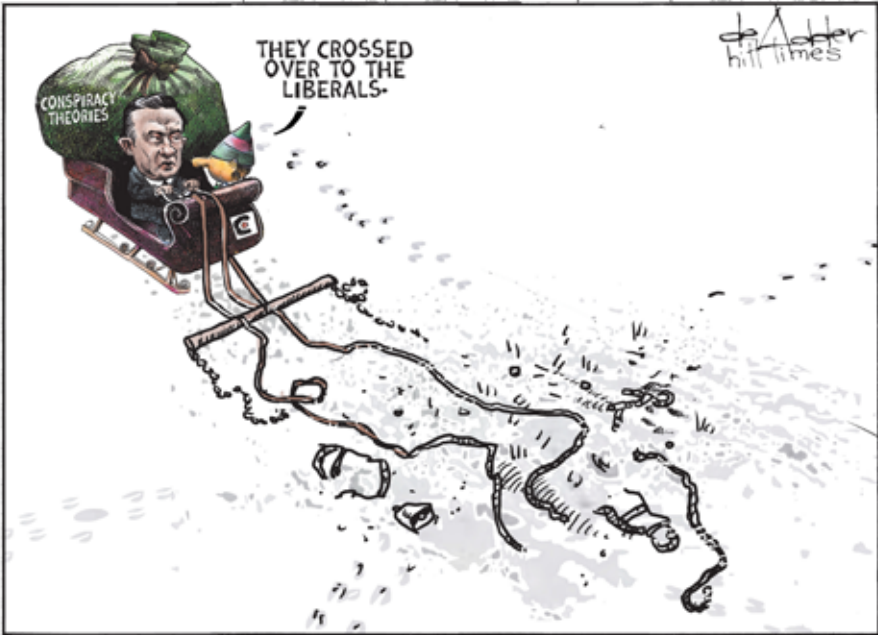
Frank McKenna, our former ambassador to the U.S., told *The Hill Times* that he's read enough of the document to make him sick. "I can understand why the Europeans are so pissed," McKenna stated.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister David McGuinty told CTV News last week that Canada is "taking note" of the new U.S. strategy, and said this country will "continue to work closely with our neighbour and partner." And Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand's office told *The Hill Times* in a statement that it "wouldn't comment on another country's domestic policies."

But, as MacKay said, Canada needs to send its own "clear-eyed vision of national defence" and release its own national security strategy. And, as Axworthy said, this country should also be cautious about any major collaborations with the Trump administration, should focus on ensuring our own strong presence in the Arctic, and should work much more closely with other NATO allies.

Our Parliament should be working together for the sake of Canada. This is serious.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

The biggest threat to Canada is our old buddy, the United States of America: Montreal reader



Canada's aligning with the EU, but it is a middle power with a small defence capability, writes Catherine Chueng. Image courtesy of Pixabay

Re: "Despite unimaginable losses, Putin continues his relentless push into eastern Ukraine, town by town, village by village, body by body," (*The Hill Times*, Dec. 1). I have great respect for Michael Harris; however, I disagree with some of his points in this column.

First, I disagree that he said Russia had unimaginable losses. Although the Russian Army moved very slowly in Eastern Ukraine, it annihilated the Ukrainian Army in dramatic numbers. To evaluate the loss and the gain in a war, it is not only about how much territory you gain, but also how many enemies you annihilate. The Russian tactic is to circle a city while leaving a small opening, giving the Ukrainian Army some hope of escaping or gaining support from outside. When Ukrainian soldiers escape or other outside forces come to help, the Russian military will attack them. It is better than entering the city, searching for the Ukrainian army, and fighting one on one. It is a military tactic.

Second, I disagree that that the United States doesn't give Ukraine long-range missiles. The thing is not that simple. The only way to defeat Russia is for NATO to put a foot on the ground in Ukraine. However, Russian President Vladimir Putin threatened to trigger a nuclear war if NATO did that. I believe that no NATO country will sacrifice or risk its own safety to help Ukraine by offering long-range missiles. In international relations, the actors calculate the consequences based on their capabilities. Russia has Oreshnik Missiles that travel at 20 times the speed of sound, which no NATO country can intercept, including the U.S. Also, Russia has Poseidon torpedoes with a nuclear engine that can reach any coast of the U.S. and trigger a tsunami. Russia can threaten and stop the U.S. from offering the long-range missiles to Ukraine.

U.S. President Donald Trump knows the limits of NATO. Also, he knows that Ukraine is losing its territory and its soldiers, as the war is going on. Trump actually is helping Ukraine and reducing the damage. The European Union wants a ceasefire; however, Putin wants a peace deal. The problem is that the EU relies on U.S. weapons, and it doesn't have the capability, at the moment, to intercept the Russian Hazel-nut missile.

Canada is aligning with the EU, but it is a middle power with a small defence capability. The help that Canada can offer to Ukraine is limited. Being pragmatic, the biggest threat to Canada is our old buddy, the southern neighbour, who wants to annex Canada.

Catherine Chueng
Montreal, Que.

Politics

My personal wish list to Donald Trump



If U.S. President Donald Trump were Ebenezer Scrooge in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, then he should pay close attention to the three ghosts of Christmas, writes Michael Harris. Image courtesy of Pixabay/Tiburi

Instead, I would like you to play *A Christmas Carol* on that big screen for you and all the president's men. And not the handful of American remakes of Charles Dickens' masterpiece, but the original 1951 version. The one with Alastair Simms as Ebenezer Scrooge—yes, Donald, you are Scrooge in this exercise. So pay particular attention to the three ghosts that visit him—the Ghosts of Christmas' Past, Present, and Future.

Dickens did something miraculous with those three characters. By showing what has been, what is, and what will be, he invited even the most self-absorbed egomaniacs to reflect on what they have done with their lives, what they are doing now—and most important of all, what they might still do before their time is up.

Here is my wish.

If the Ghost of Christmas Past could show you how you have already wielded the immense power of your office, it might lead to reflection, just as it did for Scrooge in Dickens' iconic story. And that reflection might just lead to regrets. That's what they did for Scrooge, whom, I remind you, is your character in *A Christmas Carol*. The guy who has everything but heart.

For example, in your first term, you described NATO as "obsolete," hinting that the U.S. might pull out of what you apparently think of as an antiquated alliance. You seem to have forgotten that alliances were how the world stopped Hitler in his tracks.

Your uncertainty about NATO has put millions of former allies in Europe on edge. If the U.S. wouldn't stand four square behind its perennial allies against authoritarian predators, what might that tempt Russia to do? The world soon found out.

Donald Trump could very easily go down as the president who was the undisputed champion grifter in U.S. history, with him and his family adding billions to their wealth—despite the strict prohibitions of the U.S. Constitution's Emoluments Clause.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—It's almost Christmas, so even a political junkie like

me gets to write a personal wish list. Mine is addressed to United States President Donald Trump.

Even if it ends up looking like it was written by a wide-eyed intern at Disney's Fantasyland, no matter. As I said, it's Christmas and I believe in miracles.

Let's begin with something we can all agree on. The world is in a sorry mess, which I don't have to tell you, Mr. President.

And it risks slipping into an even deeper abyss with a huge U.S. military force, armed to the teeth, just seven miles off the coast of Venezuela. As you know better than anyone, the ships and planes are not loaded with Christmas presents. It looks like boots and bombs in the stockings for these poor people—though I am still hoping that won't happen.

And Venezuela isn't the only place where Santa may have problems landing his sleigh, Rudolph or not.

The war in Ukraine wages on. The stateless Palestinians sit on a land that remains a tinder box, waiting for the next match.

Sudan and Nigeria are in chaos. Kids are dying in Africa for want of "spare-change" medication that was cut off by the world's richest man, Elon Musk, when he ran the now defunct DOGE;

Masked men in America, ICE men, are dragging Black and brown people off the street, detaining them, and then throwing them out of the country without due process.

Shipwreck survivors are being blown up by your troops with their hands raised in the air.

I have a suggestion, Mr. President. Instead of more meetings in the Situation Room with all those generals who jingle when they walk, I would like you to try something different.

For starters, stop showing human beings and motorboats blown up by missiles from your planes and warships. Unless you're going to show all of it. Show the second tape. After all, when you are shipwrecked, sinking, and shirtless, how much of a threat can you be—1,200 miles from America?

As America's political Scrooge, Donald, the Ghost of Christmas Past might stir the beginnings of regret in you by reminding you of what you have done. Sadly, the Ghost of Christmas Present reveals that you are still doing destructive things.

You have continued to dismantle alliances, even with your greatest friend and ally, Canada. You put trade sanctions on this country that money guru Warren Buffett said amounted to economic war.

And you did it while saying Canada is not a real country at all, and should be the 51st state. Strange treatment for the country that buys more from you than any country in the world, and she has shared bloodshed at your side in dreadful wars.

But, Donald, it is the Ghost of Christmas Future that sends you the most important and much-needed wake-up call—just as in *A Christmas Carol*.

After all, you could go down as the friend and enabler of dictators, as your disgraceful betrayal of Ukraine and enabling of Russia has made clear.

You could go down as the only American president in history who called citizens of his own country "garbage" from "shit-hole" countries, as you recently did. Memo to Donald. There are not "shit-hole" countries, or "garbage" humans—just desperate ones.

You could be remembered as the president who chose a trillion-dollar tax cut for fellow billionaires by depriving millions upon millions of regular Americans of health care.

You could go down as the president who said there was no affordability crisis at a time when many Americans are having to choose between putting food on their tables, or filling medical prescriptions.

You could go down as the president who suppresses negative financial reports about how the country is doing in order to fudge the truth about what your tariffs have done to the American economy.

And you could very easily go down as the president who was the undisputed champion grifter in American history, with you and your family adding billions to your wealth—despite the strict prohibitions of the U.S. Constitution's Emoluments Clause.

So, Mr. President, take a look at *A Christmas Carol*. After all his moral failures were laid out for him by the Ghosts of Christmas, Scrooge was offered a second chance. He finally felt remorse and took it. And when he did, he received something you might consider.

"I am as a light as a feather. I am as happy as an angel. I am as merry as a schoolboy."

I'm wagering it has been a while since you felt like that, Donald.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Marc Miller's historic support for Indigenous Peoples will be put to the test

The budget was silent on funding for friendship centres which is scheduled to sunset as the existing 10-year funding deal ends in 2026.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The minister of Canadian culture and identity has an almost impossible job. The idea of a monolithic Canadian culture is a challenge in itself.

Marc Miller is also responsible for official languages, minority language English support in Quebec, and French outside Quebec.

The focus on official languages overshadows support for Indigenous Peoples. When I became Canadian heritage minister in 1995, almost all funding was directed to activities promoting the languages of Shakespeare and Molière.

Indigenous applicants for cultural funding were redirected to the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, even though that department had no funding for culture.

The government claimed to be supporting Canadian culture, but was really financing European-based culture.

When it came to First Nations, there was no investment in promoting Indigenous identities though books, television, film, live performances, or any other artistic medium that supported self-identity.

In the last budget, the vast majority of Indigenous funding targeted infrastructure and investment within Indigenous territories.

It is very popular these days to open every ceremony with an acknowledgement that we, as colonizers, live on the ceded or unceded territory of various First Nations. Ceded territory signifies those lands where successive governments signed treaties with First Nations. Unceded territories includes lands where a treaty on land ownership was never concluded.

The Parliament of Canada was built on Algonquin land that has not been ceded to the Crown.

Most of today's governance policies involve engagement of

Indigenous Peoples living on those territories.

But the reality is that 60 per cent of Indigenous Peoples do not live on the lands that their ancestors inhabited. They migrate to cities, and are expected to be served via the same services available to all other citizens.

The recent budget outlined more than \$16-billion in funding initiatives largely focused on Indigenous territorial investments.

But it was silent on any future funding for the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC).

The last budget under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau allocated \$27.5-million in 2024 to the NAFC which administers more than 100 centres in small and large communities across the country.

When you compare the friendship centre budget to the investment on Indigenous territories, the contrast is already very stark. For the majority of Indigenous Peoples living away from their homes, friendship centres are the first places of welcome that can help in their transition.

The centres offer housing, job-search assistance, mental-health programs, and addiction support.

Most provide a much-needed medical and social service link to the outside community.

The Nov. 4 budget was silent on NAFC funding which is scheduled to sunset because the existing 10-year funding agreement ends in 2026.

Leaders from dozens of friendship centres across the country descended on Ottawa last week for a summit on their continued existence.

Speaker after speaker made the case that survival is crucial to the reconciliation process that the government has committed to.

Miller attended the event, joined by Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty. Both spoke positively in support of funding friendship centres.

If anyone understands that the key to Canadian identity is Indigenous, it's Miller.

He is still held in high regard for his work as minister responsible for Indigenous services, and minister of Crown-Indigenous relations.

On a personal basis, Miller was the first MP in history to make a statement in the Mohawk language, studying a community-based program developed by the Six Nations of the Grand River near Brantford, Ont.

Miller recently faced some criticism for his reaction to a question on the decline of French-language speakers in

Quebec. Miller said he was "fed up" with the language debate, raising the ire of Quebec Premier François Legault, who called him a "disgrace."

Miller's exasperation stemmed from the fact that language is constantly used by politicians as a political weapon.

He won't face that issue with Indigenous Peoples. But he will be challenged to put his historic support for them to the test by returning full funding to friendship centres from coast to coast to coast.

Meanwhile, centres are scrambling because they literally do not know what will happen in three months.

The NAFC's interim CEO advised the government that March 31, 2026, layoffs are being contemplated because that is when budget certainty ends.

Deputy minister of Indigenous Services, Algonquin Gina Wilson, has confirmed that funding will be renewed, but no one knows by how much and when.

Millions of Indigenous Peoples are hoping Miller and Gull-Masty will deliver more than a lump of coal this Christmas.

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

The Hill Times

Carney, cynic or idealist?

By making this one pipeline deal, Mark Carney might be hoping to destroy the stereotype that Liberals are a bunch of progressive, tree-hugging greens who detest Western Canada. Simply put, he's trying to rebrand Liberalism.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Former United States President Abraham Lincoln once allegedly asked, "Am I not destroying my enemies when I make them my friends?"

It's a famous quote that highlights Lincoln's philosophy: we should seek to reconcile with our



Prime Minister Mark Carney leaves the Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on Dec. 3, 2025. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

opponents and defuse hostility through understanding, compassion, and the building of bridges.

Of course, not many politicians have taken this route, since compassion and understanding are often viewed as weaknesses. Bashing your enemies is more the norm than extending olive branches.

But there are exceptions.

It could certainly be argued, for instance, that Prime Minister Mark Carney is taking a page from Lincoln's strategy of empathy and diplomacy, at least in his dealings with Alberta.

After all, Carney recently sent shockwaves through the Canadian political ecosystem when he

reached a memorandum of understanding with Alberta, which, in theory, will help facilitate the construction of an oil pipeline to the Pacific Coast.

It's a stunning turn of events.

Keep in mind that, traditionally, the federal Liberals have viewed oil and pipelines the way vegans view steak dinners: something to be avoided, opposed, and preached against.

Indeed, this was a constant source of tension and conflict between Alberta and Ottawa.

But now, thanks to the MOU, the two sides seem to be buddies, a situation almost as improbable as the Road Runner striking up a friendship with Wile E. Coyote.

So, is this just a case of Carney idealistically seeking to turn enemies into friends?

Maybe.

It could be that Carney simply wants to lower the political temperature in this country, to reduce the negative effects of polarization, which threatens to split Canadians along ideological and regional fault lines.

What better way to do that than by trying to settle the pipeline question, a political sore that's been festering and dividing Canadians for years?

As *Toronto Star* columnist Susan Delacourt recently wrote, "The level of toxicity in this country needed to be rolled back, not simply to improve Liberal fortunes, but to build some bridges between the government and some of Canada's most disaffected citizens."

But at the same time, I don't think we should totally discount the possibility that Carney also had some cynical political motives for his bold pipeline manoeuvre.

It could be, for example, that he made his pipeline deal as part of a strategy to shatter partisan stereotypes.

In other words, by doing something unexpected or by playing "against type," Carney is seeking to redefine his party's political image.

And yes, this is a standard tactical ploy.

Perhaps the most famous example of this playing out occurred in 1972 when then-U.S.

president Richard Nixon—long considered a vehement and uncompromising anti-communist—visited China.

This shocked the world, and overnight, it transformed Nixon from a Cold War warrior to an international statesman.

My point is, by making this one pipeline deal, Carney might be hoping to destroy the stereotype that Liberals are a bunch of woke, progressive, tree-hugging greens who detest Western Canada.

Simply put, he's trying to rebrand Liberalism.

His goal might be to make it more difficult for Conservatives to hammer the Liberals as irresponsible economic stewards or as anti-West.

Yet, it should be noted that Carney's pipeline gambit doesn't come without risks.

For one thing, he could alienate a section of his Liberal base, especially those Liberals of a green orientation.

In fact, Liberal MP Steven Guilbeault, once a noted environmentalist, quit Carney's cabinet over the pipeline deal.

However, it's likely Carney feels he'll gain more politically than he'll lose.

So, does striking a deal with Alberta make Carney an idealist or a cynic?

Perhaps it makes him a bit of both.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Democracy, like a Christmas gift, is best unwrapped

The Prime Minister's Office is taking a decidedly corporate approach. Then it should make sure that the essential piece of corporate governance is included by being transparent with the board of directors. In this country, the board is made up of voters.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—Threats to evidence-based journalism, persecution of opposition politicians with an offensive focus on women and people of colour, deconstruction of federal government departments, and now piracy.

If the American democracy were a person, doctors would be doing CPR right now, and giving its family that sober, silent look that means, "it's not long now."

History will likely paint 2025 as the year of economic and social surrender to the bully.

In its usual approach of capitulation to the loudest voice, the Fédération Internationale de Football Association (FIFA) gave the Bully of the United States—also known as U.S. President Donald Trump—a cereal-box prize with the word 'peace' on it. What a perversion. FIFA caved, as have many corporate leaders and more than a handful of countries.

While the American government (what is left of it) might be saying that LGBTQ2S soccer players will be safe in their country during the World Cup next year, it cannot be trusted as the bully's not-so-secret soldiers are beyond accountability, just like the Gestapo of another era. It's easily within the realm of possibility that players will have to run a real gauntlet through the Gestapo.

One wonders if Canada has caved

to the bully by co-hosting FIFA next year? How exactly does this advance the message of human rights? Can we actually say we're "proud" of this partnership? It might appear to be one of those necessary evils that happens more often in international diplomacy. But from a citizen point of view, it doesn't seem to achieve much of anything except signal that this country won't stand up for human rights when money is on the table.

If Canada sells it all for purely corporate interests and GDP, we will quickly lose our soul in the form of human rights. If history is any teacher, once capitulation and surrender trend as a key plank in the far right's bid for world power, then silence and secrecy will only feed the fear, not the democracy.

It's time for the prime minister to start talking to us more. The fall budget left most of us squinting for the message, like a wrapped gift under the tree begging for transparency.

The Prime Minister's Office is taking a decidedly corporate approach. Then it should make sure that the essential piece of corporate governance is included by being transparent with the board of directors. In this country, the board is made up of voters.

Maybe start sharing monthly video updates on what's happening. Prime Minister Mark Carney can start with a Christmas message. Surely, there are good reasons for the numerous international trips, but good reasons are meaningless if they aren't shared. Tell Canadians how these international negotiations uphold this country's values, not just corporate interests. The prime minister's voice needs to be heard at international and national events focused on human rights, not just the economy. Make us proud.

Canadians from coast to coast to coast also have skin in the game. Don't stop talking about human rights and the hope for happiness for all your neighbours. Don't stop talking about the rights of Canadians of colour, the human rights of LGBTQ2S individuals, the human rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the essential voices of women.

Every conversation we hold about human rights for family and those who don't look like us is democracy in practice.

This Christmas, make a point to talk about democracy as something that happens around the dining-room table. Bring democracy home and practice it with your family. It might be one of our most precious gifts: democracy and human rights.

“CARNEY'S VOICE NEEDS TO BE HEARD AT GLOBAL AND NATIONAL EVENTS FOCUSED ON HUMAN RIGHTS, NOT JUST THE ECONOMY. MAKE US PROUD.”



Prime Minister Mark Carney needs to work on being more transparent with Canada's board of directors: its voters, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories

are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth. *The Hill Times*

THE HILL TIMES CAREERS

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Position Title:
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OPINION



Then-environment minister Steven Guilbeault, pictured on Dec. 16, 2024, being scrummed after then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland announced her resignation from Justin Trudeau's cabinet. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Guilbeault's departure from cabinet is unfortunate, but unavoidable collateral damage

Unlike Steven Guilbeault, Mark Carney doesn't have the luxury of enforcing a green energy litmus test on the Alberta premier. He has a truculent president to face down, an economy to save and a country to unite. In this context, Guilbeault's departure is unfortunate, but unavoidable collateral damage.

Ken Polk

Opinion



This came to mind as political Ottawa continued to reverberate about the resignation from

cabinet of now-former Canadian identity and culture minister Steven Guilbeault following the memorandum of understanding on energy development that Prime Minister Mark Carney had agreed to with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith on Nov. 27.

Apart from the predictably breathless discussion by columnists citing its broader political implications, at one level, Guilbeault's resignation demonstrated that the theory of cabinet government can actually work in practice: he resigned due to his principled opposition to the MOU.

Not a hard choice for the prime minister

The bedrock principle that underpins cabinet governance is collective responsibility. Once a policy is approved by the cabinet, all its members are required to publicly support it. In this light, Guilbeault's decision was refreshing, even heartening. It is widely assumed that MPs would happily abandon any personal principle to get a seat at the top table, with all the financial perks, the ministerial limousine, and—above all—the power that comes with it. Guilbeault's choice reminds us that this is not always the case.

But from Carney's view, the price that Guilbeault may have set to remain in cabinet was too high. Losing a cabinet minister under these

circumstances is always regrettable for any prime minister, but accepting the minister's resignation would also not be a hard choice.

The former minister had taken a position against a policy outside his cabinet portfolio. One wonders how Guilbeault would have responded if he were forced to backtrack, as he seemed to insist here, on one of his own cabinet-approved policies after it had been announced.

Acceding to whatever the former minister's demands were would, in turn, have meant throwing under the proverbial bus the ministers of energy and natural resources, and environment, climate change and nature, both of whom have portfolio interests at stake, and both of whom supported the MOU.

Trickier still, it would have brought into question the prime minister's judgment for entering into the MOU in the first place. Canadian prime ministers have demonstrated their ability to take unexpected actions to achieve core political objectives, but throwing themselves under the bus in deference to a cabinet colleague's wishes has no precedent.

Juggling crises: a prime minister's job

This lifts us to the "impossible" level of prime ministerial decision-making.

Once upon a political time, Guilbeault was fêted as a "star candidate" in Quebec for then-prime minister Justin Trudeau in the 2019 election. His personal credentials as a forceful advocate for action on the climate crisis followed him into Trudeau's cabinet. He became the public face of the policy tools that the Trudeau government adopted to achieve this, particularly the carbon tax, the proposed cap on oil and gas emissions, and the electric vehicle emissions standard. All three drew political and economic pushback of varying intensity, depending on the party and the industry sector.

It was surprising for many to see Carney tap Guilbeault—the poster boy for a series of unpopular policies—for a cabinet position, albeit at a politically safe distance from the controversial clean energy file. From his perspective, Guilbeault may have thought that Carney's having been a public champion of green energy investment made it safe to accept the appointment.

What makes Guilbeault's Nov. 27 decision odd, however, was that the prime minister had also been sending unmistakable signals that his commitment to clean energy was tempering in the face of the tariff war triggered by United States President Donald Trump.

Guilbeault may have told himself that Carney's leadership

campaign pledge to scrap the carbon tax was an understandable concession to unavoidable political expediency. But even as Guilbeault entered Carney's first cabinet, the prime minister played down the gathering climate crisis to address the immediate economic one posed by Trump.

Juggling crises when required is part of a prime minister's job description. The MOU with Alberta is an essential part of Carney's juggling act; the price he has to pay to bring Alberta inside in making Canada an energy superpower.

Unlike Guilbeault, Carney does not have the luxury of enforcing a green energy litmus test on the Alberta premier. He has a truculent U.S. president to face down, an economy to save, and a country to unite toward those ends. In this context, Guilbeault's departure is unfortunate, but unavoidable collateral damage.

True, this may cause the prime minister damage among climate change purists in his caucus and among voters. But Carney is gambling that this will pale in comparison to the political gains he will make by delivering a transformational economic agenda.

Let the commentariat percolate. Let Guilbeault continue his post-resignation "victory" tour. But this, too, shall pass.

The prime minister may take comfort in an old aphorism about passing political controversies: the dogs bark, but the caravan moves on.

Ken Polk is a strategic adviser at Compass Rose. Previously, Ken served as chief speechwriter, deputy director of communications, and legislative assistant to prime minister Jean Chrétien.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Military service rests on a bedrock of trust



Canadian soldiers, pictured in 2014, returning home to Ottawa from the war in Afghanistan. They were greeted by then governor general David Johnston, then-prime minister Stephen Harper, Laureen Harper, then-defence minister Rob Nicholson, and then-chief of defence staff Tom Lawson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

When Veterans Affairs Canada provides decision letters that deny a benefit without acknowledging the veteran's arguments, evidence, or specific circumstances, the department risks destroying the sacred trust that has been afforded them by Canada's veterans.

Nishika Jardine

Opinion



Military service rests on a bedrock of trust. I imagine it's the same for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. You trust your buddy to do their job so that together, as a team, you can accomplish the mission. It's all about trust.

Most of us, when we leave the Canadian Armed Forces or the RCMP, we take that value of trust with us.

We are told while in service that Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC) will be there for us if we are injured or become ill. And, actually,

asking for help is hard for many of us: we are the ones who help, not the ones who need help. When we do seek benefits and services from VAC, most of us do so from a place of trust in this institution that is, in our minds, there to take care of us when we have been injured or suffered illness as a result of our service to our country, to Canada.

Every interaction matters to a veteran. For most of us, you only get one chance to betray our trust in you.

When a veteran applies for VAC benefits, sometimes they are denied. VAC denials of disability claims can be appealed to the Veterans Review and Appeal Board. Denials of almost all other benefits—treatments, medications, assistive devices, income replacement, education and training—can be appealed through the VAC internal review process called National First and National Second Level Appeal—or N1LA and N2LA for short.

What we have noticed is that veterans who appeal denials of these benefits often will be denied again by N1LA, and then yet again by N2LA. In other words, veterans who are denied these benefits and feel the decision is unfair, they follow the appeals process and still come away unsatisfied—worse, they feel unheard.

We have been all across this country holding town halls, and have met a lot of veterans and their families. Many of them say, "I don't even understand why I have been denied this benefit."

So, we took a look at the letters that veterans receive when they go through this process. When veterans receive unfavourable decision letters from VAC that do not clearly state the rationale for denial, that ignore the information they provided, and that provide little-to-no guidance or sup-

port on how to move forward, it is understandable that they feel they can no longer trust VAC with their well-being.

Our primary finding in our investigation suggests that veterans are not wrong in questioning the decision letters they receive from VAC when they seek redress, in good faith, for initial denials. We found that the reasons provided by VAC often did not meet

the requirements for fair reasons set out by the Supreme Court. The letters in many cases did not address the concerns that the veteran provided in their request for review.

How frustrating to submit an appeal in the expectation that one's points will be considered, and then to receive what is essentially a form letter that does not meaningfully address those points.

These decisions can have significant impacts on the lives of veterans and their families.


My office strives to assist the veteran community by identifying gaps or barriers in equitable access to the benefits and programs put in place by Parliament and the Government for Canada's veterans and their families. VAC is charged with delivering those benefits and programs to a unique community of Canadians who value trust and truth as the high watermark of service.

We know that institutional trust is strengthened by clear, consistent, and truthful communication about decisions that affect people. When VAC provides decision letters that deny a benefit without acknowledging the veteran's arguments, evidence, or specific circumstances, the department risks destroying the sacred trust that has been afforded them by Canada's veterans.

I hope Veterans Affairs Minister Jill McKnight will move quickly to implement the recommendations we are making in our newly released report, *The Veterans Affairs Canada Internal Review Process*, not only to make it right, but to safeguard and strengthen the institutional trust that the veteran community deserves.

Nishika Jardine, a retired colonel, is Canada's veterans ombud.

The Hill Times



HOGMANAY CEILIDH 2025
From the Streets of Edinburgh!

Hogmanay Ceilidh 2025 – From the Streets of Edinburgh!

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Canada's then-chief of defence staff general Walter Natynczyk, right, visited Canadian troops outside Kandahar, Afghanistan, on Nov. 4, 2010. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

COMMENT

The door's wide open for a re-invigorated NDP, and Parliament and Canada need it

Avi Lewis' daring, refreshing campaign may come to nothing; end of discussion. Or maybe, if New Democrats are feeling frisky, beginning of discussion. The country could use it.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—Does Canadian politics ever need a jolt as we lurch towards the Christmas break.

Witness last week's feeble joust over the so-far notional oil pipeline to British Columbia's northwestern coast. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre tried to expose divisions within the Liberal caucus by putting forward an opposition motion calling for support for a new oil pipeline.

The Liberals decided to vote 'no', *en masse*, on the grounds that the potential pipeline is only part of their recently signed memorandum of understanding with Alberta, an agreement that includes, among other things, an increase in that province's industrial carbon tax. Poilievre hastily expanded his motion to mirror most provisions of the MOU—except for a strengthened industrial carbon tax.

He could hardly support a measure he's been demonizing for months, portraying it—contrary to facts—as a key element in rising food costs and the source of pretty well every known economic ill. Rising food prices—as anyone who's been paying attention will know—is the troubling byproduct of crops and farmland damaged by climate change, United States President Donald Trump's tariff chaos, disrupted supply chains, and lack of competition in this country's grocery sector. (The impact of the cancelled consumer carbon tax was trivial; of the industrial carbon tax, nil.)

In the end, when it was obvious the Conservative motion was going to fail, neither Poilievre nor the prime minister were even in the Chamber due, apparently, to an urgent diplomatic reception taking place not far from the Commons. Indeed, Christmas social season is in full swing



NDP leadership candidates Avi Lewis, left, Tony McQuail, Heather McPherson, Tanille Johnston, and Rob Ashton pose for a photo before a forum hosted by the Canadian Labour Congress in Ottawa on Oct. 22, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

on the Hill, so, understandably, various *cinq-à-septs* and office parties require everyone's immediate attention.

It goes without saying that none of this time-wasting, all-too-familiar spectacle has much to do with pipelines, or the cost of the “meat and potatoes” that Poilievre often cites. Not that “ordinary Canadians,” the “common” people, or “struggling families” are ever far from their thoughts. From their actions, maybe, but never from their rhetoric.

Which is why the place—and the country—needs a refreshed, renewed, and larger New Democratic Party contingent, not to serve as humourless scolds (an unfair caricature, with a few exceptions), but to serve up specific policies and programs aimed at helping those struggling families. And giving hope to the disaffected, under-housed youth.

Not just specific policies, either, but “radical,” wildly ambitious, immensely popular ideas that will be immediately denounced as ruinously expensive and ridiculously misguided by non-struggling families, comfortable high-net-worth individuals, and their many advocates both in Parliament and the media. Who is the humourless scold, now?

Here's one such idea, promoted by NDP leadership hopeful Avi Lewis: a public option grocery store, essentially a vast warehouse selling local and regional produce at break-even costs, a sort of socialist Costco, operating as a non-profit, or a

co-op, with government support. Sound far-fetched?

The idea was part of New York Mayor Zohran Mamdani's recent winning campaign, and he has already allocated \$60-million to establish municipal-owned stores in each of the city's five boroughs in underserved neighbourhoods. Of course, a city-wide network is far less costly and complicated than a national plan, and there are several other objections to Lewis' proposal which will be broadcast ferociously by the five retail giants (three domestic, two foreign) that control food sales in this country. These will then be parroted—in alarmed, or sneering, tones—by Conservative and Liberal MPs, and much of the media.

But that is what happens when you advance a novel idea in politics, especially one that threatens profits.

Undeterred, Lewis has other planks that are bound to set hairs on fire: turning the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation into a public developer with the goal of building affordable and subsidized housing, boosting the unionized construction industry, and—while Lewis is at it—imposing a national cap on rent increases and a nation-wide anti-eviction policy.

This sounds like something that might actually address the “affordability” crisis that Poilievre claims to be so concerned about, and that the prime minister barely mentions. (Oddly, Poilievre keeps opposing more modest attempts to help working Canadians, from the embryonic national school food program, to

baby steps towards pharmacare, to limited free dental care—the last two programs, forced on the previous Trudeau government by the NDP.)

Another idea from the Lewis playbook could help the young adults living in their parents' basements that so preoccupy the Conservative leader: free university tuition and abolishing student debt. It gets worse for the excitable right: Lewis proposes a “low-carbon care economy,” offering higher wages and better working conditions for the (mostly) women—many immigrants—who care for the elderly, work in hospitals, operate child-care centres.

But his craziest idea isn't even that new. Lewis advocates “quickly” moving away from fossil fuels and embracing clean energy and the new jobs it will create for Albertans and others. There are other familiar components to his energy plan: electric inter-city bus service, fully-funded public transit, a heat pump for every home, and more. It sounds like a socialist nirvana—or, at least, a sharp departure from Carney's pro-oil strategy—but various of Lewis' environmental proposals have been endorsed by previous Liberal, and even Conservative, governments. Once upon a time even Mr. *Value(s)* Carney favoured a transition to cleaner energy.

The sheer scope of Lewis' ambition, the expense, and adjustments—the change—may well discourage disappointed Liberals, or even older New Democrats who put their faith in Carney last time, but could be lured back. However

energetic, Lewis will have to convince a gun-shy party, and then a nervous public, that his approach isn't too costly for an economy struggling under Trump's heavy boot and precious moods.

On the other hand, the prime minister seems to have found \$81-billion to substantially expand and re-equip the military over the next five years—a long-term investment that could eventually cost \$150-billion annually by 2035. Anyone remember voting for that?

As to the Lewis campaign, if not now, when? There is always a reason—national unity, inflation crisis, punishing tariffs, our dysfunctional federation—not to do the bold thing, the right thing. Meanwhile, struggling families continue to struggle while CEO salaries hit the stratosphere and the fossil fuel sector records record profits, yet still demands (and gets) handsome public subsidies. This isn't just bolshie sloganeering; it is verifiable fact.

Of course, this depends on Lewis winning the party's leadership in March 2026, which is no sure thing. For outside observers, he has run the most visible, idea-rich and slick campaign—and his French, a work in progress, surpasses the embarrassing attempts of most of his rivals. How serious is a candidate for national leadership, if, in late middle-age, they still haven't bothered to learn French?

Lewis is bright, personable, and—as a former broadcaster, documentarian and university lecturer—comfortable in front of a crowd and a microphone. He will be dismissed by some comrades as a silver-spoon socialist—Upper Canada College, University of Toronto, son of former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis and grandson of former federal NDP leader David Lewis. Also, he is married to celebrity left-wing author Naomi Klein.

He might just be too interesting, too socialist, even opportunistic, for a party grown timid. Somewhere between Jack Layton and Jagmeet Singh, the fire went out in the NDP furnace.

If the NDP wants to focus on regaining party status by increasing its numbers from seven to 12, it will likely favour Edmonton-Strathcona MP Heather McPherson who has the advantage of a fairly safe seat and Parliamentary experience. By contrast, Lewis has failed in two attempts to win a federal seat in British Columbia.

McPherson, however, doesn't outright oppose more oil pipelines, which will not impress the party's diminished green caucus. (Other candidates include B.C. union leader Rob Aston, Indigenous municipal councillor Tanille Johnston, and southern Ontario farmer Tony McQuail—none of whom speak French.)

In any event, Lewis' daring, refreshing campaign may come to nothing; end of discussion.

Or maybe, if New Democrats are feeling frisky, beginning of discussion. The country could use it.

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

The Hill Times

Canadian experts challenge proposed authoritarian Quebec constitution at UN and under international law

The experts at the Quebec Chapter of the International Commission of Jurists Canada—supported by several legal, civil society organization, and Indigenous leaders—insist that the potential violation of Canada’s international legal obligations by the proposed Quebec constitution requires the intervention of the United Nations Special Rapporteurs to recognize the human rights violations and call on the authorities to withdraw Bill 1.

Errol P. Mendes
& Stéphane Beaulac

Opinion

A group of legal experts at the Quebec Chapter of the International Commission of Jurists Canada is taking its fight against Quebec’s proposed constitution in its Bill 1 to the United Nations and to the international stage, arguing the legislation fails to respect the rights of minorities, Indigenous People, and the rule of law.

These legal experts—supported at a news conference on Dec. 2 by Amnesty International Canada, leading Quebec and Canadian civil liberties groups, and several Indigenous leaders—revealed that they are asking the UN special rapporteurs on fundamental individual and collective rights to scrutinize Quebec’s proposed constitution over rights concerns.

On Oct. 9, the Government of Quebec introduced Bill 1, the Quebec Constitution Act, 2025 (“Bill 1”), in the provincial National Assembly, enacting the “Constitution of Quebec” as the supreme law of the “Quebec nation.” It includes numerous provisions that infringe upon universal rights and standards guaranteed by, among others, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights; the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; the Convention on the Rights of the Child; the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples; and the UN Declaration on Minorities. Canada and Quebec are bound by these instruments.

Canada is a federation of 10 provinces and three territories. The province of Quebec is home to a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, religious, and ethnic minorities, as well as 11 Indigenous nations,

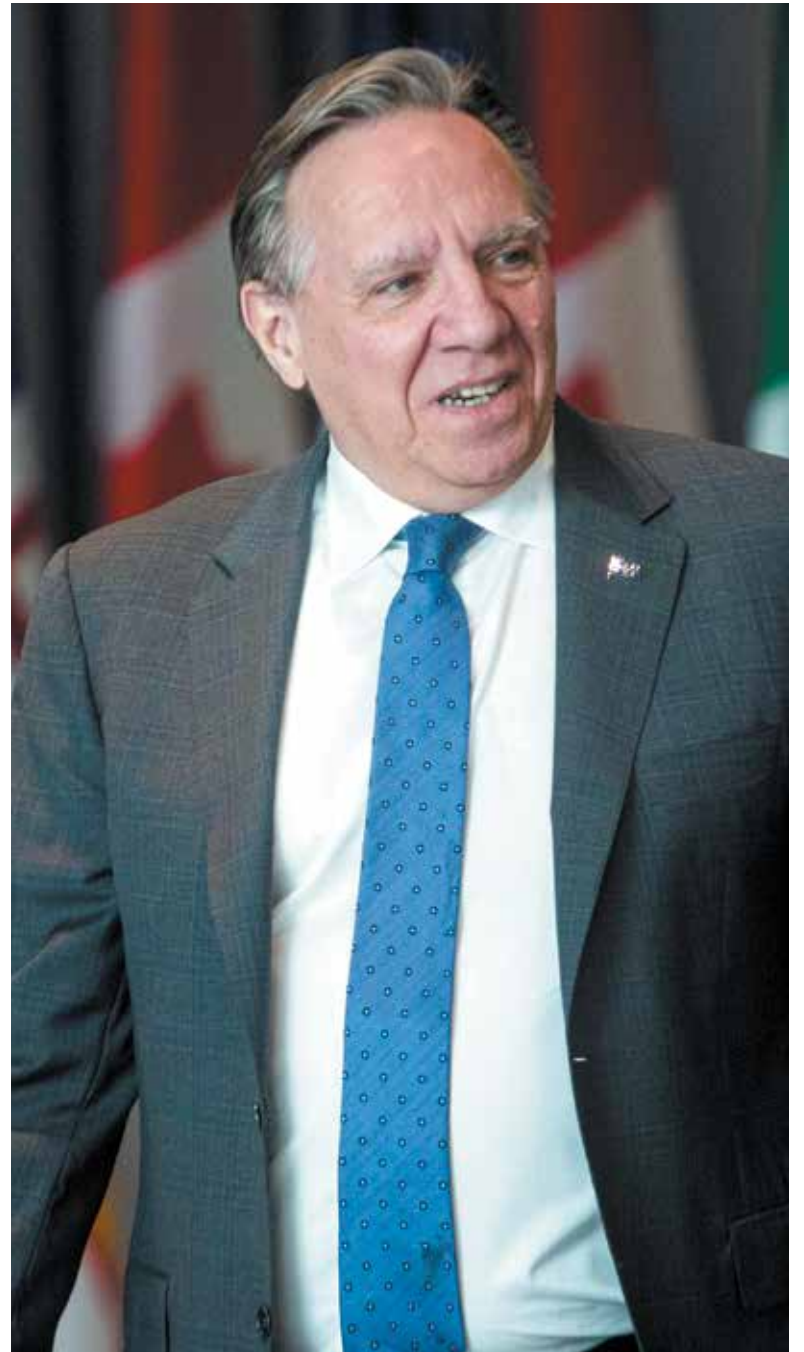
including 10 First Nations and Inuit. Canada and its provinces—including Quebec—are reference jurisdictions on the international plane, recognized for their respect for the rule of law. This is incompatible with the “hierarchy of rights” underlying Bill 1, which determines which rights are inferior to others, and must always yield to the collective rights of what are referred to as “Quebecers.” If the history of the 20th century has taught us anything, it is that this slippery slope can lead to highly dangerous situations. Bill 1 is precedent setting, and must be resolutely denounced provincially, nationally, and at the international level.

Bill 1 violates universal rights principles and standards on several critical accounts, including minority rights, Indigenous Peoples’ rights, and rule of law guarantees necessary to protect those rights. In all likelihood, the provisions of the proposed constitutional will also breach fundamental provisions of the

Canadian Constitution, including the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

One of the experts’ deepest concerns is the provision concerning the collective rights of the “Quebec nation” and how it abrogates other rights of individuals and peoples living in Quebec. While it is true that nations and national groups are entitled

“
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RIGHTS



Quebec Premier François Legault’s government tabled the draft constitution in October without prior consultation. Legault has said the proposed constitution will assert Quebec’s ‘distinct national character,’ but First Nations, legal experts, and civil liberties groups are critical of it. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to certain rights under international law, those “collective rights” cannot override fundamental individual rights or supersede the collective rights of minorities living in the province or First Nations who have rights that pre-exist those of Quebec.

Human rights are inherent and inalienable. They were established precisely to protect vulnerable individuals and groups (most often minorities or colonized Indigenous nations) from the coercive actions of dominant groups. Placing collective rights—even those of a majority of the population—above the rights of individuals, minorities, and Indigenous Peoples amounts to denying the foundations of universal human rights and Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any provision giving the dominant/majority group the right to override the rights of individuals, minorities, and Indigenous Peoples is contrary to the very idea of dignity and human rights.

The process by which this draft constitution is being imposed violates the standards

for the adoption of a legitimate constitution, in particular those established by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. This bill was drafted behind closed doors without any prior public consultation.

The experts at the Quebec Chapter of the International Commission of Jurists Canada, supported by several legal, civil society organization and Indigenous leaders, insist that the potential violation of this country’s international legal obligations by the proposed Quebec constitution requires the intervention of UN Special Rapporteurs to recognize the human rights violations, and they call on the authorities to withdraw Bill 1. This legislation is a slippery slope towards an evolving authoritarian governance that seriously undermines the rule of law and universal human rights.

Stéphane Beaulac is the head of the Quebec chapter of the International Commission of Jurists Canada. Errol Mendes is president of the International Commission of Jurists Canada. The Hill Times

OPINION

Trump's national security strategy delivers grim message that Canadians downplay at our peril



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump in Washington, D.C., on May 6, 2025. The National Security Strategy implicitly threatens to punish countries—particularly those like Canada—that pursue decarbonization strategies in ways that Trump or his MAGA officials find contrary to American interests, writes Shawn McCarthy. Photograph courtesy of the White House/photographer Daniel Torok

The Trump doctrine essentially portrays Canada as vassal state to American ‘pre-eminence’ in the hemisphere. Canada, Mexico and other nations of the Americas are expected to pursue their national interest—just as the U.S. does—but will pay a stiff price if their strategies do not align with MAGA America.

Shawn McCarthy

Opinion



OTTAWA—It's not surprising that the Trump administration's *National Security Strategy*

of the *United States of America* takes no account of the global instability and conflict that will result from extreme weather and flooding due to climate change.

The document released last week makes it clear that the Trump administration not only opposes action on climate change within its borders, but also reserves the right to pursue that opposition globally, and especially in the Western Hemisphere.

The strategy says the United States, and indeed to all western nations, face a grave threat from international migration from the Third World. Nowhere does it acknowledge, however, that the desperate conditions that drive people from their homelands will only worsen as impacts of climate change escalate.

The national security strategy delivers a grim message that Canadians downplay at our peril.

The Trump doctrine essentially portrays Canada as vassal state to American “pre-eminence” in the hemisphere. Canada, Mexico and other nations of the Americas are expected to pursue their national interest—just as the U.S. does—but will pay a stiff price if their strategies do not align with MAGA America.

Economic, environmental, and defence strategies in Canada will have to be forged with the clear realization that the Trump administration has assumed for itself

the right to sanction countries and indeed, to intervene in their politics if they are acting in ways it deems to be inimical to the U.S.

Its perceived economic and security well-being is broadly defined. It includes the profits of American companies operating abroad, the treatment of U.S. exporting firms, and development of strategic resources that the American government covets.

The document reserves the right for the U.S. to police foreign presence—notably Chinese—throughout the hemisphere, and to establish or expand American military at geographically strategic points. Think Canada's Arctic waters.

While there are plenty of areas for potential discord, Canada's approach on energy and climate change is clearly at issue.

The strategy document dismisses support for action on climate change as a “disastrous ideology.”

The idea that a warming climate poses a serious security threat has been adopted by NATO strategists, by Canada's Department of National Defence and indeed by the pre-Trump Pentagon in the U.S.

“From extreme storms to rising seas to drought and wild-fire—and the political conflict and violence fuelled by these stressors—climate change is a major international security threat,”

former Defence Department under-secretary, Sherri Goodman, wrote in her 2024 book *Threat Multiplier*.

That view has been expunged from the current thinking. It has been replaced by Trump's lies that the whole matter—all the scientific evidence of a warming planet and the damages it is causing and will inflict—is a hoax.

The National Security Strategy implicitly threatens to punish countries—particularly those like Canada that are located in the Western Hemisphere—that pursue decarbonization strategies in ways that U.S. President Donald Trump or his MAGA officials find contrary to American interests.

It's impossible to predict exactly where this unpredictable administration will choose to respond to allegations of unfairness from American industry.

Pressure U.S.-based automakers to sell more electric vehicles? Not so fast! Moves to allow lower-cost Chinese or even European EVs greater access to Canada's market? Not in America's back yard! Forcing American-owned oil companies to reduce their GHG emissions? That policy too could run afoul of the Trump Doctrine.

The strategy calls for “American dominance” in energy which includes coal, oil, gas and nuclear, but not wind or solar.

Prime Minister Mark Carney's vow to make Canada a “super-

power” in conventional and clean energy will have to accord with Washington's view of American strategic interests, or there could be a price to pay.

While Canadian oil and gas producers often compete with Americans for investment and markets, the Trump strategy proposes a hemispheric strategy to jointly develop strategic resources, critical minerals, and energy infrastructure.

The administration has tasked its various financing agencies to identify “strategic acquisition and investment opportunities for American companies throughout the hemisphere, particularly in energy infrastructure.” Ottawa faces the prospect of U.S.-government-backed acquisition of strategic Canadian assets.

At the same time, the strategy unabashedly declares the Trump administration's intention to intervene in the politics of other Western nations.

In Europe, it will support “patriotic,” anti-immigration parties by “cultivating resistance to Europe's current trajectory” within those nations. In the Americas, it will “reward and encourage the region's governments, political parties and movements broadly aligned with our principles and strategy.”

There is an argument that we shouldn't get too worked up over a strategy document—that this one contains a menu of conflicting ideas and many of its prescriptions will never implemented.

Still, this newly published strategy is wholly consistent with Trump's approach since taking office last January, whether it be offering encouragement to right-wing parties on Europe or missile strikes on alleged drug smugglers in the Caribbean.

The document rejects the relevance of international law or agreed-upon rules promulgated by the member states of multilateral bodies like the United Nations or the World Trade Organization.

It provides a vivid lens through which to consider Canada's energy and climate issues.

The Conservative Party of Canada, the United Conservative Party government in Alberta and the Calgary-based oil and gas industry are wholly aligned with Trump's agenda for an unrestrained reliance on fossil fuels. Will they be somehow rewarded?

Carney and his ministers are clearly attempting to walk a middle ground that is fraught with longer-term threats from climate change impacts, and shorter-term risks arising from any divergence from the Trump worldview.

Ultimately, Canadian voters will have to decide how much economic pain they're prepared to bear to maintain some independence from the would-be hemispheric hegemon.

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

COMMENT

A performance review: Mark Carney



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak, left, and Prime Minister Mark Carney take questions from delegates at the AFN's Special Chiefs Assembly in Ottawa on Dec. 2, 2025.
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

How has Mark Carney performed? Brilliantly, and I'm not a partisan. He has been bold, determined, visionary, and in tune with current public sentiment. He is less concerned about being 'politically correct' than with producing results.

Nelson Wiseman

Opinion



TORONTO—How has Prime Minister Mark Carney performed? Brilliantly, and I'm not a partisan.

He has been bold, determined, visionary, and in tune with current public sentiment. He is less concerned about being "politically correct" than with producing

results. A novice politician, his campaign for the Liberal leadership and in the April election demonstrated an impressive capacity for retail politics. He has handled United States President Donald Trump with aplomb. Other world leaders respect him and he projects self-assurance. Trump, China's Xi Jinping, and India's Narendra Modi treat Carney seriously, unlike their treatment of Justin Trudeau.

To be sure, Carney's record to date has had blemishes. He did not reprimand, demote, or dismiss public safety minister Gary Anandasangaree for lobbying immigration officials to admit a confessed Tamil Tiger terrorist into Canada. Anandasangaree did this as a backbencher, but he misled the public about it while in cabinet. Carney also did not dismiss Liberal party activists who smeared the Conservatives during the election campaign by scattering Trumpian "Stop the Steal" buttons at a Conservative conclave; he merely "reassigned" them.

Carney has an oversized cabinet, too many departments, and too many parliamentary secretaries (39). Trudeau had fewer. Many ministries are redundant and should disappear. Do we need a minister of jobs and families, as well as a minister of women and gender equality, especially since Trudeau's "feminist foreign policy" has been discarded? Do we need a minister of Crown-In-

digenous relations and a separate minister of Indigenous services? Redundancy is inconsistent with Carney's objective of trimming bureaucracy.

The cabinet is oversized because Carney must keep his caucus members occupied. Other prime ministers have also had bloated cabinets. Opposition MPs can rise in the House to self-righteously attack the government; government backbenchers can't criticize the government, and in recent decades can't even offer constructive suggestions outside the confines of caucus. All they can do is hope to get elevated to a more prestigious job and its perks. Being a government backbencher is the worst job an MP can have.

Step back, however, and look at the big picture of Carney's accomplishments. It deserves an A grade. The economy has performed better than anticipated. His Major Projects Office is accelerating economic development. International investors are interested in Canada again. He has quieted Alberta's government on energy policy without provoking Quebec. He has weakened his parliamentary opponents by luring one of their MPs into his caucus.

History suggests that Carney's minority government could last until 2029. That would mark a successful tenure even though his Liberals may well lose the next

election. Trudeau's last minority government also lasted four years. Then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper's 2008 government could have done so, as well, had he not dissolved Parliament.

A distinctively Canadian parliamentary culture has evolved, making Canada an outlier in the Western world. Think of Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Israel, New Zealand, Italy, etc., where majority coalition governments are almost always formed after the leading party wins a plurality of seats. In Canada, by contrast, minority governments have become the norm, not the exception.

Of the nine federal elections in this century, six have produced minority governments. These governments carried on without seeking coalition partners. Three elections since the late 1950s were triggered by governing parties opportunistically seeking to convert their minority into a majority: 1958, 1965, 2008. The current Parliament is the 45th, yet only six have been ended by confidence votes, reinforcing the likelihood that Carney's government has staying power.

Parliamentary culture is now driven by a "pass-the-baton" norm. There will be dozens of confidence votes before the next election. When they happen, if history is a guide, one party or another will rise or abstain to

ensure that Parliament is not dissolved. The NDP did so most recently in the vote on the budget, but in some future votes the Conservatives will seize the baton, and in others the Bloc Québécois will do so. That is what happened during Trudeau's two minority governments.

The Conservatives and the Bloc will use their majorities on parliamentary committees to try tarnishing the image of Carney and his government. The ethics committee is doing that now, pursuing imaginary conflict of interest violations on Carney's part. It's a wild-goose chase which will go nowhere. He has been meticulously careful to avoid any appearance of conflict, and his honeymoon with the public continues. The truculence of the Conservatives and Leader Pierre Poilievre is not working.

What would work is a major scandal. Trudeau survived the 2019 SNC Lavalin debacle because he had a majority. Then-Liberal prime minister Paul Martin's minority government did not survive the sponsorship scandal and, most crucially, the RCMP's mid-election campaign announcement of an investigation of a cabinet budget leak. The Conservatives can only hope for a similar gift.

Nelson Wiseman is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

All Politics Poll



Mark Carney, left, Pierre Poilievre, Corey Hogan, top left, Taleeb Noormohamed, Anita Anand, Sean Fraser, Dominic LeBlanc, François-Philippe Champagne, bottom left, Karina Gould, Jasraj Hallan, Jean-Denis Garon, and Peter Boehm are some of the best in this year's All Politics Poll. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and photo illustration by Neena Singhal

Everything's coming up Carney: PM tops the year's most valuable politician, newsmaker, and best book categories in *The Hill Times'* annual All Politics Poll

The results of the *The Hill Times'* 2025 year-end poll are in, with the prime minister dominating the 'Most Valuable Politician' category for 'single-handedly' turning around the Liberals' electoral chances.

BY MARLO GLASS

Prime Minister Mark Carney, a rookie to the world of elected politics who single-handedly turned the Liberals' fortunes around by winning a minority

government last April, has been chosen as this year's most valuable politician in *The Hill Times'* 27th annual All Politics Poll.

"Any other selection doesn't make sense," one voter wrote. "He single-handedly turned around the Liberals' chances and made like 10 MPs decide not to quit and re-run."

Carney (Nepean, Ont.), whose election win was also voted one of this year's biggest news stories (14.1 per cent), was also picked as one of the biggest self-promoters on the Hill (14.1 per cent), and the year's favourite dinner guest. His 2022 book, *Value(s): Building a Better World for All*, was also selected as the best book of 2025 by 10.2 per cent.

The poll garnered 128 online responses between Oct. 28 to Nov. 28; of those respondents, 34.4 per cent identified as Liberals, 20.3 per cent as Conservatives, 4.7 per cent as NDP, and 39 per cent said they didn't belong to any political party.

A total of 48.4 per cent of respondents picked Carney as this year's most valuable politician. The Liberal Party, which started 2025 double-digits behind the Conservatives in polling, is this year's greatest comeback story, according to 40 per cent of respondents.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.), meanwhile, was voted the second-most valuable politician of the year, with 7.8 per cent. He was also picked as the least valuable politician with 54.7 per cent, and the year's biggest self-promoter at nearly 47 per cent. Known for his snappy, three-word slogans, Poilievre was also tapped as the biggest talking head who should find a new hobby, with seven per cent. For his re-entry into the House of Commons after losing his longtime Ottawa-area seat on April 28 and running

again in a Conservative Alberta stronghold this past summer, he came in second place for biggest political comeback of the year, with 8.6 per cent of the vote.

Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) is on her way out of politics, but the former longtime cabinet minister and deputy prime minister ranked third place for the year's most valuable politician, with just over six per cent of the vote.

One respondent said Freeland's December 2024 bombshell cabinet resignation was the first domino to fall that led to the Liberals' re-election, as it "changed not only the fate of former prime minister Justin Trudeau, and the Liberal Party itself, but also Mark Carney's future."

Freeland's move led to changes "in ways that weren't on the horizon nor could have been contemplated, anticipated, expected this time a year ago,"

the respondent wrote. Since then, Freeland has resigned from the Liberal cabinet once more, and is serving as Canada's special representative for Ukraine's reconstruction. She has said she won't run in the next federal election and has also recently appointed the chief executive officer and next warden of the Rhodes Trust in England, an educational charity at the University of Oxford, her *alma mater*.

While the poll bestowed Poilievre with the least valuable political player award, in second place came former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh with 10.2 per cent of votes, after his party cratered in the spring election and lost 17 seats, along with official party status. Singh lost his British Columbia seat on April 28, and resigned as party leader that same night.

Three-term MP Chris d'Entremont (Acadie-Annapolis, N.S.) came in third in this category, with one respondent saying he "can't be trusted" after his budget day floor-crossing from the Conservatives to Liberals.

Respondents said 2025 should have been the year for a Conservative comeback, with 5.5 per cent of that vote. The party made it nearly all the way to electoral glory, but fell short in the 11th hour and were resigned to a fourth consecutive term on the official opposition bench after watching poll after poll in 2024 suggesting they were unbeatable.

On this question, though, the party shares the podium with former Quebec premier and Mulroney-era federal cabinet minister Jean Charest, who's been a frequent commentator on

Continued on **page 19**

All Politics Poll

Continued from page 18

trade issues this year and “still has a lot to give,” according to one commenter. Charest also was named the political figure who should have run in 2025, with 9.4 per cent of the vote, followed by former federal Conservative cabinet minister Rona Ambrose with 3.1 per cent of the vote. Former B.C. premier Christy Clark, and Canadian-American actor Ryan Reynolds tied for third place.

Who else is due for a comeback? Peter MacKay, a Harper-era cabinet minister, because “we need a better leader,” according to one commenter. The former Nova Scotian politician, who lost his bid to lead the Conservative Party in 2020, came in second, with 4.7 per cent of the vote, and the NDP and Trudeau tied for third.

Crowd pleasers

While the spring election brought some new faces to the Hill, the cabinet ministers who scored some top titles are mostly key players from the Trudeau era.

Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) was named this year’s best cabinet minister, as well as a second-favourite dinner guest. A veteran presence in the Liberal caucus, LeBlanc has held numerous files in cabinet, from finance to fisheries to intergovernmental affairs. This year, as minister responsible for internal trade and Canada-U.S. trade, he has been a key player in Canada’s trips to

Biggest NEWS STORY



Biggest News Story in 2025: Mark Carney’s candidacy/becoming prime minister (14.1 per cent), centre; U.S. President Donald Trump’s tariffs/trade/Libs winning election (11.7 per cent), left; and Justin Trudeau’s resignation (9.4 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs and courtesy of the White House

Washington, D.C. LeBlanc is also the minister of intergovernmental affairs, internal trade, one Canadian economy, and president of the Privy Council.

“He’s the only minister Carney trusts to negotiate in D.C. on his own with the White House. That says it all,” one respondent said.

“He really is out there doing EVERYTHING,” said another.

For his “Swiss Army Knife” political skills, LeBlanc nabbed over 25 per cent of the vote

for best in cabinet, followed by Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) with 13.3 per cent, and Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) with 8.6 per cent.

Champagne, for the second year in a row, was also voted the most approachable cabinet minister. Justice Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.)—who topped the All Politics Poll last year—came second, and House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) came third.

Liked by Carney and considered an effective minister, Champagne is also known as the “energizer bunny” on the Hill. Voters said he comes across as genuine and likes to smile. One Conservative staffer said they don’t interact with many ministers, but Champagne is always a friendly one.

“I think if you’re approachable, you are effective,” said Graham Milner lead public affairs counselor at Compass Rose, a government relations and public affairs company. “There’s a very symbiotic relationship.”

Cabinet ministers have 342 colleagues, he said, referencing all MPs across party lines, and “you need to be able to hear what’s happening in different parts of the country, different sectors, regions, from different linguistic backgrounds. All of these things matter in being effective.”

Both LeBlanc and Champagne “personify” accessibility, he said,

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All Politics Poll

Most Valuable POLITICIAN



Most Valuable Politician: Prime Minister Mark Carney (48.4 per cent), right; Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (7.8 per cent), top left; and former cabinet minister and deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland (6.3 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Continued from [page 19](#)

and have a “warmth” that allow them to be “both serious in their role, but also approachable.”

For the fifth year in a row, Chantal Hébert was voted Canada’s favourite “talking head,” winning nearly 11 per cent of the vote. Poll respondents said they appreciated

Hébert’s fair and nuanced takes. Hébert used to write a syndicated column for *The Toronto Star*. Today, you can catch her work in *L’actualité*, and on the CBC’s *The National*’s At Issue panel, Radio-Canada TV, and Peter Mansbridge’s *Good Talk* podcast on SXMCANADATalks.

David Cochrane, the savvy conversationalist and host of CBC’s

Power & Politics, came in second with seven per cent, followed by *The Globe and Mail* columnist Andrew Coyne, with 5.5 per cent. Coyne is also a regular on CBC *The National*’s ‘At Issue’ panel.

When it comes to former prime ministers in Canada, most still admire former Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien (1993-2003)

with 35.2 per cent of the vote, former Conservative Stephen Harper (2006-2015) with 14.1 per cent, and former Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney (1984-1993) with 11.7 per cent.

As for House committees, respondents said the House Finance Committee scores top marks, with 5.5 per cent of votes.

That’s followed by the House Foreign Affairs and International Development, with just under five per cent, and a multi-way tie for fourth between Transport, Infrastructure, and Communities; Public Safety and National Security; Procedure and House Affairs; National Defence; Justice and Human Rights; Human Resources, Skills, and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities, all at 3.1 per cent each.

Rising stars

The spring election brought fan favourites into the House of Commons.

Chief among them is Liberal MP Corey Hogan (Calgary Confederation, Alta.) a first-time MP who nabbed the gold medal in the “favourite up-and-comer” category with 7.8 per cent of the vote in his rookie season.

Speaking to *The Hill Times*, Hogan said he was flattered and honoured to be selected from a “really strong” group of new MPs.

“It’s the type of thing I’ll be bragging to my grandkids about,” he said.

Hogan answered humbly when asked why he stands out among new MPs, but suggested it could be because he’s the sole Liberal MP in Calgary—and holds one of just two Liberal seats in Alberta.

“Inherently, you’re going to bring eyeballs to you,” said Hogan, who is also the parliamentary secretary to high-profile Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.).

One respondent commented Hogan “seems like he’s starting to find his voice in the party and I have no doubt that he’ll be an asset.” Another described him as smart and pragmatic, while one said he had “Western sensibility.”

Lorne Bozinoff, president of Forum Research Inc., the company that ran the poll for *The Hill Times*, noted Poilievre had won the same up-and-comer nod in decades past.

Continued on [page 21](#)

Least Valuable POLITICIAN



Least Valuable Politician: Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (54.7 per cent), right; former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh (10.2 per cent), top left; and Conservative-turned-Liberal MP Chris d’Entremont (4.7 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Best Cabinet MINISTER



Best Cabinet Ministers: Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic Leblanc (35.2 per cent), right, Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (13.3 per cent), top left, and Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (8.6 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

All Politics Poll

Continued from [page 20](#)

Hogan said the two have more in common: they both attended the same high school.

Another seat-flipper got kudos from poll respondents, with Liberal MP Bruce Fanjoy (Carleton, Ont.) winning silver for his “giant killer” reputation when he beat Poilievre in the Ottawa-area riding the Conservative leader had held for two decades.

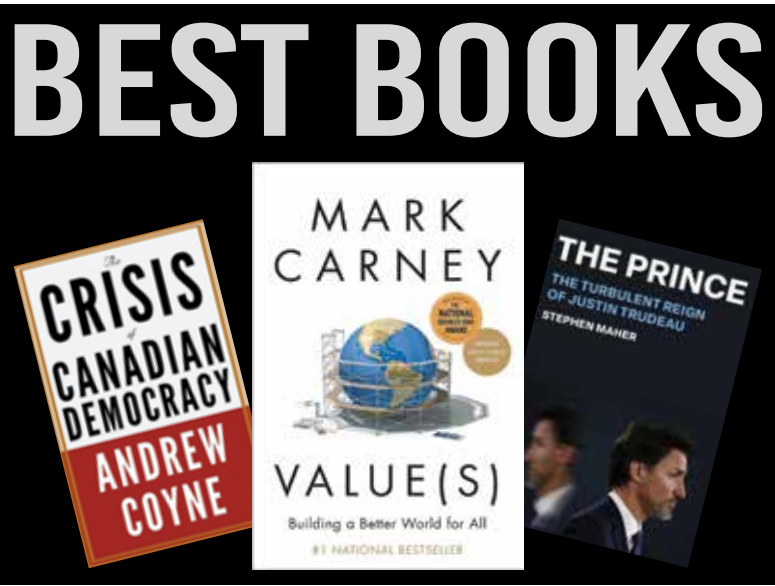
Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed (Vancouver Granville, B.C.), who was first elected in 2021, took home bronze in this category.

Bozinoff noted the vote numbers are often low for the up-and-comers because it garners a wide array of responses. Carney, for example, captured a slim 2.3 per cent of the vote. Many Conservatives, including Jamil Jivani (Bowmanville–Oshawa North, Ont.), Sukhman Gill (Abbotsford–South Langley, B.C.), Michael Cooper (St. Albert–Sturgeon River, Alta.), and Melissa Lantsman (Thornhill, Ont.) received one vote apiece.

Cooper got a shout-out from one respondent for being “the smartest MP in the House.”

Foul ball

By the end of 2024, the House of Commons was deadlocked for



Best Political Book in 2025: *Value(s): Building A Better World for All*, by Mark Carney (10.2 per cent), centre, *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*, by Andrew Coyne (3.9 per cent), right; and *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, by Stephen Maher (3.1 per cent). Book covers courtesy of Sutherland Books, Signal Penguin Random House Canada, and Simon & Schuster Canada

weeks due to a filibuster, lack of co-operation, and allegations of misbehaviour. Despite pledges for a more cordial workplace, voters still believe a lack of decorum and professionalism is the biggest issue facing Parliament itself, as politicians on both sides of the

aisle jostle to steal the spotlight during Question Period in the quest for the next viral clip.

As 2025 was an election year, it’s no surprise that big-ticket issues like affordability, crime, and immigration largely dominated the halls of the House, though the new president south of the border also managed to steal the show. Tied for first place for the “issue that has been shamelessly exploited” is the cost of living, and U.S. President Donald Trump, with both capturing 14.8 per cent of the vote. Runners-up were immigration and crime, with 14.1 and 11.7 per cent apiece.

Climate change, meanwhile, is the top issue not being addressed, nabbing nearly 25 per cent of the vote. It was also voted the “political promise least likely to be kept” next year, which is perhaps unsurprising given the new Alberta-Ottawa memorandum of understanding, which clears the way for a bitumen pipeline from Alberta to the West Coast.

“We’ve walked away from an effective climate change policy that combined effective price signals with progressive redistribution,” one voter wrote of the Liberal back-tracking on a number of Trudeau-era pledges. “Bravo.”

Other promises that respondents felt were unlikely to be addressed included a trade deal with the U.S., as well as tariffs and trade deals more broadly, as Carney fights to diversify Canada’s trade relationships.

Hit the showers

Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough–Guildwood–Rouge Park, Ont.), unfortunately, has been ranked as 2025’s weakest cabinet minister. He’s been under fire this year after a leaked audio recording where he was critical of the Liberals’ gun buyback program. He received 28 per cent of votes.

The runner-up was Immigration Minister Lena Metlege Diab (Halifax West, N.S.) with 18 per cent of respondents calling her the weakest in cabinet. She was recently called “a very bad minister” by Conservative MP Michelle Remple Garner (Calgary Nose

Hill, Alta.), her party’s critic for immigration. A Halifax constituent also accused Diab of yelling at her when she tried to get help for her brother, who is fleeing the war in Sudan.

Housing Minister Gregor Robertson (Vancouver Fraser–view–South Burnaby, B.C.), who garnered some negative press early into his first foray into federal politics for saying house prices don’t need to go down, was voted the third-weakest cabmin.

There were dozens of House and Senate committees competing for being the biggest waste of time, and 10 per cent of respondents agreed most—or all—meet that mark. Runners-up were the Library of Parliament committee, with 4.7 per cent of the vote, and

the Status of Women committee, with 3.9 per cent.

Hottest ticket in town

Voters say the Métropolitain Brasserie is the top spot for happy hour, with just over 10 per cent of the vote, followed by the Rabbit Hole with 9.4 per cent, and D’Arcy McGee’s and Three Brewers tied for third, with 6.3 per cent. All are within walking distance of Parliament Hill, and all would likely be fine places to overhear Liberal staffers plan their next phony button-planting scheme. The Métropolitain is particularly popular with Hill people, especially for book launches, receptions, and shindigs.

mglass@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Favourite Up-and-Comers in the House: Liberal MP Corey Hogan (7.8 per cent), left, Liberal MP Bruce Fanjoy (5.5 per cent), top right, and Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed (3.1 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Weakest Cabinet Minister: Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (28.1 per cent), left, Immigration Minister Lena Diab (18 per cent), top right; and Housing Minister Gregor Robertson (4.7 per cent). *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

All Politics Poll Results: Best & Worst Of Politics 2025

- Most Valuable Politician:**
1. Prime Minister Mark Carney 48.4%
 2. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre 7.8%
 3. Former cabinet minister Chrystia Freeland 6.3%
- Best Cabinet Minister:**
1. Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic Leblanc 35.2%
 2. Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne 13.3%
 3. Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand 8.6%
- Least Valuable Politician:**
1. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre 54.7%
 2. Former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh 10.2%
 3. Liberal MP Chris d’Entremont 4.7%
- Weakest Cabinet Minister:**
1. Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree 28.1%
 2. Immigration Minister Lena Diab 18%
 3. Housing Minister Gregor Robertson 4.7%
- Most Approachable Cabinet Minister:**
1. Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne 21.1%
 2. Justice Minister Sean Fraser 9.4%
 3. Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon 3.9%
- Biggest News Story in 2025:**
1. Mark Carney’s candidacy/Becoming prime minister 14.1%
 2. Trump’s tariffs/trade/Libs winning election 11.7% (each)
 3. Justin Trudeau’s resignation 9.4%
- Which Public Figure Should Have Run:**
1. Jean Charest 9.4%
 2. Rona Ambrose 3.1%
 3. Ryan Reynolds/Christy Clark 2.3%

- Promises Least Likely to Be Kept:**
1. Climate Change 9.4%
 2. Trade relations with U.S. 7.8%
 3. Tariffs/trade deals 7%
- Biggest Issues Facing Parliament:**
1. Lack of decorum/professional behaviour 15.6%
 2. Partisan polarization/Hyper-partisanship 13.3%
 3. Institutional inefficiency (disorganized, unproductive) 8.6%
- Best House Committee:**
1. House Finance Committee 5.5%
 2. House Foreign Affairs Committee 3.9%
 3. Transport, Infrastructure; Public Safety and National Security; Procedure and House Affairs; National Defence; Justice and Human Rights; Human Resources; and Status of Persons with Disabilities 3.1% each
- Best Senate Committee:**
1. Foreign Affairs and International Trade 5.5%
 2. Legal and Constitutional Affairs 3.1%
 3. Social Affairs, Science and Technology; Human Rights; Banking, Commerce and the Economy 2.3%
- Senate or House Committee That Was a Waste of Time:**
1. Most/all 10.9%
 2. Library of Parliament 4.7%
 3. Status of Women 3.9%
- Favourite Talking Head:**
1. At Issue/The Bridge’s Chantal Hébert 10.9%
 2. CBCNN Power & Politics’ David Cochrane 7.0%
 3. The Globe and Mail/CBC’s At Issue’s Andrew Coyne 5.5%

- Favourite Up-and-Comer:**
1. Liberal MP Corey Hogan 7.8%
 2. Liberal MP Bruce Fanjoy 5.5%
 3. Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed 3.1%
- Biggest Political Comeback:**
1. Liberal Party 40.6%
 2. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre 8.6%
 3. Justice Minister Sean Fraser 7.8%
- Who Should Have Made a Political Comeback:**
1. Jean Charest 5.5%
 2. Peter MacKay 4.7%
 3. NDP/Justin Trudeau 3.9%
- Issues Shamelessly Exploited by Federal Politicians:**
1. Cost of living/affordability/Trump 14.8%
 2. Immigration 14.1%
 3. Crime/public safety 11.7%
- Biggest Self-Promoter:**
1. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre 46.9%
 2. Prime Minister Mark Carney 14.1%
 3. Conservative MP Jamil Jivani 3.1%
- Top Issues Not Addressed by Politicians:**
1. Climate Change 24.4%
 2. Health Care 14.1%
 3. Affordability/Cost of Living 9.4%

- Talking Head Who Should Find a New Hobby:**
1. Pierre Poilievre 7.0%
 2. Rosemary Barton/Kevin Lamoureux/Andrew Coyne 3.9% each
- Most Admired Former Prime Minister:**
1. Jean Chrétien 35.2%
 2. Stephen Harper 14.1%
 3. Brian Mulroney 11.7%
- Who Would be Your Favourite Dinner Guest:**
1. Mark Carney 14.1%
 2. Dominic Leblanc 3.9%
 3. Jean Chrétien 3.1%
- Favourite Happy-Hour Place in Ottawa:**
1. Métropolitain Brasserie 10.2%
 2. Rabbit Hole 9.4%
 3. D’Arcy McGee’s/Three Brasseurs 6.3%
- Best Political Book in 2025:**
1. *Value(s): Building A Better World for All*, by Mark Carney 10.2%
 2. *The Crisis of Canadian Democracy*, by Andrew Coyne 3.9%
 3. *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, by Stephen Maher 3.1%

NEWS



Conservative addictions critic Todd Doherty, left, Conservative health critic Dan Mazier, and Pierre Poirier, chief of the Ottawa Paramedic Service, at a Dec. 9 press conference about the need to fast-track a bill legislating more serious criminal sentences for assaults against health-care workers and first responders. *The Hill Times* photograph by Tessie Sanci

Bill calling for more serious punishment for assaulting first responders not fast-tracked despite Conservative MPs' efforts

The Senate bill is identical to MP Todd Doherty's bill, which nearly became law but died on the order paper when the election was called this past spring.

BY TESSIE SANCI

A motion in the House to fast-track a Senate public bill that would add to the list of professions considered an aggravating factor in circumstances of assault failed on Dec. 10 after some MPs declined to provide unanimous consent.

Bill S-233, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (assault against persons who provide health services and first responders), was introduced on Sept. 23 by Conservative Senator Leo



Canadian Nurses Association president Kimberly LeBlanc said that she's been assaulted by patients in various settings including long-term care, emergency rooms, and community clinics. *The Hill Times* photograph by Tessie Sanci

Housakos (Wellington, Que.), who is also the opposition leader in the Red Chamber. After passing all three readings in the Senate in late October, it was introduced in the House by Conservative MP Todd Doherty (Cariboo-Prince

George, B.C.) on Oct. 29. It is currently awaiting second reading.

Doherty was unsuccessful in getting unanimous consent to pass the bill into law before Parliament rose for the holidays late last week.

The Hill Times asked Doherty's office for an interview to discuss the motion and the bill, but the MP was unavailable before deadline.

Bill S-233 is identical to one Doherty introduced on two

separate occasions in the last five years. The most recent iteration—Bill C-321—was supported by all MPs at third reading in the House in February 2024, and had made it through a Senate study. It was awaiting third reading in the Senate when Parliament was prorogued at the beginning of this year. It officially died on the order paper when the House of Commons was dissolved for the April 28 election.

There is already legislation—An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code—which passed in 2021 to make it illegal to intimidate health-care workers and to consider such intimidation as an “aggravating” factor during a criminal sentencing. This allows a criminal court to impose a more serious punishment than would typically be considered because the offence occurred to someone providing health-care services.

Where Bill S-233 (like its predecessor bill, C-321) differs from the 2021 government legislation is that first responders, such as firefighters, and those who provide personal care services are considered professions where an assault would be considered an aggravating circumstance for sentencing.

Doherty and Conservative Dan Mazier (Riding Mountain, Man.), his party's health critic, held a press conference in West Block on Dec. 9 to try to drum up support for the motion, which had not been presented at that point.

During the media event, Doherty said that the current bill is “complementary” to the government bill, which is why he was able to get unanimous consent on Bill C-321 when it was going through the House of Commons.

The MPs were accompanied by Canadian Nurses Association president Kimberly LeBlanc and Pierre Poirier, chief of the Ottawa Paramedic Service and a former

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COMMENT

Trump's new national security strategy raises alarms, fears over threats posed to Canada's sovereignty and prosperity



U.S. President Donald Trump, left, pictured with Prime Minister Mark Carney on May 6, 2025, at the White House, has had Canada in his sights since assuming office last January. But if Canada is not to become the 51st U.S. state, then it must at least become, for him, a vassal state, subservient to U.S. interests, writes David Crane. *Photograph courtesy of White House photographer Gabriel B. Kotico*

There will be little tolerance for countries pursuing policies that run counter to U.S. commercial interests and, in the Western Hemisphere, little hesitation in pursuing open access for its military and commercial shipping, ensuring privileged access to critical minerals and rare Earth minerals.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—The Trump administration's new National Security Strategy has, for good, reason raised alarms and even fears over the threats posed to Canada's sovereignty and prosperity. "In everything we do we are putting America First," the United States says. "We will continue to develop every dimension of our national strength—and will make America safer, richer, freer, greater, and more powerful than ever before."

There will be little tolerance for countries pursuing policies that run counter to U.S. commercial interests and, in the Western Hemisphere (that includes us), little hesitation in pursuing open access for its military and commercial shipping (the Arctic?), ensuring privileged access to critical minerals and rare Earth minerals (in Canada?), or using trade agreements and tariffs "as powerful tools" to force adoption of U.S. policies or standards that favour American business (tariffs and CUSMA?).

In fact, U.S. President Donald Trump has had Canada in his sights since assuming office last January, threatening early on to weaken our economy so much that we would literally beg to become the 51st state. But if Canada is not to become the

51st state, then it must at least become, for him, a vassal state, subservient to U.S. interests.

Unilateral tariffs on Canadian steel, aluminum and vehicles—with now a threat to impose "severe" tariffs on fertilizers from this country—are bad enough. But there is an even bigger threat: Canada's role in the future digital economy, the world of Big-Tech platforms, AI, quantum computing, and bioscience. Our ambition for data sovereignty will be at risk.

"We want to ensure that U.S. technology and U.S. standards—particularly AI, biotech, and quantum computing—drive the world forward," Trump's new strategy declares. This means "the United States must also resist and reverse measures such as targeted taxation, unfair regulation, and expropriations that disadvantage American business."

Indeed, parts of the Trump administration's strategy could have been written by the billionaire bosses of the big U.S. digital platforms—including Meta-Facebook, Alphabet-Google, X Corp., and Amazon-Prime—who appear to have formed an unholy alliance with Trump. Fawning over him at Mar-a-Lago, they are counting on him, in return, to use all the power of the U.S. govern-

ment to coerce other nations not to pursue policies that counter the global domination goals of their mega-corporations.

This echoes the pursuit of American dominance in Trump's plan for AI unveiled earlier this year, which declared that the U.S. must "ensure that American AI technologies, standards, and governance models are adopted worldwide."

As Nobel-Prize winning economist Paul Krugman wrote on Dec. 8 on his SubStack that the Silicon Valley billionaires hate Europe "because the Europeans are trying to impose sensible limits to protect their societies from the well-documented psychological and economic harms that are inflicted by an unrestrained Silicon Valley agenda," for example by limiting the proliferation of hate speech and the pernicious effects of social media on the young. He could have added they don't like Canada, either. Canada, too, is seeking to make social media and the internet safer.

These American tech billionaires are also fighting Europe—and Canada—over efforts to limit the monopoly power of these tech giants, including policies to regulate them in the public interest.

Canada has already succumbed to U.S. pressure by can-

celling its digital services tax. This would have closed tax loopholes that had allowed these big firms to reap in the range of \$50-billion a year in revenues in this country while largely avoiding paying tax here. The tax would have forced Big Tech companies to pass a tax equivalent to three per cent of their annual revenues here.

New rules forcing foreign streamers—such as Netflix, Prime, HBO Max, and Disney—to devote a minor share of their revenues in Canada to support Canadian programming and the Online News Act, which compels big platforms such as Google and Meta to compensate Canadian newspaper and magazines for the content they display on their sites, may also be at risk from American pressure.

But digital sovereignty goes much further than curbing the extractive goals of Silicon Valley's Big Tech—taking as much as possible out of Canada while putting back as little as possible.

It's about who owns and controls our data, how do we protect Canadians from extraterritorial invasion of our privacy through Big Tech platforms, how do we create the space and supports to enable Canadian companies to engage in value-adding activities, and how do we ensure domestic control and a role in ownership of our digital infrastructure?

Since forming a new government earlier this year, Prime Minister Mark Carney has appointed a minister of AI and Digital Innovation, Evan Solomon, and has promised to unveil a digital sovereignty strategy in the near future, with a strong 'Buy Canadian' focus. This includes plans for a home-grown digital cloud and protection against U.S., and other foreign chokepoints on our data.

At the Canadian Shield Institute, a new think tank created to advance this country's goals for data ownership, the focus is very much on economic sovereignty. By this, it means "restoring Canadian control and ownership over the systems and platforms that structure daily life. We believe Canada should own, shape and govern the critical systems that underpin our economy, across both physical infrastructure and digital platforms, and that more of the value created by these platforms should be delivered to our economy. That means reducing dependence on foreign-controlled assets, ending unpriced digital extraction, and building public-interest alternatives when appropriate to secure long-term resilience and value at home."

These are huge challenges that will require not just vision, but also leadership for sustained implementation. But it will also mean collectively resisting pressure from the Trump administration and the ambitions of the U.S. mega corporations that seek to make us a digital vassal state. Trump's *National Security Strategy* is a stark and mean message on what we are up against if Canada is to be both a prosperous and a sovereign nation in the years ahead. Elbows up.

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The Hill Times

NEWS

‘He’s a welcome dose of fresh air’: Kinew ranked most popular premier

New Brunswick Premier Susan Holt nabbed second-most-popular premier in the December Angus Reid poll, followed by Saskatchewan’s Scott Moe. Quebec Premier François Legault was back of the pack with a 25-per-cent approval rating.

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY

Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew is “hitting all of the right buttons with Manitobans” with the journalist-turned-politician leading the pack in premier approval ratings to close out 2025, while a recent poll shows Quebec’s premier struggles at the opposite end of the spectrum having “drifted into oblivion.”

Kinew scored a 58-per-cent approval rating in the Angus Reid Institute’s latest quarterly poll on first ministers performances. Published on Dec. 4 and involving 4,025 respondents, it’s the last report card for the year for the provincial leaders.

Manitoba’s 43-year-old first minister—and Canada’s first premier of Indigenous descent—is popular because he’s a “good communicator” and “seems to be hitting all of the right buttons with Manitobans,” according to the polling firm’s founder Angus Reid.

“Part of his popularity comes from what came before him,” said Reid. “He’s a welcome dose of fresh air.”

In 2023, Kinew’s NDP displaced Heather Stefanson and her “widely disliked” two-term Progressive Conservative government to form a “Gary Doer-style, moderate” majority NDP government, noted Reid, making the comparison to Doer, who served as the province’s NDP premier from 1999 to 2009.

Although Kinew remained the most popular of his eight provincial colleagues (the Angus Reid Institute doesn’t poll in Prince Edward Island because the sample is too small, according to Reid), Kinew’s approval numbers were down by 10 points since June.

Susan Holt, New Brunswick’s Liberal premier, was nipping at his heels, just two points behind at 56 per cent. Kinew’s disapproval rating was 39 per cent, while Holt’s was 35 per cent.

After just over a year in office following her October 2024 election, Holt has seen the Canada-American trade war take



Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew tops the Angus Reid Institute’s last poll of the year tracking premier approval ratings. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

an outsized role for her government’s attention, with exports to the United States making up one-third of the province’s GDP. ARI’s explainer of the results also makes note of spending amid these budgetary pressures, including efforts to tackle primary-care issues through a pact with the province’s doctors.

Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, leader of the conservative Saskatchewan Party, had the third-highest approval rating at 53 per cent—a reflection, Reid believes, of Moe’s “tremendous strength in rural Saskatchewan.” Moe has been an active voice on the trade pressures felt by his province, including those tied to China’s punishing tariffs on canola exports. Moe’s disapproval rating was 44 per cent. ARI notes that health care continues to be a “frustration” for many residents, culminating in an open letter from health-care workers requesting more resources to address emergency room challenges.

At the opposite end of the popularity scale were the leaders of Canada’s most populous provinces. Ontario’s Progres-

sive Conservative (PC) Premier Doug Ford scored a 34 per cent approval rating—nine points ahead of François Legault, Quebec’s Coalition Avenir (CAQ) premier, the least popular provincial first minister at 25 per cent. His total disapproval rating was 70 per cent.

“Legault has drifted into oblivion and has lost the support of Quebec voters in a massive way,” Reid said.

The CAQ is doing even worse according to the results of a recent Léger poll conducted for the Québecor media chain. It found Quebec’s governing party in third place at 18 per cent, behind the first-place finisher and once-ruling Parti Québécois (PQ), which, in the 2022 provincial election, lost its official party status, winning only three out of 125 seats in the National Assembly.

Then there’s Ontario’s Ford, who drew international attention this fall with his anti-tariff ad featuring former U.S. president Ronald Reagan that caused current President Donald Trump to suspend trade talks in October.

“Ford has tried to turn himself into Captain Canada, but he’s made a lot of enemies,” said Reid, who cited some of the premier’s more unpopular legislative initiatives, such as a measure in Bill 60 that prevents municipalities from adding bike lanes to roads, and the end of speed cameras through Bill 56.

Ford’s disapproval rating in the ARI poll was 62 per cent. Yet, his governing Ontario PCs are still riding high in the polls.

Last month, the results of an Abacus Data survey had Ford’s party at 51 per cent for voting intention, or more than double Ontario’s Liberal Party’s 23 per cent. The province’s official opposition New Democrats only garnered 19 per cent support.

Reid said that, over the past 15 years, Ontario premiers dating back to Liberal Dalton McGuinty have had “terrible ratings, but the opposition ratings were even worse.”

“So, if you can’t put up a good opposition leader, the bad approval rating for a premier doesn’t necessarily translate into electoral losses,” said Reid.

He added that “opposition approval ratings across the country are generally in the tank.”

For instance, in British Columbia, NDP Premier David Eby’s popularity rating has dropped from 53 per cent in March when he was among the most vocal critics of U.S. tariffs, to 40 per cent as his focus has shifted to the memorandum of understanding between the federal and Alberta governments on a potential pipeline to the west coast. His disapproval rating in the ARI survey was 52 per cent.

However, John Rustad, who recently stepped down as B.C.’s Conservative Party leader, pulled in the worst numbers for a provincial opposition leader in the recent ARI poll. Among 574 British Columbians surveyed, 65 per cent said they had either an “unfavourable” or “very unfavourable” view of him.

The situation is different next door in Alberta where United Conservative Party Premier Danielle Smith had a 44-per-cent popularity rating. Yet former Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi, the current official opposition NDP leader, is not far behind with a 40-per-cent favourability rating in the ARI poll.

Smith’s overall disapproval rating was 53 per cent.

According to Reid, “the fortunes of parties typically revolve around the approval rating of their leaders because we’re living in an era where party members have very little power. It’s all about what the leader is doing.”

Reid said that ARI has been conducting its quarterly premiers’ popularity poll over the past decade because “the retail government in Canada are the provinces.”

“Beyond border services, taxation and defence, the feds don’t deliver anything else to the provinces,” he explained. “The more important level of government in terms of how government affects your life is at the provincial level, and we’re the only pollster that has taken that view, unlike other pollsters who mainly focus on the federal government.”

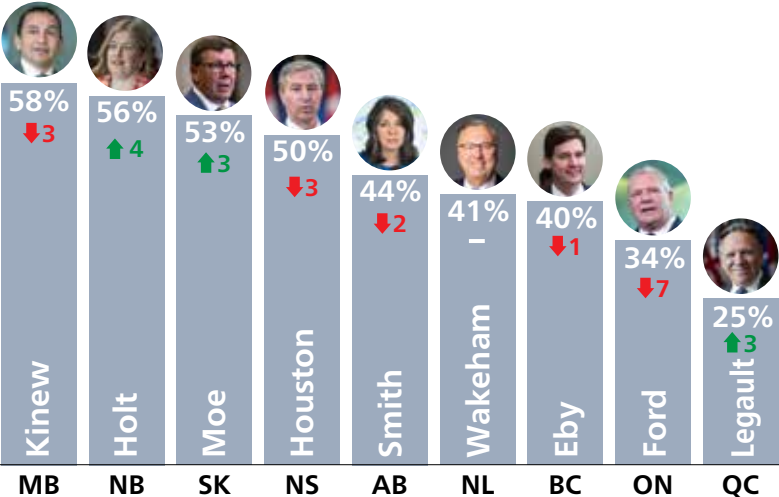
The Hill Times

Governing parties top voting intentions, with some exceptions

- **British Columbia:** Eby’s NDP government is at 43 per cent, compared to the official opposition Conservatives, who have an interim leader, Trevor Halford, at 40 per cent.
- **Alberta:** Smith’s UCP government, at 48 per cent, is slightly above the Nenshi-led NDP at 45 per cent.
- **Saskatchewan:** Moe’s Saskatchewan Party government is riding high at 55 per cent, compared to the official opposition NDP led by Carla Beck.
- **Manitoba:** Kinew’s NDP government is neck-and-neck, at 45 per cent, with the opposition PCs under the leadership of former Winnipeg Blue Bomber offensive lineman Obby Khan.
- **Ontario:** the Ford PC government led with 41 per cent, compared to the third-place Liberal Party—led by former Liberal MP Bonnie Crombie—at 28 per cent, and the official opposition New Democrats under Marit Styles’ leadership at 23 per cent.
- **Quebec:** the Paul St-Pierre Plamondon-led PQ is miles ahead, at 40 per cent, of Legault’s CAQ government at 13 per cent. Between the two parties are the Liberals, led by former federal Liberal Pablo Rodriguez at 18 per cent, and Quebec’s Conservative Party under Éric Duhaime’s leadership at 16 per cent.
- **New Brunswick:** Holt’s Liberal government leads at 59 per cent with the official opposition Progressive Conservatives, led by interim party leader Glen Savoie, at 32 per cent.
- **Nova Scotia:** Premier Tim Houston’s PC government is at 47 per cent with the official opposition NDP, led by Claudia Chender, at 35 per cent.
- **Newfoundland and Labrador:** Premier Tony Wakeham’s new PC government is, at 43 per cent, a point behind the official opposition Liberals led by former premier John Hogan at 44 per cent.

—Source: Angus Reid Institute

Premier Approval: December 2025



Source: Angus Reid Institute

It's like 'the Monroe Doctrine on steroids': Canadian politicians react to Trump's new 'very chilling' national security strategy

Continued from page 1

According to the 33-page document, released on Dec. 4, the U.S. is positioning itself as being "pre-eminent in the Western Hemisphere as a condition of our security and prosperity—a condition that allows us to assert ourselves confidently where and when we need to in the region."

Axworthy said the notion of the U.S. being "the rulers of the Western Hemisphere" will have many implications for Canada, particularly in terms of Arctic sovereignty, defence and security. The Trump administration is "basically saying, 'We will judge what you can do and what you can't do,'" Axworthy said.

The strategy's introduction states that previous foreign policy "placed hugely misguided and destructive bets on globalism and so-called 'free trade' that hollowed out the very middle class and industrial base on which American economic and military pre-eminence depend."

Axworthy said that the security strategy illustrates that "the United States no longer has a commitment to collaborative, co-operative multilateralism," and has basically adopted an "our-way-or-the-highway approach in the Western Hemisphere."

The strategy states that "the United States will reassert and enforce the Monroe Doctrine to restore American pre-eminence in the Western Hemisphere" in reference to a foreign policy position advanced in 1823 by U.S. president James Monroe that opposed European colonialism in the hemisphere.

New U.S. strategy is 'Monroe Doctrine on steroids,' says ex-minister MacKay

Former Conservative foreign affairs minister Peter MacKay characterized the security strategy as "the Monroe Doctrine on steroids," and said it calls for accelerated Canadian plans for submarines, fighter planes, and drones.

He said that Canada needs to send its own "clear-eyed vision of national defence" and release that plan as soon as possible.

The Hill Times reached out to the Privy Council Office for the status of Canada's own strategy, which is currently being developed, but did not hear back by deadline.

Defence Minister David McGuinty's (Ottawa South, Ont.) office was also asked to comment on the U.S. national security strategy, but did not provide a response.

Last week, McGuinty told CTV News that Canada is "taking note" of the new American strategy, and will "continue to work closely with our neighbour and partner" in defence, security and intelligence.

Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand's office (Oakville East, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* in a statement that it "wouldn't comment on another country's domestic policies."

Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough-Guildwood-Rouge Park, Ont.) was asked about the U.S.'s strategy in a scrum on Dec. 11. He said he hadn't yet read it, and would be getting a briefing. He also said that Canada's own national security strategy, which will be available in the "coming months," is the first one in "two-and-a-half decades, so we have to put some work into it. I think a lot of work has already gone in."

Canada receives a single mention in U.S. strategy

Given the significant military presence that Trump is planning for the Western Hemisphere, MacKay said he is left wondering whether "we are entering a Cold War with the United States."

"It is very chilling," he said. "We are no longer able to rely on splendid isolation and our big brother, the United States."

Axworthy said that the American desire to "control the Western Hemisphere" has recently played out, in particular, with Venezuela where Trump told *Politico* last week that he had not ruled out a U.S. ground invasion of the South American country, and warned that Mexico and Colombia could also face military operations as part of his government's plan to target drug trafficking.

The president also said that Nicolás Maduro's days as Venezuela's president are "numbered."



The office of Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, left, had no comment last week on the new U.S. national security strategy, but former federal Conservative minister Peter MacKay, former Canadian ambassador to the U.S. Frank McKenna, and former federal Liberal minister Lloyd Axworthy all criticize the document. . *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and one handout courtesy of Frank McKenna

Axworthy said this further illustrates how the U.S. "thinks it can decide to change the policies, politics, and leaders of any country."

He noted that there's "no recognition" of Mexico and Canada as allies and trade partners to the U.S.

"We are certainly a satellite within the world [that] Trump's people see as three spheres of influence in the Americas, Asia and Europe [that are] run by big powers: the United States, China and Russia," he added.

Canada receives a single mention in the U.S. security strategy in a section about China and "America's economic relationship" with it. The strategy states that the U.S. "must encourage ... prominent nations" including Canada, Mexico, and Australia "in adopting trade policies that help rebalance China's economy toward household consumption."

Axworthy recalled a more collegial time in the Canada-U.S. relationship during his post as foreign affairs minister when Democrat Bill Clinton was U.S. president.

Chrétien wanted to work with then-Cuban president Fidel Castro to bring his country back into the *gran familia* of the Organization of American States (OAS), from which it had been suspended in 1962. Axworthy said he spoke to then-U.S. secretary of state Madeleine Albright about Canada's intentions, which eventually led to Cuba's return to the OAS.

As a member of then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper's cabinet, MacKay worked with officials in two different U.S. presidential administrations: as foreign affairs minister when Republican president George W. Bush was in office, and then as defence minister during Democrat Barack Obama's time in the White House.

When asked whether either president would have released a national security strategy as Trump has, MacKay said unequivocally, "Absolutely not."

He noted that Robert Gates served as U.S. defence secretary to both Obama and George W. Bush, which "showed the priority that the United States placed on defence and continuity in defence policy."

Saying that he had the "good fortune" to work with Gates, MacKay recounted that he reached out to the U.S. official when Canada needed helicopters in Kandahar province during the war in Afghanistan. Gates simply asked, "How many do you need?"

"Look at how far the relationship has fallen," said MacKay, noting that no one from the Pentagon attended the recent Halifax International Security Forum, an event where Chuck Hagel, a

Republican who succeeded Gates in the defence role, announced the U.S. Arctic strategy in 2013.

Axworthy says Canada's lack of formal response to strategy is 'deafening'

Axworthy expressed the need for caution regarding any major collaborations with the Trump administration, particularly on defence issues such as his proposed "Golden Dome" air-and-missile defence system.

McGuinty said in October that Canada and the U.S. were in discussions about the need for a North American air-defence shield.

"That's insanity," said Axworthy.

"We're not dealing with a government that's any ally or friend, but has simply taken on a position that it has the unilateral right to determine and dictate what goes on in our Western Hemisphere, of which we are a part."

In response to the statement from Anand's office that it does not comment on "another country's domestic policies," Axworthy said that Trump's national security plan "is not a domestic policy." He added that the silence, in terms of a formal Canadian response to the U.S. strategy, is "deafening."

The federal government "is working on the basis that somehow we're going to find ways to get along with the U.S. It's like asking a serial killer to baby-sit your kids," said Axworthy, who also served in the cabinet of then-Liberal prime minister Pierre Trudeau.

MacKay said he is "hopeful that somebody is taking full note" of the U.S. strategy, "including Anita Anand and her office, and that we're taking on board some very alarming signals that the United States is sending."

"I hope it's going to speed up Canada's plan to come out with its own strategy that sends clear signals."

He said, "It isn't ancient history when certain people were parading around with their elbows up—and now it's kind of rag the puck or maybe it's pucker-up time, I don't know."

Axworthy said that Canada should hold a public consultation before releasing its national security strategy. On continental security, he said the federal government should focus on ensuring Canada's "strong presence in the Arctic" and "working much closer with other NATO allies."

"The U.S. national security strategy downgrades NATO," said Axworthy, noting that U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio was not at the alliance's recent foreign ministers meeting in Brussels, which was attended by Anand.

As part of its strategy for Europe, the U.S. security road-map calls for "ending the perception, and preventing the reality, of NATO as a perpetually expanding alliance."

"Trump's plan is to undermine Europe," said Axworthy.

He said that Canada should establish a "security agreement" with member nations—excluding Russia—of the Arctic Council, which was established in 1996 at a meeting in Ottawa.

Agreeing with the idea, MacKay said, "I think a case can be made for having an Arctic council for defence or a carve-out of NATO Arctic countries, but America has to be part of that."

Perhaps the U.S. defence strategy is "the proverbial kick in the rear end as we've seen on tariffs and trade," said MacKay.

"Maybe this will be the impetus for us to capitalize on other partnerships, including with the European Union and countries in the Asia-Pacific. ... But we cannot stand still—and to quote the motto of our special forces [Joint Task Force 2], it's 'deeds not words' that matter right now," MacKay said.

"Making big announcements, cutting ribbons, putting out eye-watering budget numbers without an account to draw on is not going to do it. The government is going to run out of runway in a hurry, unless we start really ramping up domestic defence production or finding other reliable partners. That needs to be central to a Canadian response, not just to this document, but to the ever-swirling geopolitics that are starting to close in on our shores," MacKay said.

Axworthy said that Canada will also feel the effects of policy from the U.S. security strategy that declares "the era of mass migration is over."

"One of the greatest issues Canada's going to be facing is migration from the United States when parts become inhabitable as the southwest burns up and floods take place," said Axworthy, who last month retired as chair of the World Refugee and Migration Council.

The security strategy states that European migration policies have created "strife" in the continent, which will be "unrecognizable in 20 years or less" and "the real and more stark prospect of civilizational erasure."

Europeans were outraged by the commentary, which Frank McKenna, Canada's former ambassador to the U.S., noted in an email to *The Hill Times*.

"I read enough of the report to gag and puke," he wrote. "I can understand why the Europeans are so pissed."

The Hill Times

NEWS

India eyes speedy, year-long negotiation to finalize trade pact with Canada

Trade observers say trade shocks brought on by U.S. President Donald Trump and recent pacts India has struck with other nations have re-awakened hopes for a deal between Ottawa and New Delhi.

BY NEIL MOSS

India's top diplomat in Canada is eyeing a one-year finish line for trade talks with Ottawa, saying renewed "political will" makes him "confident" the countries can move quickly on negotiations after their anticipated start in February 2026.

Completing a Canada-India trade deal has turned into a Sisyphean task for negotiators. Talks were launched under then-prime minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2010, which held 10 negotiating rounds before discussions stalled.

The Liberal government of then-prime minister Justin Trudeau relaunched negotiations in 2022. Canada and India targeted an "early progress trade agreement" to agree on "low-hanging fruit" before the more contentious items get dealt with in a comprehensive economic partnership agreement (CEPA).

The two sides failed to complete the first phase before Canada paused trade talks in 2023 amid allegations of the Indian government's involvement in the assassination of Sikh separatist leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar, a Canadian citizen.

Now Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Kumar Patnaik said he hopes that a CEPA can be agreed to within a year of negotiations starting.

"I think we can do it in a year's time," he told *The Hill Times* during a Dec. 7 phone interview. "That's the kind of time frame we're giving ourselves that we should finish it at the earliest."

He said, currently, both sides are "taking stock" of what the pathway to a deal will be, including what had previously been agreed to and areas where it can move forward.

Talks aren't expected to formally begin until late February at the earliest due to Canada's domestic process. A notice of intent to begin trade talks with India was tabled in Parliament on Nov. 24. That has to be done 90 days before negotiations start, meaning the earliest start would be on Feb. 22, 2026. The government is also supposed to table a notice of objectives for the talks 30 days before they start. Those have yet to be tabled.

In a Dec. 3 call, International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.) and Indian Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal discussed "preparations to launch negotiations," according to a Global Affairs Canada readout. Goyal is expected to visit Canada in 2026.

Patnaik said that the issues the two countries will have to face are already known, highlighting agriculture, dairy, sanitary and phytosanitary measures, investment protection, and dispute resolution.

"Most of this we already have a template of what we have signed with other countries. We are not going to be harsher than that with Canada. We will stick to those," he said.

This past July, India signed a trade deal with the United Kingdom after three years and 15 rounds of talks. It also signed a pact with the European Free Trade Association—consisting of Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland—in March 2024.

"If the political will is as strong as it is currently now, it is only an issue of capability—if our negotiators have time to focus on this while focusing on other issues. It will all come down to that," Patnaik said. "I give myself at the outset two years, but I think we can do it in a year."

The envoy said that would mean a deal could be completed by February 2027.

Both countries are in the midst of a series of trade negotiations. Canada has indicated it will soon



Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Kumar Patnaik, left, presented his letter of credence to Governor General Mary Simon on Sept. 24. Rideau Hall photograph by MS Anne-Marie Brisson

begin trade negotiations with the Philippines, Thailand, and the United Arab Emirates. It is currently in the middle of talks with the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, and a crucial review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement looms for 2026. India is in the middle of talks with the European Union, as well as with the United States, among others.

Past hope unfulfilled

Patnaik conceded that how past bilateral negotiations played out might not support an optimistic view that his envisioned timeline is achievable.

But he said India's trade pacts with other countries provides a template to move forward.

"Now with the template there, it is easier for us to work with other countries like Canada. With Canada, we don't have too many issues that we had with other countries," he said.

"In the past, the political will was not so strong during the past prime minister's government and now the political will is strong. I think we can move forward fast."

"So, I'm confident," he said about the prospects of reaching a deal within a year. "And the other thing is I prefer to be optimistic."

It isn't the first time that an Indian high commissioner in Canada has suggested that a trade deal with this country can be finalized quickly after talks start.

When negotiations were relaunched in 2022, then-Indian high commissioner Ajay Bisaria said that a deal could be reached within "about a year," as reported by *The Hill Times* at the time.

However, 11 months after that pronouncement, optimism evaporated with limited progress and clear disagreement.

In February 2023, *The Hill Times* reported that, after six rounds of negotiations, there were many chapters where the two sides were far apart, including on agriculture

as Indian negotiators had told their Canadian counterparts at the time that they had not been given a mandate to discuss it. The negotiators were far apart on labour and environment provisions, with slow progress on an investment chapter also in the mix.

There was an agreement on a temporary entry chapter, but that may need to be revisited as Canada's attitudes towards migration has had a sea change since that time.

'The two big elephants in the room'

Patnaik admitted that agriculture is a "difficult" area, noting that dairy has the same issues in Canada.

"That's a negotiation that has to happen. Given that we have worked it out with the U.K. on some of these issues and we are also discussing with the U.S. right now on some of these issues, I think there will be a lot of flexibility," he said.

Asked if India has an interest in exporting dairy to Canada, Patnaik said "yes," and that India is a large dairy producer.

"But if not export, at least we can have collaboration on different issues. So we have to see where it goes. I can't presuppose where the negotiations go, but we can try and work it out," he said.

"But I think it can be done. Agriculture [and] dairy, these are the two big elephants in the room," he said.

In June, a Bloc Québécois private member's bill became law that bars concessions on supply-managed sectors, which include dairy, eggs, and poultry.

Patnaik said the negotiations will be a "give and take."

"If you have to get an agreement done, the negotiators will find a way," he said.

He said India understands the concerns around investment protection, noting that an environment has to be created where investment would feel safe.

Asked if that would look like an investor-state dispute settlement mechanism, Patnaik said "probably," but he added that it is "too early to predict."

New realities underpin latest attempt to reach trade deal: Nadjibulla

The Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada's Vina Nadjibulla,

vice-president of research and strategy, said finishing trade talks with India by February 2027 is an "ambitious timeline."

"But it also reflects the urgency that both countries feel when it comes to diversifying their trade and economic partnerships," she said.

She said that times have changed since the difficulty in making progress at the negotiation table in 2023, including the trade shocks coming from U.S. President Donald Trump, who has targeted both Canada and India with tariffs. India has also since reached trade deals with others since the pause in talks with Canada.

"India's calculus has changed, and, of course, Canada's calculus has also changed now that our diversification agenda is much more front and centre," Nadjibulla said.

She said that with the delay in the start of formal negotiations, there's a chance that India concludes deals with the U.S. and the European Union so that could help inform the gains Canada can get at the negotiation table.

Trade expert Carlo Dade, the director of international policy at the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy, said that if Canada doesn't get better access to India for the agricultural exports that there would be questions about the value of a deal.

He said the Canada-U.S. trade dynamic may increase domestic pressures to take a deal that would have been considered bad in the past, and still be bad.

"If a deal is not good, the necessity of it [due to] the political pressure or the changed global environment won't make it better or make it good, it will just make it necessary," Dade said.

He said Canada shouldn't want a deal that undermines the standards that were negotiated in the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

Toronto Metropolitan University professor Sanjay Ruparelia, an expert on Indian politics, said both Canada and India have received a "Trump shock."

"The context has changed for Canada in a really severe way," he said, remarking that India, which has been skeptical of free trade agreements, is now willing to come to the table.

Ruparelia said the changed context has brought a need to strike a broader agreement "as soon as possible," when in the past they had tried to work sequentially and reach an accord on an early progress trade agreement.

"The ambition to strike a broader, comprehensive agreement might in an odd way allow greater room for negotiations for compromise and trade-offs because if you have a more narrow agreement and there are sticking points, there isn't much you can [negotiate]," he said.

"If it's a comprehensive economic partnership agreement with more goods and services and more sectors and more issues then there may be more room for actual negotiation."

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International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu spoke with his Indian counterpart Piyush Goyal on Dec. 3 about the 'preparations to launch negotiations.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

‘Better service, not less’: Canada Post pledges ‘thoughtful’ reforms and ‘leaner workforce’ amid MP concerns over loss of rural postal ‘lifeline’

Ottawa is reviewing Canada Post’s transformation plan, which the corporation’s CEO Doug Ettinger says he wishes ‘would have happened 10 years ago.’

BY ELEANOR WAND

Canada Post CEO Doug Ettinger says the Crown corporation’s path to “break even” by 2030 is not about cuts, but adopting “thoughtful and careful” reforms to mail delivery, and that trimming the aging workforce will come “primarily through attrition.”

“This is all about achieving better service, not less. I know there’s been some comments about, you know, cuts and this—it’s not about cuts, although, the company will change—but this is about creating a better experience for Canadians,” Ettinger told MPs at a Government Operations and Estimates committee meeting on Dec. 11.

Ettinger said the corporation submitted its transformation plan to Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) on Nov. 7 after the minister unveiled a series of changes aimed at addressing the postal service’s cratering finances on Sept. 25. Ettinger said that plan offers an “ambitious path” to “break even” by 2030.

The government’s reforms included ending home delivery for the remaining four million Canadians who still receive the service, lifting the moratorium on rural post office closures, lowering mail delivery standards by moving non-urgent mail by ground instead of air, and giving the postal service increased flexibility to raise its prices. Ettinger highlighted the corporation’s “thoughtful, respectful, flexible,” approach to addressing concerns around changes to rural deliveries and office closures.

“We’re not going to run roughshod over the country. We’re going



Canada Post CEO and president Doug Ettinger testified before the Government Operations and Estimates committee on Dec. 11. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to do it thoughtfully and with some clear criteria that people will be able to look at and understand.”

The government’s sweeping directive triggered a nationwide strike by the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW), which reached agreements in principle with the Canada Post on Nov. 21 after negotiating for close to two years. The exact details of the agreements have not been made public, but a CUPW release reads that “both sides have agreed on the main points of the deals.”

But Ettinger told the committee that Canada Post will need to reduce its workforce, saying there are about 16,000 staff who will be eligible for retirement over the next five years.

“We need to be a leaner workforce going forward,” Ettinger also told MPs, “and we’ll be able to reduce our size primarily through attrition, given that we have an aging workforce.”

The corporation’s workforce has remained steady over the years despite declining demand. Canada Post employed 62,300 full- and part-time staff in 2024, according to its annual report. It had a workforce of about 65,000 staff in 2014.

A number of MPs pressed the CEO on why it took the corporation—or the government—so long to act, as Canada Post’s financial perils have long been forecasted, with the

postal service recording a net loss for the past seven years in a row.

“How did we get here?” questioned Conservative MP Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, B.C.). “It wasn’t sudden. We had a lot of warnings. ... And yet the Liberals went for five years without approving a strategic plan, five years of drift, basically, while losses were piling up.”

Ettinger responded that the government and Canada Post “couldn’t get aligned,” adding that he was “pleased” to now be on the same page.



CUPW workers gather on Parliament Hill on Oct. 1 as part of a nationwide strike after the federal government announced reforms for Canada Post, including ending home delivery. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“Those are, in my opinion, exactly what the doctor ordered for us to transform the company,” he said of the transformation plan, which he told the committee he couldn’t go into detail about before the review had been completed by the government.

“I wish it would have happened 10 years ago,” he said.

Feds’ bail-out funds have been ‘exhausted’

In September, Ottawa recorded Canada Post was bleeding about \$10-million every day, and was on track to lose \$1.5-billion by the end of this year. At the time, Lightbound said that the corporation was “effectively insolvent,” calling the situation “unsustainable.”

The postal service recorded a pre-tax loss of \$841-million in 2024. Earlier this year, Ottawa spent \$1.03-billion to bail out the beleaguered Crown corporation. That loan was intended to last Canada Post through to the end of March 2026, but Rindala El-Hage, Canada Post’s chief financial officer, told the committee that the corporation “ran out” of that funding injection this month.

“We’ve exhausted that, and that was very important for us to be able to maintain operations,” she said, saying the discussions being had with the minister’s office about additional funding to continue operating until the plan is approved are “not yet finalized.”

Questioned by Conservative MPs about whether the loan could be used to pay executives, El-Hage said the money was “really around funding our operating losses,” but said no restrictions had been placed on the loan.

Liberal MP Iqra Khalid (Mississauga—Erin Mills, Ont.) also expressed confusion about how the corporation had reached such lows.

“I’m trying to wrap my head around this,” Khalid said. “There are tens of thousands of people that rely on Canada Post for jobs. There are millions of Canadians that rely on the services that Canada Post provides. When did your organization first realize that there was an issue here?”

Ettinger replied that the Crown corporation has been “studied to death over the years, in a good way,” noting that a lot of projections from 2016 “have unfortunately come true.”

Khalid remarked that Ottawa’s recommendations haven’t been put in place.

“It’s interesting that you say that this issue has been studied since 2016 ... and yet it seems as if none of the recommendations that committees and Parliament have provided to you have been implemented,” Khalid said.

Critics have accused the Liberals of long failing to address Canada Post’s financial situation. The corporation released a five-step plan aimed at righting its finances more than a decade ago in 2013, but the plan was never fully implemented. Then-prime minister Justin Trudeau ran on a platform of restoring home delivery, and once elected in 2015, instructed Canada Post to stop the transition to community mailboxes.

Ettinger said the corporation’s plan contains solutions that have been “similar to what we’ve been looking at for some time.”

“There really aren’t any surprises in this,” he said, “it’s the same things.”

‘A lifeline’ for communities

A concern raised by a number of MPs was the servicing of rural ridings with the complete elimination of home deliveries and the removal of the moratorium on rural post office closures.

Conservative MP Jeremy Patzer (Swift Current—Grasslands—Kindersley, Sask.) pointed to the rural town of Vanguard, Sask.

“It’s [a] count of a couple hundred people at the most,” he said, “but they rely on you guys every single week to send water samples off in Regina for their state water supply. They don’t have another carrier as an option.”

“It really is a lifeline for that community,” Patzer said, questioning what measures Canada Post is taking to ensure places like Vanguard don’t lose their post offices.

Ettinger told MPs the corporation was going to be “thoughtful and careful” with how they navigate office closures, saying that if there is no other nearby post office, then that office would remain open. He also indicated that criteria will be released with their transformation plan.

Bloc Québécois MP Marie-Hélène Gaudreau (Laurentides—Labelle, Que.) said in French she’s concerned Canada Post would die a “slow and quiet death,” pointing to the privatization of other postal services.

Ettinger said they have no intention of privatizing Canada Post. Lightbound also previously told *The Hill Times* that privatizing Canada Post is “not on the table.”

Gaudreau also questioned how the corporation could remain competitive without delivering parcels directly to people’s doors, as competitors do.

“Someone who would need to drive 30 minutes to get their package but could alternatively just go on the internet and just push one button to get it from another competitor directly at their door—how can you remain profitable and compete?” she questioned.

Ettinger insisted that community mailboxes are “a very strong” method of delivering parcels.

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NEWS

Bill calling for more serious punishment for assaulting first responders not fast-tracked despite Conservative MPs' efforts

Continued from page 22

executive director of the Paramedic Association of Canada.

According to Poirier, the language in Bill S-233 is vital.

"It's an important piece because, right now, the judicial system doesn't seem to have enough positive encouragement to deal with the issue. And I think by creating the context of aggravated assault, I think it will be taken much more seriously throughout the whole judicial system," said Poirier, who spoke at the press conference about the paramedic profession's support for the bill.

The MPs and health-care professionals used the press conference to discuss the need for this bill to become law, and to recount stories they've heard or—in the case of LeBlanc and Poirier—have personally experienced.

"I have to tell you that it is a weighty subject," Doherty said on Dec. 9. "How far we have fallen where a nurse can be punched,



Conservative Senator Leo Housakos is sponsoring Bill S-233, which is identical to bills previously introduced by Conservative MP Todd Doherty that would add first responders to the list of professions that would be considered an aggravating factor for the sentencing of an assault. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

knocked out for just simply taking somebody's blood pressure ... how far we have fallen where a paramedic can be attacked, thrown

down stairs, their ankles broken, [or] sexually assaulted in the back of an ambulance, and our system allows this to take place."

Referring to the health human-resources shortage, Mazier said that the impact of abuse is culminating in people leaving the profession at a time when "we can't afford to lose them."

Mazier cited an October 2025 report from the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions, which surveyed more than 4,700 nurses across the country. The report found that six in 10 nurses experienced job-related violence or abuse in the last year, and nearly one in five reported being on the receiving end of sexual abuse while on the job.

"Behind these numbers are human beings: a nurse who goes home wondering if they can face another shift; a student watching all this and deciding, 'I'm not going into health care,'" Mazier said.

The issue of violence against nurses has been one of the top advocacy priorities for the Canadian Federation of Nurses Unions. The organization's president,

Linda Silas, told *The Hill Times* this past October that it supports legislation that stiffens penalties for assaults against health-care workers, and that the federal government also has to work on increasing public awareness of the 2021 law.

LeBlanc said at last week's press conference that incidents of violence towards health-care workers and first responders have "increased dramatically" in various settings including emergency departments, long-term care homes, community clinics, home-care settings, and primary care. She added that she's personally experienced violence in each of those settings.

"I challenge every Canadian to think about going to work every day and having let someone swear at you because you asked them how they were or to throw something at you because they're in pain," LeBlanc said.

Doherty said that Bill C-321—the predecessor bill to S-233—could have been passed into law if not for the changes to Parliament earlier this year.

"Bill C-321 could have been passed into law this time last year, and it should have been passed into law. If it weren't for prorogation and eventual dissolution of Parliament [for the election], we wouldn't be having this conversation right now," said Doherty during the press conference. "There would be protections in place."

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Budget bill waits for House's January return as 'slow' session comes to a close

Continued from page 4

told reporters on the Hill on Dec. 10 that Poilievre's motion says that the Conservatives see an alliance between Ottawa and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith as "threatening to their base." She also added that the MOU requires more study.

Carney and members of the Liberal caucus have stated that any new pipeline project must be initiated and built by a private firm, not the federal government.

"We heard Liberals say this makes it clear that there must be a private proponent before the pipeline is built. Actually, the MOU doesn't say that. The MOU says you have to have private financing. The MOU specifically says Alberta is the proponent," said May.

"It certainly doesn't say that there must be free, prior, informed consent and respect for [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]."

Jordan Lechnitz, a former NDP strategist who now works for non-profit Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, told *The Hill Times* that she thinks the Conservatives outsmarted themselves with the motion. By only including parts of the MOU in the motion, but not the whole agreement, the Conservatives gave the Liberals "a pretty easy out," she argued.

"I think it was a miss for the Conservatives to be focused on the pipeline agreement when we know that still, for most Canadians, affordability is the top issue, and is something very much top of mind for people as they're doing their Christmas shopping, as they're putting together their holiday meals, as they're traveling to see friends and family. Everything is more expensive," said Lechnitz.

"I think that there was an opportunity in this last week to really put that issue in the window, because it's one that the

government has not been very active on and there would have been space for that, but they seem to have ... chosen to try to get themselves into the pipeline story in a way that I don't think was ultimately very beneficial for them."

Lechnitz argued the recently concluded session of Parliament has been unproductive and marked by a lack of activity.

"The [Liberal] government has gotten through the absolute essentials—so, budget and supply—but that's not really because they have huge support within the legislature. That's because none of the other parties wanted to deal with the consequences of opposing those confidence measures," said Lechnitz.

"Committees are pretty stalled, generally, and you can see that it's going to be a slog for [the Liberals] to get their agenda through, because they're doing this one at a time, case-by-case."



Green Party Leader Elizabeth May holds a press conference in West Block on Dec. 10, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Kofi Achampong, a lawyer and a government relations advisor for Achampong Law, as well as a former senior policy advisor to provincial Liberal cabinet ministers, told *The Hill Times* that he considers it a slight mischaracterization to suggest that this session was unproductive.

"I think this session really was focused on trying to figure out how the government was going to ultimately respond to what we're facing right now: this economy and the general uncertainty that exists out there for consumers and businesses ... and public sector alike," he said.

"I think the budget gave a clear indication of what the government's plan is, and getting that passed, I think was key. And, perhaps it took a lot more energy and steam out of the government

than it otherwise should. But it's not unusual."

Looking back at the session, Achampong argued that the MOU between Ottawa and Alberta was "a seminal moment in Canadian history."

"It's almost on par with the uniqueness with which the federal government has to treat Quebec, right? It's giving Alberta its stake in what the federal government does in a way that's unprecedented," he said.

"This particular MOU ... really, really positions Alberta in a way that I think is unprecedented and gives a very different direction to Alberta, to Westerners, to Quebecers, about what kind of government that they're dealing with in Ottawa."

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Lack of primary care so ‘chronic’ that patients don’t talk about it, says Liberal MP and doctor Powlowski

Two recent surveys find that a significant portion of Canadians do not have access to a primary care provider as governments across Canada attempt to tackle the long-time health human resources shortage.

Continued from page 1

Bay—Rainy River, Ont.), who practises medicine every Friday and often on weekends. “They kind of jump to the medical [problem].”

“I don’t spend a lot of time talking politics when I’m practising medicine. People are happy to see a doctor and I think the lack of primary health care has become so chronic, people don’t usually bother mentioning it.”

Although governments across the country have prioritized connecting Canadians to a family doctor since the COVID-19 pandemic, new data continue to show that a significant portion of the population still don’t have access to primary care.

The most recent study, entitled *OurCare*, led by Dr. Tara Kiran at Unity Health Toronto, shows that an estimated 5.9 million adults in Canada do not have a family doctor, nurse practitioner, or primary care team that they see regularly, states a Dec. 8 press release from the Canadian Medical Association. (The association partnered with Kiran’s team on the survey, which is based on responses from 16,299 adults and is meant to represent Canada’s adult population.)

This statistic is an improvement from the first iteration of the survey, released in 2022, which found that 6.5 million Canadians did not have access.

The Canadian Cancer Society also released a survey about the difficulties of accessing primary care. Its goal is to highlight the impact of health system problems on receiving specialist care, including that for cancer.

The Nov. 28 survey, conducted by the Angus Reid Institute, found



Liberal MP Dr. Marcus Powlowski continues to practise medicine in his riding of Thunder Bay—Rainy River, Ont. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

that 19 per cent of respondents don’t have a family doctor, and 30 per cent with one say it’s difficult to get an appointment. The online survey questioned a randomized sample of 2,044 Canadian adults meant to be representative of adults nationwide.

Those without a physician were more likely to report it was “difficult” or “very difficult” to access a diagnostic test (60 per cent as compared to 35 per cent of those with a doctor), or an appointment with a specialist (78 per cent versus 55 per cent).

Primary care is a “critical component” to someone accessing care for cancer because it’s where people will go if they begin to feel ill or experience symptoms that could signal cancer, according to Helena Sonea, advocacy director at the Canadian Cancer Society.

“That is very often, at least, first acknowledged by a primary care provider, and so they really are such an important conduit to somebody moving through the cancer care experience,” said Sonea, who added that primary care is also key in helping monitor those who are in remission from cancer.

‘Every practice was overwhelmed with demand’: Hanley

Powlowski and fellow Liberal MP Brendan Hanley (Yukon), also a medical doctor, both spoke to *The Hill Times* about the challenges posed by the shortage of primary-care providers.

Hanley worked in public health, hospital emergency rooms, and general family practice before turning to politics in 2021. He told *The Hill Times* that when he worked in a Whitehorse emergency room in the early 2010s, he would see patients with conditions such as diabetes and high blood

pressure who did not have access to a family health provider.

“The other difficulty was referring people who needed specialists,” said Hanley, who is now parliamentary secretary to Northern and Arctic Affairs Minister Rebecca Chartrand (Churchill-Keewatinook Aski, Man.).

“It would be very hard for specialists to take on a patient when they had no one to refer that patient back to. ... Among us, there was always that effort to try to take on patients that we’re seeing in the emergency room. But every practice was overwhelmed with demand.”

Powlowski said one of the problems is that many physicians won’t take on individuals with complex medical issues because of some provincial compensation plans that pay based on the number of patients seen throughout a year. This leads some doctors to build a big roster of patients with a focus on those who are healthier, according to the MP.

He said it is “frustrating” to see patients with more complex health needs going to walk-in clinics, which are pressed for time and don’t know the patient’s history.

Hanley said he started seeing a shift in health human resources in the early 2000s. Yukon previously had a “real advantage in recruitment” because doctors loved the location, the salary—which was then very competitive against other jurisdictions—and the ability to provide different types of care thanks to the low number of specialists in the region.

But shortages beginning in the early 2000s meant jurisdictions across Canada were competing with each other for doctors and offering more generous compensation packages, according to Hanley.

Still, another challenge is the heavy workload, stress, and burnout. “You can’t compensate that with really any amount of money,” Hanley said.

MPs want to see improved licensing procedures, training programs for foreign-trained doctors

When asked to name a policy initiative that would make a difference in improving health care, Hanley said he would like to see this country “get better” at licensing health-care professionals who’ve completed their medical education in other countries, including Canadians who’ve studied medicine abroad.

Noting this would require collaboration between provinces, territories, and regulatory colleges, and “some federal role,” Hanley said that “far too many” foreign-trained health care professionals are not able to work in health care.

This has been one of the findings to come from testimony at the House Health Committee (HESA), which recently completed a study about immigration policy and health care. Health professionals and groups testified on the difficulties of becoming licensed to practice in Canada. HESA has not yet released its final report.

Powlowski, who until recently was a HESA member and who participated in the study, said more people need to go to medical school, and there’s a need for more residency and bridging programs for physician training.

A bridging program helps foreign-trained physicians obtain the skills needed to help them practise in a Canadian health-care environment.

But those types of initiatives are under the oversight of provincial and territorial governments.

As for federal policy, Powlowski said Ottawa could use its federal spending power, which allows it “to put their nose into all kinds of things.”

He said the 2025 budget’s promise of \$97-million to improve licensing processes for foreign-trained professionals is “a big thing.” He spoke highly of a program in Nova Scotia, which provides internationally trained doctors with Canadian experience, saying he would like to see something similar launched at the Northern Ontario School of Medicine in Thunder Bay.

The Physician Assessment Centre of Excellence in Nova Scotia has “a clinic where they look after 5,000 [patients], but their primary purpose is to kind

of bring doctors through the 12-week process,” Powlowski said.

The federal Liberal government recently announced a change in immigration policy through a new express entry category for foreign-trained doctors who are licensed to practice in Canada. The change is meant to give “these doctors a clear pathway to permanent residence in Canada to fill critical health workforce gaps,” states the Dec. 8 press release. Ottawa will set aside 5,000 spaces for individuals with job offers and who are nominated by provinces and territories.

Powlowski said he has questions about the announcement, and has asked for a briefing from the Immigration Department.

One thing that the northern Ontario MP is clear on is that some regions need a boost in primary care providers more than others. Noting that the hospital in Rainy River—which supports patients from nearby Thunder Bay, Fort Frances and Atikokan—has three doctors, Powlowski said the focus should be on ensuring more physicians are available in remote areas, not Canada’s major urban centres.

“I’ve got places in my riding where health care and the lack of health care professionals is probably the number-one issue,” he said.

Hanley said he would like to contribute to the federal government’s upcoming review of health care and infrastructure needs in the North, initially announced in the Nov. 4 budget, and that he’s spoken with Northern and Arctic Affairs Minister Chartrand about it. He said he thinks the review will concentrate on medical transportation because of the high cost to move patients to health centres outside of remote communities.

“How can we leverage other potential supports to either—I guess this is more of a personal point of view—but either have better mechanisms to take care of people in their communities or to find other means to make medical travel more efficient?” said Hanley about what he would like to see the review tackle.

He added that it should also look at the experience of those who use medical transport because it can be unpleasant for patients who aren’t familiar with health systems south of the territories.

The Canadian Cancer Society’s Sonea said there is a need to prioritize health care delivery, which would include national licensing for health care professionals and eliminating red tape around clinical trials.

“Continuing to focus on health needs to be a priority, especially as we move into next year with the opportunity to have further conversations about budgets [and the] spring economic statement and so on. We appreciate that there are tremendous ongoing negotiations with [the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement] and internationally, absolutely, but we also need to take care of the people within our own borders,” she said.

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Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



Catching up with Finance Minister Champagne's now 29-member team

Varun Srivatsan is now director of policy to the finance minister, while Rachel Sutton has returned to the Hill as Champagne's deputy director of operations.

Finance and National Revenue Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** has built up a 29-member team in his office since *Hill Climbers*' last check in—pre-budget—back in July, with a number of late summer and fall hires offsetting a few departures.

First, the policy team, which got an injection of strength over the summer ahead of the Nov. 4 tabling of the 2025 federal budget.

Already reported from this team are director of international policy **Niloofar Boroun**, director of Indigenous affairs **Cherly Cardinal**, deputy policy directors **Matthew O'Connell** and **Kyle Fox**, and senior policy and Atlantic adviser **Jessica Fullerton**.

Not long after *Climbers*' early July update on the team, **Varun Srivatsan** was brought on board. Originally hired as a deputy director for fiscal policy and budget, he is now director of policy to Champagne.

Previously director of policy and strategic engagement with the Royal Bank of Canada in Toronto—as part of its RBC Economics and Thought Leadership teams—Srivatsan has also worked as a senior adviser with the Department of Natural Resources where he tackled the Indigenous Loan Guarantee Program, and as lead consultant with the advisory firm Castlemain in Vancouver, during which time he also worked part-time as a ramen chef in the city.

Among other things, Srivatsan also has roughly two years' experience working as an economist with the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer between 2018 and 2020.

He holds a bachelor's degree in international economics from the University of British Columbia, and a master's degree in eco-

nomics policy from The London School of Economics and Political Science.

Senior policy adviser **Yianni Papadatos** has since left Champagne's shop to become director of parliamentary affairs to Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister **Joël Lightbound**, as noted in an update on Lightbound's office last month.

Now part of Champagne's policy team are senior policy advisers **Rémi Gagnon**, **Jérôme Côté**, **Fahim Khan**, and **Jeffrey Li**; policy advisers **Charles-Olivier Dubé** and **Mackenzie Metcalfe**; and **Nicholas Malouin**, who covers the Canada Revenue Agency desk for Quebec and the Atlantic.

Gagnon previously worked for Finance Canada, and brings experience working as an associate with a number of law firms, including Cleary Gottlieb Steen & Hamilton LLP and Sidley Austin LLP in New York, and McCarthy Tétrault in Montreal. He's also a former law clerk to then-chief justice **Marc Noël** at the Federal Court of Appeal, and articulated with BCF Avocat d'affaires. Gagnon studied law at both York University and the New York University School of Law where he focused on taxation law.

Côté is a past director of policy to then-national revenue minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**, and former senior policy adviser to Bibeau during her time as agriculture minister. Prior to being hired by Bibeau for the first time in 2022, Côté had worked as a strategic management consultant in Montreal.

While his name wasn't on staff lists confirmed for either of *Climbers*' previous two updates on Champagne's team, Li isn't new to the finance team, having first been hired as a policy adviser to then-minister **Chrystia Freeland** in the spring of 2024. He previously worked as an economist with

the Ontario Finance Ministry's office of the budget, fiscal policy branch, and federal-provincial relations unit, and also has experience working for Ontario's Intergovernmental Affairs Ministry, and as an assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Helena Jaczek**, among other things.

Dubé, whose LinkedIn profile notes he's focused on transport, defence, and agriculture-related policy within Champagne's office, was previously a project engineer for rail and transit with engineering consulting firm WSP in Montreal. Dubé has a background in engineering, having earned a degree in civil engineering from Polytechnique Montréal. He's since also worked as a rail operations and simulation engineer with Hatch, another engineering consulting firm in Montreal, and for CIMA+.

Prior to joining Champagne's team in July, Metcalfe spent almost two years as director of government and alumni relations for the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs. A graduate of Carleton University's political management master's program, she's also a past executive director of the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations.

Malouin is another ex-revenue staffer, having worked in that office from 2023 until earlier this year. First hired as a Quebec and Atlantic regional adviser to then-minister **Diane Lebouthillier**, and he stayed on after Bibeau was named national revenue minister, becoming a parliamentary and Atlantic regional affairs adviser, a role he continued in through **Élisabeth Brière**'s turn in the post.

Ian Foucher remains in charge of Champagne's operations team, as previously noted, are senior adviser **François Massicotte**, senior West regional adviser **Quinn Ferris**, Quebec adviser **Élyse Moisan**, and caucus liaison **Francesco Sorbara**, a former Quebec Liberal MP who, as reported by *The Hill Times*, joined Champagne's office this past September.

Audrey Millette continues as director of communications to the finance minister, supported by press secretary **John Fragos**. **Kevin Acquah**, who had been hired on as deputy director of dig-

ital media to Champagne, exited for a job as a digital adviser in Prime Minister **Mark Carney**'s office earlier this fall, as noted by *Climbers* last month.

Now working with Milette and Fragos is **Simon Leblanc** as a communications adviser.

Leblanc, like Dubé, previously worked for WSP, in Leblanc's case as a public affairs and media adviser. Leblanc is also a former vice-president with Force Jeunesse, and a past senior public affairs adviser with National Public Relations in Montreal, among other things.

Sean O'Neill continues as director of parliamentary affairs to Champagne, with **Ashton Ross** in charge as director of issues management.

Now also part of that team is legislative assistant **Bryn Woolstencroft**, who was hired in September. A former research analyst and later associate with The Strategic Counsel in Toronto, Woolstencroft worked on Toronto Liberal MP **Rob Oliphant**'s successful re-election campaign this past spring.

Hélène Botelho remains office manager, while **Hirra Majid** is executive assistant to the chief of staff.

Naran Leseigneur, who had been Champagne's driver, has since exited and been replaced by new driver **Nasser Abdulkader**.

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Finance and National Revenue Minister François-Philippe Champagne leaves a Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on Dec. 3, followed by Liberal MP Kody Blois, parliamentary secretary to the prime minister. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Rémi Gagnon is a senior policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Charles-Olivier Dubé is a policy adviser to Champagne. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Simon Leblanc is a communications adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Varun Srivatsan is director of policy to the finance minister. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Mackenzie Metcalfe is a policy adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Senior policy adviser Jeffrey Li. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Rachel Sutton is deputy director of operations, and Ontario regional adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Parliamentary Calendar

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.



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 on Tuesday, Dec. 16, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Palais des congrès de Montréal. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem to talk about Canada's economy on Tuesday, Dec. 16, in Montreal

MONDAY, DEC. 15

House Schedule—The House of Commons adjourned last week until Jan. 26, 2026, and is scheduled to sit for 117 days in 2026. Here's the schedule for 2026: it will sit Monday to Friday, Jan. 26-Feb. 13; Feb. 23-27; March 9-13; March 23-Thursday, March 26; April 13-May 8; May 25-June 19; Sept. 21-Oct. 9; Oct. 19-Nov. 6; and Nov. 16-Dec. 11.

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. Shazelin 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.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 17

Holiday Reception with Liberal MP Acan—Liberal MP Sima Acan and a "guest from cabinet" will attend the Oakville West holiday reception for volunteers, donors, and other supporters. Wednesday, Dec. 17, at 6 p.m. at a location to be announced in Oakville, Ont. Details: event.liberal.ca.

THURSDAY, DEC. 18

Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks—Rescheduled from Dec. 9, Industry Minister Mélanie 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.

An Evening with Liberal MP Ntumba—Liberal MP Bienvenu-Olivier Ntumba will take part in a fundraiser for the Mont-Saint-Bruno—L'Acadie Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, Dec. 18 at 5 p.m. ET at the Royal Canadian Legion 147, 1622 rue Roberval, Saint-Bruno-de-Montarville, Que. Details: event.liberal.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. 8, 2026

REEL Politics Film Series—As part of the ongoing REEL Politics Film Series fundraiser, tonight's screening is the 1957 film *A Face in the Crowd* featuring Andy Griffith and Patricia Neal. Thursday, Jan. 8, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: reelpolitics.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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