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# THE HILL TIMES

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## NEWS

With threats to Canada's sovereignty and mounting economic challenges, MPs should work together or face an early election, says Coteau

BY ABBAS RANA

At a "critical" juncture when Canada faces challenges to its sovereignty and economic well-being, MPs from all parties will need to work together to address these issues, or expect an early election, says the chair of the Ontario Liberal caucus.

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## NEWS

'Unprecedented' 2025 for canola industry, with record-breaking economic lobbying

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent announcement of easing of Chinese tariffs hasn't gotten Canada's canola sector entirely out of the woods yet, with challenges ahead including lingering levies and the looming North American trade pact discussions, following an "unprecedented" year of trade uncertainty and record-breaking economic lobbying.

"Our message is clear. We want these tariffs removed and to get back into the Chinese market across all canola and canola products, so that's seed, oil and meal," said Troy Sherman, senior

## NEWS

# Parliament's winter session expected to be 'very consequential': politicos

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A "train wreck" of issues on the global stage and the looming question of sovereignty in both Alberta and Quebec are likely to make the winter session of Parliament "very consequential," with many Canadians also looking

to Prime Minister Mark Carney for strength in handling international issues like trade and domestic issues such as affordability, according to political pundits.

"This could be a very consequential year in Canadian politics. All will be reflected by external events and how they filter their way back

through the domestic area of activity," said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs.

"There's going to be, I think, a constant conversation as to whether Mark Carney will be working to construct a majority, or whether

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# Carney has thrown his hat over the wall, now what?

A few months ago, the PM spoke of sacrifice as Canada realigned around new priorities. *The Globe and Mail* reported last week about planning work at National Defence HQ and how to resist, via an insurgency, an American attack. The key line to me in that story was this: 'Conscription has been ruled out for now, but the level of sacrifice that would be asked of Canadians remains a central topic, the officials said.' I'll bet it does!

**Read Matt Gurney's column  
on p. 14**



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured Jan. 20, 2026, at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he delivered a banger of a speech. *Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard*

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# Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

## Eight takeaways from Max Valiquette's memoir of his time in the Trudeau PMO: I 'got to carry something we called the Bat-phone'



In his eight-part memoir from his time as executive director of communications in the Trudeau PMO, Max Valiquette, left, calls out the bullying his former colleagues Supriya Dwivedi and Katie Telford, centre, received 'for daring to be women in politics,' and describes his old boss' now-girlfriend Katy Perry as 'generous and great.' *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn, The Hill Times photograph by Stuart Benson, and courtesy Wikimedia Commons*

It's been a few months since **Max Valiquette** finished his Substack "reckoning" of his time as executive director of communications in **Justin Trudeau's** Prime Minister's Office. The marketing strategist was brought into the PMO in November 2023 from Toronto, and stayed in the Ottawa bubble until March 2025.

The following are **Heard on the Hill's** top eight takeaways from Valiquette's eight-part memoir:

"Yes, I had a level of security clearance and got to carry something we called the Bat-phone," he teases in Part One.

He has regrets: "I like to think that if I'd been there longer, I would have helped ... by radically altering some of [the PMO's] own legacy processes. I don't know that I could have, though. I certainly didn't do enough in the time that I was there. (I don't feel great about that.)"

He respects the Conservatives' comms strategy: "I have no trouble recognizing when the CPC (or anyone) is doing something well and that it bugs me."

He's met **Katy Perry**, whom he describes as "generous and great."

He can't stomach hypocrisy or leaks: "I can't share very much about what went on at caucus retreats, of course, because they are privileged. I say that while stifling a rising tide of vomit in the back of my throat, because over the course of my year and



Then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, left, and his then-executive director of communications, Max Valiquette. *Photograph courtesy of Instagram*

a half at PMO I did not attend a single retreat in which things (so, so many things) weren't leaked to the press pretty much as soon as they happened."

He also can't stomach misogyny: "I loved working with [Katie Telford and Supriya Dwivedi]...I do not love how much crap they put up with for daring to be women in politics. It comes out of nowhere and comes from all sides, *including ours*." On now-former MP **Chrystia Freeland**: "She has a brain that is working about ten steps ahead of everyone else's, and [deals] with an extra-large share of the brutal misogyny that plagues every woman who enters the public sphere of political life."

He admits to having accidentally watched Conservative MP **Melissa Lantsman** on her phone: "If what I

think happened is what happened, it supports the notion that there is a working relationship between the right/far-right media and the Conservative Party of Canada."

And he cares about how people handle being wrong: "I know that Justin Trudeau continues to occupy so much space in the minds of right-wing pundits. I don't think they know that he does, which is why so many of them end up doing or saying things that make no sense. They give up valuable column space to talk about someone who isn't important enough to merit it. They die on a hill for something admittedly inconsequential. They run away from the arguments they started because they can't fathom that they weren't right. They blame people they asked to be a part of their conversation for responding."

## Three's company: Ezra Levant catches up with Justin Trudeau, Katy Perry in Davos



Katy Perry, left, her boyfriend Justin Trudeau, and Rebel News' Ezra Levant. *Screenshot courtesy of X*

Speaking of **Justin Trudeau** and **Katy Perry**, the couple was in Davos, Switzerland, last week on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum. Rebel News' **Ezra Levant** was there, as well, and took the

opportunity to ask Trudeau a question.

"What do you make of the Federal Court of Appeal upholding the ruling that your martial law was illegal?" asked Levant, walking alongside

Trudeau and Perry, who were holding hands.

"They said you violated..." Levant continued before the former prime minister cut him off with "Good to see you, Ezra."

## Author Mark Bourrie to receive \$5,000 Pierre Berton Award

Canada's History Society has tapped Ottawa-based **Mark Bourrie**, author of *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre*, as the 2025 Governor General's History Award for Popular Media.

The prize, also known as the Pierre Berton Award, honours someone whose work has made Canadian history engaging and broadly accessible. It comes with a \$5,000 purse.

"Mark Bourrie makes our country's history as vivid as anything happening today," said **Melony Ward**, president and CEO of Canada's History Society, in a press release. "He embraces the com-

plexity of the past to create works that brim with conflict, struggle, and larger-than-life characters, all firmly grounded in research."

Bourrie's *Ripper* was on *The Hill Times'* Best 100 Books of last year. He has also written 13 other non-fiction books, which have received awards including the National Magazine Award, and the RBC Charles Taylor Prize. He's also a previous finalist for the J.W. Dafoe Prize.

Governor General **Mary Simon** is expected to present Bourrie and 11 other laureates with their awards at a ceremony in Ottawa later this year.

## Six new envoys meet the Governor General

Ambassador **Tariq Ali F. H. Al-Ansari**.

The other three heads of mission—Micronesia's Ambassador **Jackson T. Soram**, Laoian Ambassador **Phoukhong Sisoulath**, and High Commissioner for Sierra Leone **Amara Sheikh Mohammed Sowa**—are based in Washington, D.C., with accreditation to Canada.

## Davis Legree is *The Wire Report*'s new editor

Hill Times Publishing officially welcomes **Davis Legree** as the new editor of *The Wire Report*.

Originally from Brooklin, Ont., Legree studied public policy at Carleton University and has a master's degree in environmental studies from Queen's University.

He has spent the last four years as a journalist on Parliament Hill writing for *iPolitics*, where he covered, among other things, the Liberal government's online harms legislation, broadcasting policy, and the CRTC.



Davis Legree is the new editor of *The Wire Report*. *Handout photograph*

"I feel like this role perfectly melds my professional and educational backgrounds, and I couldn't be more thrilled," he told **HOH** about his new job leading *The Wire Report*.

"Given recent technological and geopolitical developments, I'm not sure there's been a more interesting time in the world of telecommunications, and I can't wait to follow along every step of the way," said Legree.

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# NEWS Back to Parliament

## Ontario national councillor Mitas expected to challenge Barber for Conservative Party presidency

Senior Conservative sources tell *The Hill Times* that current party president Stephen Barber and Christina Mitas have been strategizing and reaching out to potential supporters ahead of the national council election at the end of this month.

BY ABBAS RANA

If re-elected for a second term at the Conservative Party's Jan. 29-31 biennial policy convention in Calgary, Ontario national councillor Christina Mitas is planning to challenge incumbent party president Stephen Barber for the party's top job, say Conservative sources.

"There's a very real possibility that she's going to be the party president," said one Conservative insider who is helping Mitas with her campaign.

"We think we have the votes."

Senior Conservative sources told *The Hill Times* that both Barber and Mitas have been for weeks strategizing and reaching out to potential supporters ahead of the national council election.

Only national councillors are eligible to run for the presidency of the Conservative Party.

Mitas, a former Ontario Progressive Conservative MPP, was elected to the national council, the federal Conservatives' powerful governing body, at the 2023 biennial policy convention in Quebec City. She is currently chairs the national council's convention committee that oversaw all the convention arrangements. She also recently chaired the sub-committee on nomination rules for the next election.

Updated rules were approved at the council's quarterly meeting on Dec. 5, 2025, and are now available online.

One of the most important changes in the rules is that now the party leader can appoint eight candidates of their choice across the country. Under the old rules, there was no provision that would allow the leader to appoint candidates. But, central headquarters could wait until a federal election was imminent and then invoke the nomination rules' emergency clause to put their preferred candidates in place.

Barber, a Manitoba national councillor, is currently serv-



Ontario national councillor Christina Mitas, right, is expected to run against Stephen Barber for the position of Conservative Party president at the Jan. 29-31 biennial policy convention in Calgary. Barber was elected president in 2023. *Photographs courtesy of LinkedIn and Facebook*

ing his second term, and has been acclaimed for a third. He was elected to the role of party president at the last convention in 2023. Until 2023, he served as an assistant deputy minister in the Manitoba government. From 2024 to 2025, Barber was a vice-president at StrategyCorp, a public affairs firm. He has since launched his own business as a strategic and political adviser.

Each province's representation in the council is based on the proportion of seats it has in the House of Commons. In the 21-member national council, Ontario has four seats; Quebec claims three; British Columbia and Alberta each have two; and Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, the three Atlantic provinces, and the three territories have one seat each.

The incumbent party leader is also an automatic member of the national council and is expected to attend all meetings though they usually designate someone to represent them at council meetings. Jenni Byrne, former campaign director and a close confidante of Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.), has been representing him at these meetings.

The national council is responsible for overseeing the management of the party's affairs with the exception of fundraising and spending, which is overseen by the Conservative Fund. The membership to the national council and Conservative Fund are volunteer positions.

"The president's role is important in terms of being the voice of national council with the leadership, with Conservative Fund Canada, with caucus," said Rob Batherson, former party president.

"And it's important that, as president, you give a good airing of the views of national council throughout the party."

To handle different governance issues that come before it, the national council has set up 10 committees: the secretariat committee; national candidate selection committee; finance committee for electoral district associations; legal affairs committee; caucus liaison; membership, communications and technology committee; outreach committee; convention committee; national policy committee; and a committee concerning the party's national constitution.

### 'The list goes on of things the national party can do better': ex-MP Soetens

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Henry Champ, who is running against incumbent Saskatchewan national councillor Colette Stang, said that he's seeking the position to push for stronger nomination rules and greater transparency in national council meetings. He said that while the national council is meant to represent grassroots members to the leadership, it does not appear to do so.

"National council, in theory, is supposed to be your grassroots representative to the party executive because they're elected by the delegates," said Champ, a former Hill staffer to Conservative MP Garnett Genuis (Sherwood Park—Fort Saskatchewan, Alta.).

"The delegates are elected by the members in each EDA. ... They're the board that represent the grassroots interests. And I feel a lot of people don't feel like that is the case anymore, and some feel that some of the national council [members] are going to

Ottawa, and representing Ottawa back to the grassroots member."

He said that under the current national council, the party lost the April 2025 election. So, to win the next election, said Champ, it would be a good idea to have a new national council to develop fresh ideas and fix some of the problems that may have played an important role in the party's election loss.

"I admire Colette [Stang] for giving up a lot of her time that she can spend with her grandchildren because the position is not paid," said the 24-year-old Champ.

"But sometimes we need to have some newer voices in there, especially when we've just lost an election. There might be a lot of things that we can renew. There might be a lot of things that needs new ideas, and some younger voices in there would be great."

Champ said that the next national council election will be "crucial" as the Liberals are in a minority government, and an election could happen at any time.

The next national council will make decisions that will play a key role in the Conservative Party's electoral prospects, he said, adding the party has traditionally done well with rural voters, but has been having challenges with major urban centre voters. Champ said that he's from Saskatoon and will have some useful ideas on how to address issues concerning Canadians living in urban centres.

René Soetens, a former federal Ontario Progressive Conservative MP, told *The Hill Times* that he is aiming for a seat on the national council because he wants to see stronger local electoral district associations, and to bring forward new ideas on election readiness.

To help explain why election readiness is important to him, Soetens said that, ahead of the

last election, the party had been preparing for more than a year, yet when the campaign was finally called, "something in the realm of 100 electoral districts" still were without a candidate.

As a result, Soetens said, candidates were appointed at the last minute without contested nominations. While he acknowledged that the updated nomination rules are an improvement, the former MP said more reforms are needed, arguing that the current rules give too much authority to party headquarters and that EDAs should have a stronger voice in these decisions.

"We need to improve the ease at which local ridings can make the decision," said Soetens.

"We need to improve the way individual candidates can seek the nomination because it was a very difficult process for anybody who wanted to be a candidate at the local level. There are things the party can do to provide better training for the local EDA, better fundraising tools, better communication tools—the list goes on of things that the national party can do better."

Soetens said that most of the rank-and-file party members are not familiar with the important work that the national council does.

"There are many Conservative members that are questioning, 'who is this national council, and what is it they do?'" said Soetens. "I've never heard from them. I never get communication from them, but we all get phone calls to say, would you like to donate money?"

Soetens said that, in order to win the next election, the new national council will have an extremely important role in preparing the party. A strong national council can ask the right questions of the campaign team to further improve the party's election readiness, he said.

Soetens added that he and his volunteers are trying to reach out to all the Ontario delegates via phone calls, email, and social media to seek their support.

Kinsey Schurm, who is running to represent Ontario on the national council, was not available for an interview last week, but he sent out an email about three weeks ago to all delegates raising questions about the party's updated nomination rules.

In his email, which was obtained by *The Hill Times*, Schurm said that it's the "fundamental right" of every party member to elect their party candidates, and to protect this, the process has to be grassroots-led and transparent.

"These rules are a good first step to curtailing the widespread abuse seen in the last election by limiting the number of appointments to eight," wrote Schurm in his email.

"This change does not fully empower our members to drive a grassroots nomination process. Party insiders retain control over when nomination races are called, often delaying them until their preferred candidate has an unfair advantage. This is unacceptable."

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# NEWS Back to Parliament

## Make federal funding permanent for Canada's suicide crisis helpline, say Conservative and NDP critics

Long-time mental health advocates Conservative MP Todd Doherty and NDP MP Gord Johns say their passion for the subject is personal.

BY TESSIE SANCI

While the federal Liberals' move to renew funding for 988, the suicide crisis helpline, is receiving support from both the Conservative addictions critic and NDP health critic, they are also asking why the government is focusing on short-term investments.

Health Minister Marjorie Michel (Papineau, Que.) announced on Jan. 16 that her government will provide funding of \$120.2-million to the helpline, originally launched in 2023, for another two years. The announcement was made during a press conference at the Toronto-based Centre for Addiction and Mental Health, which leads the service.

When asked by *The Hill Times* if the two-year funding timeline meant that the program is not permanent and that it would be up to future governments to decide whether to keep funding it, Michel said that federal funding tends to go from year to year.

"So, it was not part of budget 2025, you can see, but the need is there so as long as the need will be there to get this service, I think the minister of health—whoever the minister of health is—will make sure that it will get funding for this type of service because it's really saving lives," Michel added.

Michel's office told *The Hill Times* by email that the federal government is the sole funder of 988.

Conservative addictions critic Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, B.C.)—who brought the service, which originated in the United States, to Parliament's attention through a motion in 2020—said he's happy that Ottawa is maintaining its support for the three-digit helpline but, "why not make it permanent funding?"

"Almost a million Canadians have used this line. It's shown that there's a need for it. We have about 12 Canadians a day die by suicide; a further 250 attempt suicide each and every day," said Doherty.

NDP health critic Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) said the



NDP MP Gord Johns, left, was named his party's mental health and addictions critic in 2021 and continues his advocacy in his current role as health critic. Conservative MP Todd Doherty began his formal focus on the mental health file in 2020 when he was named special adviser on mental health and wellness. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

service "saves lives" and reduces pressure on emergency rooms.

"How do you attract long-term staff and how do you build the infrastructure that's necessary? 988 is essential health infrastructure, so it needs to be treated like that," Johns said about the short-term funding.

Doherty agreed, saying, "A lot of these organizations, mental health associations, and organizations ... literally go from funding cycle to funding cycle, and they need consistent funding to be able to truly be effective."

### Conservative MP Doherty's motion started 988

The idea of attaching the digits "988" to a suicide prevention helpline—as opposed to a standard 10-digit number—initiated in the United States in 2022. It's meant to be easy to remember for individuals who are in distress.

Doherty told *The Hill Times* that he learned about the U.S.'s plans for the national line when he was doing research for a private member's bill on post-traumatic stress disorder and its impact on first responders and veterans. He introduced a motion to create a similar system in Canada in 2020.

The work of reducing the stigma around mental health by talking publicly and frequently about the subject has been Doherty's priority since he was first elected to Parliament in 2015. It comes from the experience of losing his best friend to suicide when they were 14 years old.

"All these years later, I still struggle with remembering that last night that I was with my best friend and I wish I could do it all over again. I would tell him that I loved him and our world was a

better place with him being in it," he said.

Doherty added that he thinks there are so many Canadians who constantly replay those last conversations with their loved ones who died by suicide.

"We have to find a way to break the barriers so that people can come forward. There is such a stigma attached to mental health, and we have to be better," said Doherty.

The Conservatives were the first federal party in recent history to have an MP hold a formal role concerning mental health. Doherty was appointed special adviser on mental health and wellness to then-leader Erin O'Toole in September 2020. Doherty told *The Hill Times* that the role was his idea.

The Liberal government under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau appointed Canada's first federal mental health and addictions minister, Carolyn Bennett, after the federal election in September 2021.

Following that, with the exception of the Bloc Québécois, all official parties in the House of Commons have had an MP that focused specifically on mental health. MP Mike Lake (Leduc-Wetaskiwin, Alta.) took on the role for the Conservatives until October 2022, after which Doherty was named critic. Lake is now again the mental health critic while Doherty focuses on the addictions file.

Johns became the NDP's mental health and addictions critic in October 2021, and continues to focus on those issues in his current role as health critic.

Johns said everyone has been touched by mental health, and he's "no different."

He said mental health and the toxic drug crisis are a top issue in his riding, which includes a large

Indigenous population that feels the impacts of a lack of access to mental health and addictions services.

"And then, of course, in my family, I've seen it firsthand and the impact it has on family and on community," he said, adding that he has lost friends to mental health and substance use-related illness.

"No one's not touched by it. So, for me as a leader, I need to be making sure that we're making [it] front and centre. ... It's difficult to talk about these issues because it's so close to home for so many, and it hurts, but it's critical that we rely on experts. Let experts lead with evidence-based, expert-led policy and provide the supports needed," he said.

Johns said this is why he has tabled a bill—C-201—that would require the government to provide provinces and territories with annual transfer funding for mental health and addictions services, as it does for physician services and hospitals.

When Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) Liberals won the spring 2025 election, he eliminated the mental health and addictions role from cabinet. Michel told *The Canadian Press* last spring that while that role no longer exists, "you have a mental health minister because I can tell you I am the health minister and the mental health minister."

Michel, who has stressed during her tenure that mental health is her priority, repeatedly stresses at press conferences that when she travels across the country, she ensures that mental health is always a part of her conversations.

But eliminating stigma means following through with the right policies. These include increasing federal investment and putting annual mental health and addic-

tions funding into law, according to Johns.

Doherty says mental health is a non-partisan issue.

"We've got some incredible MPs that all feel the need—on all sides of the house, I would say that this is a non-partisan issue that we are starting to talk about. ... Why is it important that people see us talking about this? Only through dialogue and conversation can we break those barriers and reduce the stigma. And I think that it first starts with us."

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### B.C. MPs react to province's decision not to ask for decriminalization extension

Conservative addictions critic Todd Doherty said the drug decriminalization program in British Columbia is an "abject failure," while NDP health critic Gord Johns said that the number of overdose deaths in the province have declined since the program first began in 2023.

The MPs, who both represent B.C. ridings, shared their reaction to the provincial government's Jan. 14 announcement that it will not ask Ottawa to extend the pilot program. The program will now end on Jan. 31, 2026. In a statement, B.C. Health Minister Josie Osborne said, "Despite the hard work and good intentions behind the pilot, it has not delivered the results we hoped for."

Though Johns didn't attribute the decline in deaths solely to the decriminalization program, he said the idea of the program was "to bring people out of the dark to get support."

Statistics from the B.C. Coroners Service spanning from 2014 to October 2025 show that unregulated drug toxicity deaths were at their highest in 2023 with 2,589 deaths. In 2024, the number of people who lost their lives to drug toxicity was 2,315. The province saw 1,538 deaths between January and October 2025.

"I regret the province of B.C.'s decision [on] the decrim pilot. ... I'm further disappointed that the province didn't release an independent, objective evaluation of the program. So, this is the problem when governments change course on life-and-death issues like this. Canadians deserve to see the evidence," Johns said.

Doherty said there are not enough treatment beds in his province. The MP recently lost a friend to substance use after the friend was turned out of the facility where he had been receiving help.

"He was in treatment, he was doing well, but at Christmas, they closed the doors of the facility and they sent him back out. That's unbelievable. He died days later," Doherty said.

"We need to make sure that we are getting people into beds and treatment when they need it, when they request it, and when they're at their lowest low point," Doherty also said.

When the pilot—which decriminalized the use of small amounts of some drugs in some public spaces—was introduced in 2023, it was proposed as a way to ensure that those who suffer with substance use receive help as opposed to entering the justice system. But over the last two years, concerns about public drug use in communities and crime have mounted. B.C. in 2024—with the approval of Health Canada—decided to restrict the areas in which the applicable drugs could be consumed.

# ‘Stark contrast’ between Carney and Trudeau’s approach to Indigenous relations, says ITK president Obed

**Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami** president Natan Obed says it’s been ‘challenging’ navigating the ‘new lens’ of Mark Carney’s leadership, with the national body having to pitch investments to the feds in ‘almost like a Dragon’s Den approach.’

BY ELEANOR WAND

**Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami** president Natan Obed says it has been “challenging” navigating new relationships with the Carney government after 10 years of relationship building under the Trudeau-era Liberals, with his organization now deploying an almost “Dragon’s Den approach” of pitching investments to get heard.

“We spent some time in the beginning of this Carney government trying to find a way to reorient those who are in the key positions of power about the work that we have been doing together and the need for continuation,” said Obed, who’s led the ITK since 2015.

He pointed to a “stark contrast” between former prime minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government and that of Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.).

“The biggest challenge has been to keep the institutions that we’ve worked 10 years to create functioning,” he said.

Obed noted that, for Trudeau, reconciliation was a “key plank” of his platform.

The former prime minister launched the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, ran on implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action in 2015, and enshrined the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples into federal law.

Obed said that Carney, by contrast, has spoken about “reconciliation generally as a theme,” and as a “contributing consideration”

for the feds’ work, but it’s not his first priority.

“I’m not casting aspersions on that,” he said. “The focus on the ‘One Canadian Economy,’ on housing and building housing and reducing the dependence on the U.S. ... Those are, rightly, his focal areas.”

But Obed said the result is there’s “almost like a *Dragon’s Den* approach,” with ITK having to pitch investments.

ITK was “left in the dark” about the future of some pledges made under Trudeau, including Ottawa’s 2018 commitment to eliminate tuberculosis across Inuit Nunangat by 2030, Obed said, and the Inuit Child First Initiative, which provides access to government-funded products and services for Inuit children.

“We spent the better part of a year trying to figure out how to navigate through the new lens of a new leader and those who he has chosen to represent the interests of the government at [Privy Council Office] and [Prime Minister’s Office],” he said.

“So, it’s been challenging.”

## ‘Canada has a lot of work to do to earn back the trust,’ says AFN national chief

Assembly of First Nations (AFN) National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak said “Canada has a lot of work to do to earn back the trust after Bill C-5 and a bad budget.”

The prime minister’s first federal budget, released in November 2025, did not contain an Indigenous-specific chapter, unlike previous budgets under Trudeau. The AFN criticized the budget for falling short on health, training, language, and truth and reconciliation.

Carney’s Bill C-5, the controversial legislation attached to the Major Projects Office (MPO)—passed into law as the Building Canada Act—has been criticized for giving Parliament the authority to fast-track projects with national-interest status, which could see treaty rights overridden.

Most recently, the government’s energy deal with Alberta, which outlines a pathway to an oil pipeline running from Alberta’s oil sands to the British Columbia’s coast, was denounced by Coastal First Nations in B.C.,

who say they don’t want the project built. The AFN adopted a resolution back in December urging Canada to withdraw from the deal.

On Jan. 13, Carney met with some coastal nations to discuss “how we build and how we build together,” he said.

But Woodhouse Nepinak said First Nations’ rights are “under threat in new ways.”

“We have fought in Parliament, and continue to do so,” said Woodhouse Nepinak, who was elected to the role in December 2023. “Unfortunately, we keep fighting in courts, and we keep winning, and we will keep winning in courts. But the relationship between this country has to change.”

“Why do we always have to fight through the courts when we should be around the table making decisions together?”

## Tension is palpable’ over Carney’s development plans, says Métis National Council

The Métis National Council has been “pretty encouraged” by Carney’s willingness to engage on major projects, said its president, Victoria Pruden.

The prime minister held a Métis Major Projects Summit in August where he told Métis representatives that their rights will be respected as projects fast-tracked under the MPO are developed.

Pruden called the summit “incredibly productive,” saying she sees “a lot of potential” for future meetings, with cabinet ministers taking a “relationship-building” approach.

Still, Pruden pointed to tension stemming from Carney’s rapid development ambitions.

“What we’re seeing is that tension where we have an extremely powerful prime minister with such that perspective of ‘let’s get things done, let’s move forward quickly,’ she said.

“Holding that balance of meaningful engagement with Indigenous partners, including Sec. 35 rights-holding Métis governments and organizations with land claims and who are in treaty negotiations—that tension is palpable.”

Pruden pointed to an occasion where the council was notified of consultation on a Friday for a meeting the next week.



Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed, pictured, said his organization has been ‘left in the dark’ about the status of pledges made under former prime minister Justin Trudeau. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

countries have sent troops to the autonomous Danish territory.

Obed said the threat will have “pretty big ramifications” for Inuit, calling the situation “scary.”

“We are caught in the middle of, again, geopolitical dynamics that are not of our making,” he said.

“We ... want Canada to work with us on any threats that we may see to our homeland and to our way of life.”

## Time to ‘close the loop’ 10 years after Daniels decision: Pruden

A “top priority” for the AFN is getting clean-water legislation for First Nations tabled after a previous bill died on the Order Paper in the last Parliament. Woodhouse Nepinak said she’s hoping new legislation doesn’t differ from the original bill.

She also said she was “really glad” that Carney agreed to a long-requested joint federal-provincial-territorial-First Ministers Meeting with First Nations, giving them a “full seat at the table.”

Carney announced the meeting at the AFN Special Chiefs Assembly back in December, telling chiefs they would “set the agenda.”

For Pruden, the priority for the year ahead is to “close the loop” on self-government agreements, treaties, and land claim agreements, 10 years after the Daniels v. Canada decision.

That Supreme Court ruling said the federal government is legally responsible for legislating issues affecting Métis and non-Status Indians, with both being considered Indians under Sec. 91(24) of the Constitution, though not under the Indian Act.

“My dad is 85 years old. I never thought that at this age, I would see my dad still not having access, as a vulnerable senior, to more supports around health care, around housing,” Pruden said.

“Canada needs to come to the table and settle some of these matters.”

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# Editorial

## Editorial

### MPs from all parties must work together to deal with external and internal challenges facing Canada

Canada is currently facing one of the roughest periods in its history, dealing with both external and internal challenges. These are serious challenges. Externally, the country is facing threats to its sovereignty from its southern neighbour, while also grappling with the economic fallout of a trade war with its largest trading partner. Canada and the United States exchange approximately \$1-trillion worth of goods and services every year, and hundreds of thousands of jobs on both sides of the border depend on this relationship. U.S. President Donald Trump's almost daily inflammatory rhetoric and hefty tariffs on Canadian goods have already cost thousands of jobs in this country, and more losses are expected.

Federal and provincial governments in Canada have been seized by this daily soap opera as new developments and threats from the U.S. president emerge.

The situation has become even more concerning following U.S. Special Forces' strikes in Venezuela and the illegal arrest of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro earlier this month, with senior U.S. officials openly expressing willingness to use force to achieve their objectives in other countries. Following these strikes, Trump has threatened similar actions against Colombia and Iran, while also warning Mexico to "get its act together." Until last week, the Trump administration was also signalling the use of force to take over Greenland, but the president seems to have backed down from that threat last week following conversations with NATO about a possible deal.

Internally, Canada is facing mounting national-unity challenges. Alberta is expected to hold a separation referendum later this year, while the Parti Québécois is widely projected to win Quebec's next provincial election. If they do, they could potentially pursue their own independence referendum at some point during their mandate. At the same time, affordability remains a top issue for Canadians, with recent polls showing jobs, the economy, and Canada-U.S. relations as important issues.

Against this backdrop, Prime Minister Mark Carney, who delivered a groundbreaking speech last week at the World Economic Forum, has his hands full. While leading a minority government, Carney must keep his government afloat and navigate both internal divisions and external threats. Politicians of all stripes must understand that the responsibility to deal with these challenges does not rest only with Carney. All party leaders and MPs—regardless of their political affiliation—should set aside their differences and work together to get the country through and out of these turbulent times.

Usually in between elections, people don't follow politics closely. But these are unusual times, so people are paying close attention to how politicians of different parties are conducting themselves. Those seen as acting irresponsibly or only in their own petty self-interest may ultimately face voters' judgment at the ballot box.

*The Hill Times*



## Letters to the Editor



### Canada shouldn't spend \$3-billion on 'money-losing tourist trains': letter writer

In the next few weeks, VIA Rail will be receiving bids to replace its "long-haul" trains, which run from Halifax to Vancouver, and to Prince Rupert, Churchill, and northern Quebec. Many of the existing cars are now 80 years old, and there is concern that, despite careful maintenance, they may become unsafe. The new trains, essentially like-for-like replacements, are expected to cost about \$3-billion. Final assembly may be done in Ontario or Quebec, sustaining a few hundred jobs.

We love trains, but with all the other pressures on the federal budget, does it really make sense to spend so much money on services that carry mostly tourists and require perpetual subsidy? These are the last vestiges of trains that, in the days before paved roads, linked almost every community across the country. Now they are travelling curiosities. VIA's premier train, "The Canadian," runs between Vancouver and Toronto. According to VIA's 2024 report, ridership in 2024 was 64,000, equal to about 0.15 per cent of Canada's population.

Many passengers are foreign tourists, and some make a repeat trip, so probably fewer than one in 100 Canadians ever ride it. It loses more than \$60-million per year.

The train does serve a few remote communities in British Columbia and Ontario, but almost all of these are now connected by paved roads and could be served in other ways for a tiny fraction of what VIA costs. VIA only runs twice a week, so even if it offers a nicer trip than a bus, timetables usually don't

match when people want to travel.

Yes, "The Canadian" attracts wealthy foreign tourists, many of whom stay on to spend money at hotels and restaurants. But more tourists now ride "The Rocky Mountaineer," which operates profitable, unsubsidized trains over the route between Vancouver and Banff. Why is Canada investing billions of dollars to continue a loss-making service that competes with a profitable enterprise?

There may be an alternative to simply shutting down the Canadian. In 1999, Australia sold its long-distance trains, the "Ghan" and "Indian Pacific," to a private consortium, of which I was a member. Like VIA Rail's Canadian, these trains always lost money in public ownership. We figured out how to make them profitable, increasing and extending services, and they continue to operate to this day. A private operator might find ways to do something similar with the Canadian.

If the federal government does want to buy trains to protect manufacturing jobs, buy some bi-level coaches to lengthen trains in the Quebec-Windsor corridor. This would address the current dispute with CN, and enable VIA to carry millions more passengers at lower fares.

The train does serve a few remote communities in British Columbia and Ontario, but almost all of these are now connected by paved roads and could be served in other ways for a tiny fraction of what VIA costs. VIA only runs twice a week, so even if it offers a nicer trip than a bus, timetables usually don't

Michael Schabas  
 Toronto, Ont.



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump at the White House in Washington, D.C., on May 5, 2025.

Photograph courtesy of the White House/photographer Daniel Torok

# Carney did in Davos what other world leaders should be doing: rebuking the U.S. bully

U.S. President Donald Trump didn't like what Mark Carney said in his speech in Davos. You can be sure that payback is coming. The key for Canadians is to be as brave as their prime minister, no matter how Trump tries to punish this country for taking the higher road.

Michael Harris



Harris

**H**ALIFAX—Along with many other things, United States President Donald Trump can be a whining, whining, crybaby.

The tantrum-filled toddler in Trump was on full display in Davos, Switzerland, when he delivered his speech to the World Economic Forum on Jan. 21.

It was not really a speech. It was a boastful and insulting rant. For more than an hour, Trump extolled his own country, claiming that the U.S. won the Second World War and single-handedly financed NATO, but got nothing in return. He proceeded to slag the host country, Switzerland, the leader of France, NATO, and just about everyone else.

The president had especially choice words for Canada and Prime Minister Mark Carney. The day before Trump spoke, Carney told the gathering that the international community was in the midst of a "rupture" of the rules-based system that has kept the world at peace for 80 years.

That system, Carney said, is being replaced by economic coercion from major powers. Although Carney never mentioned Trump by name, everyone knew that he was talking about the man who slapped punitive tariffs on his allies, sparking anxiety and anger around the world.

Carney had some sage advice for his peers. He said that the "middle powers" must stand together in the face of economic intimidation. In a memorable turn of phrase, Canada's prime minister observed, "If we're not at the table, we're on the menu."

Carney's trenchant words received a standing ovation from the audience. He said out loud what everyone was thinking, but were too afraid to declare: don't

give in to Trump's intimidation tactics.

But Trump was not impressed by Carney's speech. Miffed by what he clearly saw as criticism of his use of tariffs against people who disagreed with his policies, the president struck back at Carney in his own speech.

Trump basically told Carney to watch his mouth. He crudely claimed that Canada only existed because of the U.S. He accused Canada of not being grateful for all of the "freebies" he claimed it gets from America. It was an extension of the same nonsense Trump spouted when Justin Trudeau was prime minister, which was that Canada is not a real country, and should be America's 51st state.

Currently, what has the world so worried is Trump's brazenly declared ambition to annex Greenland.

The president does not seem to care that Greenlanders don't want to be Americans. He does not seem to care that Greenland is an autonomous territory within the realm of Denmark, a NATO ally of the U.S. All he cares about is snatching territory that doesn't belong to him. No one should forget or downplay his stated desire to annex Canada.

Why is Trump trying to do this? Is he after Greenland's mineral wealth? Does he think that annexing Greenland will help with his legacy as president? Did

his military intrusion into Venezuela create a taste for imposing his will on other countries?

No one knows. But one thing is crystal clear: Trump's stated reason for taking over Greenland—to defend against Russian and Chinese incursions in the Arctic—is patently false.

If beefing up North American security were his true intention, he doesn't need to annex the island. Under existing agreements, the U.S. has the ability to build as many bases on Greenland as it wants.

The fact is that the Americans themselves closed bases there. They are now down to one. And where is the proof of Chinese and Russian incursions in the Arctic that Trump says he wants to defend against?

The world is right to be nervous about any leader of any country—let alone the leader of the most powerful nation on Earth—who wants to annex other people's territory. When the United Kingdom's then-prime minister Neville Chamberlain allowed Adolf Hitler's Germany to annex the Sudetenland from Czechoslovakia in 1938, it did not lead to "peace for our time," as Chamberlain boasted, but to the Second World War.

It is tempting but foolish to appease Trump in the matter of Greenland. It is a good thing that Trump now says he will not use force to take over the island.

But it would be almost as bad to allow him to annex the island by negotiation. What country would he want to grab next under the pretext of national security? Canada perhaps?

Don't laugh at what would normally be an absurd possibility. According to a *Globe and Mail* article on Jan. 20, the Canadian Armed Forces are modelling a scenario in which Canada is invaded by the U.S. The apparent assumption is that if Trump is willing to destroy NATO over acquiring Greenland, everything bizarre seems suddenly possible.

And that's why Carney's implicit rebuke of Trump's acquisitive aspirations was so important. Bullies always need to be confronted. Bullies in charge of powerful countries need to be called out when their actions go beyond the pale. They need to be called out by other world players.

But there is always a price to be paid for taking a moral stand, especially against a vengeful and powerful player like Trump. Consider what he told his critics could happen over the Greenland issue: if the European Union were to allow him to annex Greenland, the U.S. would be grateful; but if the EU were to oppose him, he would "remember."

Trump didn't like what Carney said in his speech in Davos. You can be sure that payback is coming. And Trump will have the perfect opportunity when the free trade deal between Canada, the U.S., and Mexico comes up for renegotiation this year.

The key for Canadians is to be as brave as their prime minister, no matter how Trump tries to punish this country for taking the higher road.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT Back to Parliament

# Going along to get along is over

Canadians are waiting to see how Donald Trump retaliates, but Davos proved one thing: America is alone.

Sheila Copps



Copps' Corner

OTTAWA—Going along to get along is over.

Prime Minister Mark Carney made it clear at the World Economic Forum in Davos last week that the time for appeasement of a major power is dead.

Carney's speech resonated around the world, as the Davos audience responded with a standing ovation.

The call for middle powers to work together was not lost on other countries with whom the prime minister hopes to cooperate. Nor was it lost on United States President Donald Trump.

Carney was careful not to specifically mention Trump in his speech, but the message about the end of the current world order could not have been clearer.

Carney appealed to middle-power cooperation as the only antidote to balance out the hegemonic mentality of the stronger, major powers including the U.S. "If we are not at the table we are on the menu," was how Carney bluntly put it.

Trump was quick to respond, claiming in his own Davos speech the next day that "Canada lives because of the United States."

He also characterized Canadians as ungrateful, and caustically reminded "Mark" to remember that in the future.

Trump did not start calling Carney "governor," which was the moniker he constantly used to describe former prime minister Justin Trudeau. But he made no bones about his belief that Canada does not appreciate America's help in defence.

Canada does not appreciate being treated as a future 51st state. Recent polling showed that almost one-third of Canadians believe Trump could invade our country.

As Trump was speaking, leaders from Nordic countries were gathering in Canada's North to discuss how the Arctic region might defend itself from invaders, including the threat that the president has made to invade Greenland.

In the past 200 years, Canadians and Americans have not feared each other. We have lauded the fact that we share the longest undefended border in the world. That hasn't stopped Trump from claiming that he wants to take over Canada.

A few days ago, an image of a map of North America with Canada under the American flag was posted on Trump's media feed as a photo of the presidential cabinet.

British Columbia Premier David Eby said last week he was at a complete loss for words to express how angry he was about the post. He encouraged British Columbians and other Canadians to continue their boycott of American booze and travel.

Americans are getting that kind of pushback from countries around the world. In contrast to Carney, the American president's rambling message—which went



Prime Minister Mark Carney delivers his speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, 2026. *Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/ Ciaran McCrickard*

on for more than an hour—was greeted with tepid applause. A number of listeners simply left the room while the president strangely kept mixing up the names of Greenland and Iceland.

At Davos, Trump repeated a statement made earlier in the week by two of his cabinet members, that he would always put "America first, but not America alone."

But his words do not match his actions. Everything he has done as president is making enemies of former friends. Instead, he reached out to enemies like North Korea and Russia. Europe is on edge, and Latin America is wondering who could be next for military takeover.

Trump's insistence that America needs to take over Greenland—and his threat to use military action—has prompted North Atlantic Treaty Organization colleagues to plan defence of Greenland against a NATO member.

The stock market responded negatively to Trump's Greenland threats, and that may be why he told Davos he would not use military force to take over Greenland.

Shortly after, Trump issued a statement claiming he would not invade Greenland by force

because the Americans were working with NATO on a solution that would satisfy everyone.

He also backed off imposing tariffs by Feb. 1 on all European countries opposed to his Greenland takeover. The climb down was clear recognition that America is rapidly becoming isolated because of Trump's unpredictable and illegal threats.

The global political landscape has been unravelling ever since Trump's re-election in November 2024.

Carney's global message is that we can't count on nostalgia to fix the problem. The old world order is gone. Anyone who wants a rules-based international system, has got to respond to the realpolitik that the U.S. under Trump is no longer a trusted ally.

Trump knows that Carney has already been working with other leaders on a new way to establish rules that bullies cannot override.

Canadians are waiting to see how Trump retaliates, but Davos proved one thing.

America is alone.

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

# Conservative convention promises drama

Will Pierre Poilievre use the convention to showcase a new political persona? Will we see a new and improved Poilievre, one perhaps who is less confrontational?

Gerry Nicholls



Post Partisan Pundit



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will go through his leadership review at the Conservative convention in Calgary. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

as gatherings where the cut and thrust of politics are blatantly on display.

Indeed, watch any political convention, and you're sure to witness some drama, some conflict, some surprises and, if you're lucky, maybe a little dose of *Game of Thrones*-style intrigue.

It's the "politics of politics" on a grand scale.

So, just for fun, let's speculate on some of the possible dramatic

theatrics which might erupt at the Conservative convention.

Of course, the most obvious drama for us to focus on is Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre's impending leadership review.

What if he gets less than overwhelming support from attending delegates? Will his leadership survive?

That certainly promises to be an interesting story, but there are other even juicier storylines to contemplate.

For instance, I'm wondering whether anti-Poilievre factions exist within the party, factions that are secretly, but actively seeking to undermine the Conservative leader's support.

Will they play a role at the convention?

And if such factions are operating behind the scenes, does that mean certain high-ranking Conservatives are in the shadows pulling their strings, hoping they can help usurp Poilievre?

Sometimes I wonder, for example, if Ontario Premier Doug Ford has his eyes on the Conservative leadership crown.

Will he or his supporters cause some mischief at the convention?

Other possible usurpers to throw in a conspiratorial mix include former Alberta premier Jason Kenney, up-and-coming Conservative MP Jamil Jivani, and one-time federal Progressive Conservative leader Jean Charest.

And it's not just leadership questions that provide grist for the speculation mill.

Keep in mind, the Conservatives gathering in Calgary will also debate policy positions that'll include several hot-button topics, including private health care, scrapping Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policies, and abortion.

Will this cause tension on the convention floor?

I can certainly imagine a showdown occurring between Red Tories, social conservatives, and populists over some of these issues as each side seeks an upper hand, a showdown which could help define the Conservative Party's immediate future.

Will it come across to the Canadian public as radical or as mainstream?

Then, if you really want to get into the weeds, we can hypothesize what will happen if policy debates on the convention floor become acrimonious or heated.

Would that put the Conservative Party on the verge of an ideological civil war?

And finally, let's talk about Poilievre's performance at the convention, a topic which will raise a few key questions.

First off, will he use the convention to showcase a new political persona? In other words, will we see a new and improved Poilievre, one perhaps who is less confrontational?

Or will he be the same old Poilievre, the one we've seen for years strutting on the national stage?

Inquiring political minds want to know!

The other question concerning Poilievre is whether he'll be able to instill enthusiasm in his base.

Keep in mind, he comes to this convention as the guy who lost the last federal election, a failure that has surely eroded his political star power.

On top of that, his base is probably still demoralized and shaken from that loss.

So, does Poilievre still have what it takes to energize and mobilize his troops, to rally them for the next election?

If he can, it might give his party some much-needed momentum heading into this year.

So yes, given all this potential drama, the Conservative convention should be worth a watch.

*Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.*

*The Hill Times*



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## OPINION Back to Parliament

# In a world filled with conflict, Yamanouchi reflects on diplomacy

Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi reminds us that in this chaotic world of change, we must recognize the importance of diplomacy. By working together, nations have the potential to solve the global issues that imperil human existence.

Roseann O'Reilly Runte  
Opinion



**A**t the beginning of a new year, we traditionally share sincere wishes for peace. Yet, today, conflict caused by natural disasters and human violence touches nearly every corner of the globe. While we individually, and as nations, offer support for those affected, we must also seek to mitigate the causes of such tragedy. With scientists around the world working together, we can contribute positively to reducing and alleviating environmental disasters. We must also create the political, economic, and just conditions that will reduce violence. To achieve this, we need diplomacy.

Kanji Yamanouchi, Japan's ambassador to Canada, has served his country and the world in international relations for 41 years. He has been stationed in Tokyo, Seoul, New York, and Washington prior to taking up his post in Ottawa. He kindly agreed to share some of his important insights with me.

When asked how he became interested in diplomacy, Yamanouchi admitted that, as a very young child, he loved music, reading, and writing. While as a pre-teen, he might even have dreamed of being a rock star, he chose instead to pursue his studies, and, on graduating from university, he decided to take the foreign service exam along with 1,499 other



Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, pictured at the Japanese Embassy in Ottawa on June 8, 2022. Yamanouchi has served his country and the world in international relations for 41 years. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Supreme Court Chief Justice Richard Wagner, left, then-House Speaker Greg Fergus, and Kanji Yamanouchi, pictured Feb. 11, 2025, at Japan's National Day reception at the Chateau Laurier in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

applicants. He humbly admits to having been one of the 25 selected that year. He continued his education at work, learning the need for collaboration and cooperation in his team, across government departments and nations. He came to understand the difference between politics and policy, between knowledge gained through experience and information available on the internet. He learned to recognize the power of gentle suggestions and the need to replace youthful hubris with the wisdom of humility. Recognizing the immensity and complexity of international issues, he said he felt like the "proverbial frog at the bottom of a

well," looking up and seeing only a small portion of the sky.

Yamanouchi offered a definition of diplomacy, saying it's based on four pillars: politics and security, economics (business), culture and education. International issues create the context for and inform the work accomplished in each pillar. Today, these issues include global warming, the lack of a world centre (the harsh reality of geopolitics), the possibilities and dangers of AI, and immigration. These challenges also provide common grounds, the basis for mutual understanding. In turn they can be fostered by greater exchanges of knowledge leading to deeper

friendships and partnerships, as well as mutual understanding.

While the ambassador emphasized the importance of building teams and consensus, saying that diplomacy requires dialogue and flourishes within partnerships and alliances, he also hinted at the role small gestures can play in enabling successful discussions. He impressively recalls how the negative outcome of a difficult international discussion was avoided by delicately inserting a detour into shared interests in art, literature or music.

For example, Yamanouchi remembered navigating conversations more candidly with Aung San Suu Kyi of Myanmar in the

early 2000s, after finding their shared passion for the music of Bob Dylan. Understanding requires knowledge and diplomatic relations can be fostered when common ground is discovered. This is the building block for relations among nations and the people who represent them. Diplomacy involves polite suggestions rather than direct contradictions.

In reflecting on the history and present relations between Japan and Canada, Yamanouchi returns to the idea of interdependence, based on mutual interests. He says that today, regardless of size, no country can survive on its own, and Japan and Canada need each other. Japan cannot feed its population without purchasing Canadian agricultural produce. For Japan, he says, it is a life and death situation. Today, Canada has agricultural produce to export, and seeks stable markets like that offered by Japan. Japan also needs natural resources such as critical minerals, while we can benefit from Japanese support for manufacturing in this country. Japanese and Canadian companies are working together to extract and provide critical minerals in an environmentally friendly fashion.

Yamanouchi pauses to reflect on the enormous potential of Canada as a young country with two official languages, vast resources, with expanding expertise in AI and quantum, a country that recognizes the injustices of the past and is committed to correcting them, and a country of immigration that welcomes knowledge and ways of knowing from around the world. He sees these characteristics as indicators of Canada's strong potential.

The ambassador shared with me a provisional translation of his book about Canada that was published in Japan. His book intends to provide Japanese and other visitors to Canada not with the general information one might find on the internet, but knowledge gained by living here. His work also provides an important mirror for Canadians. It is useful to see ourselves in the eyes of others and it is refreshing to be reminded of the many important and successful diplomatic roles Canada has played in its relatively brief history.

The ambassador has also written several thoughtful articles such as one recently published in this paper on HMCS Robert Hampton Gray. It demonstrates the wisdom and courage of the Japanese people, the importance of gestures of healing in the wake of wars, and the choice we have as individuals and as nations to stand together in recognizing both courage and sorrow and the importance of memory. Diplomacy is sharing knowledge and understanding.

As we face 2026, Ambassador Yamanouchi reminds us that in this chaotic world of change, we must recognize the importance of diplomacy. By working together, nations have the potential to solve the global issues that imperil human existence.

Roseann O'Reilly Runte is the author of *Canadians Who Innovate: The Trailblazers and Ideas That Are Changing the World*, published by Simon & Schuster in 2024.

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## COMMENT Back to Parliament

# Carney has thrown his hat over the wall, now what?

A few months ago, the PM spoke of sacrifice as Canada realigned around new priorities. The same theme popped up in a *Globe and Mail* story last week about planning work at National Defence HQ about how to resist, via an insurgency, an American attack. The key line to me in that story was this: 'Conscription has been ruled out for now, but the level of sacrifice that would be asked of Canadians remains a central topic, the officials said.' I'll bet it does!

Matt Gurney

Opinion

**T**ORONTO—Mark Carney has thrown his hat over the wall. Now what?

I suspect the prime minister will get the reference, but if you don't, it's an old Irish story told by writer Frank O'Connor and then popularized by the late United States president John F. Kennedy.

The story tells of a couple of good Irish lads who've come to a tall orchard wall. Determined to see what was on the other side, they toss their hats over the top. Now they have to climb it to get their hats back.

In Davos, Switzerland, last week, the PM tossed Canada's proverbial hat over the wall. He's openly declared the former "rules-based international order" a dead concept, and, indeed, a bogus one. (To which I say, please, prime minister, sir, may I have some more? Pumped right into my veins?)

He said that the great powers are going to impose their will on others, including Canada, and it's time for the middle powers to come together and insist that



Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, 2026.  
Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard

rules and norms be honoured, including by combined force, if necessary.

It was a bold speech, and it got noticed. U.S. President Donald

Trump's own Davos speech the next day noted that Canada exists at the pleasure of the U.S., and there's more truth to that than I'd like.

So, how do we get over the damned wall?

That's not a snarky question. Let me say for the record that I read the PM's speech and would

happily co-sign it. The PM is articulating a vision of global change that I entirely agree with, and also one that I supported when it was Chrystia Freeland articulating it, as she tried to do, with only partial success, during the tenure of the last prime minister. But now we have to do things.

We are doing things! New trade deals with China and Qatar last week, and others before, are things we are doing. Ramping up defence spending is a thing we're doing. Closer cooperation with our European allies, particularly on defence and security, is a thing we're doing.

Good! My question is now, what else can be done? What other deals should we make, now? What other military capabilities can we procure, as soon as humanly possible?

And, critically, what should or must be asked of Canadians? A few months ago, the PM spoke of sacrifice as Canada realigned around new priorities. But not much happened. The same theme popped up in a *Globe and Mail* story last week about planning work at National Defence HQ about how to resist, via an insurgency, an American attack. The key line to me in that story was this: "Conscription has been ruled out for now, but the level of sacrifice that would be asked of Canadians remains a central topic, the officials said."

I'll bet it does! Because that's the key question, isn't it? Canada, as it exists today, is optimized (if that's the word) to function and thrive under the old rules. It's a simple matter of fact that optimizing to the new rules is going to mean changing our country, and fast.

What's that going to look like? How many countries will join with us? How many will take us seriously, given how unserious we've been in recent decades? How many of our friends and even allies—if it comes right down to it—will decide to sell us out in order to focus on priorities closer to home? After all, we are in America's backyard ... will the French or British threaten to nuke Boston to keep the Yanks out of Ottawa?

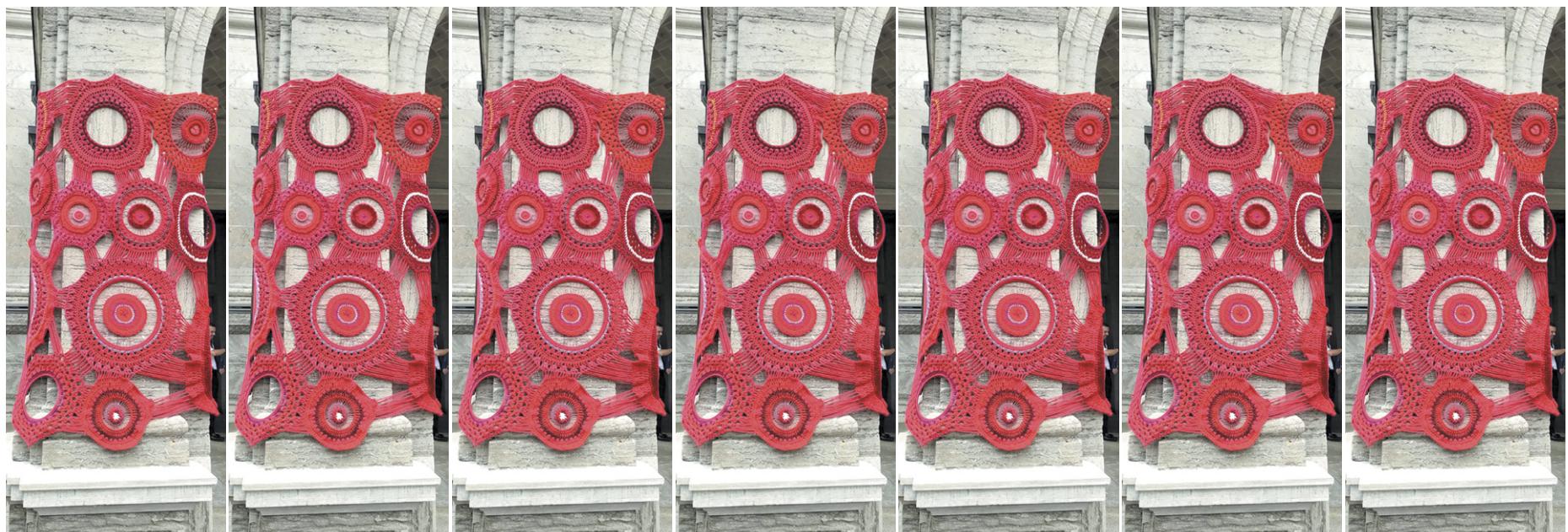
I don't know. I have some guesses and ideas, but it's going to be up to Carney to set the direction and do the things we need to do. Our hats are over the wall, Trump has noticed them, and now we've got to go get them. How, and how fast, is what we still must decide for ourselves. While we still have time.

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A note of thanks: My colleagues at *The Hill Times*, and its readers, have the very sincere thanks of both myself and my wife relating to our recent and ongoing health issue. Your support matters, and while we do intend to move forward with as much privacy as possible, the care and concern shown has been a comfort to us both. We appreciate your prayers.

Matt Gurney is a Toronto-based journalist. He is co-editor of *The Line* ([ReadTheLine.ca](http://ReadTheLine.ca)), an online magazine. He can be reached at [matt@readtheline.ca](mailto:matt@readtheline.ca).

*The Hill Times*



Métis artist Tracey-Mae Chambers' giant red wool, silk, and cotton crocheted art installation hangs outside Rideau Hall on July 1, 2023. Rose LeMay says the next Governor General of Canada should be an Indigenous person. *The Hill Times* photographs by Kate Malloy

# Principled-based pragmatism and the wisdom of the seven generations

An easy win for the prime minister to show his commitment to Indigenous inclusion is to name an Indigenous individual to be our next Governor General. We have thousands of years of experience in diplomacy and relationship-building, and we need to be part of whatever comes next.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths

OTTAWA—"We take on the world as it is, not wait for a world we wish it to be." Prime Minister Mark Carney's use of parataxis and measured delivery added levels of power that rocked the world, like Michelle Obama's speech at the 2008 Democratic convention.

The prime minister's assessment of the world today is in inarguable. The broken trust of America due to the current actions of the United States president will not be repaired after his term is over. Canada has no time to waste to pivot to a new way of being to ourselves and with allies.

In terms of content in the second part of Carney's speech, it's clear that shifting alliances and building new trading partners

is the chosen approach. Given the asymmetric capitalist system of trading which protects the First World at the cost of the Third World, is this the best values-based approach? Should we use capitalism to rebuild a new world order? I'm not sure we have any choice today given the urgency and the levels of threat against us as a country. And, yes, this is short-term gain for significantly bad long-term impacts on the world. Capitalism is pretty bad, it drives colonization—which almost led to the destruction of Indigenous Peoples. Ginger Gosnell Myers, a First Nations leader in British Columbia, reminded me that we've lived through apocalypse before, and we'll make it through again if we have to. I'm pondering this question as I plan to drive my truck over to Starbucks and then go shopping, so there's that.

I have one area of quibble about the content of Carney's speech, and it's about the values of Canada. I'd prefer if the prime minister had said more and did better on reconciliation and the inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in this time of crisis, and this is a message that his office needs to focus on urgently. Canada is not strong without Indigenous Peoples. Canada is not strong when it bulldozes or polices its way into natural resources on Indigenous lands. Maintaining one's values is not the simple card-sorting exercise where domestic strength is the ace over the ten of hearts of minority inclusion. We have to do both, or we do neither.

If we have a pluralism that is the envy of the world, it may be because they don't know what Canada did to Indigenous Peoples, and they will learn quickly once they peak under the hood. The only way we maintain our reputation for pluralism is to continue the work on reconciliation, and to humbly share our national journey with others.

This is yet another request for the prime minister to apply his skills of rhetoric here at home. Bring Canadians along on this

journey. Put your money where your words are, prime minister. Take steps to enshrine Indigenous Peoples in places of national leadership, in the discussions on how build Canada strong.

Gov. Gen. Mary Simon, as an Inuk, has fundamentally shifted the role of governor general for the better with her actions here and abroad to ensure Indigenous inclusion. Who better to carry our flag to Greenland but our Inuk Governor General? Who better to build alliances based on Indigenous inclusion with Mexico? She has created a wave of Indigenous support and love across this country and likely beyond. The role of the Governor General has finally started to have a quiet impact for pluralism that is truly Canadian at heart.

An easy win for the prime minister to show his commitment to Indigenous inclusion is to name an Indigenous individual to be our next governor general. We have thousands of years of experience in diplomacy and relationship-building, and we need to be part of whatever comes next.

*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.*

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## COMMENT Back to Parliament

# Who's Tory now? It's complicated

If traditional conservative voters, and others, are looking for an effective, intelligent and nimble centre-right leader, they already have one in Mark Carney. We'll see how long this lasts.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



**C**HELSEA, QUE.—These are troubling times for the ideologically pure. And confusing times for a divided right.

Many Conservatives were falling over themselves to commend Prime Minister Mark Carney for his cogent, well-received speech to the economic and political elite in Davos, Switzerland, last week. James Moore, a former Stephen Harper-era cabinet minister, tweeted: "Vote Liberal, vote Conservative—that choice will come. Put down your partisan swords today and take a minute to listen to this speech and what is being framed. These times are not like any other."

Conservative columnist Tasha Kheiriddin called the speech "brilliant"—as did other centre-right commentators, some more guardedly. Even NDP leadership candidate and MP Heather McPherson called the remarks "worth watching." Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet said it was a "fine" speech.

As everyone knows by now, Carney urged middle powers, like Canada, to band together economically, militarily, and diplomatically as a counterweight to a rogue American president, intent on destroying the existing world order. His remarks created an admiring buzz among global financial and political elites that may—or may not—pay dividends among ordinary voters at home.

Arguably, the most enthusiastic response came from conservative-adjacent observers in this country, an electoral bloc that appears increasing ready to embrace the nominally Liberal prime minister as one of theirs: a



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured in silhouette, walking up the stairs in the West Block on Parliament Hill on April 3, 2015. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

reborn Progressive Conservative. Could it even push more Conservative MPs to cross the floor, delivering Carney his cherished majority?

In an odd twist, however, the prime minister's most high-profile Conservative ally to date, Ontario Premier Doug Ford, has taken issue with another key Carney initiative: the recent trade deal that will permit 49,000 Chinese-made EVs into the country, yearly, at a much-reduced tariff of six per cent (down from 100 per cent). If the agreement holds, imports rise to 70,000 vehicles in five years.

Ford said he's "disappointed" that he didn't get more than two-hours notice of the deal. He thought he and Carney had a "great relationship," he said, sounding hurt. Ford wants more than promises, or vague allusions to future Chinese auto plants in Ontario, employing thousands of local workers. He wants "concrete investments."

Some of his criticism was shared by federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (with whom Ford does not have a "great relationship"), who griped that Carney must explain why

he called China "Canada's biggest security threat" during last spring's campaign, only to embrace a "strategic partnership" with the global superpower once elected.

(Perhaps Poilievre, preoccupied with this coming weekend's leadership review at the federal Conservative convention in Calgary, hasn't been following the latest aggression, insults, and extortion attempts emanating from Washington, D.C. The threat environment has shifted.)

In any event, the "flood of cheap, made-in-China EVs" that Ford worries about represents only three per cent of cars sold in Canada, albeit 33 per cent of electric cars. But, some 50 per cent of these Chinese vehicles will be "affordable," that is, available for no more than \$35,000—a price few North American manufacturers can, or do, match. So the Chinese EVs won't be displacing Canadian-made vehicles, they'll be offering consumers more choice. Which is how markets should work, conservatives used to argue.

Ford also claimed these cars will be packed with Chinese spy technology, presumably so agents

in Beijing can track Canadians' weekly trips to Costco, or to the pickle-ball court. Said the premier: "I don't trust what the Chinese put into these cars."

That claim—echoed, again, by Poilievre—was refuted by, of all people, Ottawa's former arch-enemy, Danielle Smith. The UPC Alberta premier told reporters she trusts Canadian security officials to ensure Chinese vehicles sold here "pose no threat" to privacy laws or national security. So, Ford miffed, Smith onside? It is becoming increasingly hard to follow the plot.

It gets more bewildering. Guess who wasn't too upset by the Canada-China deal? Donald Trump. The United States president commented, uncharacteristically mildly: "If you can get a deal with China, you should do that, right?" Of course, Trump doesn't want to import any Canadian-made cars anyway, and apparently doesn't care if we buy fewer of his. (Still following?)

To confuse the picture further, Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe, who once berated the federal Liberal government with clocklike consistency, sat beside Carney at the bargaining

table in Beijing and later praised the deal and the prime minister. That is because, in return for the EV concession, China promised to reduce its crippling tariffs on Canadian canola oil, canola meal, peas, lobsters, and seafood. This pleased other western Canadian and Atlantic premiers, regardless of party label.

Ford's huff likely won't last because the Ontario premier reached peak bi-partisan popularity earlier in the Trump reign when he stood strongly against the U.S. president's predations, earning the sobriquet "Captain Canada." Then Ford's Super Bowl ad irritated Trump, and earned a gentle tut-tut from Carney, but the premier's willingness to work with Ottawa was a vote-winner—and the opposite is likely true, at a time of serious national peril.

Last week, the premier said he was "100 per cent supportive" of Carney's tough talk in Davos, noting that he was saying the same thing even before Carney was elected.

So far, there is one prominent political voice that is—if not entirely missing—muted. That is Poilievre. Given the timing, location, and the absence of Ontario conservatives, who are having their own convention at the same time—Poilievre will be facing (and wooing) a decidedly right-wing crowd in Calgary on Jan. 29-31. Among them will be fans of Trump.

That is why the opposition leader keeps emphasizing affordability, food prices, housing—all valid concerns for many Canadians—and trying to reprise his successful anti-carbon tax campaign. He hasn't had much to say about the dagger pointed at the heart of our economy, in the hands of a deeply unstable and vindictive trading partner.

Carney, by contrast, is resolutely focussed on finding new partners, and, perhaps, leading a fundamental remake of the global trading system. As his Davos speech suggests, without saying so explicitly, quiet diplomacy, subtle flattery, and appeals to common interests have no impact on a manic, impulsive, and entirely self-interested U.S. president. Carney never lowered himself to the abysmal behaviour of some Trump supplicants—United Kingdom Prime Minister Keir Starmer's invite to Windsor Castle, Venezuelan politician Maria Corina Machado donating (and tarnishing) her Nobel Peace Prize—but he has been appropriately tempered.

By contrast, Poilievre is relentlessly parochial, reflexively partisan, wedded to narrow conservative shibboleths, and inhibited from taking the blunt, patriotic, anti-Trump stance of other prominent right-leaning politicians.

Is this someone Canadians want dealing with the grizzly down south?

If traditional conservative voters, and others, are looking for an effective, intelligent and nimble centre-right leader, they already have one in Carney. We'll see how long this lasts.

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

*The Hill Times*

# After a year of inaction, the Carney Liberals must show up for work in 2026

While Canadians struggle with rising costs, economic uncertainty, and a global environment shifting beneath their feet, the session that just concluded will be remembered as one of the least productive in our Parliament's history.

Conservative Senator Leo Housakos  
Opinion



As Parliament prepares to return, Canadians are entitled to ask a simple but fundamental question: what exactly has the Carney government been doing with the mandate it was given so far?

The answer, unfortunately, is not found in a robust legislative record. It is found in its absence. While Canadians struggle with rising costs, economic uncertainty, and a global environment shifting beneath their feet, the session that just concluded will be remembered as one of the least productive in our Parliament's history.

In 2025, the House sat for just 72 days, counting the fewest number of sitting days in more than 80 years. This is a lower tally than in 2021, when the country was in the grip of COVID-19 lockdowns. Across the entirety of 2025, the government managed to pass just seven bills.

This paralysis is no accident. Rather, it is the natural continuation of a Liberal tradition that Prime Minister Mark Carney

seems to have embraced with zeal: the belief that Parliament is a nuisance to be bypassed rather than the heart of our democracy. From the Senate's vantage point, its constitutional role is to examine legislation carefully and ensure that laws serve Canadians in the long term. That work depends on the government bringing forward bills. When it does not, Parliament stalls.

From the opposition benches, it is difficult to accept the government's repeated claims of urgency when they fail to translate priorities into action. Nowhere is this gap between rhetoric and reality more glaring than in Carney's central campaign promises: his supposed unique ability to deal with United States President Donald Trump, and to make Canada more resilient by building "at speeds not seen in generations." He pushed through the One Canadian Economy Act (Bill C-5) with a sense of manufactured urgency, claiming it would unleash nation-building projects.



Prime Minister Mark Carney claimed Bill C-4, the Making Life More Affordable for Canadians Act, was a high priority, and yet the legislation floundered in the House until the end of December, writes Conservative Senator Leo Housakos, leader of the opposition in the Senate. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Yet, months later, the ground remains unbroken. Not one major energy infrastructure project has been announced or started.

He claimed that Bill C-4 (the Making Life More Affordable for Canadians Act) was a high priority to give Canadians a needed tax cut and make home purchases more affordable, and yet the legislation floundered in the House of Commons until the end of December. Although the prime minister has tried to blame this delay on the Conservatives, a simple read of the Finance Committee's proceedings at clause-by-clause consideration shows it was the government filibustering its progress, not the opposition.

This habit of making a grand show of legislating without any intent to follow through is a hallmark of the Liberal "regard" for Parliament. Take the Foreign Agents Registry. Although its passage in 2024 pre-dates his time as prime minister, Carney is now the one slow-walking its implemen-

tation. By refusing to enact the will of Parliament, he is leaving our democracy vulnerable while cozying up to the very perpetrators of foreign interference in Beijing that inspired the registry's creation in the first place.

Parliament cannot hold the executive to account for mere intentions or glossy press releases. Accountability requires legislation being drafted, tabled and debated. Progress requires it be put into practice. When the bells ring this February, Canadians won't be looking for more technocratic vision statements. They will be looking for movement on the cost of living, trade, energy, and national security. In 2026, it is time for the Carney government to finally show up for work.

Conservative Senator Leo Housakos was appointed to the Senate of Canada by then-prime minister Stephen Harper in 2008, and is leader of the opposition in the Senate.

*The Hill Times*

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## OPINION Back to Parliament

# Chrystia Freeland's 10 greatest achievements as Liberal cabinet minister

History will write that Chrystia Freeland did something very few political figures ever do: she stepped in and ended Justin Trudeau's story before he took the party down with him. As she told me the night of the 2024 Liberals' Christmas party, 'He crossed a red line,' a line one can interpret a million and one ways.

Kelly Patrick

Opinion

Here are Chrystia Freeland's 10 greatest achievements as a Liberal cabinet minister.

### Major domestic achievements

**1. Pandemic economic stabilization and recovery (2020–22):** As finance minister, Freeland oversaw one of the largest emergency fiscal responses in Canadian history, and transitioned it into a recovery architecture without collapsing employment or the financial system. Canada exited the COVID pandemic with GDP and labour-market metrics outperforming G7 comparators—something even Conservative economists quietly acknowledge.

**2. Fiscal credibility shielding the Trudeau brand (2020–2025):** Freeland's credibility with markets, Bay Street, the Bank of Canada, and foreign investors provided the Trudeau government a "fiscal legitimacy shield." Without her reputation, the Justin Trudeau brand—especially post-WE scandal and pre-inflation spike—would have been perceived as unserious or reckless by financial and business stakeholders. She was the only senior Liberal whose word bond markets took seriously.

**3. Strategic industrial policy—especially EV/green manufac-**



Then-deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland, pictured on Oct. 22, 2024, at a press conference in the National Press Theatre in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Then-deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland, pictured left on Nov. 24, 2022, on her way to testify before the Public Emergency Order Commission about the 2022 Freedom Convoy occupation of Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing and supply chains: Freeland helped land multi-billion-dollar auto, battery, and clean-tech investments through a combination of fiscal incentives, United States diplomacy, and cross-border supply chain alignment. These investments gave the Liberals a credible jobs and industrial policy narrative outside Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal.

**4. Child care agreements (with then-minister Karina Gould):** A historic national childcare framework—arguably the most durable social policy achievement of the Trudeau era—negotiated province-by-province under Freeland's fiscal stewardship. This likely remains for decades and is a signature legacy policy.

### Foreign policy, trade and geo-economic achievements

**5. Renegotiation of NAFTA/CUSMA under hostile Trump conditions (2017–18):** Freeland was the central architect and negotiator of the re-opening of NAFTA, preserving market access, removing poison pills, and modernizing the agreement during a period in which Canada genuinely risked economic crisis. Trudeau's strongest foreign-policy legacy is actually Freeland's.

**6. Restoring cross-partisan U.S. relationships and establishing Canada as a serious**

**actor:** Freeland rebuilt channels with U.S. Congress, governors, and business networks beyond Trump's White House—an old-school cabinet skill few Canadian ministers have retained since the era of Brian Mulroney. This was critical to CUSMA success and ongoing Arctic/NORAD collaboration.

**7. Ukraine sanctions, NATO diplomacy, and global democratic alignment:** As foreign affairs minister and later finance minister, Freeland elevated Canada within the pro-NATO, pro-democracy coalition dealing with Russia. The credibility here was personal, not institutional, and was widely acknowledged by international counterparts.

### Internal political achievements (the part Ottawa is afraid to say out loud)

**8. Stabilizing the Liberal government post-2019 and post-WE charity collapse:** After Gerald Butts' exit, Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott's resignations, and the Trudeau brand collapse among educated professional voters, Freeland was the only figure who reassured the coalition of elites who actually make Canadian governance work: finance, public service, diplomatic, security, and business communities. Without her, the Liberals would very plausibly have lost the 2021 election.

**9. Acting as *de facto* deputy prime minister in practice, not just in title:** Freeland became the first Canadian deputy PM to actually function as a systemic ballast to the governing apparatus. She chaired cabinet-level crisis tables, brokered federal-provincial negotiations, and handled Ottawa's relationship with the American state. No one else in cabinet—not a single minister—had the range.

**10. Forcing Trudeau to resign, saving the Liberal Party from a Conservative government:** This one is the part few in the party will admit publicly yet, but everyone in Ottawa actually understands. Almost everyone—except Trudeau himself—believed if Trudeau had insisted on leading the party into the last election, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre would have won, possibly a majority. We don't know this for sure, but we do know that Mark Carney turned the party's fortunes around. Another minority was not going to happen under Trudeau. Liberals wanted Trudeau gone.

Let's be honest, aside for the major strides he made on reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, politically, no one misses him.

Freeland was the only senior Liberal with the political stature and sovereign legitimacy to tell Trudeau the truth: that he could not win again, and that the party would die if he insisted on being the protagonist of one more cycle.

This kept the Liberal Party within the realm of competitive politics.

History will write that Freeland did something very few political figures ever do: she stepped in and ended her leader's story before Trudeau took the party down with him. As she told me the night of the 2024 Liberal Party Christmas Party, "He crossed a red line," a line one can interpret a million and one ways.

Political historians and the rest of us will consider this her most important contribution, the more consequential than childcare, because it altered the survival of a governing party and the partisan equilibrium of the Canadian state.

Thank you, Chrystia Freeland. *Kelly Patrick is an Ottawa-based public affairs consultant who provides strategic communications advice to Indigenous organizations, all orders of government, and community groups across Canada. She has served Liberal prime ministers, senators and premiers. She can be reached at kelly@kppublicaffairs.org.*

*The Hill Times*

# Priorities for Canada as 2026 gets underway

This government would flunk any test for transparency. Why are new programs, such as Build Canada Homes, the Major Projects Office, and the Defence procurement office being established as 'special operating agencies' under the Treasury Board's cloak of confidentiality?

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May

Opinion



As the leader of the smallest opposition party in the

House, I admittedly have too many goals. Greens will pursue innovative strategies to ensure Canada's economic sovereignty, such as strategic reserves for our natural resources. We want trade deals that do not undermine human rights, and meaningful climate action that reduces the cost of living, such as pursuing cheap and abundant electricity generated from wind, solar and geothermal sources.

Our vision of nationally significant projects would improve affordability through such things as a nationally integrated smart grid; transmitting electricity from renewable, decarbonized sources; and much-needed nation-building infrastructure in better and more accessible low-carbon public transit for rural and remote Canada, as well as our urban areas.

These goals do require of Canada that we have enough wealth generated to ensure equity at home and fairness in our own society. That is why Greens have ensured new sources of revenue in our budgeting, such as in a 0.2 per cent financial transaction tax, and a wealth tax, such that we could pay for our programs and with

lower deficits than any other party, based on Parliamentary Budget Office review.

Internationally, we want Canada to re-engage as a donor nation living up to the 1969 Pearson targets for development assistance, and in pursuit of peace and nuclear disarmament. We must stand up globally in defence of international law. Greenland's sovereignty must be respected, but also Venezuela's.

In focusing on our role as parliamentarians, all MPs want to ensure that Canadian democracy is robust, with institutions that are transparent and ethical. Democracy's home is Parliament and our work on legislation should be an example for the world.

But increasingly it is in the process of making new laws that the branding by the new Carney administration of "build, baby, build" and build fast gives me the greatest disquiet. The old adage "haste makes waste" is long forgotten. Going slowly is not a worthy goal in and of itself, but thinking through the consequences of legislation is actually our job.

Hearing from expert witnesses, with bills studied by the appropriate committees and

amended as thoughtful review suggests, is often skipped. Since the re-opening of Parliament in May 2025, the legislative agenda has been relatively thin, but the bills have overwhelmingly been of the omnibus variety. Those pre-prorogation pieces of legislation that had enjoyed strong cross-party support—some on the verge of passage that died on the Order Paper—have, for the most part, been left for dead.

The new government has favoured abbreviated processes, programming motions to force through legislation that should shock the conscience of law-makers. How can it be that the Canadian Cancer Society warned that moving too fast on "streamlining" regulation of carcinogens, to reduce inter-provincial trade barriers, would be completely ignored? The bill had closed amendments before the Canadian Cancer Society witnesses could testify.

And, of course, part one of Bill C-5, the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, was never studied by the House Health Committee at all. I was the only MP to vote against those bulldozed changes. There are too many examples to cite.

Now as we resume, the Budget Implementation Act, C-15, an omnibus bill of more than 600 pages, changing over 20 different pieces of legislation, is to be studied only by the House Finance Committee. The astonishing changes found in Division 5 allow any minister to exempt any entity from the operation of any federal law under that minister's area of responsibility (except the Criminal Code). All in aid of cutting "red tape." When then-Ontario premier Mike Harris waged a war against "red tape," Canadians died from contaminated water in Walkerton.

This government would flunk any test for transparency. Why are new programs, such as Build Canada Homes, the Major Projects Office, and the Defence Procurement Office being established as "special operating agencies" under the Treasury Board's cloak of confidentiality?

In a world that is unstable and uncertain, Canadians need to trust our institutions. Secrecy and haste do not assist in building that trust.

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

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## COMMENT Back to Parliament

# IMF report says Canada's elevated trade uncertainty reinforces long-standing weaknesses in productivity and competitiveness

So while Mark Carney's efforts to develop new markets and new partnerships around the world matter, without a corresponding effort to boost Canadian innovation and support our ambitious entrepreneurs in building and growing new companies, the new market opportunities won't lead to new exports and investments.

David Crane

Canada & the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

**T**ORONTO—In his speech to the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, last week, Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a message that is as important for Canadians as it was for his international audience: "nostalgia is not a strategy."

There is a new reality, he said, as the past global order that brought safety and security is now dissembling. So the question is not whether to adapt to this new reality. "We must. The question is whether we adapt by simply building higher walls—or whether we can do something more ambitious."

Yet, nostalgia is still a powerful force. Take the near-hysterical reaction of Ontario Premier Doug Ford, the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers Association (the major American auto companies in Canada), Unifor, and the Cana-

dian Automotive Parts Association in reaction to the Carney government's agreement for the entry of 49,000 Chinese electric vehicles into this country as part of a much broader agreement to deepen trade and investment ties between the two nations.

If you believed these voices—which you shouldn't—Carney had opened the floodgates to Chinese automobiles in a way that threatened the very existence of Ontario's automotive industry. The auto industry has real problems, but they have much more to do with a lack of technological competitiveness—with the Asian producers in Japan, Korea, and China displacing the traditional United States and European producers—than with unfair trade practices.

The much bigger challenge is to build a Canada that can generate the good jobs and standard of living that Canadians aspire to. That means, Carney argued in Davos, building a strong domestic economy so that no country has the leverage that enables coercion. "Diversification internationally is not just economic prudence; it is the material foundation for honest foreign policy."

In a mission to China prior to the Davos stopover, Carney said Canada "can thrive in this new system. But to do so we must be ambitious—we must work at speed and scale to find new partners, diversify our trade, and attract unprecedented levels of new investment. And we must be clear-eyed." In the case of China, where we have differences on political systems and human rights, for example, "that means we have to understand differences between Canada and other countries, and then focus our efforts to work together where we are aligned." With the global system upended, "Canada must chart a new course by navigating the world as it is, not as we wish it to be." With this approach, Carney said, "Canada is forging a new strategic partnership with China."

This partnership, he said, would focus on five key areas "where both our nations stand to make substantial

and sustained gains." They are: clean energy and climate competitiveness; expanding trade, especially in agriculture and food; working together on multilateralism and strengthening global governance; deepened engagement in public safety and security; and expanded people-to-people ties and culture.

Carney is seeking to expand Canadian exports to China by 50 per cent by 2030, or from about \$30-billion to \$45-billion, where he also negotiated a strategic partnership with expanded Canadian investments in China in services, energy, aerospace agriculture and advanced manufacturing, and expanded Chinese investments in Canada in energy projects, agriculture, and consumer products. More controversially, Carney is seeking to attract investments in the auto sector from China.

Following his mission to Beijing, and before arriving in Davos, Carney also stopped in Qatar with—according to the prime minister himself—Qatar affirming "its commitment to make significant strategic investments in Canada's nation-building projects." The two nations, Carney said, agreed to collaborate in various sectors in trade and investment, including mining, agriculture, telecommunications, information and communications technology, biotechnology, and transportation.

But to capitalize on market access and partnership agreements that Carney has made, in missions to Asia, Europe, and the Middle East, we need the

competitive businesses that can deliver high-value products and services to these markets. So most of the hard work must be done here at home.

And here the big challenges remain, as the International Monetary Fund says in its new report on Canada, to boost innovation, entrepreneurship, investment, research, talent, and competition. Forecasting an average annual growth rate of just 1.7 per cent from 2026 through 2031, with a potential growth rate of just 1.5 per cent—the speed limit of the economy that measures the rate of growth we can have without triggering inflation—the future is one of diminished expectations.

Growth is too low to sustain the kind of country we want and to meet the challenges of the future. The big problem is our poor productivity performance, with weak innovation, infrastructure constraints and limited competition. Canada's innovation performance has declined over the past 15 years, and is the poorest in the G7. Protectionism is not the solution.

As the IMF says, "Canada's productivity slowdown is a defining constraint on long-term growth and living standards." Canada continues to lag its peers and output per hour worked is now about 30 per cent lower than in the U.S., "with the gap having widened over time." The reason is not this country's dependence on commodity exports, the IMF says. Canadian productivity is lower than other commodity-exporting nations such as Australia and Norway. Two problems are a decline in business start-ups, which are a key source of innovation, and growing market concentration, which limits competition.

"Canada is adjusting to the largest shift in North American trade policy since NAFTA. The economy has been more resilient than initially feared, supported by USMCA exemptions, resilient consumption, and policy cushioning. Nonetheless, elevated trade uncertainty has weighed on exports, investment, and confidence, reinforcing long-standing weaknesses in productivity and competitiveness," the IMF says in its summary.

So while Carney's efforts to develop new markets and new partnerships around the world matter, without a corresponding effort to boost Canadian innovation and support our ambitious entrepreneurs in building and growing new companies—and scaling them up so they have the scale and scope for global markets—and transforming existing companies from traditional to new sectors, the new market opportunities won't lead to new exports and investments. Instead, our slow growth and weak productivity will mean a stagnating country, and we will be much more subject to the whims and threats from our neighbour to the south. If Canadians lose confidence in our future, we won't have much of a future.

David Crane can be reached at [crane@interlog.com](mailto:crane@interlog.com).  
The Hill Times



Prime Minister Mark Carney is seeking to expand Canada's exports to China by 50 per cent by 2030, or from about \$30-billion to \$45-billion. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



A person walks past the Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa on Jan. 16, 2026. Today, more than 75 per cent of Senators sit as members of independent groups. This reality has meaningfully changed how legislation is studied and improved, writes Senator Lucie Moncion, facilitator of the Independent Senators Group. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# The independent Senate in 2026: an anchor of stability

For the Senate to contribute effectively in 2026, Parliament must recognize that the Senate's independence is essential to effective decision-making and to the strength of Canada's democratic system.

Lucie Moncion



Opinion

The road ahead is uncertain, both at home and abroad. A minority government could become a majority, or could quickly destabilize, while the global order faces significant disruption. Whatever challenges arise, the independent Senate stands ready to provide stability and help navigate turbulence.

During these uncertain times, Canadians are eager for results. Affordability, economic stability, and long-term prosperity are pressing realities for families, workers, and communities across the country. In that context, an independent Senate plays a vital role.

The experience of 2025 has provided important lessons. When legislation advances under constrained timelines, pressure is often transferred to the final stages of the process. In those circumstances, the Senate is deprived of its ability to carry out the level of examination Canadians rightly expect and deserve. This approach is not beneficial to sound public policy.

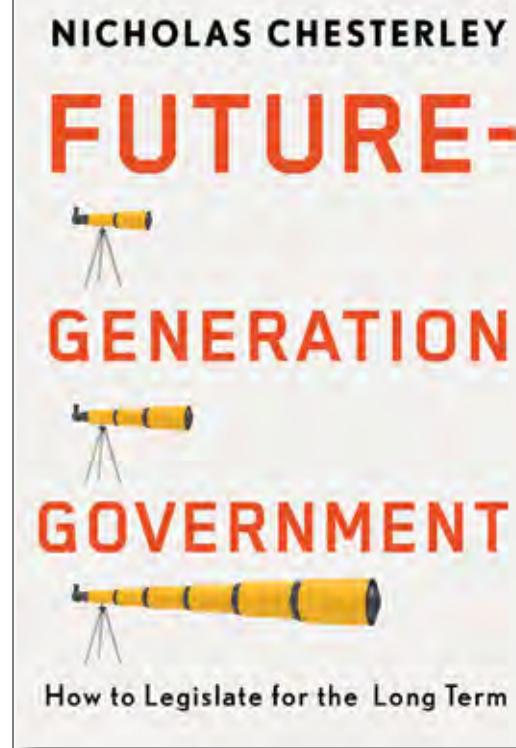
A productive 2026 will depend on Parliament's institutions being able to operate

as intended within their constitutional mandates. For the Senate, that means the ability to exercise independent legislative review without external pressure.

Recent experience demonstrates this point clearly. In several instances last year, the Senate was asked to consider important legislation under significant time constraints. In at least one case, the usual committee process was shortened, limiting both the range of witnesses and the opportunity for in-depth questioning. This occurred in the context of a minority government in the House. Senators worked within those parameters, and legislation was ultimately adopted. The experience, nonetheless, reaffirmed an important principle: a sound deliberative process strengthens outcomes.

The Senate's role is neither to obstruct the will of the House, nor to adopt legislation without examination. It is to provide sober second thought, informed by evidence, expertise, and the perspectives of Canadians who may not always be reflected in majority decision-making. Independence is essential to carrying out that responsibility with integrity.

Today, more than 75 per cent of Senators sit as members of independent groups. This reality has meaningfully changed how legislation is studied and improved. Senators are guided not by party affiliation, but by the substance of each bill, the testimony of witnesses and the potential consequences for Canadians. Independence is no longer a transitional phase; it is now a defining characteristic of the Senate.



## Future-Generation Government

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Nicholas Chesterley

"Chesterley wrestles directly and engagingly with the gnawing question of how to square human short-termism with the long-term problems we face. Given that our lives and those of our children depend on the answer, this is a book we should all read."

-David Halpern, author of *Inside the Nudge Unit: How Small Changes Can Make a Big Difference*



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The Senate has demonstrated its capacity to strengthen legislation. For example, under the current government, the Senate was instrumental in amendments to Bill S-2, an Act to Amend the Indian Act (new registration entitlements). During then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's last majority government, the Senate acted as an anchor for minorities and marginalized groups by improving proposed legislation, and by reducing the unintended consequences that could arise from it. Through its independence, the Senate has contributed to more effective laws, benefiting both Canadians and governments alike.

Looking ahead, many of the issues Parliament will address in 2026 will have lasting effects on Canadians' daily lives and economic well-being. These decisions will shape how policies are implemented, how programs are delivered, and how public institutions function over time. In this context, Parliament benefits from processes that allow legislation to be examined with an eye to long-term impacts, practical consequences and real-world application.

For the Senate to contribute effectively in 2026, Parliament must recognize that the Senate's independence is essential to effective decision-making and to the strength of Canada's democratic system. By bringing evidence, expertise, and careful reflection to the legislative process, an independent Senate strengthens Parliament's capacity to serve Canadians. When that role is clearly recognized and supported, Parliament as a whole is better equipped to uphold public confidence in democratic institutions.

As Parliament begins a new session, there is an opportunity to reflect on recent experience and reset expectations. An independent Senate, working responsibly and respectfully alongside the House of Commons, is essential to serving the public interest.

Independence is now an established feature of Canada's parliamentary system. When it is clearly understood and supported, it enhances Parliament's effectiveness and bolsters public trust in democratic institutions.

*Senator Lucie Moncion is the facilitator of the Independent Senators Group, the largest independent group in the Senate of Canada. She was elected to the role in December 2025, and her mandate began on Jan. 1, 2026.*

*The Hill Times*

# OPINION Back to Parliament



Iqaluit, the capital of Nunavut. Investments in Arctic military capacity must be made with the dual purpose of supporting vibrant communities who are our first line of defence, writes NDP MP Lori Idlout. *Photograph courtesy of Rigo Olvera, Pexels.com*

# A shifting geopolitical environment leaves the Arctic central to Canada's sovereignty and security

A credible Arctic security strategy must be rooted in *Akuqtujuuk*—the twin stars that rise together and signal hope. For Canada, those stars are sovereignty and Indigenous leadership.

NDP MP  
Lori Idlout



Opinion

According to the Inuit season in the High Arctic, January is called *Qaummagiaq*. This is the time of the year when the sun begins to return. Before this, Inuit were living in *Tauvijuaq*, a time of great darkness, when the sun would not rise.

There is an Inuit hymn which describes a moment of hope,

based on an observation of the stars. There is an Inuit constellation called *Akuqtujuuk*. Two stars that are next to each other.

*Qaumatillugusuli Sinilaurivugu,*  
There will be a time when we sleep during daylight,  
*Ulluqsuli Tauva.*  
daylight is still in another time.  
*Alianaittuqaqpui Inuunialirama,*  
I am encouraged that life will be bustling again,  
*Ulluqsuli Tauva.*  
daylight is still in another time.  
*Akuqtuju Anngutivu,*  
The *Akuqtujuuk* (constellations) have caught the horizon,  
*Ulluqsuli Tauva.*  
daylight is still in another time.  
*Ulluqsuli Tauva,*  
I will celebrate when I can live life again,  
*Ulluqsuli Tauva.*  
daylight is still in another time.

I share this hymn now because we are in a new year. *Akuqtujuuk* have returned to the horizon. We will now have daylight. The sun will return.

As Parliament settles into a new session, the country demands clarity of purpose. In the North, this season evokes the image of Inuit hunters who *mauliq*, standing motionless over a seal's breathing hole, waiting with discipline and foresight. In

the Arctic, survival has always required patience, vigilance, and deep respect for the land.

Ottawa would benefit from the same discipline. Thanks to the convicted criminal that is running the United States, the geopolitical environment is shifting quickly, and the Arctic—long treated as a distant policy file—is now central to Canada's sovereignty and security. Threats against Greenland, melting sea ice, increased foreign interest, and accelerating competition for critical minerals have made the region a strategic crossroads. Decisions made in Parliament today will shape Canada's position in the circumpolar world for decades.

In view of U.S. President Donald Trump's consistently increasing imperial actions, we need to take his threats with caution. Among those—Greenland and turning Canada into the 51<sup>st</sup> State—we need to strengthen our capacity to protect ourselves while we diversify trade relationships. We must be clear: Canada cannot secure the Arctic without investing in the people who live there.

This is where the federal government's approach to Indigenous rights and northern governance becomes inseparable from national security. Despite

repeated commitments to reconciliation, many Indigenous leaders argue that Canada remains in a period of *Tauvijuaq*—a great darkness—when it comes to honouring free, prior, and informed consent. Especially with Bill C5, the Free Trade and Labour Mobility in Canada Act and the Building Canada Act, as evidence that federal commitments can be quickly set aside when politically inconvenient.

Yet, amid this tension, a historic opportunity has emerged.

If Parliament is serious about Arctic security, it must look beyond megaprojects conceived in the South. Northerners are in overcrowded housing, have limited health services, aging infrastructure, and chronic underinvestment in community capacity. These are not social policy footnotes—they are security vulnerabilities. A region cannot be secure if the people who live there are not.

Investments in Arctic military capacity must be made with the dual purpose of supporting vibrant communities who are our first line of defence.

We need to strengthen our relationship and commitment Arctic security with our European allies. We must work closely and meaningfully with them to defend

Greenland, and to ensure reciprocity should Canada's sovereignty be threatened.

We must reinforce our claim over the Northwest Passage so that our European allies have no hesitation about supporting us when others have imperial designs on it. One way to reinforce our sovereignty over the Northwest Passage is to demonstrate active management of the region by finalizing the Recommended Nunavut Land Use Plan (RNLUP) that provides clarity for industry and certainty for governments. It demonstrates that Inuit leadership is not a symbolic gesture—it is a practical, sophisticated, and essential component of Arctic governance.

For Canada's allies and competitors alike, the RNLUP sends a message: the people who know the land best are leading its stewardship. In an era of heightened geopolitical interest in the Arctic, that is a strategic asset.

A credible Arctic security strategy must be rooted in *Akuqtujuuk*: the twin stars that rise together and signal hope. For Canada, those stars are sovereignty and Indigenous leadership. One cannot shine without the other.

Implementing the recommended Nunavut land use plan is a concrete, immediate step the federal government can take to strengthen sovereignty, rebuild trust, and demonstrate that Arctic policy is more than aspirational language in a Throne Speech.

As *Qaummagiaq*, the return of the sun, brings light back to the Arctic, Canada has a choice. It can continue down a path that accelerates climate risk and sidelines Indigenous governance, or it can build a future where military investments, environmental protection and sovereignty reinforce one another.

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

*The Hill Times*

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## OPINION Back to Parliament

# Canada's economic, security and environmental interests have never been more challenged

One thing is crystal clear: Canadians do not want a US-style, two-party political system. They know that a healthy democracy needs a range of parties with a diversity of ideas.

Interim NDP Leader  
Don Davies



Canadians will be watching Parliament closely in 2026. And for good reason: our economic, security and environmen-

tal interests have never been more challenged.

The impacts of United States President Donald Trump's threats to our nation's sovereignty and to our economy are being felt by Canadians from all walks of life. People are experiencing the direct consequences of these actions, with high unemployment (especially among young people) and rising prices making it difficult to make ends meet. They want—and need—Ottawa to get to work helping them through this crisis, with practical measures that will bring relief now.

That's exactly what New Democrats are committed to doing.

That starts with investing to strengthen the very institutions that hold this country together.

One of the most fundamental of these is our public healthcare system—a nation-building accomplishment that Canadians take great pride in, and which distinguishes us from the U.S.

In the last Parliament, New Democrats worked hard to deliver the biggest expansion to our public health care system Canada has seen in a generation, including free diabetes and birth control medications and devices, and dental care coverage for those without access.

In the year ahead, we'll push to expand access to affordable medicine for the millions of Canadians who do not have coverage. And we will press for investments to help the millions of Canadians who currently do not have a family doctor. Connecting more Canadians to primary care and to mental health care should be a top priority for the federal government this coming year. A healthy economy needs a healthy population.

It is unacceptable in a country as rich as ours that securing affordable housing is out of reach for so many. Housing anchors us in community and is essential for meaningful participation in

society. Yet, in the face of this crisis, the Liberal government is planning to spend less on housing than they have previously.

In the year ahead, New Democrats will push for new, concrete federal commitments to build non-market homes, including in the vitally important social and cooperative sectors. And we'll push for stronger rules to protect tenants, and to stop corporate investors from treating housing as a commodity, further driving up costs.

As interim leader of the New Democratic Party, I have committed to reconnecting our party with working Canadians. As Canada faces a jobs crisis, we will push for new measures to create good, family-sustaining jobs. This means making sure that the projects the federal government funds create union jobs and good working conditions. And it includes bringing forward legislation to repeal Section 107 of the Labour Code, a section

With a strong, revitalized New Democratic Party, under a newly elected leader, we will continue our proud legacy of contributing creative ideas for the benefit of working Canadians, and hold the Liberal government to account.

Don Davies is the interim leader of the New Democratic Party of Canada, and the MP for Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.

*The Hill Times*

which has increasingly been used by the Liberals to interfere with collective bargaining on the side of employers.

This year also promises to be

an exciting one for the NDP. Can-

ada is a stronger, fairer and more

just country as a consequence

of the work New Democrats have

historically done. Across the

country, members and supporters

are engaged in a far-ranging con-

versation about the future of our

party, which has a direct bearing

on the future of our country.

One thing is crystal clear:

Canadians do not want a U.S.-

style,

two-party

political

system.

They know that a healthy

democracy

needs a

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with

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sity

of

ideas.

party House leaders and whips this spring. Chrystia Freeland's resignation from the Liberals combined with Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux's non-voting and apparent eventual resignation means that as the House returns, Liberals are still two votes short of getting to a tie vote in the Commons.

Parliamentary rumour mills will continue apace about how Liberals might find their way to that magic number, but in the meantime, I'll be watching how Government House Leader Steve MacKinnon navigates advancing Prime Minister Mark Carney's legislative priorities through the spring. The search for "dance partners" on legislation will continue, which will be the more interesting behind-the-scenes action I'll be watching.

At the same time, it has been very interesting to watch the dynamic between Liberals, Conservatives, and Blocistes play out on House standing committees, with New Democrats unable to play defence for Liberals in committee votes. In some cases, Conservatives and Bloc members have been finding ways to amend government legislation effectively, and in others, Liberals have found a way to bring the Bloc onside.

This dynamic will be impo-

rtant to watch as the Liberal govern-

ment

tries to advance its key

piece of legislation through the

House this fall: C-15, the Budget

Implementation Act. With its 601

pages, it makes any Harper-era

omnibus bills pale in compari-

son—omnibus bills previous

Liberals pledged to never intro-

duce. In any case, how the oppo-

sition parties deal with the bill

in the House Finance Committee

(starting early in the session) may

have broader indications on how

they intend to deal with the gov-

ernment's legislative agenda as a

whole over the coming months.

While everything I have

mentioned is no doubt impor-

tant in terms of the government's

domestic agenda for the spring

sitting, MPs should also buckle

up because I believe—even more

so—geopolitical events will

impact how all parties respond

to increasing crises on the world

stage. The old adage of "Canadi-

ans don't vote on foreign policy

issues" has traditionally been

the viewpoint of many political

observers, but as foreign policy

issues increasingly have domestic

impacts, how political leaders

deal with these global issues is

increasingly important.

We are barely four weeks into

2026, and we have already seen

the arrest and exfiltration of Vene-

zuelan President Nicolas Maduro

by the United States to stand trial;

increased sabre-rattling over the

future of not just Greenland but

NATO, as well, by U.S. President

Donald Trump; mass protests

and killings of unarmed civilians

protesting the clerical dicta-

ship of Ayatollah Khamenei and the

Islamic Revolutionary Guard

Corps in Iran; and a major shift

in Canada's foreign policy and

trade posture towards China

and President Xi Jinping. As the

saying goes, "there are decades

where nothing happens, and

there are weeks where decades

happen," and it feels like we are

more in the latter time frame than

the former.

As almost any Canadian

involved in business from

large corporations down to the

smallest enterprise now knows,

we live in a very different world

than we did 12 months ago. As

such, Canadians deserve to know

where their political leaders

stand on these issues, and what

they would do to lessen the

impact of these make life better

or easier for all of us.

And so as the spring sitting

kicks off, there is no shortage of

domestic or global events that

Parliamentarians will have to deal with.

We will all be looking to see how

parties and leaders deal with them.

Garry Keller is a vice-president

with StrategyCorp's government

relations and geopolitical prac-

ties. He is a former chief of staff

to a government House leader,

government whip, and minister of

foreign affairs.

*The Hill Times*

# Return of Parliament: MPs should buckle up

As the sitting kicks off, there is no shortage of domestic or global events that parliamentarians will have to deal with.



Opinion

With the return of Parliament this week, it's not unusual to see pundits and prognosticators make their predictions for what lies ahead in the House over the next 68 sitting days (give or take) this spring. So, here's my take of what to expect.

The parliamentary math that dominated a lot of the political conversation in the fall sitting will continue to test the skills of all

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 Hanwha  
Ocean



## OPINION Back to Parliament

# Quebec: inhaling the ‘hopeium’ of the next ‘Mark Carney’

The potential evanescence of a CAQ without François Legault in all probability increases the likelihood of a PQ win in October. Investors already concerned about that prospect will be looking to consider attaching an additional risk premium to any opportunities in Quebec because of the fundamental political uncertainty associated with a PQ win.

Ken Polk

Opinion



Time is the Grim Reaper for all elected leaders. Last year, it claimed then-prime minister Justin Trudeau. This week, it ushered Quebec Premier François Legault into his political grave.

After years of accumulated problems, criticism and grievances, voters simply become tired of seeing the same face and hearing the same answers. They start looking elsewhere for solutions. It takes a truly extraordinary confluence of circumstances for a political party to win government again after the departure of an unpopular leader.

All of which has some looking at the miraculous recovery last spring, under newcomer Mark Carney, of the federal Liberals, who seemed doomed to defeat. It is not surprising, then, to see some people reaching for this analogy since it is so fresh in the political hive mind. This is especially so among Coalition Avenir



Quebec Premier François Legault announced on Jan. 14, 2026, that he will resign as premier and won't run in the October election, but he will remain in his role until the party elects a new leader. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Québec strategists, for whom Legault's personal approval ratings and the party's fourth-place standing in the polls seem to them an apt parallel to the dire fix the federal Liberals were in in late 2024.

This is, of course, understandable. They have to say something to keep giving the battered CAQ. But there is hope, and then there is hopeum. The search for the next Carney is pure hopeum.

### CAQ may disappear without Legault

First, no one being mooted as a Legault replacement could credibly be pitched as a newcomer with the same profile and private-sector credibility as Carney. The names being bandied about are all either current or former CAQ cabinet ministers. This may reflect the fact that the CAQ itself was Legault's personal creation.

A former Parti Québécois (PQ) cabinet minister, Legault felt that a lot of Quebec nationalists—like himself—were tired of the PQ's decades-old fixation on sovereignty referendums, but wanted an alternative that was safely nationalist in orientation. Quebec voters would be hard-pressed to name anyone in his government other than the premier himself, so the party's very existence may come into question now that the founder is leaving.

Second, the Quebec Liberal Party already has the lead in the “next Carney” sweepstakes. It is also holding an accelerated leadership election to replace Pablo



Parti Québécois Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon. Photograph courtesy of X/Twitter

Rodriguez, whose short-lived leadership came a cropper amid allegations of corruption linked to his campaign.

Charles Millard, former president of the Quebec Federation of Chambers of Commerce, has already declared his candidacy. There has also been leadership speculation about other business leaders, such as Sophie Brochu, former president and CEO of Hydro-Québec, and Louis Vachon, former CEO of the National Bank of Canada. However, the prospect of an investigation into the Quebec Liberal party in the wake of the leadership corruption allegations suggests that the party will be in bad public odour in the run-up to October's provincial election.

### Francophone voters may return to the PQ

Third, Legault's departure may substantially strengthen the PQ's hold on francophone voters. The party has been leading the polls in Quebec for two years, but still faced a significant vulnerability on its nationalist flank from the CAQ. Legault and the CAQ drew off a substantial portion of the francophone vote that had traditionally gone to the PQ in elections since the latter party's creation in 1968. Indeed, PQ majorities have been built squarely on their hold on francophone voters. Legault's resignation may see that vote return to its old PQ home, making a PQ government far more likely.

PQ leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon seems to be aware of this tantalizing possibility. His statement on Legault's resignation was in many ways a tribute to the premier, saying, “François Legault has always been sincere in his desire to improve the lot of the Quebec nation. He spent more than a decade in the Parti Québécois vigorously defending the necessity of Quebec becoming a country. By founding the Coalition Avenir Québec, he continued his commitment to Quebec by trying to achieve gains for Quebec within Canada.”

The tone itself is also a key obstacle to a CAQ miracle comeback. No one would ever expect federal Opposition Leader Pierre Poilievre to say anything even remotely similar in reference to any of the departures of his political opponents. Indeed, it was Poilievre's slash-and-burn approach to politics, his Trumpian tactics, that seemed to facilitate the charge of voters to Carney—back to the Liberals—in the context of the American tariff war last spring. By virtue of the tone and content of his statement on Legault, St-Pierre Plamondon seems intent on demonstrating the statesmanship that voters—francophone or not—expect from a premier.

As I have written before, the PQ's continued fealty to the idea of Quebec sovereignty and its promise of another referendum by 2030 could be a significant obstacle to a PQ return to government. But if St-Pierre Plamondon handles that issue with the same dexterity as he has dealt with Legault's resignation, then this worry may be muted in the election.

True, United States President Donald Trump's rhetorical and tariff assault on Canada, the factor that led more than any other to Carney's win last April, remains a major preoccupation in Quebec as it is across Canada. So the prospect of another sovereignty referendum may not be one kind of political uncertainty for Quebecers to tolerate come election time.

But this is quite apart from the stew of political circumstances from which the Carney miracle emerged.

Legault's resignation certainly shuffles the political deck in Quebec in uncertain ways. But the potential evanescence of a CAQ without Legault in all probability increases the likelihood of a PQ win in October. Investors already concerned about that prospect will be looking to consider attaching an additional risk premium to any opportunities in Quebec because of the fundamental political uncertainty associated with a PQ win. No doubt that will not overshadow the uncertainty Trump has created for proponents of growth and investment across Canada. The sovereignty premium will be small. But it will be real.

But expecting a Carney-like deliverance for the CAQ is simply political hopeum. And hope, like hopeum, is not a strategy.

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

*The Hill Times*

# Learning a new dance for 2026

Our government needs to take actions that not only respond to the new threats we're facing from our neighbour, but that also protect our sovereignty.

Cam Holmstrom

Opinion



Over our long history as a country, there have been many metaphors to describe our reality living next door to the United States. Ever since the American Revolution, we have gone through ebbs and flows when it comes to the difficulty of living next to our neighbours. Since the end of the Second World War, we've lived through a period of relative stability in this regard, which has allowed for a lot of prosperity on both sides of the border. But that stability has completely evaporated over the past year, with the re-election, rhetoric, and actions of one man: United States President Donald Trump.

That past stability and collaboration—and the trust that came with it—has been irreparably damaged over the past months. That will last well beyond Trump, even if the U.S.

changes course and comes back to its senses. These facts are having a massive impact on the policy position taken by our government, as the fundamentals of our economic, diplomatic, and defence relationships have been thrown up in the air by Trump. To try to act as if we are living in a "business as usual" environment is simply not an option.

That means that our government needs to take actions that not only respond to the new threats we're facing

from our neighbour, but that also protect our sovereignty. That is a very tricky balance to strike. In their latest "National Security Strategy," the Americans made it clear they don't want allies close to home; they want supplicants. Trump wants to be surrounded by vassal states that bend to his every whim, and are *de facto* controlled by him—if not annexed. For us, it means that every action we take will potentially draw Trump's ire as he tries to assert his dominant wishes. The irony is that, each time he lashes out, it forces Prime Minister Mark Carney and his government to take more such actions.

We recently saw this in two separate cases on the same day. Canada recently signed a new agreement with China, which included many measures like rolling back tariffs on EVs. Remember those tariffs were part of an action we took, in collaboration with the Joe Biden Administration, for legitimate security reactions and to protect the North American automobile market. That made sense when we shared common interests.

But since then, Trump has made it clear he doesn't want to buy "Canadian cars," and that he feels the U.S. doesn't need anything from Canada. So, when he is trying to cripple the Canadian auto sector, while our farmers receive retaliatory tariffs from China because of those tariffs, why would Canada stand by the American position? Yet, when the Carney government announced this deal (which rolls back the tariffs and allows China access to three per cent of the Canadian market), the White

House started with the belligerent language, saying that Canada may regret this.

That same morning, Trump told media that he will lay extra tariffs against countries that dare to oppose his demands to take over Greenland. As neighbours of both the U.S. and Greenland, there is no way that any Canadian government could ever accept the U.S. demand to annex an allied NATO neighbour. Yet, we know that standing by our sovereign,

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Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

principled position here will likely come at a cost.

When Parliament returns, one thing is very clear; the Trump administration is in the chat, and is throwing around its unpredictable weight. Trump is clearly trying to use intimidation to get what he wants, rather than the historical collaboration of allies that has brought prosperity to all of us. That means that if we are going to remain the Truth North, Strong and Free, that will come with the likelihood of upsetting the increasingly imperial leadership in Washington, D.C. This is now what defines our new "business as usual," and if we want to keep being the prosperous, independent

nation that we are, we need to accept that. Or as my dad always said to me when I was young, "if you're on thin ice, you might as well dance." This isn't our first dance, and if we're successful, it won't be our last.

*Cam Holmstrom is the founder and principle of Niipaawi Strategies. Red River Métis, born and raised in Treaty 3 Territory in Northwestern Ontario, he has spent over 20 years working and volunteering in Canadian politics. He spent a decade on Parliament Hill working in the NDP caucus, with a focus on the natural resources, foreign affairs, and Indigenous rights portfolios.*

*The Hill Times*



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## OPINION Back to Parliament

The Liberal government has been stymied and scuttled at every turn in both the House and in committees. This situation would change dramatically should they get to those elusive 172 seats.

Ashton Arsenault



Opinion

With the House resuming this week for the spring session, many numbers are swirling around. Let's start with 172: the all-important number of seats

needed to secure a majority in the House of Commons.

The Carney government has been pulling out all the stops to reach this magic number—cornering opposition members wherever they can, likely promising goodies and perhaps even prestige if their offer is accepted (boy, would I like to be a fly on the wall for those conversations). To date, the blitz has been somewhat successful. They have convinced both Chris d'Entremont (Acadie-Annapolis, N.S.) and Michael Ma (Markham-Unionville, Ont.) to ditch their blue shields in favour of red capes.

Slight wrinkle, however: the Carney government still isn't at 172 seats, and is now dealing with a "two steps forward, one step back" situation with the recent resignation of Chrystia Freeland. Turns out moonlighting as an adviser to a foreign government while retaining a seat in the House is *no bueno*. Either way, the government is two seats short of where it wants to be.

Why does it matter? Observers, pundits, and interested par-

ties alike may have caught on to the fact that the Carney government—not dissimilar to the previous Trudeau governments—isn't particularly skilled at steering a legislative agenda through the House in a minority situation.

To be generous, their first full session in Parliament yielded limited legislative success. To be less generous, the government has been stymied and scuttled at every turn in both the House and in committees. This situation would change dramatically should they get to those elusive 172 seats.

The second number? Whatever number the leader of His Majesty's Loyal Opposition and Conservative Party Leader, Pierre Poilievre, gets in his leadership review vote when Conservative Party faithful gather in Calgary later this week. What is an acceptable result for Poilievre? I assert that anything over 70 per cent is a passing-with-flying-colours grade. Others likely disagree. But anything less than that is almost certainly open to scrutiny and questions.

As the Conservative convention is delegated, I expect the number to be higher than 75 per cent (and potentially higher still). A strong result in the leadership-review vote will free up Poilievre to be an even larger thorn in Prime Minister Mark Carney's side and dispel any and all rumours that certain pockets of Tories are beginning to question Poilievre's leadership. Look at the most recent federal polls: even a Conservative opposition going through a leadership review is still within striking distance—if not neck and neck—with the Liberals. My prediction? Poilievre endures.

The last number? Five. There are five contestants vying to be the next leader of Canada's federal NDP. Whoever prevails will be taking over a party that is desperate for a refresh, and for any reason at all to be hopeful. I will avoid getting into other numbers concerning the NDP because they are, well, bleak. Bleak polling numbers. Bleak financials. Bleak return on investment for propping up the Trudeau government for

as long as they did. This observer will be watching the leadership vote closely in March to see the party faithful's choice—particularly since there is so much room on the political left at the moment. Can the NDP find its way back to relevance?

For Canada's major federal political parties, these are the numbers to watch as the year kicks off. A less clear number, of course, is how many days there are between now and the next federal election. To date, there appears to be no appetite from the public to trigger another trip to the polls. The Prime Minister and his chief rivals understand this, though difficult economic indicators and an ongoing realignment in the global order could well change that appetite over the next few months.

These are the political numbers that matter in 2026.

Ashton Arsenault is a partner at Crestview Strategy based in Ottawa, and is a former political staffer during the Stephen Harper government.

*The Hill Times*

# Health care is 13 per cent of Canada's economy, and must be central to nation-building

This is not a call for unchecked spending. It's a call to recognize health care for what it truly is: foundational economic infrastructure. If we are serious about building Canada's future, health care can no longer sit in the background. It must be central to nation-building.

Jimmy Yang



Opinion

With Canada's 2025-2026 flu season being more intense

and widespread than typical, and with health-care resources being stretched to the max, the stunning increase in influenza cases across this country is now translating into significant workforce challenges—a stark reminder of how the performance of our economy is deeply tied to our health.

Canada's economic future depends on the health of its people and the system that supports them. Health is the backbone of Canada's society and economy. Health care accounts for roughly 13 per cent of Canada's GDP, is the country's largest employer, and plays a critical role in labour force participation, productivity, and population growth. When health falters, the economic consequences ripple far beyond hospitals and clinics—showing up as absenteeism, delayed return to work, and reduced workforce participation.

As governments refocus on nation-building—housing, infrastructure, AI, clean energy, and industrial policy—health care is increasingly treated as a given rather than a core pillar of economic renewal. In 2026, pressures on the health system continue to intensify, yet health

remains largely absent from national conversations about competitiveness and productivity, and Canadians are feeling the impact in their day-to-day lives. During the pandemic, health systems experienced unprecedented funding growth, often exceeding 30 per cent year over year. That era is over.

Most provinces are now planning annual health budget increases of just two to three per cent, despite aging populations, workforce shortages, and rising demand. In real terms, this means we are asking the health sector to do more with less funding growth than at any point in its history.

If we do not change course, Canadians will face longer waits, poorer access, and more fragmented care. Providers will experience deeper burnout and worsening workforce shortages. But if we act, we have an opportunity to improve outcomes, control costs, and build a system that is sustainable for the next decade.

This is not a temporary adjustment; it is a structural shift. But it is also not a call for more money. It is a call to fundamentally rethink how care is being delivered and how to deliver a better return on investment.

## Three pillars for a sustainable health economy

### 1. System transformation: from reactive to proactive

Canada's health system remains largely reactive, organized around hospitals and episodic care rather than prevention, continuity, and outcomes.

The path forward is clear: shift toward team-based, outcome-focused models of care with funding reallocated to better-align to patient needs that are less expensive to deliver. This means moving care into community and primary settings where more appropriate, integrating physical and mental health, and using data insight to intervene earlier. Without this shift, demand will continue to overwhelm acute care. With it, patients experience better access and continuity, and providers work in environments that reduce stress rather than amplify it.

### 2. Courage to build sustainable health economies

Health leaders are now confronting a reality once avoided: traditional funding and delivery models are no longer viable.

Building sustainable health economies over the next 10 years will require courage from leaders

willing to challenge the status quo and embrace new approaches to service delivery, partnerships, and productivity.

Recent federal initiatives, including dental care and pharmacare, are examples in improving access and affordability but their success will depend not just on how care is funded, but on whether systems are modernized to embrace how care is delivered.

### 3. Foundations: people, technology, and new labour model approaches

The health workforce is under unprecedented strain. Clinicians spend up to 30 per cent of their time on non-clinical administrative work, while traditional labour supply can no longer keep pace with demand.

Technology, automation, and AI must be part of the solution, reducing administrative burden, enabling better clinical decisions, and allowing providers to focus on patient care.

## Health as core economic infrastructure

We cannot grow the economy with an unhealthy workforce. We cannot attract global talent without reliable access to care. And we cannot sustain population growth without resilient health systems.

This is not a call for unchecked spending. It is a call to recognize health care for what it truly is: foundational economic infrastructure. If we are serious about building Canada's future, health care can no longer sit in the background. It must be central to nation-building.

Jimmy Yang is the managing director and health-care lead at Accenture Canada.

*The Hill Times*

Prime Minister Mark Carney has to walk a tight rope on relatively short-term political and partisan issues while executing a major pivot on numerous longer-term policy issues, writes Marc Snyder, vice-president of government relations for Paradigme Stratégies. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# Carney must walk a tightrope in 2026, dealing with an unpredictable neighbour

Canada has been over-relying on a partner—the United States—that has become unreliable.

Marc Snyder

Opinion

Wow! What a year 2025 was. So, what does 2026 hold?



Will the next 12 months bring as much change as the last 12 did?

Probably! Or not. Who knows?

And, in that context, Prime Minister Mark Carney has to walk a tight rope on relatively short-term political and partisan issues while (not to mix metaphors) executing a major pivot on numerous longer-term policy issues.

Let's start with longer-term issues. Our country has been overrelying on a partner (the United States) that has become unreliable. I heard former Canadian ambassador Bob Rae refer to our southern neighbour's strategy as being Operation Random. It fits.

Decoupling our economies will be—at the very least—a decade-long initiative.

The government proposes massive capital investments (\$115-billion for infrastructure and \$110-billion for productivity over five years) to make Canada an “energy and critical minerals superpower” by the 2030s, a new federal agency to double construction rates by 2030, shifting to “Clean Energy Sovereignty” to meet climate-change targets through technology rather than taxation and a new Defence Investment Agency to “rebuild, rearm, and reinvest in the Canadian Armed Forces faster” (a growing preoccupation to anyone who has read Trump’s new “Monroe Doctrine on steroids.”)

Some pundits have started complaining that we haven’t yet

reached a new trade agreement with the U.S. To these I ask, “isn’t that a good thing?” Seriously.

I understand the risk of a “zombie USMCA,” what the Eurasia Group describes as being “neither fully dead nor alive” but the actual U.S. average tariff rate on Canadian goods is 5.6 per cent—the lowest in the world—and more than 85 per cent of our exports are tariff-free. Isn’t any new deal we sign likely to worsen our current situation?

Another longer-term issue I’m worried about is the sovereignty conversation, both here in Quebec and in Alberta.

While I think Carney has been following the Alberta sovereignty debate closely (having been raised in Edmonton), I’m not sure Prime Minister’s Office or Privy Council Office have been investing enough time in the Quebec question.

Premier François Legault’s decision to call it quits earlier this month has shuffled the deck of Quebec politics. As of right now, I feel his decision will most likely hurt the Parti Québécois’ chances in this fall’s general election. They have put a lot of emphasis on criticizing the premier. But when the premier’s not there anymore, they’re in a similar position to the federal Conservatives when then-prime minister Justin Trudeau announced he was leaving last January. But that could change depending on whom the CAQ will choose as its next leader. The Quebec Liberals will also be choosing a new leader, most probably one with an economic background: Charles Milliard.

A third longer-term issue I’m preoccupied with is what I see as a waning appetite for lowering

interprovincial trade barriers. I mean, I get it. But it might just be the most unsexy file of Dominic LeBlanc’s wide-ranging portfolio.

Surprisingly—considering what we know about the prime minister’s makeup—it’s on the short-term objectives that I think that the government is doing the best.

The Liberals are obviously (and correctly) working on getting that majority they failed to reach in the April 2025 general election. Three Conservatives have already left their caucus, two of them to sit with the government and one to retire in the spring. The departures are leading up to the Conservative convention at the end of January where Pierre Poilievre will be facing a leadership review.

While I don’t think we’ll see any more floor-crossers between now and then, I’d bet real money that we’ll see some after the convention.

Of course, I’m assuming he’ll reach 50 per cent support, but that doesn’t guarantee anything. Think about it: if you’re not too hot for Poilievre, whatever the result (whether or not he wins big), your incentive to leave is higher than ever.

So, back to my opening question: what a year it was, so what does 2026 hold?

The only thing that is certain is that Canada will continue to have to play a very complex, uncomfortable role with a very unpredictable neighbour, while sharing Europe’s values, a little too far from home.

Marc Snyder is vice-president of government relations at Paradigme Stratégies.

*The Hill Times*

# Global

Back to Parliament

## ‘We are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition’: Carney tells World Economic Forum

A world of fortresses will be poorer, more fragile, and less sustainable. And there is another truth: if great powers abandon even the pretence of rules and values for the unhindered pursuit of their power and interests, the gains from ‘transactionalism’ become harder to replicate. Hegemons cannot continually monetize their relationships.

BY PRIME MINISTER  
MARK CARNEY

DAVOS, SWITZERLAND—It's a pleasure—and a duty—to be with you at this turning point for Canada and for the world.

Today, I'll talk about the rupture in the world order, the end of a nice story, and the beginning of a brutal reality where geopolitics among the great powers is not subject to any constraints.

But I also submit to you that other countries, particularly middle powers like Canada, are not powerless. They have the capacity to build a new order that embodies our values, like respect for human rights, sustainable development, solidarity, sovereignty, and territorial integrity of states.

The power of the less powerful begins with honesty.

Every day we are reminded that we live in an era of great power rivalry. That the rules-based order is fading. That the strong do what they can, and the weak suffer what they must.

This aphorism of Thucydides is presented as inevitable—the natural logic of international relations reasserting itself. And faced with this logic, there is a strong tendency for countries to go along to get along. To accommodate. To avoid trouble. To hope that compliance will buy safety. It won't.



Prime Minister Mark Carney at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, 2026. *Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard*

So, what are our options? In 1978, the Czech dissident Václav Havel wrote an essay called *The Power of the Powerless*. In it, he asked a simple question: how did the communist system sustain itself?

His answer began with a greengrocer. Every morning, this shopkeeper places a sign in his window: “Workers of the world, unite!” He does not believe it. No one believes it. But he places the sign anyway—to avoid trouble, to signal compliance, to get along. And because every shopkeeper on every street does the same, the system persists.

Not through violence alone, but through the participation of ordinary people in rituals they privately know to be false.

Havel called this “living within a lie.” The system’s power comes not from its truth but from everyone’s willingness to perform as if it were true. And its fragility comes from the same source: when even one person stops performing—when the greengrocer removes his sign—the illusion begins to crack.

It is time for companies and countries to take their signs down.

For decades, countries like Canada prospered under what we called the rules-based international order. We joined its institutions, praised its principles, and benefited from its predictability. We could pursue values-based foreign policies under its protection.

We knew the story of the international rules-based order was partially false. That the strongest would exempt themselves when convenient. That trade rules were enforced asymmetrically. And that international law applied with varying rigour depending on the identity of the accused or the victim.

This fiction was useful, and American hegemony, in particular, helped provide public goods: open sea lanes, a stable financial system, collective security, and support for frameworks for resolving disputes.

So, we placed the sign in the window. We participated in the rituals. And largely avoided calling out the gaps between rhetoric and reality.

This bargain no longer works. Let me be direct: we are in the midst of a rupture, not a transition.

Over the past two decades, a series of crises in finance, health, energy, and geopolitics laid bare the risks of extreme global integration.

More recently, great powers began using economic integration as weapons. Tariffs as leverage. Financial infrastructure as coercion. Supply chains as vulnerabilities to be exploited.

You cannot “live within the lie” of mutual benefit through integration when integration becomes the source of your subordination.

The multilateral institutions on which middle powers relied—

the WTO, the UN, the COP—the architecture of collective problem solving—are greatly diminished.

As a result, many countries are drawing the same conclusions. They must develop greater strategic autonomy: in energy, food, critical minerals, in finance, and supply chains.

This impulse is understandable. A country that cannot feed itself, fuel itself, or defend itself has few options. When the rules no longer protect you, you must protect yourself.

But let us be clear-eyed about where this leads. A world of fortresses will be poorer, more fragile, and less sustainable.

And there is another truth: if great powers abandon even the pretence of rules and values for the unhindered pursuit of their power and interests, the gains from “transactionalism” become harder to replicate. Hegemons cannot continually monetize their relationships.

Allies will diversify to hedge against uncertainty. Buy insurance. Increase options. This rebuilds sovereignty—sovereignty that was once grounded in rules, but will be increasingly anchored in the ability to withstand pressure.

As I said, such classic risk management comes at a price, but that cost of strategic autonomy, of sovereignty, can also be shared. Collective investments in resilience are cheaper than everyone building their own fortress.

Shared standards reduce fragmentation. Complementarities are positive sum.

The question for middle powers, like Canada, is not whether to adapt to this new reality. We must. The question is whether we adapt by simply building higher walls—or whether we can do something more ambitious.

Canada was amongst the first to hear the wake-up call, leading us to fundamentally shift our strategic posture.

Canadians know that our old, comfortable assumption that our geography and alliance memberships automatically conferred prosperity and security is no longer valid.

Our new approach rests on what Alexander Stubb has termed “values-based realism”—or, to put it another way, we aim to be principled and pragmatic.

Principled in our commitment to fundamental values: sovereignty and territorial integrity, the prohibition of the use of force except when consistent with the UN Charter, respect for human rights.

Pragmatic in recognising that progress is often incremental, that interests diverge, that not every partner shares our values. We are engaging broadly, strategically, with open eyes. We actively take on the world as it is, not wait for a world we wish to be.

Canada is calibrating our relationships so their depth reflects our values. We are prioritising broad engagement to maximise our influence, given the fluidity of the world order, the risks that this poses, and the stakes for what comes next.

We are no longer relying on just the strength of our values, but also on the value of our strength.

We are building that strength at home.

Since my government took office, we have cut taxes on incomes, capital gains and business investment, we have removed all federal barriers to interprovincial trade, and we are fast-tracking a trillion dollars of investment in energy, AI, critical minerals, new trade corridors, and beyond.

We are doubling our defence spending by 2030 and are doing so in ways that builds our domestic industries.

We are rapidly diversifying abroad. We have agreed a comprehensive strategic partnership with the European Union, including joining SAFE, Europe’s defence procurement arrangements.

We have signed twelve other trade and security deals on four continents in the last six months.

In the past few days, we have concluded new strategic partnerships with China and Qatar.

We are negotiating free trade pacts with India, ASEAN, Thailand, Philippines, Mercosur.

To help solve global problems, we are pursuing variable geometry—different coalitions

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## GLOBAL

Continued from page 30

for different issues, based on values and interests.

On Ukraine, we are a core member of the Coalition of the Willing and one of the largest per-capita contributors to its defence and security.

On Arctic sovereignty, we stand firmly with Greenland and Denmark and fully support their unique right to determine Greenland's future. Our commitment to Article 5 is unwavering.

We are working with our NATO allies (including the Nordic Baltic 8) to further secure the alliance's northern and western flanks, including through Canada's unprecedented investments in over-the-horizon radar, submarines, aircraft, and boots on the ground. Canada strongly opposes tariffs over Greenland and calls for focused talks to achieve shared objectives of security and prosperity for the Arctic.

On plurilateral trade, we are championing efforts to build a bridge between the Trans-Pacific Partnership and the European Union, creating a new trading block of 1.5 billion people.

On critical minerals, we are forming buyer's clubs anchored in the G7 so that the world can diversify away from concentrated supply.

On AI, we are cooperating with like-minded democracies to ensure we will not ultimately be forced to choose between hegemons and hyperscalers.

This is not naive multilateralism. Nor is it relying on diminished institutions. It is building the coalitions that work, issue by issue, with partners who share enough common ground to act together. In some cases, this will be the vast majority of nations.

And it is creating a dense web of connections across trade, investment, culture on which we can draw for future challenges and opportunities.

Middle powers must act together because if you are not at the table, you are on the menu.

Great powers can afford to go it alone. They have the market size, the military capacity, the leverage to dictate terms.



Prime Minister Mark Carney speaks at World Economic Forum on Jan. 20, 2026. Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard

Middle powers do not. But when we only negotiate bilaterally with a hegemon, we negotiate from weakness. We accept what is offered. We compete with each other to be the most accommodating.

This is not sovereignty. It is the performance of sovereignty while accepting subordination.

In a world of great power rivalry, the countries in between have a choice: to compete with each other for favour or to combine to create a third path with impact.

We should not allow the rise of hard power to blind us to the fact that the power of legitimacy, integrity, and rules will remain strong—if we choose to wield it together.

Which brings me back to Havel.

What would it mean for middle powers to "live in truth"?

It means naming reality. Stop invoking the "rules-based international order" as though it still functions as advertised. Call the system what it is: a period of intensifying great power rivalry, where the most powerful pursue their interests using economic integration as a weapon of coercion.

It means acting consistently. Apply the same standards to allies and rivals. When middle powers criticize economic intimidation from one direction but stay silent when it comes from another, we are keeping the sign in the window.

It means building what we claim to believe in. Rather than waiting for the old order to be restored, create institutions and agreements that function as described.

And it means reducing the leverage that enables coercion. Building a strong domestic economy should always be every government's priority. Diversification internationally is not just economic prudence; it is the material foundation for honest foreign policy. Countries earn the right to principled stands by reducing their vulnerability to retaliation.

Canada has what the world wants. We are an energy superpower. We hold vast reserves of critical minerals. We have the most educated population in the world. Our pension funds are amongst the world's largest and most sophisticated investors. We have capital, talent, and a government with the immense fiscal capacity to act decisively.

And we have the values to which many others aspire.

Canada is a pluralistic society that works. Our public square is loud, diverse, and free. Canadians remain committed to sustainability.

We are a stable, reliable partner—in a world that is anything but—a partner that builds and values relationships for the long term.

Canada has something else: a recognition of what is happening and a determination to act accordingly.

We understand that this rupture calls for more than adaptation. It calls for honesty about the world as it is.

We are taking the sign out of the window.

The old order is not coming back. We should not mourn it. Nostalgia is not a strategy.

But from the fracture, we can build something better, stronger, and more just.

This is the task of the middle powers, who have the most to lose from a world of fortresses and the most to gain from a world of genuine cooperation.

The powerful have their power. But we have something too—the capacity to stop pretending, to name reality, to build our strength at home, and to act together.

That is Canada's path. We choose it openly and confidently.

And it is a path wide open to any country willing to take it with us.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, who represents Nepean, Ont., delivered this speech at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, 2026.

The Hill Times

## Back to Parliament COMMENT

## One Danish soldier

If even one soldier dies in Greenland due to American aggression, NATO nations would be forced to step in.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



United States President Donald Trump often changes his mind, and the number of times he has said he would use force on Greenland is far greater than the times he has said he won't, writes Gwynne Dyer. White House photograph by Molly Riley

If Trump's advisers are brave enough to do their jobs, they will also have told him that force will be necessary because a huge majority of Greenlanders don't want to be Americans. Without force, they would not obey.

So let us assume that a violent American invasion of Greenland remains a strong probability. What is the use of a few people dying to resist it, and then lots of other people suffering hardships because Trump imposes 200 per cent or whatever tariffs on EU countries to punish them for backing Denmark's resistance, when it's all inevitable anyway?

It isn't inevitable. It wouldn't even be irreversible after it happened. Americans themselves might turn against Trump's imperial adventures either before or after a conquest of Greenland. And losing Danish and Greenlander soldiers' lives, activating Article 5, even waging a guerilla war are ways to keep your right to your homeland on the table.

Canadians might escape the same fate if the conquest of Greenland proves too expensive or just too embarrassing, whereas otherwise they are the next item on Trump's menu. (Neither Greenlanders nor Canadians in the occupied territories could expect American citizenship, since giving them the vote would swing American political outcomes far to the left.)

At the very least, a joint front against Trump on this issue would strengthen the EU's internal solidarity against American pressure. It would have to evolve very rapidly to build a credible common identity and both Trump and Russian President Vladimir Putin would try to prevent that, but the Greenland crisis may even help on this count.

A successful resort to NATO's Article 5 including a fairly peaceful parting with a post-Trump United States (he's an old 79, and his stream-of-consciousness style is more and more repetitive) could be a start down that road. It's going to be a rough ride, but the game is not over.

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

The Hill Times

# NEWS Back to Parliament

## 'Unprecedented' 2025 for canola industry,

More than one-third (33.9 per cent) of all federal advocacy in 2025 was about economic development, setting a new record in annual lobbying.

Continued from page 1

director of government and industry relations for the Canola Council of Canada (CCC).

"This is very significant progress announced by the prime minister, and it's going to create some commercial conditions that will allow for exports of canola seed and meal into China, but we need to make sure that this is addressed long-term as part of our bilateral trading relationship."

Carney (Nepean, Ont.) announced a deal with China on Jan. 16, providing significant tariff relief for Canadian canola seed and meal. Under the agreement, the current 100-per-cent tariffs on canola meal—which have stood for about 11 months—are expected to be removed as of March 1, 2026. Tariffs on Canadian canola seed are also expected to be reduced from nearly 76 per cent down to 15 per cent, also as of March 1. The preliminary agreement makes no mention of tariffs on canola oil. In exchange for China easing up on tariffs, Canada will slash its own levies on Chinese electric vehicles.



The top 10 most-lobbied cabinet ministers in 2025: Tim Hodgson, top left, Mélanie Joly, Julie Dabrusin, Jill McKnight, and Heath MacDonald; Mark Carney, bottom left, François-Philippe Champagne, Dominic LeBlanc, Steven MacKinnon, and Evan Solomon. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

The deal has drawn some criticism, including from Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who said the agreement will harm Ontario's auto sector.

Sherman called the deal "significant progress," but added that long-term predictability for the canola sector is still needed, since the agreement only stipulates tariff relief for canola meal will last "at least" until year's end. The CCC will be pushing Ottawa to do what it takes to extend that relief

beyond the end of 2026, according to Sherman.

China is Canada's second-largest customer for canola and related products, with exports of canola and canola products to China valued at approximately \$5-billion in 2024. However, for 2025, export value to China is expected to plummet to less than half that amount, according to the CCC.

The Chinese tariffs, combined with the current trade war with the United States under the Donald Trump administration, made 2025 a "year of firsts" for the canola sector, according to Sherman.

"I think it's safe to say that 2025 was unprecedented for the Canadian canola industry. Unprecedented in terms of the pace of change, unprecedented in terms of the trade turbulence that we're seeing with some of our key markets, unprecedented in terms of being blocked out of the Chinese market for most of 2025," he said.

"The impacts of those tariffs on Canadian canola and canola products were severe and required a significant level of urgency of action by the federal government to restore that market access."

A new record was set last year for federal lobbying about the economy, both in terms of the overall volume of communication reports filed on that subject, and in terms of the percentage of reports about the economy compared to reports on all other subjects. Just over a third (33.9 per cent) of all lobbying activity in 2025 was about economic development, with more than 11,200 communication reports for the year listing that subject out of more than 33,300 reports. This level of federal engagement about economic matters sur-

passes any other year on record in the federal lobbyists' registry, with the distant second being 2024, where economic development lobbying made up nearly 20 per cent of all lobbying for the year.

The domestic canola sector led the way in economic development discussions in 2025, with the CCC filing 237 reports on that subject, and the Canadian Canola Growers Association (CCGA) filing 132.

Besides the trade challenges with China, Canada's canola sector is also "keenly interested" in the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), which is coming up for its first mandatory joint review in July.

The U.S. is this country's largest market for canola, with total exports in 2024 valued at \$7.7-billion. Canola seed, oil, and meal are all generally exempt from current U.S. tariffs against Canada because they are CUSMA-compliant. However, even if the immediate threat of tariffs are reduced, "the risk and uncertainty of tariffs has not been eliminated," according to the CCGA website.

Sherman told *The Hill Times* that his group's representatives visited Washington, D.C., on four occasions in 2025 to talk about the bilateral trading relationship, and the benefits of Canadian-grown canola to the U.S. economy.

Trump said on Jan. 13 that CUSMA is "irrelevant" to him, that Americans don't need Canadian products, and it wouldn't matter to him if the deal expired.

When asked for a response to Trump's comments about CUSMA, Sherman said that Canada's canola sector—along with many other industries—is highly integrated across North America.

"Part of the story that we are bringing to Capitol Hill and the U.S. administration are the

economic benefits of Canadian-grown canola in the United States," he said. "We know that there are real benefits to this trading relationship for the Americans, and that's the story that we're trying to tell policymakers in D.C. and across the country."

The CCC is represented on the registry in-house by Chris Davison, its president and CEO.

**'Our major trader trading partner turned a cold shoulder,' says Council of Canadian Innovators' Daniel Perry**

Another major contributor of communication reports about economic development last year was the Council of Canadian Innovators (CCI), which filed 107.

Daniel Perry, CCI's director of federal affairs, called 2025 a big year for his organization, with the trade war with the U.S. bringing issues to the forefront



### Economic Development Lobbying (2010-2025)

Year	Total communication reports	Economic development comms reports	Percentage
2025	33,341	11,291	33.9%
2024	35,043	6,924	19.8%
2023	33,547	5,703	17%
2022	31,490	4,949	15.7%
2021	24,340	3,893	16%
2020	28,371	4,805	17%
2019	16,644	2,229	13.4%
2018	23,575	2,757	11.7%
2017	23,294	2,376	10.2%
2016	22,423	2,337	10.4%
2015	9,301	464	5%
2014	12,938	586	4.5%
2013	11,929	567	4.8%
2012	11,778	498	4.2%
2011	11,718	416	3.6%
2010	9,630	192	2%

The above table shows total lobbying activity and the number of communication reports listing economic development as a subject matter for discussion in federal lobbying between 2010 and 2025. Economic development was listed in more than 11,200 communication reports in 2025, accounting for almost 34 per cent of lobbying activity that year. Based on a search of the federal lobbyists' registry on Jan. 21, 2026.

# with record-breaking economic lobbying

## Top Organizations Discussing Economic Development (2025)

Organization	Communication reports (economic development)
Canola Council of Canada	237
Canadian Canola Growers Association	132
Telesat Canada	115
Canadian Construction Association	111
Council of Canadian Innovators	107
Enbridge Inc.	106
Aerospace Industries Association of Canada	105
Agnico Eagle Mines Limited	103
Bruce Power	97
Alliance of Manufacturers & Exporters Canada	88

The above table shows the groups in 2025 that filed the most communication reports listing economic development as a subject for discussion. Based on a search of the federal lobbyists' registry on Jan. 21, 2026.

such as economic sovereignty, and how to protect Canadian businesses.

"We saw a change and shift in tone from the government not only because it was a new form of government with a new prime minister, but also a new economic reality, our major trading partner turned a cold shoulder to us," said Perry.

"Canadians are feeling economic pressure, whether it comes to the job market, being able to afford things and have opportunities that they previously had, and that that will continue throughout this year as well."

Perry argued that the Liberal government's Buy Canadian Policy, announced on Dec. 16, 2025, is a positive step forward. He said that 2025 was the "year of getting started," and 2026 will be "the year of execution."

"Economic sovereignty and the economy will continue to be a focus," he said. "Our economy is no longer based just in commodities, but it's talking about IP data and controlling critical technologies, as well as looking at innovation security policy—that they're all intertwined with each other, and that in order for us to be a strong nation, to continue to

grow, that we need to really focus on these areas."

During an address at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, on Jan. 20, Carney emphasized the end of the rules-based international order, and urged middle powers—such as Canada—to work together. He said this country is "building strength at home" through measures including removal of inter-provincial trade barriers, \$1-trillion of investments in energy, artificial intelligence, critical minerals, new trade corridors, and a doubling our defence spending by the end of the decade.

Perry called the speech "an honest diagnosis of the moment Canada is in," in a Jan. 21 LinkedIn post.

"Building a strong domestic economy is not just economic policy. It is foreign policy. It is security policy," said Perry in the post.

"In a 21st-century economy defined by [intellectual property], data, and control over critical technologies, innovation and security are completely intertwined. This is something even Donald Trump's own National Security Strategy recognizes

explicitly: technological leadership is national power. That is the lens Canada now needs to apply to its own policy choices."

When asked about Trump's comments about CUSMA's irrelevance, Perry said that Canada will continue to innovate.

"Our members will continue to grow and foster great ideas, and if the U.S. wants to buy them, that's okay, but there are other countries lining up, too," he said.

The CCI is represented on the registry in-house by CEO Patrick Searle, and also by consultant Karen Moores of Town Advocacy.

The Alliance of Manufacturers & Exporters Canada (CME) contributed 88 communication reports for lobbying activity related to economic development in 2025.

Dennis Darby, CME's president and CEO, told *The Hill Times* that "manufacturers, by and large, are probably the most impacted by the current economic cycle," at least when it comes to trade.

He said that, while more than 85 per cent of the goods Canada

trades with the U.S. were safe from tariffs thanks to CUSMA exemptions, the remaining 15 per cent of trade affected by tariffs are almost all manufactured goods.

"At the beginning of last year, there was fear all over Canada. What were these tariffs going to do?" he said.

"We've seen downturns. We've seen lost contracts. We know that companies are having to, in some cases ... absorb some of that tariff to your cost if you want to keep your customer in the U.S."

When asked how 2026 will compare to 2025, Darby said there is uncertainty, "because we don't know where the tariff situation is going."

"We did a poll near the end of 2025 of our members, and what we expected has happened. People are sitting on their hands. People are not making investment decisions. That's not good," he said.

"If misery loves company, we've talked to manufacturers in the U.S., and they're doing

the same. They're sitting on their hands as well. In many cases companies with healthy balance sheets are holding off making investment decisions in anticipation of where things will be."

Regarding Trump saying the U.S. doesn't need Canadian products, Darby said that's wrong.

"Most economists would agree, the U.S. economy is so strong, and it ... needs inputs from countries like Canada and Mexico," he said.

Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Intergovernmental Affairs and One Canadian Economy Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.), will lead a trade mission to Mexico between Feb. 15 and Feb. 20, targeting sectors such as advanced manufacturing, agriculture and clean technologies. CME will be a part of the trade mission, according to Darby.

The CME is represented on the registry in-house by Darby.

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## Top Cabinet Ministers Lobbied in 2025

### Cabinet Minister

Cabinet Minister	Communication reports
Tim Hodgson, Minister of Energy and Natural Resources	273
Mélanie Joly, Minister of Industry and Minister responsible for Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions	260
Julie Dabrusin, Minister of the Environment, Climate Change and Nature	179
Jill McKnight, Minister of Veterans Affairs and Associate Minister of National Defence	143
Heath MacDonald, Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food	138
Prime Minister Mark Carney	136
François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Finance and National Revenue	133
Dominic LeBlanc, President of the King's Privy Council for Canada and Minister responsible for Canada-U.S. Trade, Inter-governmental Affairs, Internal Trade and One Canadian Economy	113
Steven MacKinnon, Minister of Transport and Leader of the Government in the House of Commons	88
Evan Solomon, Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario	87

This table shows the current cabinet ministers who appear in the most communication reports for lobbying activity that occurred in 2025. Based on a search of the federal lobbyists' registry on Jan. 21, 2026.



Ontario Premier Doug Ford, left, has been critical of a Canada-China trade deal on canola and EVs announced by Prime Minister Mark Carney on Jan. 16. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# NEWS Back to Parliament

# With threats to Canada's sovereignty and mounting economic challenges, MPs should work together or face an early election, says Coteau

Ontario Liberal caucus chair and MP Michael Coteau is urging MPs from all political stripes to work together at this critical time.

Continued from page 1

"There's an expectation by Canadians [that MPs should] work together, and if the parties and the Members in the House cannot work together, there will be a very clear expectation that there be a reset in Parliament so we can set forward on a mandate to get things done," said Liberal MP Michael Coteau (Scarborough-Woburn, Ont.), who is the chair of the Ontario Liberal caucus, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"That's what Canadians want eventually, so this is our opportunity to work together. And if we can't work together as MPs, there will be an expectation to go back to the polls."

Coteau, a former provincial cabinet minister who was first elected federally in 2021, said that because of the United States-triggered trade war and its President Donald Trump's repeated rhetoric about annexing Canada, this country has been placed in a very difficult situation, and the government needs stability to deal with these challenges. He said this is a key moment in history when Canadians want all parties to set aside their political and ideological differences, and get the country out of this tough situation.

Prior to these recent challenges, Coteau said, politicians could have entered the political arena for issues that they were passionate about or the causes that motivated them, but new challenges have now overshadowed everything else.

"The limitation of what is a priority for Canadians now has shrunk completely at this moment because there's such big issues. The expectation of Canadians is going to be that their Members of Parliament build, within the House of Commons, a sense of what is urgent," said Coteau, who chairs of the House Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee.



Canadians are looking for 'stability so the prime minister and the administration can get the job done,' says Ontario Liberal caucus chair Michael Coteau. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"And even more importantly—at this point—stability, so the prime minister and the administration can get the job done. That stability today is going to be one of the most meaningful attributes people are looking for when it comes to the House of Commons," he added.

In the 343-member House, the threshold for a majority government is 172. Currently, the Liberals have 170 seats, the Conservatives 142, the Bloc 22, the NDP seven, the Greens one, and one seat is vacant.

In a minority government, an election can be triggered at any time. The opposition, which currently outnumbers the government in the House, can bring down the government on a confidence vote, or the prime minister can request that the governor general dissolve Parliament and call a new election.

Even though the Liberals have a strong minority, they still need the support of at least one opposition party to move all pieces of legislation through the House. Unlike the last Parliament, when they had a confidence-and-supply agreement with the NDP, they have no such arrangement with any party. So, prior to every confidence vote, they have to engage in negotiations with all parties to seek their support. Usually, these talks create uncertainty, which is unhelpful for the smooth functioning of the government.

On Nov. 17, the Liberals' budget passed by a razor-thin margin of two votes: 170-168. Conservative MPs Shannon Stubbs (Lake-

land, Alta.) and Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.), and NDP MPs Lori Idlout (Nunavut) and Gord Johns (Courtenay-Alberni, B.C.) abstained from voting. At that time, the Carney government also had Chrystia Freeland's vote as the now-former Liberal MP had not stepped down from her seat.

Also voting with the government on Nov. 17, 2025, was Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.). After the vote, she at first said she had made a "mistake" by voting with the government, which wouldn't be repeated again. Later, May said she would make her decisions on a case-by-case basis. So, if the Liberals need her vote, they will have to negotiate with the Greens before every confidence vote.

Considering the Conservatives and the NDP's voting patterns on the budget, it appeared that both parties cast their votes strategically to ensure that the government was not defeated.

The average age of a minority government in Canada is 19 months. The last election happened on April 28, 2025, which means the government will complete its first year in power in late April.

In a minority Parliament, it's customary for the governing party to reach out to opposition parties ahead of the budget vote or other confidence votes to request their support. Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and other senior cabinet ministers did meet with opposition party leaders before the budget vote, but the opposition has been

saying that engagement was not meaningful.

According to a recent poll by Nanos Research, if an election were to happen now, 38.8 per cent of Canadians would vote for the Liberals, 34.8 per cent for the Conservatives, 11.5 per cent for the NDP, and 7.7 per cent for the Bloc.

In the preferred prime minister category, 51.3 per cent identified Carney as their choice and 25.3 per cent expressed a favourable opinion of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.).

In terms of top-of-mind issues, 18.3 per cent identified jobs and economy, and 13.4 per cent said Trump and the Canada-U.S. relationship.

## Liberals could 'orchestrate their own demise' to risk a majority, says ex-Tory MP Lukiwski

Meanwhile, in addition to Trump's threatening rhetoric towards Canadian sovereignty, his top officials' public remarks are making this whole situation even worse.

"We live in a world ... that is governed by strength, that is governed by force, that is governed by power. ... These are the iron laws of the world," said Stephen Miller, the White House deputy chief of staff, to CNN on Jan. 6.

He later added: "We're a superpower. And under President Trump, we are going to conduct ourselves as a superpower."

Miller made these remarks following a strike on Venezuela in which U.S. special forces arrested President Nicolás Maduro and brought him to New York. Since that successful raid, Trump and senior White House officials have openly discussed taking over Greenland, including the possibility of using force if needed. Last week at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, Trump changed his tone, saying he would not use force to acquire the Danish territory.

Trump has also threatened similar actions against Colombia and Iran, and has said that Mexico needs to "get their act together."

A poll by Leger Marketing published earlier this month states that 31 per cent of Canadians think that the U.S. might invade Canada. The poll also

found that 55 per cent of Canadians are of the view that the U.S. might invade Greenland, 51 per cent think Cuba could come under American attack, and 47 per cent think the U.S. will attack Colombia and Panama.

Up until Jan. 16, Carney was careful in his remarks about Trump in an effort to avoid antagonizing the American president, despite the ongoing trade war, U.S. strikes in Venezuela, and Trump's annexation rhetoric of Canada. But that changed last week, when Carney spoke at the World Economic Forum—a speech which has been widely praised by Canadians across party lines. Without directly referring to Trump or the U.S., Carney called out "great powers" that use their strength to coerce other countries to bend. He called on middle powers to work together to build a new order rooted in the rule of law, and to reduce reliance on those great powers.

The next day, Trump in his own World Economic Forum speech, described Canada as "ungrateful" and said that his northern neighbour has been receiving "freebies" from the U.S.

"I watched your prime minister yesterday. He wasn't so grateful," Trump said. "But they should be grateful to us. Canada lives because of the United States. Remember that, Mark, the next time you make your statements."

On Jan. 22, Trump announced on Truth Social that he's withdrawing his invitation to Carney to join the U.S.-created and led Board of Peace. The U.S. president did not explain his decision. He called the Board of Peace "the most prestigious Board of Leaders ever assembled, at any time." This move is expected to throw another wrench in the already deteriorating bilateral relationship.

Meanwhile, former Saskatchewan Conservative MP Tom Lukiwski told *The Hill Times* that he would not be surprised if an early election were called this year. He predicted that while the Liberals hold a strong minority in the House, they would move quickly to capitalize on any opportunity to secure a majority. Lukiwski, however, cautioned that if the Liberals were to pull the plug, it could be a risky move that could backfire.

"It would not surprise me if the Liberals orchestrated their own demise so that there would be an election in the hope that they could get a majority, finally," said Lukiwski.

Of the nine elections in the last 25 years, only three—2000, 2011, and 2015—have yielded majorities.

Liberal MP Charles Sousa (Mississauga-Lakeshore, Ont.) said that MPs should always work together to deliver for Canadians, but now is especially the time when they must do it.

"I like the way the prime minister said it, you know, we've got to be at the table or we'll be on the menu," said Sousa.

"And that goes for all of us in the House. So, there's a sense of decorum and respect that's necessary, and people want to see us do that."

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# Public service job cuts will be 'minimal' in procurement and contracting roles, says PSPC

Public Services and Procurement cuts would add a layer of 'uncertainty' to the already murky field of federal contracting, but could also open up opportunities that lead to better outcomes, say former public servants.

BY IREM KOCA

As workforce adjustment notices roll out across the federal public service, the government's central purchasing agent says there will be "minimal" impact on positions directly involved in procurement and contracting as it focuses on efficiency.

The federal government has begun to notify thousands of federal workers about job cuts, in line with Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) plan to shrink the public service by 16,000 full-time equivalent roles over three years stemming from a 2025 government spending review.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) issued 730 workforce adjustment notices, according to a Jan. 16 update from the Public Service Alliance of Canada. Information compiled by *The Hill Times* indicates that the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada has reported 110 notices for its membership, and that the Canadian Association of Professional Employees reported 139, bringing the total number of PSPC-affected positions to 979 as of Jan. 22. However, the question of which positions will be eliminated is still unclear.

PSPC did not respond to *The Hill Times'* questions about how many jobs will be cut or how many employees currently work in procurement, but it said in a statement that the impacts on those workers will be "minimal."

According to PSPC's 2024-25 results report, the department had nearly 19,000 staff working on core responsibilities and for its internal services. The report listed 2,263 full-time equivalents working on the purchase of goods and services.

"Reductions to positions directly involved in procurement and contracting are minimal,"



Public Services and Procurement Canada, led by Minister Joël Lightbound, has reportedly issued nearly 980 workforce adjustment notices as part of the government-wide job cuts. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nicole Allen, a PSPC spokesperson, told *The Hill Times* by email.

"As the government is committed to reducing its reliance and spend on external consultants, PSPC will continue to focus on business transformation, reducing procurement complexity as way to increase efficiency in service delivery."

The 2025 budget said the government would cut a total of \$60-billion in spending over five years, which includes a goal of reducing 40,000 jobs from the 2023-24 peak public servant population by 2030. The November document signalled PSPC will undertake "strategic realignments to reduce ongoing costs to operate programs and efficiently deliver services," and aim to reduce spending by 15 per cent over three years: \$108.9-million in 2026-27, \$147-million in 2027-28, another \$190.8-million in 2028-29, and \$195.6-million ongoing.

Former public servants who spoke to *The Hill Times* said government job cuts adds further "uncertainty" to procurement, and risks institutional expertise being replaced by consultants, but it also presents an "opportunity" for the government to shift to outcome-based processes.

Clem Srour, a former director of the Industrial and Technological Benefits Branch at Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada who has been involved in delivering major defence procurements, said the job cuts are likely to add another layer of "uncertainty" to procurements on top of "great amount of uncertainty" at PSPC.

"Procurement is a skill you don't develop overnight. People working in procurement develop this over years of managing various projects," said Srour, adding that, going forward, the federal government needs to manage



Former senior public servant Clem Srour says the government may lose the best and brightest of procurement officers with the job cuts. Handout photograph

the job cuts carefully to ensure it maintains the institutional knowledge that is crucial to successful project delivery.

Srour said there is a risk that the government will lose some of the best and the brightest as those with the best portfolios are more likely to leave the public service and seek opportunities elsewhere.

Srour left the public sector in 2023, and is now managing director of Tridus Strategies.

"We could see a lot of people with years of experience going out the door, potentially all around the same time. That could leave a big gap in skills and experience in the department. That's not going to be very useful to their ability to manage the procurement process," he said.

While PSPC has not yet confirmed what jobs the cuts would affect, Srour said that if it means there would be fewer procurement officers, that would be "problematic."



Sahir Khan, a former assistant parliamentary budget officer, says public service cuts could present the government with an opportunity to transform procurement. Photograph courtesy of X

The government could potentially employ artificial intelligence for certain procurement tasks such as developing requests for proposals and other processing contracting documents, but the department still would have to rely heavily on people with deep expertise in the field, Srour argued. High-level jobs, such as briefing ministers and managing files, would have to be done by real people, he said.

When asked if having fewer procurement officers in the public service would eventually lead departments to outsource some of the work to consultants, Srour raised the question of how the government would pay for that switch.

"Are we going to be cutting back positions but then try to find money to bring on consultants and contractors? If you go in one direction and you want to bring consultants and contractors on, you need to have money for that

as well. And potentially it could be more expensive. You don't have to pay contractors for benefits, but you still have to pay them appropriately because they have the experience."

Sahir Khan, a former assistant parliamentary budget officer and current vice-president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa, told *The Hill Times* that "while it's terrible that people are losing their jobs, it's also an opportunity for the federal government to rethink how it does procurement."

"What this is going to mean is people who manage programs are now going to have to take more ownership over procurement. So while we're reducing the number of people, it's also a time to rethink how the government does procurement, which means bringing that activity closer to the people who deliver programs and services, and integrating programs into buying outcomes and not just buying inputs," he said.

Khan argued that governments are shifting from procuring goods to procuring services, and that the latter comes with greater complexity and needs to be managed differently.

"You can't just reduce the [number of people] without changing the very processes you're using to achieve an outcome," he said. "If the government simply reduces people without changing the way it procures, it may find itself actually outsourcing functions to keep that system going."

Both Srour and Khan underlined that federal procurement is undergoing a transformative period during which the government needs a clear strategy for going forward.

Federal contracting has been under microscope for the last couple of years due to delays and cost overruns and fraudulent activity reviewed. Carney has committed to overhauling federal procurement, pushing for multiple transformative moves in the last year including launching a "Reciprocal Procurement" policy to ensure goods and services except military purchases are sourced from Canada or its trading partners. In that same vein, a "Buy Canadian" policy aimed at prioritizing domestic suppliers in federal contracts, and the establishment of a new Defence Investment Agency to oversee major military purchases have been informing conversations around the future of federal procurement. However, the implementation of all three policies are still unclear to many working in the procurement sphere.

Procurement Ombud Alexander Jeglic previously told *The Hill Times* that his consultations showed "very few truly understand" how defence procurement even works. Jeglic had found "systemic issues that persist year after year," with a 113-per-cent increase in written complaints to his office in 2025, and had proposed five changes to improve federal procurement.

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# NEWS Back to Parliament

# Health workforce, toxic drug crisis on health critics' agendas this winter

Conservative health critic Dan Mazier says an upcoming committee report on immigration and health care will include 'damning evidence' that will surprise people.

BY TESSIE SANCI

As MPs return to the Hill, federal health critics say they will focus on the need to improve Canada's health workforce crisis, with Conservative health critic Dan Mazier saying that a Health Committee report outlining the obstacles faced by thousands of physicians to becoming licensed in Canada needs to be published.

"There's some pretty damning testimony there that, I think, will surprise a lot of people [and] that the government should definitely take action on," said Mazier (Riding Mountain, Man.), who is a vice-chair for the committee.

"We have Canadians studying [medicine] abroad that can't [return and practice in] Canada because of all the barriers. We have 13,000 internationally trained physicians [currently] in Canada not practicing," Mazier said, referring to some of that testimony. The study was proposed by Mazier last fall and the committee held its last meeting on the subject on Nov. 27.

Also frustrating Mazier is another finding that the federal government provides visas to medical students from Saudi Arabia so they can learn in Canadian hospitals, but they return to their home country once their training is completed.

Mazier said this takes up capacity in the health-care system that could be used to train doctors in Canada.

These issues are coming to the forefront as 5.9-million Canadians do not have a primary care provider, according to the 2025 OurCare National Survey, and emergency rooms across the country are overwhelmed.

Health Committee chair and Liberal MP Hedy Fry (Vancouver Centre, B.C.) said that when the committee returns, it has to provide instructions to the analysts about what MPs would like to see in the report, which will have to be produced in both official languages.



Conservative health critic Dan Mazier, left, says a key focus for him during the winter sitting is the proximity of some supervised injection sites to places frequented by children, while NDP health critic Gord Johns says he'll be vocal on issues including mental health and pharmacare. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

It is unknown when the report will be tabled.

"Hopefully, [the recommendations are] going to be agreed upon by the whole committee. But if it isn't, then you're going to have one of the three political parties wanting to do their own report," Fry said.

NDP health critic Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, B.C.) also told *The Hill Times* that he'll be pushing the government on health workforce problems.

Johns said the NDP has been calling for a "real plan" for health workforce issues that includes funding to increase training spots for those studying medicine, faster recognition of foreign credentials, and retention measures to motivate current health-care workers to remain in the sector.

"Everyone should be able to access a doctor or nurse practitioner or community health team in a timely way," Johns said, adding that there is a particular need in rural and remote areas, and that Indigenous-led services have to be a priority.

*The Hill Times* asked Julien Coulombe-Bonnafous, a press secretary for the Bloc Québécois, by phone and email if his party wanted to provide a statement about their priorities, but did not receive a response.

The NDP's Johns also said he will renew his calls for a national summit on the toxic drug crisis, and will continue to press the government on funding parity for mental health. Johns has introduced for the second time a private member's bill, C-201, to amend the Canada Health Act so that mental, addictions, and substance use health services are funded by annual federal transfers.

Mazier has also criticized the federal Liberals' actions on the toxic drug crisis. He told *The Hill Times* that he will be outspoken about Ottawa's approvals of supervised injection sites near places

frequented by children, such as schools, playgrounds, and daycares.

Mazier used his time when Health Canada officials were before the Health Committee on Oct. 2 and Oct. 9 to question officials about the location of these sites.

"There's no way that drugs should be used next to children, especially fentanyl," Mazier told *The Hill Times*. "I've questioned [Health Minister Marjorie Michel] directly on this, and it seems to be just off the radar totally. So, I'm definitely going to hold her account on this."

Conservative addictions critic Todd Doherty (Cariboo—Prince George, B.C.) also spoke to *The Hill Times* about his focus for this winter and spring, saying that Canada is "gripped in an opioid crisis and a mental health crisis."

"I think in our country that we have yet to really address—we need to make sure that there are beds available [and] we need to make sure if somebody is seeking treatment, that there's help available," he said.

The recent renewal of 9-8-8, the national three-digit suicide prevention helpline, is a "critical step" in providing necessary support, Doherty said.

The federal government announced on Jan. 16 that it would provide up to \$120.2-million to keep the line, which launched in 2024, running for another two years. Work on the helpline began after Doherty's successful House motion in 2020 to launch the service.

Johns said he expects to keep pushing the federal government to keep signing bilateral pacts for pharmacare.

"We're seeing provinces that are wanting to sign pharmacare agreements, and they can't even get a meeting to talk about it," Johns said.

Since the Pharmacare Act—a key component of the now-defunct supply-and-confidence agreement

between the previous Liberal government and the NDP—was passed in 2024, agreements with only three provinces and one territory have been signed. The agreement with Yukon was signed by Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) government following Carney's Liberal leadership win in early 2025.

But since last April's federal election, no other agreements have been signed even though Carney told reporters back in September that his government would follow through with other deals.

Johns also introduced Bill C-206 last spring to establish a national strategy on brain injuries. A similar bill was introduced in 2022 by then-NDP MP Alistair MacGregor, who lost his seat to now-Conservative MP Jeff Kibble (Cowichan—Malahat—Langford, B.C.). MacGregor's bill was at report stage in the House after being unanimously passed at second reading and studied by the Health Committee in 2024.

Noting the bill's unanimous support and that he is "pretty far down on the Order Paper," Johns said he's been talking to the Prime Minister's Office about having the proposed strategy included in this spring's economic statement.

## Health Committee to study pharmaceutical sovereignty, medals for living donors

The Health Committee is expecting a busy sitting as it balances studies proposed by its members as well as potential ones for private members' bills that are awaiting second reading votes.

The committee is currently conducting a study on antimicrobial resistance that was proposed by Bloc Québécois MP Luc Thériault (Montcalm, Que.).

An upcoming study on pharmaceutical sovereignty, proposed

by Liberal MP Maggie Chi (Don Valley North, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Michel (Papineau, Que.), is also on the docket.

The committee is also expected to return to an opioids study that was begun prior to the spring 2025 election, but was not completed, said committee chair Hedy Fry.

She told *The Hill Times* that the committee will also dedicate some time to a Conservative motion, which will see officials from Health Canada, the Public Health Agency of Canada, National Defence, and Procurement answer questions about the national emergency stockpile of personal protective equipment.

The only private member's bill that is definitely heading to the committee is Bill C-234, Living Donor Recognition Act, which would establish a medal to be awarded to those who have donated an organ during their lifetime.

Fry said she is co-sponsoring the bill, which was introduced by Conservative MP Ziad Aboualtaif (Edmonton Manning, Alta.).

The bills that haven't yet received a second reading vote, but could be on their way to the committee if successful are: Bill C-218, An Act to amend the Criminal Code (medical assistance in dying), introduced by Conservative MP Tamara Jansen (Cloverdale—Langley City, B.C.); Bill C-224, An Act to amend the Food and Drugs Act (natural health products), introduced by Conservative MP Blaine Calkins (Ponoka—Didsbury, Alta.); and Bill C-239, An Act to amend the Canada Health Act (accountability), introduced by Liberal MP Sukh Dhaliwal (Surrey Newton, B.C.).

As for Fry's own priorities in the House, the long-time Liberal MP said she is keeping her eyes on the issue of private health care in Canada.

As examples, she pointed to Alberta's plan to allow physicians to work in both the public and private health care system, and an upcoming motion at the federal Conservatives' policy convention at the end of this month about a two-tier health care system.

*The Hill Times*'s review of the policy proposals for the convention shows one, referred to as Submission #1057, that states the Canada Health Act should be amended "where necessary, to provide the provinces with greater flexibility in the delivery of, and insurance coverage options for" health care services.

Fry, a physician before she turned to federal politics in 1993, said that after completing medical school in Dublin, Ireland, she and her doctor husband specifically moved to Canada in the 1970s to work in its public health-care system.

"The whole issue of medicare concerns me—whether it would survive. It was brought in by Liberals, strengthened by Liberals under the Canada Health Act. It is not going to die under Liberals, as far as I'm concerned," she said.

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# House winter session expected to be ‘very consequential’ with affordability issues, global trade, and possible referendums, say politicos

If an election were held today, the Liberals would capture 41 per cent of voters, while the Conservatives would take 39 per cent, according to Abacus Data survey data released on Jan. 22.

Continued from page 1

he will be moving to form a majority, and all of that is going to affect what gets discussed in Parliament.”

The House returns on Jan. 26 after having risen on Dec. 11, 2025, while the Senate is scheduled to come back on Feb. 3.

For Bricker, what this parliamentary session all comes down to is whether a federal election will be called, and if the Liberals can secure the small number of seats still needed for a majority. The Liberals currently hold 170 seats, with their numbers recently bolstered by former Conservative MPs Michael Ma (Markham—Unionville, Ont.) and Chris d’Entremont (Acadie—Annapolis, N.S.) having crossed the floor to the government’s side in late 2025. However, the resignation of now-former Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland on Jan. 9 created a vacancy in her Toronto riding, triggering a by-election.

Bricker told *The Hill Times* that this Parliament is strange in how close Carney (Nepean, Ont.) is to a majority. He pointed to the leadership review awaiting Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River—Crowfoot, Alta.) at his party’s policy convention in Calgary from Jan. 29-31, and the NDP’s leadership election in March as potential moments when other MPs may decide to switch to the Liberals. Floor crossings could be triggered if MPs in either party are dissatisfied with the results in their leadership considerations, according to Bricker.

“You could see people on the Conservative side standing up and saying, ‘We need more of a national unity government,’” said Bricker.

“The NDP has a convention coming up, and we’ll see what that leads to. Maybe there’ll be some losers at the convention ... so that could open up some opportunities.”



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and Prime Minister Mark Carney. The House returns on Jan. 26. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

If an election were held today, the Liberals would capture 41 per cent of committed voters, while the Conservatives would take 39 per cent, according to survey data released by Abacus Data on Jan. 22. The NDP sits at eight per cent, followed by the Bloc Québécois at seven percent.

The Abacus Data survey also found that Poilievre’s personal ratings have reached their lowest point since the firm began tracking it in mid-2023, with 35 per cent of Canadians holding a positive impression of the Conservative leader, and 48 per cent holding a negative impression.

Bricker called the international issues currently facing Canada, including the trade war with the United States and its President Donald Trump, an “absolute train wreck of a global agenda.” However, he added that for the average Canadian, the key issue continues to be affordability, followed by health care and housing.

According to Bricker, two of the most important issues facing Canada in the coming months—which will be outside of Ottawa’s control—are possible political landscape changes in two provinces.

Alberta could potentially see a referendum on independence from Canada. On Jan. 2, the province’s chief electoral officer issued a citizen initiative petition for a “Referendum Relating to Alberta Independence.” For the referendum to occur, organizers must collect 177,732 signatures from eligible Alberta voters by May 2.

“You hear different projections, but there’s a possibility that could happen, and it could happen around the same time that we’re having an election [in] the province of Quebec, in which sovereignty is going to, again, be an element of the conversation,” said Bricker.

“We’ve never dealt with it in our history, where we’ve got two parts of the country kicking off at the same time.”

In Quebec, the province’s general election is scheduled for Oct.

5, 2026, although it may be called earlier. The Parti Québécois, led by Paul St-Pierre Plamondon, is currently leading in polls, and has promised a referendum on sovereignty if elected.

## Ottawa-Alberta MOU will ‘dominate the conversation in Parliament’: Brad Lavigne

Brad Lavigne, president and a partner with Counsel Public Affairs, and a former principal secretary to then-NDP leader Jack Layton, told *The Hill Times* that the question is how the outcome of a separatist referendum in Alberta could affect Canada’s position at the negotiation table with the U.S. during the current trade war.

A joint review of the Canada-United States-Mexico-Agreement is coming up in July.

“Will the referendum itself serve to weaken Canada’s leverage at the negotiation table? I think that’s going to be one of the things that will kind of be in the backdrop,” said Lavigne.

“How does that look to the American counterparts at the trade-negotiating table as to whether or not Canada has a strong hand?”

Lavigne argued that the recently signed memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Ottawa and Alberta will also need some attention this spring.

Carney and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith signed a MOU on Nov. 27, 2025, outlining a shared commitment to establish Canada as “a global energy superpower.” It sets a series of conditions that could result in a private-sector proponent bringing forward a proposal for a pipeline from the province’s oil patch to British Columbia’s coast.

The MOU also set an April 1, 2026 deadline for details such as a new carbon pricing agreement for Alberta’s industrial emitters, and finalization of an agreement for a 75-per-cent reduction in methane emissions by 2035.

“The MOU is relatively vague. How well Ottawa is upholding its end of the bargain in the MOU will, I think, also dominate the conversation in Parliament and whether or not there’s more to come. That is, are there more memorandums of understanding on energy with other Western provinces coming? What could those possibly look like?” said Lavigne.

David Coletto, CEO and founding partner of Abacus Data, told *The Hill Times* that, outside of the broader global insecurity issues, it’s access to affordable housing and health care that Canadians are worried about the most.

“I think [Canadians are] looking for their political leaders to offer up not just words, frankly, but actual policies that are going to move the needle for people and give them a sense of hope that things at least will stay as they are and won’t get worse,” said Coletto.

“Cost of living, housing, health care, and Trump are the top four issues, that people think should be the priorities of the federal government. I think the prime minister knows it. I think the government knows it. It’s just, can they demonstrate to people that they are seized by those issues, particularly the affordability one, which is the hardest one for them?” he added.

Coletto said that, from a polling perspective, Carney has sustained goodwill among a large portion of the public, with close to half of Canadians maintaining a positive view of him.

“I guess the question is: ‘are people going to get impatient?’ Maybe. But I also think that they understand what we’re up against as a country, both in terms of dealing with Trump, but also a bunch of other things that are going on, and I still believe that the core group of people who supported the Liberals in the last election are giving him the benefit of the doubt,” said Coletto.

“They trust him to guide the country forward. That’s not everybody, but those who did support him and trust him in the past, I think, continue to do so.”

When it comes to the Conservatives, Coletto said he expects Poilievre to successfully pass his leadership review, but he may have a challenge in expanding beyond his core base of supporters.

“Poilievre has been very good and successful at holding the coalition together that voted for him last spring, despite all of the friction, the changes and how people are feeling ... and I think that is an indicator that it’s a solid group of people who, if given the chance again ... would likely vote Conservative again,” he said.

“But the other hand is that [Poilievre] has actually lost ground when it comes to trying to convince anybody else that he is the right choice at the moment, [and] that the party has answers to some of the big questions that many people are asking.”

## Cost of living the top domestic concern: ex-MP Marco Mendicino

Marco Mendicino, a former Liberal cabinet minister who is currently senior counsel and strategic adviser to Toronto-based law firm Cassels, told *The Hill Times* that the top domestic issue this session will be affordability. Internationally, the most important issue will be trade and the evolving geopolitical landscape, he said.

“From a policy perspective, the government needs to continue to focus on affordability, and there are ways in which it can address that priority on behalf of Canadians by accelerating housing starts, and the Build Canada Homes Agency is one where I think a lot of Canadians will look to for concrete results,” said Mendicino, who served as public safety and as immigration minister under then-Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau’s government.

“I also think major projects in getting energy to market as quickly as possible will be crucial, and ... removing all federal barriers to internal trade.”

On Jan. 20, Carney addressed the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland, where he talked about the end of the rules-based international order, and urged middle powers to work together. He said Canada is “building strength at home” through measures including \$1-trillion of investments in energy, artificial intelligence, critical minerals, and new trade corridors.

According to Mendicino, any domestic accomplishments in terms of major projects will also serve as a demonstration to the rest of the world about the core message of Carney’s speech.

“The old era is done, and this is a new era, right? And a new era in which middle powers have an opportunity to work together to establish new agreements, new deals on the basis of common interest,” he said.

“Canada has much to offer the world when it comes to energy, natural resources, and the like.”

When looking ahead to the rest of 2026, Mendicino said there will be uncertainty because of the inability to predict with clarity “where world events will take us.”

“Juxtaposed against that volatility, it’s, I think, reassuring to a lot of Canadians that you have a steady hand on the wheel in Mark Carney, that you have a battle-tested crisis manager—someone who knows how to navigate the seas when they get high and rough,” he said.

“I think it will be up to the government, again, to put forward and implement its economic agenda, to address Canadians’ concerns around affordability, and internationally to continue to make the case that Canada is a place with whom other countries can do business as a trusted partner.”

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## NEWS Back to Parliament

# McPherson's NDP leadership ex-MP support, but Lewis nabs

NDP MP Leah Gazan's endorsement of Avi Lewis makes her the only caucus member behind a candidate. NDP MP Heather McPherson is backed by 12 former MPs, including longtime colleague Charlie Angus.

BY ELEANOR WAND

**N**DP MP and leadership candidate Heather McPherson is leading the five-contestant pack in endorsements, with 12 former MPs backing her bid, while next-closest candidates Avi Lewis and Rob Ashton have a fraction of the support from those with federal political experience.

McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), a three-time MP and the only member of caucus in race, has in her corner former longtime NDP MPs Charlie Angus and Carol Hughes, as well as former Alberta premier Rachel Notley, plus the support of four provincial politicians.

Lewis, an activist and journalist, was the first to earn caucus support, with three-term NDP MP Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, Man.) saying Lewis was the best suited to rebuild the party, and to "offer hope in tough times." The candidate, whose father is the former leader of the Ontario NDP, and whose grandfather once led the federal party, also has the support of three former MPs and two provincial politicians. Ontario MPPs Jessica Bella and Lise Vaugeois have pledged their support, as have 10 past provincial NDP representatives, including Joel Harden and Gary Burrill.

International Longshore Workers Union national president Rob Ashton has collected the support of two former MPs, three provincial politicians, and is also backed by some unions. Ashton's campaign has not published an endorsement list on his website, and did not respond to requests for a list by deadline.

Angus, who decided not to run for re-election in 2025 after nearly 21 years in the House, said that the job of leading the NDP is not an "entry-level position" in his endorsement video for McPherson.

"We need a leader who understands how to win, who has a track record of winning," said Angus, who is a prolific poster on his Substack, *The Resistance*.



NDP leadership candidate Heather McPherson, centre, is leading in endorsements, followed by Avi Lewis, left, and Rob Ashton. New Democrats will select their new leader at the end of March at the party's convention in Winnipeg, Man. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and illustration by Neena Singhal

"Heck, if you can win a riding in Alberta, and turn it into one of the safest NDP seats, then you have that track record."

In the last election, which saw a number of New Democrat candidates crushed as voters splitting red and blue in the response to United States President Donald Trump's threats against Canada, McPherson won her seat with 47 per cent of the vote. That record has also gained her the support of former NDP MPs Dawn Black, Lisa Marie Barron, Richard Cannings, Linda Duncan, Jack Harris, Leila Dance, Raymond Côté, and Judy Wasylycia-Leis.

Lewis has the support of former British Columbia-based NDP MPs Svend Robinson, Bill Siksay, and Libby Davies, who is also past deputy party leader. He's also been endorsed by a number of climate activists and authors, including David Suzuki, Cory Doctorow, and Yann Martel. Lewis' wife, Naomi Klein, has also offered her support.

In a Jan. 15 endorsement video alongside Lewis, Gazan said "we need someone who can rebuild our party, we need someone who can offer hope in tough times, and that person, I believe, is Avi Lewis."

NDP MPs Alexandre Boulerice (Rosemont—La Petite-Patrie, Que.), Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, B.C.), and Lori Ildout (Nunavut) did not respond by deadline about who they support as the next leader. Jenny Kwan's (Vancouver East, B.C.) office told *The Hill Times* she would not be commenting on the race as the



NDP MP Leah Gazan has endorsed Avi Lewis for the party's leadership. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former NDP MP Charlie Angus has endorsed Heather McPherson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

caucus chair. Interim leader Don Davies' (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.) office, too, said he won't be endorsing a candidate.

Ashton is backed by former Quebec MP Laurin Liu and ex-B.C. MP Bonita Zarrillo. He's also picked up the support of the United Steelworkers Union, the Canadian Union of Public Employees' Saskatchewan branch, B.C. NDP MLAs George Anderson and Rohini Arora, and Suzy Hansen, a Nova Scotia NDP MLA.

"We need to win back seats in Quebec, we need to win back workers outside of Montreal," Liu said in her endorsement video.

"Rob Ashton's the guy for the job. ... He's working on his French, and he's ready to knock on doors in Quebec and in the Maritimes."

Neither of the other two candidates—Tony McQuail and Tanielle Johnston—have secured support of New Democrats with federal political experience, though Johnston has been endorsed by Manitoba's former deputy premier Eric Robinson.

### Lack of French 'disqualifying,' says former MP Robinson

Robinson, who was an MP from 1979 to 2004, and who ran

unsuccessfully for NDP leader in 1995, said that there's a "threshold" of French required to be a leader of the federal party.

"If you're going to be an effective leader of the federal and democratic party, you have to be able to communicate with the eight million Canadians who are francophones," he said.

"A number of the candidates bring a lot of strengths to the leadership, but they can't communicate in any effective way with eight million Canadians, and so that's disqualifying."

Robinson said that as McQuail, Johnston, and Ashton's French is limited, the race comes down to

# bid secures most only caucus nod



Former NDP MP Svend Robinson said a candidate not being able to speak French is 'disqualifying.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"If I were Avi, I'd be making that case that he has more flexibility to rebuild it out into communities across the country, and he would have to fundraise that," she said.

## McPherson can 'hit the ground running': former MP Roche

Former independent Senator Douglas Roche, who was a Progressive Conservative MP in Edmonton from 1979 to 1984, said he's purchased an NDP membership to vote for McPherson. He told *The Hill Times* he did so as an independent.

Roche said McPherson has an impressive history on the Hill, so the "caring and committed parliamentarian" stands out in the field of candidates.

"She is the only candidate who has experience in Parliament, which is where all the action takes place, so she can hit the ground running as leader," said Roche. "Heather does not need an introductory course in how government and Parliament operates, so that itself is a very big plus for Heather's campaign."

Roche pointed to McPherson's experience as the NDP's foreign affairs critic, highlighting her work on nuclear disarmament and Palestine. As critic in 2024, the MP succeeded in passing a non-binding motion in the House banning the arms sales to Israel.

A report released last year suggests arms were still being sent despite the motion, though the feds have denied that is the case.

Nash said the leadership race so far has been "fairly low-key," but pointed to Lewis and McPherson as the frontrunners.

"Because of the dominance of foreign affairs, from the invasion of Venezuela to Trump at the summit in Davos ... there isn't much oxygen left for anything else," she said.

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Then-NDP leader Jagmeet Singh resigned on April's election night. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



McPherson and Lewis. Neither Lewis nor McPherson are fluently bilingual, though Lewis' abilities are stronger than McPherson's.

All the candidates have committed to improving their French-language skills, but the lack of fluency has caused some concern, especially after the race's first leadership debate in Montreal. The event was pitched as being bilingual, but a number of candidates muddled their way through prepared statements and struggled when questions were posed in French.

In 2011, New Democrats rode their "orange wave" to official opposition thanks to their support in Quebec. Now, Boularic is the sole Quebec NDP MP left in the House.

Quebec is needed for the party to rebuild, agreed former NDP Peggy Nash, who has not endorsed a candidate.

"In terms of the challenge of the future leader, rebuilding the party, it's a big job, and Quebec has to be part of that job," said Nash, who represented a Toronto-area riding from 2006 to 2008, and again from 2011 to 2015.

Last April's election reduced the NDP caucus to only seven MPs, dropping the party below the threshold of 12 MPs required for recognized party status in the House, and forcing New Democrats into a leadership race after then-party leader Jagmeet Singh resigned on election night.

Robinson said at "such a critical time" for the party, New Democrats need a leader capable of capturing "the imagination of Canadians." He said Lewis can achieve that outcome, likening his campaign to that of New York City Mayor Zohran Mamdani.

"Avi is a really dynamic and effective communicator," he said. "He's able to communicate well, he's able to inspire and excite young people."

It's something Siksay, an MP of seven years until 2011, echoed.

"I looked at Avi. What Avi did for me was that he gave me some

## NDP leadership race endorsements

Last updated Jan. 22, 2026.

### Heather McPherson

Charlie Angus	Former Ontario MP
Reg Baskin	Former Alberta NDP president, former Alberta Federation of Labour president
Dawn Black	Former B.C. MP
Richard Cannings	Former B.C. MP
Raymond Côté	Former Quebec MP
Leila Dance	Former Manitoba MP
Johanna den Hertog	Former NDP president
Linda Duncan	Former Alberta MP
Jack Harris	Former Newfoundland & Labrador MP
Vivienne Horne	Former Alberta MLA
Carol Hughes	Former Ontario MP
Lynn Hunter	Former B.C. MP
Nancy Janovicek	Former Alberta NDP president
Michael Janz	Edmonton City Councillor
Danielle Larivee	Former Alberta MLA, former Alberta minister
Lisa Marie Barron	Former B.C. MP
Rachel Notley	Former Alberta premier
Chris O'Halloran	Former Alberta NDP president
Chandra Pasma	Ontario MPP
Shannon Phillips	Former Alberta MLA, former Alberta minister
Nicole Rancourt	Former Saskatchewan MLA
Douglas Roche	Former Alberta Progressive Conservative MP, former independent senator
Amna Shah	British Columbia MLA
Tom Sigurdson	Former Alberta MLA
Cathy Sproule	Former Saskatchewan MLA
Bob Wanner	Former Alberta MLA, former Alberta House speaker
Judy Wasylycia-Leis	Former Manitoba MP
Rod Wilson	Nova Scotia MLA
Kristyn Wong-Tam	Ontario MPP
<b>Avi Lewis</b>	
Jessica Bell	Ontario MPP
Jennifer Bowes	Former Saskatchewan MLA
Gary Burrill	Former Nova Scotia leader
David Chudnovsky	Former B.C. MLA
Libby Davies	Former B.C. MP, former deputy leader of the NDP
Cheri DiNovo	Former Ontario MPP
Cory Doctorow	Author, journalist
Ann Douglas	Author
Leah Gazan	Manitoba MP
Joel Harden	Former Ontario MPP
Naomi Klein	Author, Avi Lewis' wife
Seth Klein	Author, researcher, Avi Lewis' brother-in-law
Nimâ Machouf	NDP Quebec co-president
Flor Marcelino	Former Manitoba MLA, former Alberta minister
Yann Martel	Author
Bill McKibben	Author, environmentalist, 350.org founder
Shawn Menard	Ottawa city councillor
Sean Orr	Vancouver city councillor
Jan Pullinger	Former B.C. MLA
Svend Robinson	Former B.C. MP
Sid Ryan	Former Ontario Federation of Labour president, former CUPE Ontario president
Bill Siksay	Former B.C. MP
David Suzuki	Environmentalist, David Suzuki Foundation co-founder
Lise Vaugeois	Ontario MPP
<b>Rob Ashton</b>	
George Anderson	B.C. MLA
Rohini Arora	B.C. MLA
Harry Bains	Former B.C. MLA, former B.C. minister
Mike Farnworth	Former B.C. MLA, former B.C. minister
Suzy Hansen	Nova Scotia MLA
Laurin Liu	Former Quebec MP
Canadian Union of Public Employees Saskatchewan	Union
The United Steelworkers Union	Union
Bonita Zarrillo	Former B.C. MP
<b>Tanille Johnston</b>	
Eric Robinson	Former deputy premier of Manitoba
Brent Niganobe	Mississauga First Nation Chief
Nicole Minions	Mayor of Comox, B.C.
Will Cole-Hamilton	Courtenay, B.C., city councillor

Source: NDP leadership campaigns, social media posts

# NEWS Back to Parliament

## CBC says bureau expansion will address ‘news deserts,’ despite concerns from local media outlets



CBC News pictured on Sparks Street in Ottawa. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Last week, the CBC announced it would expand into 11 new markets in an effort to provide more “boots on the ground journalism,” but some local media outlets are concerned there won’t be enough room for everyone.

BY DAVIS LEGREE

Some local journalists say they are worried the CBC’s recent decision to stand up new bureaus across the country could undercut community-based reporting by overpowering existing news outlets.

“I think the CBC coming in just muddies the waters,” Jason Antonio, a reporter with moosejawtoday.com, told *The Hill Times*.

“Having the CBC come into a community like Moose Jaw might be harmful to local media because the CBC will attract more eyeballs to its products and take away from the radio station or *Moose Jaw Today Online*.”

Moose Jaw, Sask., was among the 11 communities included in a

recently-announced CBC expansion that will bring newsrooms to areas identified as needing more local coverage.

Other affected localities include Dawson City, Yukon; Flin Flon, Man.; and Châteauguay/Montérégie, Que. In last week’s announcement, the CBC also committed to hiring 33 journalists that will be spread across new and pre-existing bureaus, which now total 77 locations.

“These are places where we have little or no presence on the ground,” said Brodie Fenlon, general manager and editor-in-chief of CBC News, in an interview.

“Some of these places are what you might define as a ‘news desert,’ as in there’s very little or any journalism happening there.”

Originally coined in the 1980s, a ‘news desert’ refers to a geographical area where community-based coverage is practically non-existent.

“Writ large, we know journalism is in decline right across the country, so this is a way of stepping in and adding ... boots-on-the-ground journalism in what are often smaller communities or more remote communities,” said Fenlon.

This is the second wave of the CBC’s local news expansion, as the broadcaster announced the opening of more than 20 local and regional bureaus early last year, which have been populated by 30 recently-hired journalists.

Fenlon said the expansions have been possible because of the Online News Act, legislation introduced by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau’s government, which required large platforms to pay for news content that appears on their websites.

While Meta, Facebook’s parent company, responded by blocking Canadian news from appearing on the social media platform, Google negotiated a \$100-million media fund that would be annually dispersed amongst Canadian outlets—including the CBC—which can receive a maximum of seven per cent of the pot.

“The settlement from Google provided some funding that allowed us to make a more significant move,” said Fenlon.

“[Without it,] we would have had to stop a bunch of things to make this happen.”

### Teamwork makes the dream work?

In its announcement, the CBC promised to “champion the work of other community news organizations” and, where possible, form partnerships with other outlets, but reaction from current local news media has been mixed.

“I don’t really think the CBC is needed, but rather we need an extra reporter or two at the current news outlets,” said Antonio, who has worked as a journalist in Moose Jaw since 2019.

“The CBC also has way more money and way more resources, so that could be a hurdle for local news organizations.”

Antonio acknowledged that there will be benefits, as the CBC will help “apply more pressure” to local institutions, like the municipal government or police service, but said he’s skeptical of the public broadcaster’s pledge to collaborate with other outlets.

“If the CBC has the reporters, they can just do the work themselves,” he said. “I can’t imagine a big behemoth like the CBC wanting to collaborate with other smaller news outlets.”

Other local media veterans were more optimistic, including Brook Jones, editor of the *Selkirk Times*, who said he was “surprised” to hear that the CBC would establish a bureau in the Manitoba community, located 40-minutes northeast of Winnipeg, but said that “everyone” is excited about the idea.

“Having served the Selkirk community for so many years, people here value news outlets covering their stories,” said Jones, who founded the *Selkirk Times* after the Post-media-owned *Selkirk Journal* closed in 2020. “I even got a message from the mayor about it ... so I take it very much as a positive.”

“Different news outlets have different specialties ... so I don’t look at it as competition. I look at it as everybody trying to do the

same thing, which is covering the news.”

In Richmond, B.C., Maria Rantanen, editor of *Richmond News*, said local journalism has been struggling for years, so the equation is very simple: “the more reporters, the better.”

“It’s sad to see that so many newsrooms have declined ... so it’s positive to see resources being put into Richmond,” said Rantanen of the 200,000-person town located just outside Vancouver. “When you’re a local news outlet, you get into the minutiae of that community. It supports democracy, it supports citizen engagement, and it’s what citizens need to know.”

“So, I think [the CBC] will be a complement to what’s already being done.”

The CBC’s Fenlon emphasized that the broadcaster has “no interest” in hurting local media, but rather it’s making a concerted effort to provide more community-based coverage. He noted that “proximity” was a major priority of the CBC’s new five-year strategic plan, released this past October.

In recent years, continued Fenlon, the CBC has relied on “temporary” bureaus to provide coverage of various communities.

“This is a shift in terms of trying to create a more permanent presence,” he said. “And we believe strongly that the more players there are in news and media, the better it is for the country.”

Meanwhile, David Hutton, senior managing director of CBC News in the Prairies, said the broadcaster’s local affiliates will work with existing outlets on coverage and personnel issues.

“We’re looking at what we will do, like co-production, training [journalists], or other things that will help contribute to a healthier media landscape,” Hutton said.

“What will that look like? We’re just getting it set up, so we haven’t really developed it yet.”

### Over 600 local news outlets have closed since 2008: data

Recent research suggests local news outlets are quickly becoming an endangered species in Canada, as declining advertising revenues have contributed to newsroom closures across the country.

According to the Local News Research Project, an exploration into “news poverty” housed by Toronto Metropolitan University, 603 community-based outlets have closed in 388 communities since 2008, compared to only 264 outlets that have launched during that period.

The trend has been particularly felt in sparsely-populated areas as, over the same timespan, 273 outlets have closed in places with fewer than 20,000 people, while just 82 news stations and publications have opened.

“One of the obvious reasons why having a vibrant local news environment matters is because it gives people the information they need to participate in local democracy,” said April Lindgren, the project’s founder.

Continued on page 45

# Leaked PMO travel advisory tests fragile trust with press gallery as ‘universal respect’ still found lacking, say journos

Part of an embargoed advisory for Prime Minister Mark Carney’s recent foreign travel was published online by Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar two days after being distributed to the press gallery. Reporters say identifying the leaker is essential to protecting the gallery’s credibility.

BY STUART BENSON

The leak of an embargoed advisory detailing the prime minister’s travel plans earlier this month demonstrates a lack of “universal respect” between Hill journalists and his communications team, say current and former press gallery reporters. But in order to move past the stumbling blocks in its relationship with the Prime Minister’s Office at a time of declining trust in the media, the gallery will need to ensure it excises any “mischief makers” willing to risk its reputation for partisan gain, reporters say.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* on background in order to speak freely, Parliamentary Press Gallery journalists suggested several hypotheses regarding the culprit responsible for leaking the advisory to a Conservative MP, but many had difficulty imagining a suspect willing to risk their own reputation for such little benefit, noting that the social-media post only preceded the official announcement by a few days.

One former journalist said that while there needs to be consequences if a member of the gallery is responsible for the leak, it is also further evidence that, after nearly a year, the PMO’s communications team isn’t “universally respected” by the gallery.

“They’re getting better at it, but they still seem new at it,” the source said. “There’s a lot of respect, but that’s something



After a recent leak of an advisory for Prime Minister Mark Carney’s international travel plans, the Parliamentary Press Gallery executive discussed whether there were any options to reinforce members’ obligations to respect embargoes. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

that’s built, and they haven’t fully done that yet.”

On Jan. 7, Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) office publicly announced his Jan. 13 departure to visit China before attending the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos, Switzerland. Carney’s pit stop in Qatar was announced on Jan. 8.

As is customary, the gallery was provided with an embargoed “For Planning Purposes Only” document on Jan. 1, detailing the three stops, the timeline, and relevant details to allow newsrooms to assign reporters, allocate resources, and book accommodations to cover the trip.

Similar planning documents are traditionally sent to the gallery—which are then distributed to bureau chiefs—ahead of all trips by the prime minister, and sometimes for members of his cabinet, and parliamentary delegations, and are not intended for publication before the official announcement.

However, in this instance, that notice was shared with Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, Alta.), who posted a portion of the document to social media on Jan. 3, two days after it was sent to the gallery.

“Beijing. Doha. Davos. In 2026, this is what [Prime Minister Carney] prioritizes,” Majumdar wrote. “Not you. Not Canada. Not the national interest. Just capitulation at every turn.”

Majumdar’s office did not respond to questions from *The Hill Times* regarding how he received the document, or whether he is concerned about the precedent that may be set for

a future Conservative government that may need to rely on the discretion of gallery journalists.

On Jan. 7, press gallery president Mia Rabson wrote to members urging them “to continue to respect the terms of embargoes and information provided for planning purposes only.”

Rabson reminded members that building a “strong and mutually respectful relationship” with the PMO depends not only on the government providing access to “the people, information and spaces” journalists need to do their jobs, but also on trust that embargoed information shared for logistical purposes will not be disclosed prematurely.

“If that trust is broken on either side, it makes the role the media plays in a healthy society more difficult, and also runs the risk that advocacy for more access and improved transparency will be ignored,” Rabson wrote.

She added that, over the past 10 months, the gallery executive had been in “constant communication” with the PMO to advocate for improved access, including greater availability at events and cabinet shuffles, and more opportunities for Canadian media to question the prime minister directly.

Journalists who spoke with *The Hill Times* said Carney’s relationship with the gallery has improved since a rocky start less than a year ago when he faced criticism over his tone with female reporters and a perceived preference for foreign media over domestic interviews. Several said they hoped that progress would

continue as both sides move beyond the first-year “growing pains.”

However, the leak comes less than three months after the gallery issued a rare public condemnation of Carney’s decision to exclude Canadian media from his October 2025 trip to Egypt to attend the Gaza Peace Summit hosted by United States President Donald Trump.

In an Oct. 14, 2025, statement, Rabson said accredited journalists were neither informed in sufficient time nor invited to accompany the prime minister.

“The Gallery is disappointed and dismayed at the exclusion of Canadian media from the event and expresses in no uncertain terms that this must never happen again,” Rabson wrote. “It is unprecedented that Canadian media be entirely excluded from a Canadian prime minister’s foreign trip. Every government, in a healthy democracy, must show a commitment to freedom of the press … any event that erodes access, transparency and accountability is a step in the wrong direction.”

The PMO did not provide an on-the-record comment by publication deadline, but a senior source speaking on background said the relationship and communication with the press gallery remains “collaborative.” The source added that the gallery executive was not to blame for the leak, but would not speculate on who was at fault.

## PPG needs to root out ‘mischief-makers’ or risk reputation, non-partisan credibility

Both past and current Hill journalists said the gallery executive “needs to find out who did this” to preserve the group’s credibility.

“We have to manage the reputational risk so the gallery is able to do its work ethically and in good faith,” one source said. “We need governments and opposition parties from all sides to trust that we are not partisans with personal agendas.”

Another former journalist pointed to what they described as loosened entry standards in recent years, which they said have allowed a small number of “mischief-makers” to violate “the spirit and protocols of ethical journalism.”

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, Rabson said that “follow-

ing a discussion of the matter at a recent gallery board meeting, the decision was made to meet with gallery bureau chiefs to discuss the best way to ensure agreement among bureaus to receive information for planning purposes, that allows members to plan coverage ahead of when the information is public.”

During the Jan. 20 meeting, Rabson noted that the gallery could do very little to enforce that agreement beyond emphasizing the rules and obligations to its members.

“If everyone agrees, and [something] still got leaked … there’s very little we can do about that,” Rabson said at the meeting, adding that investigating the culprit is “well out of our bailiwick.”

If the gallery doesn’t police its own, several journalists also raised concerns that the current progress toward increasing access to PMO events and travel could backslide to where it was in the summer of 2024, when the gallery raised multiple concerns about repeated inconsistencies in then-prime minister Justin Trudeau’s daily itineraries. That summer, Trudeau made several public appearances at Pride parades, community events, and cultural festivals, despite the day’s itinerary listing “no public events” when distributed to the gallery, with only select media outlets given advanced notice to provide coverage.

“The last administration played favourites, and that wasn’t good for journalism,” one former press gallery journalist told *The Hill Times*. “You don’t want the PMO to return to that default where they give all of the good stuff to a handful of journalists they think they can trust.”

Cameron Ahmad, a former communications director for Trudeau, told *The Hill Times* that many of those itinerary issues stemmed from security concerns or last-minute confirmations after distribution, rather than a lack of trust. He said he doesn’t believe the recent leak will be a major stumbling block for the new relationship’s progress.

“As far as I can remember, the press gallery has always treated that relationship respectfully and understood that it’s important to be able to work together and serve the purpose of informing the Canadian public,” Ahmad said, adding that he doesn’t expect this incident to change that shared view inside the PMO.

However, he called the decision to leak the advisory and the Conservatives’ attempts to turn the trip into a scandal “bizarre and incoherent.”

“Strategically, I just think that is such a strange decision to criticize the prime minister for travelling to grow our trading relationships at a time when we absolutely need it,” Ahmad explained. “When we’re talking about travelling on the world stage and representing the country internationally during this period of crisis, it would make a lot of sense for political actors to rise above the fray and present a united front.”

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# NEWS Back to Parliament

# Experts say 6G networks still years away, but Canada's already preparing for the technology of the future

Leading researchers believe 6G technology could be the key to unlocking high-speed cell service in every corner of the country.

BY DAVIS LEGREE

Carleton University professor Halim Yanikomeroglu, one of the nation's leading researchers into 6G mobile networks, often takes the VIA train to travel between Ottawa and Toronto—but he has a complaint.

"One quarter of the time, there is no cellular signal," he told *The Hill Times*. "And, I'm going between one of the world's largest cities and the nation's capital. It's quite remarkable, really."

But, in Canada, it's not exactly an uncommon problem.

Research from the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) determined that 13.4 per cent of major roads (equivalent to thousands of kilometres of highways and heavily-trafficked thoroughfares) have no cellular service.

The CRTC's study did not consider secondary and other rural avenues, meaning there's almost certainly larger pockets of cell service dead zones throughout Canada. More recently, the regulator asked domestic telcos to provide more details about coverage areas, in an effort to improve mobile service across the country.

However, Yanikomeroglu said this problem will likely be resolved through the development and implementation of 6G (sixth-generation) technology.

"With 6G, one big promise is enabling ubiquitous connectivity," said Yanikomeroglu, a systems and computer engineering professor at Carleton.

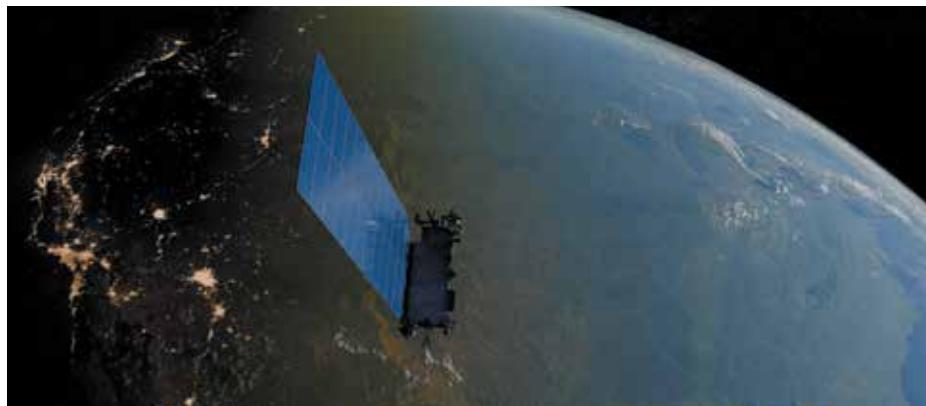
"It would completely eliminate the digital divide ... and connect the unconnected."

The 6G technology refers to the next wave of wireless communications. It will be the successor to 5G tech, which was first introduced in 2019 and has since become widely available, both in Canada and throughout the world.

Essentially, a new generation represents the next wave of digital evolutions, prompting upgraded device technology and faster network speeds.

But, before a new generation of technology can be made commercially available, it must be defined and standardized.

The International Telecommunication Union, which counts 194 members, including Canada,



A Starlink satellite, pictured in 2025. The 6G technology refers to the next wave of wireless communications. It will be the successor to 5G tech, which was first introduced in 2019 and has since become widely available, both in Canada and throughout the world. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

released a definition of 6G in 2023, along with several "usage scenarios," emphasizing AI-powered applications, expanded use of the 'Internet of Things,' as well as "ubiquitous connectivity, especially in rural, remote and sparsely populated areas."

A coalition of standards organizations called the 3rd Generation Partnership Project is expected to release international guidelines for 6G technology by early 2029, at which point companies and countries can begin updating their networks.

Now, it should be noted that what exactly qualifies as '6G' is still relatively unknown, as much of the technology is still being designed.

Regardless, Yanikomeroglu said the technology's potential is particularly relevant for Canada, given the country's diverse geographies, climates, and populations.

"When we talk about ubiquitous connectivity, the discussion is very different in Canada compared to Luxembourg, Belgium, Kuwait, or other densely populated areas," he continued.

But how would it work?

Essentially, Yanikomeroglu explained, cell service can be divided into two different kinds of networks: terrestrial and non-terrestrial (NTN).

As expected, terrestrial networks rely on cables and fibre-optic equipment located on or near the Earth's surface, which then provide coverage to a specific capture area. Meanwhile, NTN consists of satellite technology, operated by companies like Starlink or Telesat, which can provide connectivity to less accessible locations.

"Wherever you are, whether it be a plane or on the ocean, there is basically a satellite system everywhere on the globe," he said. "The issue is the ... terrestrial network and satellite networks are different, and they're not interconnected."

The expectation is that 6G technology could bridge the gap.

Yanikomeroglu noted that modern-day smartphones work in what he called "dual mode." When people are indoors, he noted,

devices connect to wifi, and while outdoors, they connect to a cellular network.

"But, tomorrow, devices might be triple mode," he continued. "In addition to those two, we might be connected to satellites ... and this could be a game-changer for 6G."

The end result? Total connectivity, he said.

## A northern light?

The eventual deployment of 6G networks will perhaps be most impactful on Canada's remote Arctic communities. While most households in the Yukon and Northwest Territories enjoy access to high-speed broadband, coverage maps from Rogers and Bell, the country's two largest telcos, suggest all three northern territories receive minimal mobile coverage.

According to Fayyaz Ahmed, a researcher with the N.W.T.'s territorial government, widespread adoption of 6G technology has the potential to "change everything in the Arctic."

"Instead of old fixes, new systems blend low-orbit satellites, high-altitude platforms, and scattered land-based units to close blind spots," said Ahmed in an email. "Sensing tools woven together could track ice shifts, guide rescue efforts, watch ecosystems, and keep vital structures strong."

"[Meanwhile,] health services could make choices faster because data decides closer to users, [and] schools could update students quicker without relying on distant servers."

However, Ahmed, also an affiliate at the Aurora Research Institute in Inuvik, N.W.T., cautioned, 6G networks must be "used right."

"None of this works if 6G stays treated like any other profit-driven tech," he continued. "It must be seen as an essential funding demand first. Decisions should also shift under Indigenous leadership, not just corporate ones."

"Northern climates demand unique rules—no one-size-fits-all setup here."

Currently, the federal government is funding multiple 6G

research projects through the National Research Council's (NRC) High-throughput and Secure Networks Challenge program, including a study into 'millimetre wave' technology that seeks to bring increased connectivity to "remote and rural areas that are beyond the reach of traditional fibre telecommunications networks."

Angela Gamouras, a physicist and adjunct professor at the University of Ottawa, is leading an NRC-funded project investigating the potential for terahertz wireless communications, which involves designing a receiver that could handle high-frequency electromagnetic waves.

"We've been working on how we can make a receiver that's low-cost and easy to operate, so it could potentially one day be implemented in our infrastructure," she said.

"Because [the NRC] is really looking into improving communication and wireless communications for all Canadians, but especially those in the north and rural Canadians."

## Canada could be a 'major player' in 6G: expert

Optimism may abound for future use cases of 6G networks, but stakeholders emphasize this technology is still years—if not decades—away.

Gamouras said her study's progress has been promising, and she believes the technology could one day help facilitate a wireless network that allows people to use network speeds that are 100-times faster than what is currently offered, but that day isn't expected to arrive anytime soon.

"We have been in consultation with some commercial partners..., but we definitely have a ways to go," she said. "It's not going to happen tomorrow by any means."

For Yanikomeroglu, widespread adoption of 6G technologies won't likely come until the "mid-2030s."

"At that point, operators might quickly deploy, or they might still wait another couple of years," he

said. "So, when deployment will start is still a question mark."

"That being said, we expect some jurisdictions, like China and the Middle East, will have quicker first deployment ... but, in Canada, it remains to be seen."

Yanikomeroglu contended Canada has the opportunity to become a "major player" in the 6G space, owing to its storied history in satellite technology.

After the Soviet Union and United States, Canada was the third country to construct and launch a satellite, when *Alouette 1* went into orbit in 1962. Now, Canada houses multiple large satellite firms, including Telesat and MDA Space, along with the headquarters for the multinational Kepler Communications.

"Some people might argue that Nortel is gone and BlackBerry is gone, therefore Canada does not have a big industry in 6G, so the government shouldn't make this a priority," Yanikomeroglu said. "But the ecosystem is still very strong."

"Canada, historically, has been very strong in the telecoms area..., and we can certainly play a role moving forwards."

In addition to funding research and development through the NRC, Ottawa has also supported a series of joint guiding principles for 6G technology, which included the prioritization of cybersecurity, interoperability, and energy efficiency.

"Canadians depend on telecommunications services being reliable and secure every day, whether for personal connectivity or the digital economy," said then-industry minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.) in 2024.

"Our government has endorsed these... principles for 6G so that Canadians can continue to benefit from the latest wireless technologies."

There were no new supports explicitly for 6G initiatives in the Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) recent budget, though the federal government financially supported 6G research led by the Swedish telco Ericsson in 2023.

Other companies, including Nokia and Huawei, have also announced plans to conduct 6G research at their respective facilities in Ottawa.

In a statement, Cheyenne Daly, a spokesperson for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) told *The Hill Times* that the federal government "recognizes" that 6G communication networks will "underpin all major economic and social activity, as well as the effective delivery of critical services."

"The government is working with international partners to ensure Canadians continue to have access to secure and reliable telecom services and the latest wireless technologies," said Daly.

"Canada's collaboration with international partners on telecommunications issues like 6G builds on the government's longstanding support for industry-led and multi-stakeholder approaches to technical standards development."

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# ‘We ask the government not to send us back to the ruins’: Turkish earthquake survivors call on feds to ease path to permanent residency

IRCC says the measures that allowed 2023 earthquake survivors to stay in Canada were intended to be temporary, but many of those hometowns were decimated and looking for a ‘fair’ and ‘reasonable’ pathway to continue the lives they’ve built in this country.

BY IREM KOCA

A group representing Turkish earthquake survivors in Canada is calling on the federal government to launch a “reasonable” path to permanent residency and to ease stringent eligibility criteria as many would be forced to return to their disaster-hit country when their special visas expire this year.

On Feb. 6, 2023, a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck southern Turkey, killing more than 60,000 people and rendering millions homeless in the country and neighbouring Syria. Canada granted a special temporary visa for the earthquake victims, often referred to as TS2023, allowing them to live and work in Canada for three years. Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC) issued 9,357 “temporary resident applications”—including for both Turkish and Syrian natives—between March 29 and Dec. 31, 2023.

The TS2023 measures were originally meant to assist students and temporary workers in Canada who couldn’t return home due to the destruction in their home countries, having lost their family members and access to funds. The measures also allowed Turkey- and Syria-based earthquake victims who also had visitor visas to Canada to come and live with their family members in Canada, and to work here for three years.

Many of those Turkish visa holders who have rebuilt their lives in Canada under the program hope to stay, according to Ali Demircan, president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations (FCTA), an umbrella



Turkish earthquake survivors in Canada are looking to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada, led by Minister Lena Diab, pictured, to establish a fair pathway to permanent residency, says a community group representative. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Devastation and destruction caused by the earthquake in Adiyaman, Turkey, in February 2023. Photograph courtesy of Yusuf Celik

organization of the Turkish Community of Canada. But with their three-year permits set to expire within the year, and resources exhausted, the special visa holders are asking the federal government to create an pathway beyond existing immigration streams.

“Many individuals affected by the earthquake have faced trauma, health challenges, caregiving responsibilities, or other crisis-related barriers that limited their ability to meet every [PR] indicator. Those circumstances should not result in automatic exclusion,” Demircan told *The Hill Times* in an interview conducted in Turkish.

Demircan said that although Ottawa never promised the temporary visas would lead to permanent residency, many are looking for a “fair” and “reasonable” pathway that takes into account the trauma endured, as well as the time and money lost in the process of resettling in Canada.

According to Demircan, an “easier path” would look like redefined eligibility criteria that rewards Canadian work experience, at least two years of legal residence, basic language and education requirements, and indicators of integration to Canadian society through having children enrolled in school, employment in sectors with labour shortages, or volunteer work.

Immigration Minister Lena Metlege Diab’s (Halifax West, N.S.) office did not respond to *The Hill Times*’ questions about TS2023. In 2023, as a backbench MP, Diab presented a petition in the House asking the government to create a special visa program for family members of Canadian citizens and permanent residents

in Turkey, as well as to expedite the processing of family reunification applications for applicants who live in the earthquake zone.

Jeffrey MacDonald, an IRCC spokesperson, told *The Hill Times* in an email that special measures to support those affected by the earthquakes in Syria and Turkey ended on Jan. 3, 2024—an extension from when they were originally set to expire on Sept. 25, 2023.

“These measures were intended to be temporary in nature and made it possible for Turkish and Syrian nationals who were in Canada with valid temporary resident status to stay and support themselves while the region recovered from the devastating earthquakes,” MacDonald said.

MacDonald highlighted that eligible Turkish and Syrian

nationals with valid temporary resident status in Canada—including visitors, students, and workers—can still apply to the existing immigration programs and pathways available. This has been IRCC’s position since the TS2023 visas were first issued.

Canada offers multiple pathways to permanent residency through economic and humanitarian streams such as Express Entry, Provincial Nominee Programs, or refugee resettlement programs. However, most TS2023 visa holders are often ineligible for these programs due to limitations in their special visas and factors such as a lack of multiple years of Canadian work experience.

In the example of Express Entry, applicants receive points based on criteria such as their age—younger candidates receive

the highest points—education, language skills, Canadian work experience, and education, and additional factors such as having a job offer. That process has become more difficult after the government reduced immigration levels, removed the advantage of gaining points for having a valid job offer, reduced the frequency of permanent residency draws, and with major provinces having already reached their immigration targets.

“It is important to note that Canada is regaining control of its immigration system in order to restore balance and sustainability, while continuing to meet its humanitarian commitments. Our approach puts immigration on a responsible path that allows Canada to respond to the needs of communities and fulfill its promise to offer opportunities to those who consider this country their home,” MacDonald said.

Under the 2026–2028 Immigration Levels Plan, permanent resident admissions are set to below one per cent of the population after 2027, and the total number of temporary residents will be reduced to less than five per cent of the population by the end of 2027.

“All decisions are guided by the long-term sustainability of our immigration system and must be consistent with the Levels Plan and the 2025 budget,” MacDonald said.

Demircan said he’s had multiple meetings with IRCC officials in which he explained the Turkish visa holders’ circumstances and shared their written testimonies, but has not been able to meet with Diab as minister. He said he had previously raised this issue with then-Toronto-area Liberal MPs Paul Chiang and Ya’ara Saks, as well as current Liberal MP Sima Acan (Oakville West, Ont.).

Acan—the first Turkish-Canadian MP in the country’s history—was the FCTA’s president when the 2023 petition was tabled, and, at the time, took part in meetings with federal officials, initially for the approval of the visa and then to provide visa holders access to education and health care.

Acan told *The Hill Times* in an email that she is “very familiar with the status of TS2023 visa holders especially due to her position as a community volunteer prior to her election last year. She said that, since becoming an MP, she has had a series of meetings with IRCC officials about visa programs that affect her constituents.

“I know that Canada’s new government is working hard to bolster the immigration system, and I am continuing to advocate for sustainable pathways for temporary residents in Oakville West including TS2023 holders.”

## We have no home or jobs to go back to’

Alper Kirtil, a Toronto-based immigration consultant and paralegal who works closely with TS2023 visa holders, told *The Hill Times* in a Turkish-language interview that in the absence of extensions or measures that

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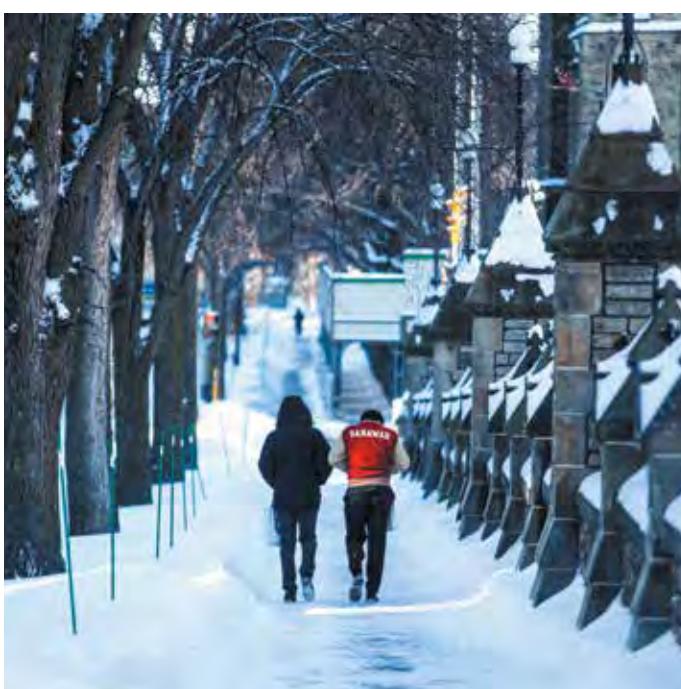
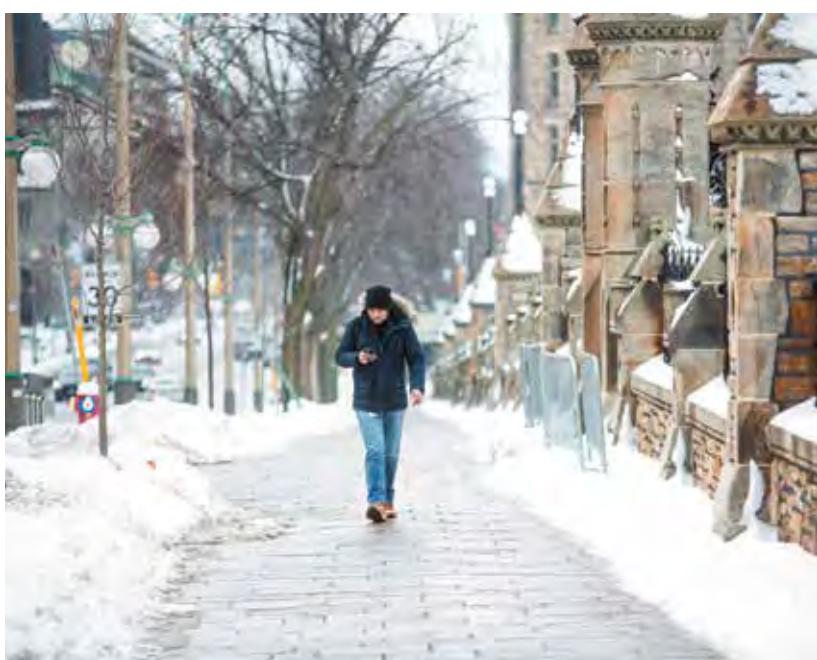
## FEATURE Back to Parliament

# MPs return to a wintery Ottawa this week

*The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



Pictured from top and clockwise: People walk past Centre Block, which is expected be under construction until 2031; the National War Memorial covered in snow; brave runners out on Wellington Street jog past the Parliament Buildings; people walk west down Wellington Street; the Prime Minister's Office, in all its architectural glory; and a person walks up Wellington Street past the Parliament Buildings.



# CBC says bureau expansion will address ‘news deserts,’ despite concerns from local media outlets

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However, Lindgren said her research suggests the CBC's entrance into new, smaller markets might have a positive effect on the local journalism ecosystem.

"When a public broadcaster is in a market, it forces all the news organizations to up their game and do a better job," she said. "So, I think [the CBC announcement] is good news for these communities."

Lindgren also explained that more densely-populated areas can also suffer from 'news poverty,' which is why she was encouraged to see Peel Region, Ont., which includes Brampton, Mississauga, and a regional population of 1.5-million people, featured in the broadcaster's expansion.

"A lot of big suburban communities outside of major cities tend to have relatively limited homegrown local media that are devoted to covering those communities," she said. "You think about Brampton and Mississauga with their large populations, but the amount of local media focused on them is extremely lim-



The CBC newsroom in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

ited, so that might be an explanation for that."

The advocacy group Friends of Canadian Media called the CBC's announcement a "welcome and necessary step," but cautioned that the broadcaster could upend

the news market in impacted communities.

"It's important that public policy strikes the right balance between strengthening public service journalism and maintaining space for a healthy, pluralistic pri-

vate media sector," said Sébastien Higgins, the group's spokesperson, in a statement. "Expansion by the public broadcaster inevitably raises important questions about its impact on the broader media ecosystem."

"These competitive dynamics deserve careful, evidence-based examination, and a comprehensive CBC/Radio-Canada mandate review is the appropriate forum to assess whether current structures and guardrails remain fit for purpose in today's media environment."

## Go west, young man

According to CBC officials, another motivation behind the decision to expand was a desire to increase the broadcaster's presence in western Canada. Among the 11 communities set to receive CBC bureaus, eight are located west of Ontario, while none are in Atlantic Canada.

The CBC is also planning to hire 11 journalists to "bolster" one-person newsrooms in another 11 bureaus located in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, and the Northwest Territories.

"There are some major cities that have had no CBC presence, like Red Deer, Alta.; Medicine Hat, Alta.; and Prince Albert, Sask.; and these are places where the population is growing fast," said Hutton, who's helmed the CBC's Prairies coverage since 2023.

"So, we're trying to have more reporting in places that have, over time, seen less reporting on their communities."

When asked if CBC was "playing catch-up" in Western Canada, Fenlon acknowledged the region had become "more of a focus" for the broadcaster.

"There are a number of communities where we are just not there, and many of them happen to be in central and western Canada," said Fenlon. "That's just the way the CBC has developed since the 1930s, where a lot of growth [was] through Atlantic Canada, Quebec and Ontario."

NDP MP Gord Johns (Courtenay—Alberni, B.C.) said he "appreciated" that the CBC was placing more emphasis on local news coverage in western Canada, but many gaps still remain.

"I am disappointed that central and northern Vancouver Island wasn't included among the 11 new bureaus," said Johns, who represents a riding on the island, in a statement. "[These] communities include many rural and remote towns with multiple Indigenous cultures and languages that deserve stronger local media coverage."

"I will continue to advocate for that investment so residents here aren't left without the coverage they need."

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# 'We ask the government not to send us back to the ruins': Turkish earthquake survivors call on feds to ease path to permanent residency

Continued from [page 43](#)

would allow a transition into permanent residency, thousands of people would be forced to return to a home country still recovering from the impacts of the earthquake.

"Not because they failed to integrate, but because no pathway was designed beyond the emergency phase. This outcome would undermine the very purpose of TS2023," he said.

"They are no longer newcomers in transition. They are now embedded in Canadian communities, workplaces, and schools. They are paying taxes, filling labour shortages, and rebuilding stability after trauma."

İncilay Anlar, who came to Montreal from Hatay, the epicen-

tre of the earthquake, was one of the survivors whose testimony was among those the FCTA presented to IRCC.

"My husband works in the evenings so he can attend French school during the day. Our children are 11 and 8. They are learning both English and French and are finally happy again. We are ready to do more than our best to get permanent residency, but we have nowhere to go back to in Turkey. Our old city is not yet livable. We ask the government not to send us back to the ruins," Anlar wrote.

Beyza Imamoglu, a former social worker from earthquake-hit Gaziantep whose TS2023 visa expires in November 2026, told *The Hill Times* in a Turkish interview that the three years they were given was not

enough to secure a pathway towards permanent residency through existing measures.

"This was an opportunity for us to get back on our feet. We did not expect the process to be smooth but we encountered serious structural difficulties, particularly in areas such as language proficiency and professional accreditation," she said.

"This showed us that rapid migration policies developed in the aftermath of disasters must be supported by long-term integration policies."

Imamoglu explained her husband, who has been working in Alberta as an electrician for over a year, is unable to obtain the qualification for a provincial nominee program without an official trade certificate due to his

status as a TS2023 visa holder. That might mean his Canadian work experience may not count toward permanent residency.

When asked about their plan, Imamoglu said, "We don't even know."

"People have used up their savings to come and stay here. How are they supposed to leave, and where are they supposed to go? We have no home or jobs to go back to."

The Turkish government pledged to rebuild the 11 cities destroyed, with plans to reconstruct 319,000 homes within the first year after the earthquake, but news reports years after the disaster show that hundreds of thousands of people are still living in temporary housing units scattered across the country.

The World Bank estimated US\$34.2-billion in physical damage in 11 major cities in Turkey with more than 800,000 buildings destroyed and about 3.3 million people displaced, in what was one of the deadliest earthquakes in the region's history. Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan said in December 2025 that 14 million citizens were affected by the earthquakes, and that the cost of the disaster reached US\$150-billion.

Demircan said one alternative solution would be to extend the temporary visas for at least another three years so that TS2023 visa holders can have more time to strengthen their profiles and pursue permanent residence through existing programs.

A petition tabled by Liberal MP Yvan Baker (Etobicoke Centre, Ont.) in October 2025 asking the government to establish a dedicated, one-time permanent residency pathway for those currently in Canada under temporary emergency immigration measures is also calling for the consideration of reasonable eligibility factors. Demircan said his community is monitoring the petition—which has already received more than 44,000 signatures—and is hoping that TS2023 visa holders would be included in any positive moves stemming from it.

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# Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



## Environment Minister Dabrusin promotes new deputy director, adds more aides

Plus, Secretary of State for Children and Youth Anna Gainey has a new director of policy, operations, and parliamentary affairs.

Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister **Julie Dabrusin** has made a number of changes to her staff lineup since *Hill Climbers*' last update, including promoting senior policy adviser **Isabelle Hurley** to deputy director of policy.

Hurley has been working on the federal environment file since late 2021, having first been hired as a special assistant for the Atlantic to then-minister **Steven Guilbeault**, who later promoted her to senior policy and northern regional affairs adviser. Prior to working for Guilbeault, Hurley had been a research associate with the Future of Marine Ecosystems Lab in Halifax. She holds both a bachelor of science and a master of science degree, focused on biodiversity and climate change, from Dalhousie University.

A few new advisers have also been added to Dabrusin's team, starting with senior adviser **Jared Forman** in late October.

Forman most recently was busy as a senior manager of communications and public affairs for NorthX Climate Tech, but before then spent roughly a year as a speechwriter in the Prime Minister's Office, starting under then-PM **Justin Trudeau** in May 2024. Forman was also lead speechwriter for the 2025 Liberal election campaign.

Prior to joining Trudeau's office, Forman had been a policy adviser and speechwriter to then-natural resources minister **Jonathan Wilkinson**. Off the Hill, Forman's work history includes time spent as a research associate with the Canadian Climate Institute, and as a policy specialist with the Canadian International Council, where he previously interned.



A new senior adviser and new senior policy adviser are among the recent staffing changes of note in Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister Julie Dabrusin's office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Jared Forman is now a senior adviser to Minister Dabrusin. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

**Robyn Seetal**, meanwhile, has been hired as a senior policy adviser for nature and natural capital, and also serves as nature finance lead.

Dabrusin officially added "nature" to her ministerial portfolio title this past December.

Seetal joined Dabrusin's team fresh from

the Glasgow Financial Alliance for Net Zero (GFANZ)—a coalition launched by Prime Minister **Mark Carney** in 2021 as then-United Nations special envoy on climate action and finance. A chartered professional accountant, Seetal began working for GFANZ in New York in 2023 as an adviser and deputy chief of staff to the vice-chair and co-chair—a role previously filled by Carney—and worked as its Nature Investment Lab lead.

A past manager of risk advisory, sustainability, and climate change for Deloitte, Seetal has since also been a director and founding member of the investment co-operative, Local Investing YYC; founder and principal consultant with IkTaar Sustainability Advisory; and an adviser and value commis-



Robyn Seetal is a senior policy adviser to the environment minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

sion lead for the Capitals Coalition.

**Matthew Paisley** continues as director of policy to Dabrusin, and also currently oversees senior policy adviser **Brenna Walsh**, and policy and North regional adviser **Natalie Woodland**.

Also new to Dabrusin's office since *Hill Climbers*' July update are parliamentary affairs adviser **Junan Adam-Gordon**, who was hired in mid-September, and issues manager and committee adviser **Isabella Iantorno**.

Iantorno worked on Dabrusin's successful 2025 re-election campaign in Toronto-Danforth, Ont., having lent a hand to Ontario Liberal MPP **Stephanie Bowman**'s winning provincial campaign earlier in the year. Prior to joining the environment team in July, Iantorno had spent most of last summer as an intern with Veritas Communications.

Both Adam-Gordon and Iantorno report to **Nyagua Chiek** as director of parliamentary affairs and issues management. Also currently part of that team is senior parliamentary affairs adviser

Isabella Iantorno is an issues manager and committee adviser to Minister Dabrusin. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

includes: **Kieran Steede**, director of operations and international affairs; **Richard Mavin**, senior operations and executive adviser; **Nicole Ellement**, senior regional adviser for British Columbia, Alberta, and Saskatchewan; **Alex Kondakov**, senior regional adviser for Ontario and Manitoba, and assistant to the parliamentary secretary; **Noah Fon**, Quebec regional adviser; **Sarah Gingles**, Atlantic regional adviser; **Jenna Ghassabeh**, director of communications; **Emily Jackson**, senior communications adviser; **Malachy Schwartz**, senior digital communications adviser; **Keean**

**Nembhard**, press secretary; and **Derek Felizarta**, executive assistant to the minister.

**Director change for Sec. of State Gainey**



Secretary of State for Children and Youth Anna Gainey at Rideau Hall for her swearing in on May 13, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Secretary of State for Children and Youth **Anna Gainey** has a new director on her team, with **Isabella McKenna** recently taking over as director of policy, operations, and parliamentary affairs.

**David Frank-Savoie**, who was named director of policy and operations to Gainey post-election last spring, is currently on parental leave.

McKenna joined Gainey's team fresh from Canada Post where she's been working for the last two-and-a-half years, roughly, as manager of ministerial affairs and integration. She previously worked on the Hill in various roles between 2018 and 2021.

Starting as an assistant to then-Ontario Liberal MP **Borys Wrzesniewski** in 2018, later

that year McKenna landed her first ministerial job as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-status of women minister **Maryam Monsef**. She stuck with Monsef—whose title evolved to become women and gender equality, and rural economic development minister—until 2020 when she joined then-public safety and emergency preparedness minister **Bill Blair**'s team as a parliamentary affairs and issues management adviser. She later covered the same as a senior adviser to Miller as then-immigration minister.

Since stepping away from the Hill after the 2021 election, McKenna has also been a communications manager with iirlabs, an investor relations firm acquired by Alliance Advisors IR in 2024.

**Alexander Jagie** is chief of staff to Gainey, whose team otherwise includes legislative assistant **Madison Lalonde**, operations adviser **Gabriela McGuire Cañete**, press secretary and communications adviser **Elsa Niyongabo**, and communications assistant **Aaron Rosenbaum**.

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# Parliamentary Calendar



# Cory Doctorow to talk his bestselling book, *Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What To Do About It*, on Jan. 28 in Ottawa



## MONDAY, JAN. 26

**House Schedule**—The House of Commons will resume on Monday, Jan. 26, and is scheduled to sit for 117 days this year. 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.

**Lunch: 'Enabling Canada's Defence and Space Ambitions'**—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event featuring Mike Greenley, CEO of MDA Space, who will discuss "Enabling Canada's Defence and Space Ambitions." Monday, Jan. 26, at 12 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: [canadianclubottawa.ca](http://canadianclubottawa.ca).

## TUESDAY, JAN. 27

**Conference: 'A Changed America'**—Massey College hosts a day-long conference, "A Changed America: How Should Canada and the World Respond?" examining how Canada and the international community should respond to profound political changes underway in the United States. Participants include Bob Rae, Canada's former ambassador to the United Nations; former Liberal MP Leah Taylor Roy; Charles McMillan, author and former senior adviser to then-prime minister Brian Mulroney; and Ben Rowswell, former Canadian envoy to Venezuela. Tuesday, Jan. 27, at 8:30 a.m. ET at Massey College, 4 Devonshire Place, Toronto, and happening online: [masseycollege.ca](http://masseycollege.ca).

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](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

## WEDNESDAY, JAN. 28

**Bank of Canada Interest Rate Announcement**—The Bank of Canada will announce the new target for the overnight rate, and also publish its *Monetary Policy Report*. Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 9:45 a.m. ET. Details: [bankofcanada.ca](http://bankofcanada.ca).

**Ex-CSIS Chief David Vigneault to Deliver Remarks**—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute hosts a roundtable in French on national defence and economic security, featuring David Vigneault, former director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service; Dr. Gaëlle Rivard Piché, executive director of the CAD Institute; and Dr. Philippe Bourbeau, professor at HEC Montréal and co-director of the International Institute of Economic Diplomacy. Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 4:30 p.m. ET at Édifice Sun Life, 1155 rue Metcalfe, suite 800, Montreal. Details: [cdainstitute.ca](http://cdainstitute.ca).

**An Evening with Cory Doctorow**—Perfect Books and The Other Hill host an evening with Cory Doctorow, author of *Enshittification: Why Everything Suddenly Got Worse and What To Do About It* featuring a post-lecture book signing and Q&A. Wednesday, Jan. 28, at 7 p.m. ET at allsaints event space, 317 Chapel St., Ottawa. Register: [theotherhill-lautrecolline.ca](http://theotherhill-lautrecolline.ca).

## THURSDAY, JAN. 29

**Prime Minister Carney to Meet with Premiers**—Prime Minister Mark Carney is expected to meet with Canada's premiers in Ottawa. Details to follow.

**Lecture: 'Indignity, A Life Reimagined with Lea Ypi'**—Toronto Metropolitan University hosts this lecture, "Indignity, A Life Reimagined with Lea Ypi." Drawing from her experience growing up in one of Europe's most isolated regimes and family history, and scholarly work on freedom, citizenship, and political transformation, acclaimed political philosopher Ypi offers crucial insights into how regimes shape lives across generations, democracy's fragility and what it means to sustain human dignity amid profound uncertainty. Thursday, Jan. 29, at 7 p.m. ET at the Appel Salon, Toronto Public Library, 789 Yonge St., Toronto. Register: [tinyurl.com/LeaYpiTPL](http://tinyurl.com/LeaYpiTPL).

## THURSDAY, JAN. 29—SATURDAY, JAN. 31

**Conservative National Convention**—The Conservative Party of Canada will hold its National Convention. Thursday, Jan. 29, to Saturday, Jan. 31, at the Telus Convention Centre, Calgary. Details: [cpc26.ca](http://cpc26.ca).

## FRIDAY, JAN. 30

**Minister Diab to Deliver Remarks**—Immigration Minister Lena Metlege Diab will discuss how the government and the department of Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada are returning immigration to levels that are sustainable for communities to absorb in a lunch event hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Friday, Jan. 30, at 11:30 a.m. AT, at the Marriott Harbourfront, 1919 Upper Water St., Halifax. Details: [business.halifaxchamber.com](http://business.halifaxchamber.com).

## Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks

**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, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the DoubleTree by Hilton Hotel, 1255 Jeanne-Mance St., Montreal. Details: [corim.qc.ca](http://corim.qc.ca).

## MONDAY, FEB. 2

**'Could Canada Go to War Without the U.S.?'—Catalyze4 and the Canadian Defence Associations Institute host an event, "Catalyzing Canadian Sovereignty: Could Canada Go to War Without the U.S.?" featuring a panel discussion with deputy minister of Defence Stefanie Beck; former Canadian NATO rep, retired vice-admiral Scott Bishop; Wendy Gilmour, former NATO assistant secretary general; and Dr. Stephen Saideman. Also, Don Newman will host a fireside chat with former chief of defence staff retired General Wayne Eyre. Monday, Feb. 2, at 12:45 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details: [studioc4.com](http://studioc4.com).**

## TUESDAY, FEB. 3

**Harper's Official Portrait to be Unveiled**—House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia will host the unveiling of the official portrait of former prime minister Stephen Harper. Prime Minister Mark Carney is expected to attend the unveiling of the portrait, which will hang in the Prime Ministers' Portrait Gallery.

## Canada's Leadership in Global Nutrition

—As part of International Development Week, Action Against Hunger and Results Canada host a lunch-and-learn event focused on life-saving nutrition interventions that address child and maternal malnutrition where the needs are the greatest. Tuesday, Feb. 3, at 12:30 p.m. in West Block, Parliament Hill. Details via Eventbrite.

## WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4

**Gala Dinner to Mark 20 Years Since Harper's First Election**—Former prime minister Stephen Harper will celebrate 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](http://harperx20.ca).

## THURSDAY, FEB. 5

### Conservative Caucus Reunion

**Brunch**—As part of events celebrating the 20th anniversary of the swearing in of the 28th Ministry and 39th Parliament of Canada, former prime minister Stephen Harper and Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar host a special Conservative caucus reunion brunch. Thursday, Feb. 5, at 9:30 a.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

**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, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Details: [empireclubofcanada.com](http://empireclubofcanada.com).

**Webinar: 'Canada's Changing Immigration Landscape'**—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a webinar on "Canada's Changing Immigration Landscape: Top five things to watch out for in 2026," featuring Irene Bloemraad (UBC) and Mireille Paquet (Concordia University). Thursday, Feb. 5, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: [irpp.org](http://irpp.org).

## FRIDAY, FEB. 6—SUNDAY, FEB. 22

**Olympic Winter Games**—The Olympic Winter Games will take place over two weeks in Milano Cortina, Italy, from Friday, Feb. 6, to Sunday, Feb. 22. Details: [olympics.com](http://olympics.com).

## SATURDAY, FEB. 7

**Winter Celebration at Rideau Hall**—Rideau Hall, the residence of the Governor General, hosts a Winter Celebration, an afternoon of free outdoor activities, captivating

performances and more than a few surprises will delight young and old alike. Saturday, Feb. 7, from 12:30–4 p.m. ET at Rideau Hall, 1 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details: [gg.ca](http://gg.ca).

## MONDAY, FEB. 9

**Irish Ambassador in Edmonton**—The Edmonton Chamber of Commerce and the Consulate General of Ireland host a networking reception featuring Irish Ambassador to Canada John Concannon. Monday, Feb. 9, at 2 p.m. MT at the Edmonton Chamber of Commerce, 600 9990 Jasper Ave., Edmonton. Details: [business.edmontonchamber.com](http://business.edmontonchamber.com).

**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, at 6 p.m. ET at the Rogers Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Register: [bit.ly/CAAINFireside](http://bit.ly/CAAINFireside).

## MONDAY, FEB. 9—TUESDAY, FEB. 10

**AI in Defence Conference**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute and Department of National Defence host a two-day, invitation-only "AI in Defence Conference," focusing on the use, integration, and application of AI as a critical enabler of Canada's defence capability and sovereignty, incorporating both government and industry perspectives. Monday, Feb. 9, to Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 7 Bayview Station Rd., Ottawa. Details: [cgai.ca](http://cgai.ca).

## TUESDAY, FEB. 10

**'Diagnosing and Combating Health Misinformation'**—The Empire Club of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association host "Diagnosing and Combating 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](http://empireclubofcanada.com).

## TUESDAY, FEB. 10—WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11

**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, in Calgary. Details: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

## THURSDAY, FEB. 12

**Bacon and Eggheads Breakfast**—The Partnership Group for Science and Engineering's first breakfast event of 2026 will take place today. Stay tuned for an announcement regarding the topic and speaker. Thursday, Feb. 12. Details: [pagsc.org/bacon-eggheads](http://pagsc.org/bacon-eggheads).

**CCSPA Government Breakfast Reception**—The Canadian Consumer Specialty Products Association hosts its annual Government Breakfast Reception. All Parliamentarians are welcome. Thursday, Feb. 12, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. RSVP: [coombss@ccspa.org](mailto:coombss@ccspa.org).

**Book Launch: *Democracy's Second Act***—Peter MacLeod, co-author of *Democracy's Second Act*, will chat with journalist Joanne Chianello about why frustration and polarization are rising—and how reclaiming the power of the public can lead to a more hopeful political future. Thursday, Feb. 12, at 6 p.m. ET at the Métropolitain Brasserie Restaurant, 700 Sussex Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

## FRIDAY, FEB. 13—SUNDAY, FEB. 15

**Munich Security Conference**—The 62nd Munich Security Conference, the leading forum for international security policy, will take place at the Hotel Bayerischer Hof in Munich, Germany, from Friday, Feb. 13, to Sunday, Feb. 15. Details: [securityconference.org](http://securityconference.org).

# INNOVATION

## POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date: **Monday, February 2, 2026**

Advertising deadline: **Tuesday, January 27, 2026**



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