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NEWS

Feds prioritize speed in trade agenda as MPs raise alarm over transparency

BY NEIL MOSS

Months away from the review of Canada's most consequential trade agreement with the United States, MPs are raising the alarm over governmental secrecy and a lack of transparency in trade negotiations.

The Liberals have kept information about trade negotiations close to the vest as Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has frequently remarked that he won't negotiate in public.

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NEWS

Tory Senator Housakos proposes invoking notwithstanding clause to uphold certain mandatory minimums

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Conservative Senate Leader Leo Housakos is proposing what would be the first federal use of the notwithstanding clause to uphold mandatory minimum sentences for child sexual abuse and exploitation material offences following a recent Supreme Court ruling, and says he hopes to bring debate over such laws "out of the

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NEWS

Despite early 'spirit of co-operation' on some bills, Liberal agenda still failing to launch in Parliament, say politicians

BY STUART BENSON

The opening weeks of the winter sitting have offered tentative signs of co-operation from the Conservative Party—rather than blanket opposition—after MPs agreed to pause a log-jammed study of the Liberals' contentious anti-hate legislation.

But with the government only willing to bend so far to secure support for Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) agenda in a nearly "tie-game" minority Parliament, those

early signs of progress appear to have merely delayed a return to last fall's dysfunction—or something worse.

"Nothing's gonna give," Liberal strategist Joe Jordan told *The Hill Times* last week, slightly downgrading his already pessimistic prediction from December as the House rose for the holidays.

Jordan, a former parliamentary secretary to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, said that while Conservatives have offered areas where they are willing to support the Liberal govern-

ment—particularly on crime and affordability—too many key pieces of Carney's agenda are "still waiting at the starting gate."

Although the House Justice and Human Rights Committee temporarily paused its study of the anti-hate bill C-9 last week to move ahead with Bill C-14, the Liberals' bail and sentencing reform legislation, Jordan said the manoeuvre is a microcosm of the larger hurdles plaguing most committee studies and

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Fêting 20 years of Harper Conservatives



Former prime minister Stephen Harper, right, kicked off a week of festivities marking the 20th anniversary of his 2006 election win in Ottawa on Feb. 2. Before sitting down with former PM Jean Chrétien for chat, Harper received the Royal Canadian Geographical Society's gold medal from board president Lois Mitchell, left. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



By Christina Leadlay

Heard on the Hill

'You don't get to pick your family': Hogan cousins throw shade during Conservative convention weekend



'Corey is great at his job as a partisan politician. I disagree with almost everything he says,' Conservative strategist Cole Hogan, left, said of his cousin, Liberal MP Corey Hogan, during an interview on CPAC at the Conservative convention last weekend. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Social media became an outlet for a little family feud this past weekend, as Liberal MP **Corey Hogan** and his Conservative strategist cousin **Cole Hogan** traded barbs during the federal Conservative Party convention.

The rookie MP for Calgary Confederation, Alta., began by offering a backhanded welcome to delegates to his riding on Jan. 29: "Pleased to welcome the Conservative Party of Canada National Convention to Calgary this weekend! Between sessions, I hope you enjoy our shops, restaurants, and the many charms of a city where 4/10 people voted Liberal last election. Welcome to the heart of the new west."

The next day, in response to Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre's** speech, he then posted on

X: "I know I'm already a Liberal MP, but after hearing this Poilievre speech can I, like, double join the Liberal party?"

Ten minutes later, Corey's cousin Cole—who has worked on campaigns for Ontario Premier **Doug Ford** and former Alberta premier **Jason Kenney**—replied: "Which parts do you disagree with? Is it the principles? We have those. I know it's not the policies, we know you guys love those."

Then on Jan. 31, Liberal Hogan issued a statement with colleagues **Taleb Noormohamed** and **Rachel Bendayan**, which said, in sum: "At this crucial time for our country, Pierre Poilievre is still the wrong choice."

"I responded to this gang's statement live on TV yesterday," strategist Hogan posted on X

that day about his interview with CPAC's **Michael Serapio**. "Have Liberals lost the ability to make effective attacks? I thought they were good at this stuff? Also, why are you attacking a party that's willing to work with you in the House?"

In his aforementioned interview with Serapio, Cole addressed the family dynamic: "My first response is 'you don't get to pick your family' though sometimes they make arguments you don't like, you have to work through it."

"Corey is great at his job as a partisan politician. I disagree with almost everything that he says, but he is good as a political practitioner, so I will give him kudos for that."

Blair to take over as U.K. high commissioner

Former Liberal minister **Bill Blair** will be the next head of mission to oversee Canada House in London when he assumes the mantle of the country's high commissioner to the United Kingdom, the Prime Minister's Office announced on Feb. 2.

The long-rumoured job assignment was made official earlier this week with Blair resigning his Scarborough Southwest, Ont., seat that he's held since 2015 when he entered politics after a nearly 40-year policing career.

Blair—whose past portfolios include that of border security and organized crime reduction, emergency preparedness, and national defence—will succeed his former Liberal caucus colleague **Ralph Goodale**, who returned to Canada at the end of 2025 after four-and-a-half years as head of the U.K. mission.

Blair's resignation puts the Liberals down two seats for 2026 in the already slim minority Parliament.

The PMO also announced that **Nathalie Drouin** will succeed **Stéphane Dion** as Canada's ambassador to France and Monaco. A longtime public servant, Drouin most recently served as the prime



Bill Blair, left, and Nathalie Drouin will head Canada's missions in London, U.K., and Paris, France, respectively. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade

minister's national security and intelligence adviser and deputy clerk of the Privy Council Office. She has also served as deputy minister of justice for both the federal and the Quebec governments.

Both diplomatic appointments will be effective this spring.

Liberals name University–Rosedale candidate

In other empty-seat news, a Toronto doctor has been tapped by the Liberal Party to carry its banner in the upcoming byelection in University–Rosedale, Ont.

The party said in a Jan. 31 press release that **Danielle Martin**, "an experienced family physician and health care leader," will be on the ballot when a byelection is called to replace former cabinet minister **Chrystia Freeland**, who vacated her seat on Jan. 9.

Martin "has extensive experience advising governments

on health-care policy, and is the author of a national bestselling book on health care in Canada," the party-issued biography says. "She holds a master's degree in public policy from the University of Toronto and has continued to train and support the next generation by teaching family medicine, health policy and leadership."

A byelection hasn't yet been called for the riding, which has been Liberal since its creation in 2015. The earliest date the vote can take place is March 2.

Former Conservative MP Findlay enters B.C. party's leadership race

Former Conservative MP **Kerry-Lynne Findlay** officially launched her campaign to lead the Conservative Party of British Columbia on Jan. 30.

"I'm running for premier to keep our party conservative and defeat the NDP," the former three-term MP posted on Instagram late last week. "This leadership race is a simple choice: a reliable conservative, or a liberal takeover. I am a reliable conservative."



Former Conservative MP Kerry-Lynne Findlay is running to be the B.C. Conservatives' next leader. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Findlay enters a growing field of candidates to replace **John Rustad**, who stepped down on Dec. 4, 2025. Already announced are former BC MLAs **Peter Milobar** and **Iain Black**; current MLA **Sheldon Clare**; political commentator **Caroline Elliott**; chancellor of Capilano University **Yuri Fulmer**; businessman **Warren Hamm**; and former president of Pattison Food Group

Darrell Jones. The leadership vote will take place on May 30.

Minister Olszewski tapped as Jasper lead

Emergency Management and Community Resilience Minister **Eleanor Olszewski**—who already has additional responsibility for Prairies Economic Development Canada—is now also the ministerial lead for Jasper, Prime Minister **Mark Carney** announced on Feb. 2.

Rebuilding continues in Jasper, Alta., following destructive wildfires there in the summer of 2024. "Olszewski will co-ordinate the federal government's recovery and rebuilding efforts—working with provincial, municipal, and Indigenous partners to keep proj-



Minister of Emergency Management Eleanor Olszewski. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

ects moving and deliver lasting results for the Jasper community," reads the press release.

A rookie Alberta MP, Olszewski is the third cabinet minister to hold this portfolio since then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau** created it in October 2024. Then-minister and Alberta MP **Randy Boissonnault** was the first Jasper lead, until he departed cabinet a month later. In February

2025, Trudeau passed the file to then-minister **Terry Duguid**, who, while re-elected last April, didn't make it into Carney's cabinet.

Senator Lewis new CSG deputy lead

Just shy of his one-year anniversary in the Red Chamber, Senator **Todd Lewis** has a new role within the Canadian Senators Group.

The Saskatchewan Senator recently took on the role of deputy liaison, the CSG announced on social media last week.

"His commitment to community engagement and collaboration make him an excellent fit

for this role," the second-largest group of Senators posted on X and Bluesky on Jan. 30.

The 61-year-old farmer was appointed to the Senate on Feb. 7, 2025, by then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau**. Lewis takes over the role from Senator **Krista Ross**, who is now the CSG's full liaison. cleadlay@hilltimes.com

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COMMENT

The Conservatives' other favourite boogeyman makes a comeback

The Tory leader's convention speech included a nod to ending diversity, equity, and inclusion. Let's unpack the idea of merit.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—On Jan. 30, the Conservative Party voted overwhelmingly to keep Pierre Poilievre as their leader for the next election. Poilievre was supported by 87.4 per cent of the delegates who voted. His 48-minute speech sounded like Florida governor Ron DeSantis. It also reiterated many of the dog whistles the Conservatives have made a part of their policy suite. Unfortunately, instead of parsing the speech, many establishment political voices praised Poilievre for not crashing out on a national stage. I guess that's what they call merit. It's the ability to put your big-boy pants on one leg at a time.

Ending diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) has been a major part of the Conservative policy platform in recent years. Everyone's favourite boogeyman (besides immigrants) got a shoutout. ("We want a nation where all of us are equal, a nation that is colourblind. We want a nation with no more hyphens, no more group labels.") In America, the relinquishing of DEI initiatives has been swift and definitive. United States President Donald Trump has even gone as far as actioning "Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity," predicated on the belief that "DEI and [diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility] policies ... undermine our national unity," thereby manipulating the use of the Civil Rights Act meant to protect racialized people and women from discrimination to elevate white men according to the principle of merit.

White women, you are DEI, too.

Let's unpack the idea of merit. Assumption 1 upon which the merit argument is predicated: marginalized communities would not be marginalized if their participation in the economy was equal to that of their old-stock Canadian counterparts. These communities are marginalized because their labour participation is their choice. In other words, Black, brown, and Indigenous people, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities, and white women are lazy.

Assumption 2 for the merit argument to hold is that one has to assume that the absence of racialized people, women, and LGBTQ people in certain positions is due to an unproven fact that people in these communities are unmerited in

the first place, i.e. not smart enough. Lemme say that again: we are too stupid to hold any positions than the ones we are relegated to, which are subordinate to old-stock Canadians. This is eugenics, which is a debunked and racist theory, as explained by the National Human Genome Institute, "that humans can be improved through selective breeding of populations." Most eugenics beliefs and policies stem from xenophobic and attitudes.

Assumption 3 purports a simple untruth: that hiring and promotions are based on merit, and somehow DEI steers the meritless into positions of elevated repute. DEI and merit are positioned in opposition to each other due to Assumptions 1 and 2. Why can't they be both? Hiring and promotions in Canada are based on who is accepted as one of the popular kids and who isn't; it's basically high school. Friends hire friends of friends. The ordained are given more training, mentorship, and opportunities to learn and grow, while those who aren't are left to their own devices. DEI is not about positioning, rather it's about levelling the playing field of opportunities.

The "Liberal racism" that some Conservatives like Jamil Jivani have decried is also based on these assumptions, which is the inverse of the merit argument (not in opposition, but inversely related). Basically, the presence of DEI undermines the abilities of the marginalized. One cannot make this argument without first asserting Assumptions 1 to 3. Having talent automatically translates into opportunities, which translates to being rewarded for such talents. If you're not receiving those opportunities, then it must be individualized to your failures. Liberal racism is essentially reverse-racism given a partisan flavour.

Picking up on individualization of failures, unconscious biases are individualized failures of assessing quality on merit. If you believe unconscious biases do not exist and everyone grades everyone equally all of the time, then we have a level playing field. We know this can't possibly be true.

The use of political correctness is a strawman argument. To me, ending political correctness means you can call me the n-word repeatedly because not having the freedom to bully racialized people is not freedom. Eventually, rhetoric turns into policies. Manipulating history by exclusions of factual information is akin to the Dark Ages, and it's also anti-Indigenous. What Poilievre is selling is not the truth about ourselves, but rather a sanitized version of Canada so that particular Canadians don't feel bad. Facts don't care about your feelings, snowflakes. I'll wait for the book banning to begin, since they don't coddle old-stock Canadians' feelings.

Erica Ifill is host of the Bad+Bitchy podcast.

The Hill Times

Poilievre earns the privilege of a second chapter



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has done the work to earn his place to carry the party's banner in the next election, writes Josie Sabatino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Amir Said

Love him or hate him, the Conservative leader has demonstrated his willingness to fight for the future of Canada.

Josie Sabatino

Beyond the Headlines



OTTAWA—Second chances are increasingly rare for political leaders. If damning headlines or plummeting poll numbers don't contribute to a downturn in fortunes, holding a caucus together while maintaining the support of grassroots members generally poses significant challenges for the individual tasked with keeping the lid on a pot that is constantly threatening to boil over.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has had no shortage of challenges that have threatened to tip the scales against him. From a sky-high rise in the polls to an electoral defeat on both the national and local stage, Poilievre has had to spend the last year picking up the pieces. Even after regaining a seat in Parliament, he found himself under siege as members of his own team crossed the floor to join the Liberal rank and file.

At several junctures, it felt like Poilievre was given just enough rope to hang himself before grassroots members could even cast a ballot to determine his future. And yet, he survived the parliamentary gauntlet. Thanks to a successful convention that saw him garner 87.4 per cent of the delegated vote, he has managed to put to bed any lingering questions about his political future.

One of the outstanding questions that many had heading into last weekend's convention was if Poilievre could successfully relay whether he had learned anything from his electoral defeat, and pivot to a more moderate message that could widen the party's appeal.

The Conservative leader did not capitulate on the fundamentals. Once-in-a-generation affordability challenges were a central theme of Poilievre's lengthy speech, as were messages focused on crime, immigration, sovereignty, and the promise of

uniting Canadians who are losing hope in the future. To the untrained observer, this speech bore parallels to many of the words spoken during the last election campaign.

But the man on the stage bore little resemblance to the pit bull who successfully twisted then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals into a pretzel, and successfully defeated a number of their signature policies. Gone are the days of "Canada is broken," replaced instead by the "best is yet to come." Personal anecdotes coloured the speech, illustrating that hope remains the most powerful antidote to the generational crisis in which Canadians currently find themselves.

Poilievre will be accused of missing the moment to make a major statement on Canada-United States relations, and failing to demonstrate a course correction following his inability to effectively counter the Liberal response during the election. While it is true the Conservative leader didn't lay out a step-by-step strategy, he offered something more valuable: a reiteration of his party's willingness to work with the Liberals to deliver results.

The reality of opposition politics is that the Conservatives have no seat at the negotiating table, nor are they privy to government strategies articulated behind closed doors. Answering the call—if and when it comes from the Liberal benches—is the only appropriate next step for Poilievre and his team.

The life of an opposition leader is rarely glamorous. It is defined by long days, a brutal travel schedule, time away from family, and accepting the relentless criticism about what isn't working, all while under the looming threat of an election. Poilievre has done the work to earn his place to carry the Conservative banner in the next election. It would be foolish to assume he doesn't understand the stakes heading into the next election, or the consequences of failing to expand the party's reach.

Love him or hate him, Poilievre has demonstrated his willingness to fight for the future of Canada. While many obstacles remain in his path, he has earned the privilege of writing his own second chapter.

Josie Sabatino is a vice-president at Summa Strategies. Prior to joining Summa, Sabatino spent nearly a decade as a Conservative political staffer, providing communications and issues management advice to Members of Parliament and the leader of the official opposition.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

What happens after the convention dust settles?

The Conservative leader and his team have bought themselves time, but there's still much work to do because waiting for the other guy to fail is not a plan.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—Credit to Pierre Poilievre: he worked hard to retain the leadership of the Conservative Party, and was rewarded with more than 87-per-cent support of those who attended the Calgary convention last weekend.

Like the political opponent he long battled against—former prime minister Justin Trudeau—Poilievre has shown he is a political fighter.

True, there were no current challengers for his job, but it would have been a fool's errand to assume he would have won in a cake walk had he not continued to campaign for his post. He has bought himself some temporary leadership peace at least until—and if—there is another floor crossing or battle with a leading conservative premier.

There also seems to be a different approach being taken by some of Poilievre's senior political staff. There are plenty of recent examples of them doing more outreach to people beyond those who have demonstrated cultish devotion to the Conservative leader. For example, campaign manager Steve Outhouse is heading back to his home province of Nova Scotia to take part in the provincial Progressive Conservative convention. You'll recall not that long ago the Poilievre team apparently had unnecessarily irritated popular

Nova Scotia Progressive Conservative Premier Tim Houston.

Outhouse, and Katy Merrifield, Poilievre's communications director, are apparently adding some maturity and savvy to Team Poilievre. That could be very helpful for the Conservative leader's future chances.

While Poilievre presented himself as more human and vulnerable in his keynote address at the convention on Jan. 30—and credit to him for talking about his daughter's autism as that would not have been easy—the jury is likely to be out for a while on whether his message of hope is real. His grievance set still seems focused entirely on Liberal political failures, as he sees them. That is a great message track for the faithful, but risks coming across to the broader audience as typical politician speak in an atypical environment.

As his former campaign manager Jenni Byrne intimated in an interview with the CBC's Kate McKenna, the federal Conservatives need to link what is happen-



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre did himself and the party some good at last weekend's convention, but the jury is likely to be out for a while on whether his message of hope is real, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ing with affordability in Canada to the current chaotic environment driven by United States President Donald Trump. To date—and perhaps wisely because of some of his base of support—Poilievre has been tepid when it has come to both a critique of the U.S. president and a counter or complementary plan for dealing with his administration.

Ducking Trump only serves to benefit Prime Minister Mark Carney, who, according to a multitude of polls, scores well with Canadians for navigating the southern tsunami. It appeared a large portion of the Conservatives' 2025 election strategy was to lap up support as people tired of Trudeau. If they are hoping to follow a similar track where they wait for Carney to fall out of favour and stay clear of Trump, that doesn't scream path to victory.

Poilievre did himself and the Conservatives some good at the party's convention. Half the battle for an opposition leader—and a Conservative one—is to keep his own party united and focused. For a weekend under the national spotlight, they did that, which hasn't historically always been the case at Conservative gatherings.

The Conservative leader and his team have bought themselves time. In politics, as in life, time matters. That said, they shouldn't be blinded by a post-convention halo effect. Much work still needs to be done. Waiting for the other guy to fail is not a plan.

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

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COMMENT

Poilievre lends credence to western separatists' blame-it-all-on-Ottawa bias

The Tory leader claimed his government would end separatist sentiment by renewing historic pride and delivering policies that would bring hope to disaffected youth in Alberta and Quebec.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Pierre Poilievre's landmark speech to the Conservatives' convention focused pretty much on the same themes we've heard since the days when the leader was driving Justin Trudeau into retirement.

Well, he did add a few lines to keep the audience in Calgary in an upbeat mood on Jan. 30, making nasty remarks about immigrants and "phoney refugees."

While stressing his well-honed affordability message in the usual anger-inducing tone, Poilievre avoided taking a strong position on what you might call the elephant in the room, or in the province, or in the country: the Alberta sovereigntist movement.

Everyone says Brexit is a minority cause in the province to date. But it's obvious that these kinds of things can get out of hand as emotional thinking fed by grievance and entitlement are magnified in the dramatic run-up to independence votes. It happened in Quebec in 1995, leading to the near death of Canada, and with Brexit in 2016, where Britain was led to a large extent by false information into a divorce from Europe that many—perhaps most—Britons came to regret.

The fact is that Albertans, who still enjoy the best standard of living in Canada, have never gotten over the collapse of the global oil price in 2014. With the oil boom and related corporate investment no longer creating huge wealth

in the province, measures of individual economic well-being in Alberta have gradually descended over a decade to the level experienced by other Canadians.

As is obvious, the enduring results in Alberta of the fall in the global petroleum price have, over time, all come to be blamed exclusively on the federal government. Never mind that Ottawa (apparently unnoticed by Albertans) committed \$34-billion to build Canada's largest-ever infrastructure project to carry more oil via the Trans Mountain pipeline from their province to a Vancouver port.

Poilievre, as usual, echoed that narrative, claiming federal Liberals—not market forces—undermined Alberta's oil greatness.

He also didn't say much directly on United States President Donald Trump's attempts to destroy Canada's economy and his overtures about the 51st state, which fused into a national uproar last week with news that Alberta separatists had been in Washington, D.C., trying to enlist U.S. support to break up this country. British Columbia Premier David Eby labelled them traitors, and Ontario Premier Doug Ford implored Alberta Premier Danielle Smith to take a stand

against her province's Leavers, which she has since refused to do.

(In his 50-minute speech, Poilievre never uttered the name "Trump," who is admired by many in his party.)

Poilievre also steered clear of commenting directly on the risks posed to Canada by separatists, laying the whole problem at the feet of—guess who?—the Liberals. And, in a bit of rhetorical gymnastics, he tied the urge to break away from Canada back to affordability and what he said were the negative impacts of efforts to redress past racist injustices to Indigenous Peoples. A Conservative government, he claimed, would end separatist sentiment by renewing historic pride and delivering policies that would bring hope to disaffected youth in Alberta and Quebec.

After his wide-ranging, emotion-heavy oration, Poilievre handily won his party's mandatory leadership review vote. This was surely welcomed by the Liberals, since Poilievre's personal popularity numbers in the polls are so low they're in danger of running off the bottom of the charts.

Back in the real world after the political convention in Calgary,

Poilievre may find it difficult to keep from being drawn into discussion of the now-intertwined issues of Trump and Alberta separatists. At a time when the U.S. president is intensifying his onslaught against this country, these developments are beginning to open up a lot of very pressing questions about what a map of Canada—assuming there is such a map—will look like in a few years.

Could a Canada without Alberta survive? That would seem unlikely even in normal times. Added to that are all the questions about whether the Trump administration would intervene (secretly or otherwise) on behalf of Alberta's independence advocates. Or, should Albertans vote "Leave," could the U.S. president resist taking advantage of the splintering of Canada and the likely chaos in his north to advance his stated goal of annexing this country? There's also the possibility of a messy legal battle over Albertans' right to claim independence, which could produce any number of fraught, unpredictable scenarios involving domestic conflict or U.S. pressure/intervention.

Of course, the U.S. might do nothing. But Alberta separating would, in any case, be a disaster beyond description. In the months ahead of what seems a likely referendum among Albertans, Smith may be able to somehow get away with playing both sides of the separation issue. But Poilievre, as an Alberta MP and leader of His Majesty's Opposition, is going to find it hard to avoid taking a stand against this reckless, destructive craze in the province he represents.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.
The Hill Times

U.S. envoy is making Canada's F-35 decision a no-brainer

We need to cancel the remainder of the F-35 purchase, pivot to Saab, and bolster our domestic aviation industry.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Nobody likes a bully, and at his recent World Economic Forum speech in Davos, Switzerland, Prime Minister Mark Carney garnered international kudos in calling for middle powers to stand up to would-be super-power bullies.



Carney deliberately refrained from naming the United States in his brief address, but President Donald Trump was astute enough to know Carney's words were aimed at him.

In his verbal backlash at the perceived criticism, Trump made the crass remark that NATO allies such as Canada had stayed "a



U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra, left, says Canadians could face consequences if they don't move forward with the full purchase of Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets to replace the aging C-18s. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade and DND photograph by Sgt Norm McLean

little off the frontlines" during the decades-long conflict in Afghanistan. Naturally, such a statement drew rebukes from all the NATO countries whose soldiers spilled blood fighting in that U.S.-led occupation.

Trump then singled out Canada and Carney for not being "grateful" enough for the protec-

tion the U.S. would provide with its proposed new Golden Dome missile defence shield.

To revive all the old insults, Trump also referred to Carney as "Governor" in a recent Truth Social post. This, of course, reflecting Trump's oft-repeated claim of forcibly submitting Canada into becoming the 51st state,

either through economic pressure or military force.

Under normal circumstances, ambassadors would attempt to de-escalate inter-state tensions by making apologies or sane-splaining the rantings of the U.S. president.

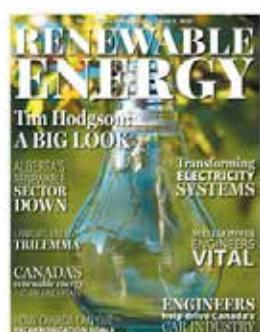
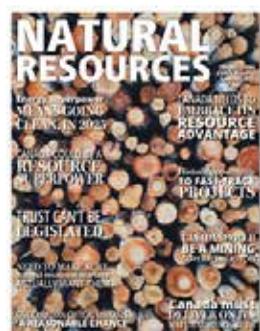
However, incumbent U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra has instead decided to double down and fan the flames of unnecessary instigation. In a Jan. 26 interview with the CBC, Hoekstra said that Canadians could face dire consequences if the decision is made not to move forward with the full purchase of Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets.

Hoekstra went so far as to state that if Canada were to opt out of the F-35 purchase, the long-standing NORAD agreement would be altered. As a result, Canada would need to accept more U.S. fighter jets flying in our airspace at their own discretion.

In other words, Canada either buys the U.S.-built F-35s, or we forfeit the sovereignty of our own air space. That is the logic and tactics of a mob boss.

However, given Carney's brave words of standing up to bullies, Hoekstra has just handed the prime minister a golden

POLICY BRIEFING CALENDAR



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Editorial

Editorial

Team Canada could use some info about the next play

The people responsible for making some of the country's favourite entertainment converged on Ottawa last week for the annual Prime Time conference hosted by the Canadian Media Producers Association.

Although there was plenty of talk about the TV juggernaut that has become Crave's *Heated Rivalry*, the real rivalry baked into the undercurrent of many conversations was that between us and our southern neighbours as the two countries prepare to review the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

The Online Streaming Act, which sought to overhaul Canada's legislative framework for broadcasting, included new provisions tasking the national telecommunications regulator with ensuring international entities still "contribute to ... Canadian resources in an equitable manner." It's been a target of U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer, and Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller recently told *Politico* that it was part of a "suite of measures" identified by the Americans that are under scrutiny.

As *The Hill Times*'s Stuart Benson reports, Miller attempted to assuage the concerns of those who make Canadian film and TV, highlighting "red lines around culture, arts, protecting artists that we can't and shouldn't cross," but it was cold comfort.

"Only four people actually know what's going on, and none of them are the minister of culture," one executive producer said.

As Neil Moss reports, that tight inner circle in trade talks makes it difficult

for stakeholders, parliamentarians, and Canadians writ large to know which of their defences need to be shored up.

While everyone understands the concept of not "negotiating in public," there is room within the government's own procedures to offer more transparency. The U.S. held its CUSMA consultations in public, while Canada's were behind closed doors. Conservative MP Jacob Mantle is right to push to see the submissions from that exercise.

When he appeared before the House International Trade Committee on Jan. 27, International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu highlighted the speed at which the government is trying to move in diversifying away from the U.S.

"I think we need to keep that in mind as we move forward, that we're not in normal times anymore," he said, in defence of the government ignoring its own timelines for tabling implementation bills for trade pacts in the House.

No, we're not in normal times. And people have been growing increasingly concerned about U.S. relations, according to recent Nanos polling showing a nearly 10-point jump for the issue as a national concern over the past four weeks.

But that makes it the best time to demonstrate that we're all in this together by actually making Canadians feel as though they're part of a team, and don't have to keep their heads on a swivel to see where the axe will fall next.

Given the way notices are rolling out to the public service about job cuts, clearly that is a futile ask.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

CMHC should take a closer look at condo fees as part of addressing housing crisis: Ontario reader

Perhaps push back from condo owners suffering price shock should have been taken more seriously as an early warning that affordability and housing was becoming decoupled, writes Bev Kennedy. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The cracks are showing up even in former drivers of supply for condos—one of the lower rungs on the property ladder—and that's the mud-dle in which developers and retail investors are mired with respect to empty micro condos.

But the story darkens for longtime owner-dwellers who are pressed to their financial limits with soaring special assessments—a cost pressure the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) does not track—on top of maintenance hikes.

The CMHC is focused on supply data, not the cost of maintaining aging buildings, and appears oblivious to the legal implications of the automatic liens that condominium corporations can apply to units, and the growing risk of occupants losing their homes because they can't keep fending off the cost shocks.

It doesn't help that while condo boards have been given inadequate tools for ensuring sufficient contributions to reserve funds for decades, over time, the recommendation has grown from five per cent to 10 per cent as a baseline to now 30 per cent of operating funds to keep the reserve fund adequate. There is also a recent recognition that the benchmark of CPI for maintenance-fee increases was not appropriate, and a more purpose-focused anchor should have been an index tracking construction costs.

This is why policy and program drafters should insist on better data aggregation from condo oversight bodies instead of blaming condo boards because of their fiduciary duties for their

condo legislation, or blaming owners when the data given to boards did not reflect the real cost shocks now triggering special assessments since it is backward looking. Perhaps push back from condo owners suffering price shock should have been taken more seriously as an early warning that affordability and housing—including the ability to keep up maintenance given the automatic liens embedded with condo ownership—was becoming decoupled.

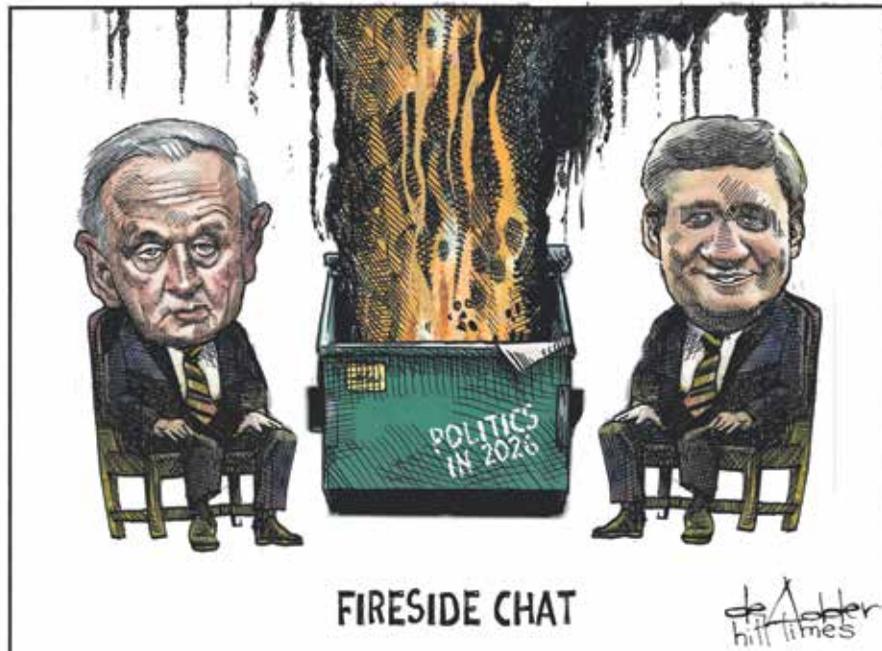
So how will the well-intentioned focus on building new supply further affect the cost of maintenance and construction material and supply?

Condos are a significant sector of housing, and housing—like banking—has a huge footprint in our economy.

So if one looks back on past banking crises due to inadequate regulations, I would suggest housing—and the condo sector in particular—is overdue for a melt-down, and that the well-intended programs to build new housing are just what will push that sector over the edge along with owners.

There is more to solving the riddle of housing affordability than simply building more supply. And blaming condo boards and owners is ignoring the flawed tools boards have been given to build up adequate reserve funds to avoid the growing tsunami of special assessments. So why isn't the CMHC documenting special assessments as part of its calculations, which were recently updated to reflect growing housing affordability pressures?

Bev Kennedy
 Oakville, Ont.



COMMENT

Carney's embrace of middle power status sends us 'back to the future'

Hopefully, the prime minister's description of the world is flawed, and we will again reap the benefits of global multilateral co-operation. Otherwise, we may be re-living the 1930s.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



Prime Minister Mark Carney's emphasis on middle powers in his Jan. 20 World Economic Forum address would be familiar to anyone studying foreign policy in Canada in the 1960s and '70s, writes Andrew Caddell. Photograph courtesy of World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard

to say I worked with the talented diplomats who used convincing arguments to serve our interests.

As a result, we were able to be major players in the Uruguay and Doha Rounds at the World Trade Organization in the 1990s, we were the drivers of the Arctic Council in 1996, the Land Mines Convention of 1997, and the International Criminal Court in 2002. We wrote the doctrine of "Responsibility to Protect" at the United Nations, and contributed

significantly to the UN reform panel in 2005. We also worked with the United States in creating the Free Trade Agreement in 1989, and then with Mexico on NAFTA in 1994. These were all significant achievements, and reflected well on our status as a "middle power."

Of course, anyone studying foreign policy in Canada in the 1960s and '70s was familiar with that term, as it was the subject of many exam questions or term papers. This was an era of the

"superpowers"—the U.S. and Russia—whose nuclear competition and proxy wars dominated the news. The former colonial powers, the United Kingdom and France, were sometimes included in that group as they had nuclear weapons and sat on the UN Security Council.

In the 1980s, we joined the G7 but were a bit player compared to the U.S., Germany, and Japan. The so-called "Peace Dividend" with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 proved to be a fallacy. Then the world began to change around the time of the millennium. The creation of the G20 in 1999 by future prime ministers Paul Martin and Gordon Brown offered the potential of the future, as it welcomed the emerging economies of China, India, Brazil, and Africa.

In the early 2000s, recalling my studies, I was one of those people who felt we could get more traction as a middle power along with others in the G20 than as a minor one in the then-G8. Most experts at what was then the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade scoffed at the idea, but it seemed to me we could work with Argentina, Australia, Indonesia, Italy, Mexico, South Africa, South Korea, and Turkey as we shared many characteristics in population and economics.

We did not pursue that path, but in Davos, Switzerland, last month, Prime Minister Mark Carney received plaudits for his "Carney Doctrine," in which he gave new credence to Canada as a middle power, repeating the term seven times. For me, it was *Back to the Future*.

Describing the changes in the world as "a rupture, not a transition," he eschewed the old ways of multilateral co-operation, saying, "The multilateral institutions on which the middle powers have relied—the WTO, the UN, the

COP—the architecture, the very architecture of collective problem solving are under threat."

But in the same breath he added, "as a result, many countries ... must develop greater strategic autonomy, in energy, food, critical minerals, in finance and supply chains."

Then he explained this new reality: "The question is whether we adapt by simply building higher walls, or whether we can do something more ambitious ... So, we're engaging broadly, strategically with open eyes. We actively take on the world as it is, not wait around for a world we wish to be."

What Carney seems to be saying is we must work with other middle powers to achieve our ends. Especially when the President Donald Trump-led U.S. is looking more and more like an outlier.

That said, the decision to engage in "strategic partnerships" with China and Qatar is not without its risks. Despite their economic clout, neither plays by the rules. Working with the G20 middle powers, along with the U.K. and European Union makes sense. But we should recognize the risk in collaborating with dictatorships.

In some ways, I hope the prime minister's description of the world is flawed, and we will again reap the benefits of global multilateral co-operation. Otherwise, we may be re-living the 1930s, when high American tariffs, the Great Depression, and the failure of the League of Nations were precursors to a world war.

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

U.S. envoy is making Canada's F-35 decision a no-brainer

Continued from page 6

opportunity to actually get his elbows up, and deliver a blow to Trump's bottom line.

For those who have not been following this ongoing saga closely, here is a brief recap. The Royal Canadian Air Force announced that it intended to purchase 88 Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets in December 2022 at a total projected cost of \$19-billion. That cost would later jump to more than \$27-billion.

However, Canada actually only committed to buying the first 16 F-35s for a price tag of \$7-billion. The first of those aircraft will be delivered this year, but will not enter actual operations in Canada until 2027.

In March of 2025, during the opening rounds of Trump's tariff wars, Carney ordered the RCAF to review the overall F-35 project. Yes, we are well into the first contracted phase of the deal, and we will undoubtedly take delivery of those first 16 F-35s.

However, Canada has the option of walking away from the remainder of that program.

During the competition to find a replacement for Canada's aged-out fleet of CF-18 Hornet fighters, the Saab Gripen had finished a close second to the F-35.

Since the moment Carney ordered the F-35 review, Saab has dusted off their proposal and sharpened their pencils. Last week, they offered to sell Canada a package of 72 Gripen fighters

along with six GlobalEye surveillance aircraft. The airframe for the GlobalEye is already produced in Canada by Bombardier, and Saab has offered to assemble the fleet of Gripens in Canada.

The latest estimate on this deal is that it would create 12,600 jobs in Canada's aviation industry. No specific dollar figure was made public by Saab on this latest offer.

However, even if it is in the same ballpark as the remainder of the F-35 purchase—roughly \$21-billion—the Gripens are far more economical to operate. The cost to fly a Gripen is estimated at between \$8,000 and \$12,000 per hour, whereas the complex F-35 sucks up between \$33,000 and \$50,000 for every flying hour.

As for the longer-term sustainability of those aviation jobs moving forward, Ukraine has expressed interest in acquiring up to 100 Gripens to re-equip any post-war Ukrainian Air Force, and the potential worldwide market for the GlobalEye is substantial.

That said, stalwart RCAF proponents of the F-35 and only the F-35 need to concede the fact that the Gripen is an excellent Arctic interceptor fighter with an availability rate that puts the complex, maintenance-heavy F-35 to shame. The two fighters are purpose built for different purposes.

The F-35 is a stealth-strike aircraft meant to take out a near-peer's air defences on Day 1 of a conflict. On the

other hand, the Gripen excels at intercepting hostile threats in the High Arctic from remote landing strips. There is no reason that the RCAF would not be able to operate a mixed fleet of fighters.

But, it was Hoekstra himself who told Canadians that we are not able to sustain a mixed fleet.

Let's prove him wrong. We need to cancel the remainder of the F-35 purchase, pivot to Saab, bolster our domestic aviation industry, and—in doing so—show the world that Carney walks the walk.

As for Hoekstra's threats about NORAD airspace being controlled by the U.S., I suggest we hastily invest in some serious surface-to-air-missile systems, such as the French-Italian Aster family of missiles.

Once we actually possess those, we could tell Hoekstra and Trump to FAFO.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

Taking a stand for sovereignty



X owner Elon Musk, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump in the White House on May 30, 2025. *White House photograph by Molly Riley*

Canadians need to consider how to reverse the stranglehold of all the American Big Tech companies that mine our data for their sole financial gain.

Catherine Tait

Opinion



I had the privilege of serving as the first woman to run Canada's public broadcaster from 2018 to the end of 2024.

Since the fateful day in January 2025 when United States President Donald Trump was inaugurated for the second time, the world order has been shattered and a new disorder introduced with "sovereignty" as the word *du jour*. Looking back on my tenure at CBC/Radio-Canada, I remember the blowback to my public comments in 2019 about the rapacious FAANGs (Facebook, Amazon, Apple, Netflix, and Google). I had the temerity to liken the presence of Netflix in Canada to a form of cultural imperialism. Five years later, we are all reflecting on this new imperialism, an American president backed by Big Tech. Digital sovereignty is the battle cry for Europeans shocked by the sobering reality that their technological infrastructure and social media ecosystem are largely U.S.-controlled.

In Canada, elbows up are not enough as our prime minister stood down on implementation of the Digital Services Tax legislation in an early effort to appease our neighbour to the south. Similarly, we as Canadians need to consider how to reverse the stranglehold of all the American Big Tech companies that mine our data for their sole financial gain. And, yet again, our government entertains offers from American artificial intelligence companies looking to expand their data centres across our vast territory—all that space! All that water! Data centres that pollute, employ very few, strain the electrical grid, and will ensure U.S. control of our data for decades to come.

So why does a former CBC president care? Because there is a role for public media in a future where traditional TV has receded in favour of digital services. We know that the majority of young Canadians today find their news through social

media (and that's with Facebook and Instagram still boycotting news in the country). Canada has an opportunity to secure a "sovereign" public space for news—free from toxic trolls—and the public broadcaster could lead this charge on social media services that are free of algorithms.

Across the planet there are software engineers, entrepreneurs, and policymakers seeking to promote an alternative to centralized social media products that depend on the business model of surveillance advertising. To date, the movement has been largely confined to tech geeks, but glimmers of more consumer friendly options came to light with the migration from X to Bluesky when Elon Musk took the brakes off hate. Bluesky, a decentralized, open source social media solution has grown to 42 million users, and the code it developed (ATProtocol) is now governed by a non-profit entity called the Modal Foundation in the Netherlands.

Here in Canada, a startup called Gander is built on the open protocol of Bluesky and promises a sovereign Canadian service that puts "the social back in social media." (Disclosure: I am one of Gander's advisers.) For now that means no advertising, your data stays in Canada, and we return to the kinder days and promises of the internet. Gander is closing over \$2-million raised in a crowd-funding effort from more than 2,400 Canadians this week, and close to 40,000 Canadians have already signed up to a service that is still in beta testing.

Why all the excitement?

Canadians are sick and tired of the Big Tech bullies. Social media is a cesspool of hate, misogyny, and racism. It is time to say no to the feudal overlords of Big Tech, and take back our agency as individuals, and as citizens of a country that prides itself on tolerance as a core value. The point of decentralized social media is to put the control back into the hands of ordinary users—you and me. You control your data, your photos and followers are yours to take with you if you want to move to another service (interoperability), and your preferences are your own (you curate your feeds.)

Surely the public broadcaster should lead the way in supporting a new sovereign digital space where Canadians can find verified, unbiased news? Our PM was right when he said nostalgia isn't a strategy. So, at the risk of inflaming the ranks of those who pine for the good old CBC days, I say embrace the future, take a stand for sovereignty, and make sure that your public broadcaster is there to ensure a secure, online, public space for civil discourse amongst Canadians.

Catherine Tait is the former president and CEO of CBC/Radio-Canada.

The Hill Times

What public art museums are for when the ground shifts

Museums are among the few civic places designed to sustain shared attention and contested memory in public.

Zainub Verjee

Opinion



Public art museums protect the symbolic commons and hold time against speed, writes Zainub Verjee. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

In the world "as it is"—as Prime Minister Mark Carney put it—public museums stop being amenities and become civic equipment when the ground shifts. Not because they deter armies or rewrite trade regimes, but because sovereignty depends on what they help preserve: a people's capacity to recognize itself in public.

Sovereignty is usually discussed as a hard thing: borders, courts, police, central banks. Yet, those instruments rely on a softer underside that policy language often avoids naming: narrative, legitimacy, shared memory, and the public's ability to agree on what happened and what counts as real. When that underside is captured, the hard instruments can remain intact while a society's self authorship thins out.

Public museums sit on that fault line because they authorize visibility. To collect, conserve, and exhibit is to certify. This belongs to the public record. This is worth keeping. This will outlast the moment. In stable periods, that authority can look like cultural housekeeping. In contested periods, it becomes contested power.

This is why neutrality fails precisely when it is most advertised. In pressured times, neutrality can slide into deference to whoever can punish an institution most effectively, whether through funding threats, reputational campaigns, political retaliation, or access. It becomes alignment with leverage, recast as professionalism. A public museum's obligation is not neutrality. It is accountability to scholarship, to the public, and to the difficult realities that the word "public" contains.

So what are public art museums for when the ground shifts?

First, they protect the symbolic commons. A museum is one of the few places where shared objects and shared stories can exist without being instantly monetized or turned into factional trophies. It holds long memory, inconvenient evidence, and the permission to say the past is not finished with the present. When anxiety rises, the symbolic commons is often the first thing powerful actors try to capture because controlling memory is an efficient route to legitimacy.

Second, museums hold time against speed. The feed turns public life into a tempo of instant interpretation: outrage, alignment, forgetting. Museums are among the last public technologies designed for duration: slow looking, return, reconsideration. That slowness is democratic habit, the ability to let complexity exist long enough for thought to form.

Third, museums make the politics of visibility visible. Every museum decides what enters the frame and what stays out-

side it. Whose histories are art, whose are artifact, whose are folk, whose are minor. In unsettled times, these become contests over belonging. Museums matter because they can refuse two corruptions at once: erasure, where uncomfortable histories are pushed out; and instrumentalization, where marginalized histories are displayed as institutional virtue while being stripped of political consequence.

Fourth, museums are rehearsal spaces for pluralism. Democracy is the practice of cohabitation with people you did not choose. When the ground shifts, that practice becomes brittle. Camps harden, suspicion deepens, institutions retreat into risk aversion and call it stability. Museums can narrow the public sphere by treating discomfort as failure, or they can expand it by staging argument with structure and interpretation that dignifies doubt.

Finally, public museums must defend meaning from governance by wealth. The art historian Nizan Shaked argues in *Museums and Wealth* that non-profit museums often present themselves as public while being governed through private wealth and its priorities, and that reform requires structural redistribution, not only better language and programming. The pressure point is decision power: who can veto, who defines "risk," who gets to decide what is "too political" to collect or show.

If a museum cannot safeguard curatorial and scholarly judgment from reputational management and donor comfort, it will still be political. It will simply be political in the most predictable way, reproducing the power that funds it, then calling the result neutrality.

Canada likes to imagine its cultural institutions as polite and unthreatening. But in a moment when the public sphere is being compressed from multiple directions, museums are not peripheral. They are among the few civic places designed to sustain shared attention and contested memory in public.

The test is simple and severe. Can a public museum withstand pressure without recasting censorship as risk, or deference as neutrality? In the world "as it is," that is what public museums are for.

Dr. Zainub Verjee, C.M., RCA, is a Governor General's Award laureate, and executive director of Galeries Ontario Galleries. She writes on art, democracy, and the public good.

The Hill Times

Multilateralism isn't dead—it's being forced to deliver

Pragmatism must prevail over narrow nationalism, because co-operation is what creates jobs, lowers costs, and expands opportunity.

Esteban Crespo Polo

Opinion



The strain on the multilateral system is real. The United Nations Security Council remains constrained by great-power rivalry, and the World Trade Organization struggles to enforce its own rules. International agreements are often announced with ambition, only to stall when domestic political pressures intervene or when bureaucratic processes within governments allow momentum to fade. These shortcomings have fuelled skepticism, and encouraged governments to rely more heavily on unilateral action or improvised arrangements when core interests are at stake.

Yet, declaring multilateralism obsolete misunderstands the nature of today's challenges.



G7 leaders meet in Kananaskis, Alta., on June 16, 2025. Co-operation between nations will endure only if governments and institutions move beyond rhetoric, and deliver results, writes Ecuador Ambassador Esteban Crespo Polo. *White House photograph by Daniel Torok*

Climate change, pandemics, transnational crime, migration, supply-chain disruptions, and financial instability do not respect borders. No country, regardless of size or power, can address them alone. Sovereignty remains important, but interdependence is unavoidable.

The real question, then, is not whether multilateralism is necessary, but whether it is fit for purpose.

The era of multilateralism as we once knew it is likely over. What is emerging in its place is

a more pragmatic and selective form of co-operation—one that prioritizes effectiveness over formality, and outcomes over declarations. Smaller coalitions, regional frameworks, and issue-specific alliances increasingly complement traditional global institutions, often delivering faster and more tangible results.

This evolution is often described as fragmentation. In reality, it reflects adaptation to a faster, more competitive, and more interconnected world.

Coming from the private sector, I believe in a pragmatic diplomacy—one that measures success not by the frequency of joint statements, but by its capacity to generate concrete results and improve people's lives. In a world that moves at the speed of the internet, diplomacy that does not deliver is quickly bypassed. Co-operation between nations will endure only if governments and institutions move beyond rhetoric, and deliver results. Pragmatism must prevail over narrow nationalism, because

co-operation—not slogans—is what creates jobs, lowers costs, and expands opportunity.

Ecuador's work toward a free trade agreement with Canada—now pending signing and ratification in 2026—illustrates this pragmatic approach. Negotiated within a rules-based and co-operative framework, such agreements convert diplomacy into expanded trade, increased investment, job creation, and new opportunities for people in both countries. This is diplomacy at its most effective—not as an abstraction, but as a practical tool for development.

For smaller and emerging economies, this transition carries both risks and opportunities. When global rules weaken, power matters more, and informal arrangements can deepen exclusion. At the same time, a more flexible multilateral landscape allows these countries to exercise greater agency through regional co-operation, South-South partnerships, and functional alliances built around shared interests rather than rigid ideology.

The challenge is ensuring that pragmatism does not become exclusion—and that effectiveness does not come at the expense of legitimacy.

Ultimately, the future of multilateralism will not be decided by abstract debates about the "rules-based order." It will be decided by performance. Can institutions facilitate trade, mobilize investment, manage migration, combat transnational crime, and respond at the speed today's crises demand?

Multilateralism is not dying. It is being forced to evolve.

In today's world, co-operation that improves people's lives is not idealism. It is pragmatism.

Esteban Crespo Polo is the ambassador of Ecuador to Canada. The Hill Times

America's drug-pricing reset will reverberate far beyond Washington

Countries like Canada could find themselves navigating tighter negotiations and slower access to new therapies.

Akolisa Ufodike

Opinion



The United States' renewed push toward "most favoured nation" drug pricing is widely framed as a domestic cost-of-living measure, while also serving as a politically salient policy signal ahead of the



U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., left, and Health Minister Marjorie Michel. Canadian drug prices are routinely included in international pricing baskets, writes Akolisa Ufodike. *White House photograph by Abe McNatt and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

midterm elections. That framing understates its significance. What is unfolding is not simply a U.S. health-policy experiment, but a potential reset of global pharmaceutical pricing—with meaningful implications for Canada's econ-

omy, investors, and life-sciences strategy.

Under "most favoured nation" (MFN) pricing, U.S. public programs and affiliated purchasing platforms peg the price of certain prescription drugs to the

lowest levels paid in comparable developed countries. Recent agreements with major manufacturers such as Eli Lilly and Pfizer, alongside new federal models targeting Medicare and Medicaid, signal that this approach is

moving from rhetoric to partial implementation.

If sustained, MFN would challenge a long-standing feature of the global drug market: price discrimination. For decades, pharmaceutical firms have charged the highest prices in the U.S. while offering lower prices elsewhere, using American revenues to cross-subsidize research, development, and global market access. MFN directly attacks that structure by anchoring U.S. prices to international comparators.

For Canada, this matters for three reasons.

First, Canada is already a reference country—whether it wants to be or not. Canadian drug prices, governed through a mix of federal regulation and provincial negotiation, are routinely included in international pricing baskets. If the world's largest pharmaceutical buyer begins to benchmark itself more aggressively to those prices, Canada shifts from being a passive participant in global price setting to a *de facto* anchor. That elevates Canada's importance in launch strategies, negotiations,

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NEWS

Culture Minister Miller says Canada can't cross CanCon 'red lines' in U.S. trade negotiations

Heated Rivalry creator Jacob Tierney says he is 'strangely confident' the prime minister 'knows what he's doing' in U.S. trade negotiations as the Online Streaming Act remains under fire.

BY STUART BENSON

At a gathering of Canada's film and television industry executives and creators in Ottawa last week, there were seemingly only two things on everyone's mind: hockey players who kiss each other, and whether the Liberals' Online Streaming Act will survive trade negotiations with the United States.

Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) spent the days leading up to his Jan. 29 appearance at the Canadian Media Producers Association's (CMPA) annual Prime Time conference attempting to reassure stakeholders that protecting their industry was a "red line" in Canada's ongoing trade negotiations with the U.S., and many expressed mostly quiet confidence that the government will have its back. However, many also put little stock in either the seemingly contradictory statements the government has made on the subject, or the subsequent public reassurances.

The day before the conference began, *Politico* reported that Miller had suggested the Online Streaming Act and Online News Act were part of trade talks with the U.S.—contradicting earlier pledges by his predecessor, Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.), and Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.), who vowed culture would remain off the negotiating table.

Guilbeault reiterated that vow last October at a CMPA Hill Day reception, telling attendees that "as Canada works out its new trade relationship with the U.S., culture is not and will not be on the table."

Reception attendees who spoke with *The Hill Times* at the time said they were concerned about the fate of the Online Streaming Act, given the ongoing court challenge by international streaming companies, and the government's seeming openness to use the digital policies imple-



Bell Media president Sean Cohan, left, and Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller at the Canadian Media Producers Association's annual Prime Time conference on Jan. 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

mented by the previous Liberal government as "bargaining chips" in the current trade negotiations.

Bill C-11, which received royal assent in April 2023, amended the Canadian Broadcasting Act to regulate online streaming services like Netflix, YouTube, and Spotify. It requires those platforms to showcase and contribute to the production of "Canadian stories and music" in both official languages and Indigenous languages.

In June 2024, the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) ordered that foreign streamers must contribute five per cent of their annual Canadian revenues to a fund devoted to producing domestic content, including local TV and radio news, but the following December large streaming companies like Netflix, Disney, Apple, and Spotify launched a court challenge against that order.

On Dec. 23, 2024, a Federal Court of Appeal judge ruled that those payments—which the CRTC estimated would generate up to \$200-million in annual funding per streamer—would be paused until the court process concluded. The parties agreed to an expedited schedule to hold proceedings last June before the majority of the payments came due the following month. The following December, those streaming companies also launched a separate challenge of a CRTC decision made under the legislation that would require them to disclose financial information.

As Canada's television and film industry awaits the court's decision and the funding's fate, it has also grown increasingly concerned about the destiny of the legislation responsible for mandating those payments, particularly in the wake of Carney's cancellation of the Digital Services Tax and professed openness to "all avenues" of adjusting the Online Streaming Act.

Those fears were further compounded on Jan. 27 after Miller's comments that the legislation

had been "identified [by] the U.S. as a suite of measures that are considered to be irritants in our trade relations." He further added that "there are a number of lines that the Canadian government will not cross," but later clarified to *Politico* that he is not a direct participant in the negotiations and was speaking broadly.

During his Jan. 28 appearance at the CMPA conference, Miller made similar reassurances to the industry representatives in attendance.

"We're facing a very tough trade negotiation with the U.S. that is shameless in using asymmetrical economic tactics. They have made no secret that part of our industries are ones that they see change on, but there's some red lines for us" Miller said while speaking with media personality George Stroumboulopoulos.

"There are red lines around culture, arts, and protecting artists that we can't and shouldn't cross," Miller continued, adding that beyond being a "\$100-billion industry that supports Canadian livelihoods ... it's the heartbeat of our nation."

While Miller hesitated to say anything further during a scrum with reporters after his on-stage appearance, he said the government wants "to make sure that people are getting a fair shake, that we're protecting Canadian content, because that's who we are as a country."

When pressed further for why he could not provide the same assurances Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) has given for measures to protect the "French language," Miller told reporters that "I'm not negotiating with you," but later clarified again that he was not negotiating with anyone.

Attendees who spoke with *The Hill Times* also pointed to Miller's lack of participation in the negotiations as reason to put little stock in either the contradicting statements or the reassurances.

"Only four people actually know what's going on, and none of

them are the minister of culture," one executive producer told *The Hill Times* on Jan. 28, referring to Carney; LeBlanc; Martin Moen, an associate assistant deputy minister of trade policy and negotiations with Global Affairs Canada; and Canada's outgoing Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman.

However, others were willing to read further into Miller's comments, noting that if Trump views the Online Streaming Act as an irritant, then if removing it isn't currently on the table, it's already "on the menu," and all it may take is for him to order it as with the DST.

Yet, later in the day, at a special red-carpet event to celebrate the success of the Canadian-made television series *Heated Rivalry*, the show's creators were more vocal in their confidence in the government's negotiations.

Creator Jacob Tierney—who writes, produces, and directs the show based off the series of novels by Canadian author Rachel Reid—told *The Hill Times* that he "feels very strongly" that Canada needs to invest in its arts, and that large streamers looking to "come here and take advantage of our craft and tax credits" should be willing to do the same.

Tierney added that he feels "strangely confident in this current government," and that "Carney knows what he's doing and will get us out of this."

Brendan Brady, an executive producer on the show, told *The Hill Times* that the Online Streaming Act was "incredibly important" in order to ensure that "Canadian stories are told within a Canadian system without outside control."

"There is incredible opportunity for streamers to share in that, and it's worth fighting for," Brady said. "We don't need to change our system just because those streamers want to enter our country's market."

During introductory remarks before the night's panel featuring Tierney, Brady, and two of the show's lead actors, Carney jokingly took "credit" for the show and the "Canadian funding" that supported both it and the industry as a whole.

"I'm a politician, I'm not above taking credit," Carney joked. "I may not have been here when the decision was made, but I am here now. I greenlit this thing. I stood up to the Americans."

Conservatives channel Prime Time remarks to champion anti-CBC policy

However, despite attempts by some industry players to keep any comments under the radar so as to not affect the ongoing negotiations with the U.S., it was the speech from CMPA president and CEO

Reynolds Mastin that seems to have garnered the most attention—though not from the Liberals' trade opposition south of the border.

"Prime minister, know that every person in this room, and the 180,000 people who work in the industry, have your back, just as we know that you have ours," Mastin told the Prime Time crowd as he introduced Carney on Jan. 28.

At the Conservatives' national convention on Jan. 30, MP Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, Alta.), her party's identity and culture critic, referenced those comments in her intervention in support of a resolution to end government funding for the CBC.

"Regardless of whether you want to acknowledge it or not, there is a love affair going on between the current media landscape in this country and the Liberal government of Canada, and we need to put a stop to that," Thomas said, framing Mastin's quote as being delivered from the stage of a "summit of all media."

"This is what is said by the mainstream media, just yesterday. Further to that, the minister of heritage has said that the CBC is responsible for 'social cohesion.' Folks, this is propaganda at its finest, it needs to stop," Thomas said in support of the policy.

A 17-second clip of Mastin's comments was posted online and shared by right-wing influencers and organizations like Canada Proud, as well as several Conservative MPs, to further suggest an inappropriate relationship between the Liberal government and the "legacy media."

In response to *The Hill Times'* request for comment, the CMPA said it is a "non-partisan organization" that represents "more than 600 small and medium-sized companies across Canada that produce movies and TV shows—not news," and that over more than 75 years it has built "constructive relationships with successive federal governments, opposition parties and parliamentarians of every political stripe."

However, not all Conservatives share this adversarial stance towards Canada's media producers.

Conservative MP Eric Duncan (Stormont-Dundas-Glengarry, Ont.)—who joined Carney, Miller, and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon (Toronto Centre, Ont.) on the Prime Time red carpet on Jan. 28—told *The Hill Times* the conference and the presence of international delegations there "has been incredible" for highlighting the potential for Canada to "get our message out to the world."

Duncan, who represents a rural riding, said that in the discussions surrounding the trade negotiations, a topic of primary interest is supply management, but whether the issue is Canadian milk or television, "it's really important that we do as much as we can to promote Canadian products" regardless of the industry.

"There are so many sectors competing, and it's going to be a challenge with the U.S., but a lot of doors are opening right now for Canada and we need to walk through every single one that we can," Duncan said.

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DND spurns House committee request for roadmap to comply with info czar's orders



Minister David McGuinty's Department of National Defence is consistently one of the worst performers for complying with the Access to Information Act. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The feds say the Department of National Defence treats orders from the information commissioner as a 'priority,' but won't commit to a timeline.

BY NEIL MOSS

The federal government says creating a plan and timeline for the Department of National Defence to comply with the information commissioner's outstanding orders is "not feasible."

In the last Parliament, the House Defence Committee conducted a study on transparency at the Department of National Defence (DND). In a report that was tabled in the House in November 2024, the committee recommended that a plan and timeline be created to comply with all the outstanding orders.

A government response to that report wasn't produced until last week as due to the federal election call last spring. A renewed call for a government response came when the committee was reconstituted for the 45th Parliament.

The government agreed "in principle with this recommendation," but added that it is "not feasible" to develop a specific plan and timeline as DND "addresses each order based on the particular circumstances of the case file."

"However, orders from the Information Commissioner of Canada are treated as a priority by the Defence Team to meet the deadlines imposed by the Information Commissioner," the response noted.

Former Liberal MP John McKay, who chaired the House Defence Committee when it tabled the report, said that a fully functioning committee that is

serious about its mandate should find the government's response to be "very unsatisfactory."

"[It] should call back to the committee the minister who is ultimately responsible for this and say, 'That is not acceptable and tell us what you're going to do about it,'" he said.

McKay noted that parliamentary committees are only as useful as the willingness of members to pursue their prerogatives under its mandates.

He said DND has a long-standing problem with complying with the information commissioner's orders.

The situation, on its face, is that the department is not following an order of an officer of Parliament, McKay said, suggesting it could rise to the level of contempt of Parliament.

House of Commons Procedure and Practice notes that the House has the right to punish as contempt an "action or omission" that "obstruct or impede" the performance of the House, including an officer of the House.

DND has 'duty' to respect orders: lawyer

Access to information expert Michel Drapeau, a lawyer who represents members of the Canadian Armed Forces, said that if any department should be able to follow orders, it should be DND.

"They give orders all the time. If you are serving in the military, you take orders and you give orders," he said. "They have to show an example."

He noted that by the time that the information commissioner gives an order, it would be months—if not years—since the original request was submitted.

"For them to have the audacity to now say that they're going to [prioritize others] and some will be processed on a more urgent basis, that's not what the law says and that's not what we expect from them if they've been given an order from the information commissioner," he said. "They have a duty to respond,



Former Liberal MP John McKay says DND's response to the Defence Committee is 'very unsatisfactory.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The office of Information Commissioner Caroline Maynard says that she doesn't 'contemplate' applying for a court order to compel DND to follow an order at 'the present time.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and a duty to, in fact, respect the order."

Liberal MP Charles Sousa (Mississauga-Lakeshore, Ont.), who currently chairs the House Defence Committee, said that DND is increasing staffing, while also digitizing and modernizing the access-to-information process to improve file management.

"That's the advice we've persuaded them to be taking, and that is exactly what they're saying that they will do," he said.

Sousa said the department is committed to upholding the accountability and transparency of the access-to-information regime.

"All the work they are doing to process and improve their file management is a priority for

them," he said. "How long will it take? We'll see, but it's certainly something that they're committed to do."

Sousa said revisiting and studying transparency at DND isn't on the committee's docket at the time.

Info commish had 66 orders against DND in 2025

DND and Information Commissioner Caroline Maynard have taken each other to court more than two dozen times in the last three years. In six cases, Maynard has tried to get the Federal Court to compel DND to comply with

her rulings to release information. DND has also appealed to the court to strike down Maynard's orders to grant an extension or prevent the release of information.

In response to an Order Paper question from Conservative MP Doug Shipley (Barrie-Springwater-Oro-Medonte, Ont.), the government revealed that it spent around \$1.63-million in actual and notional legal costs contesting Maynard in Federal Court from Jan. 1, 2021, to Sept. 25, 2025. That includes 67 cases, of which 26 involve the defence minister.

In 2025, Maynard had 66 orders for DND to release information after it was delayed in responding to a request under the Access to Information Act. That was an increase from 45 in 2024.

Asked how many outstanding orders with which DND has yet to comply, a spokesperson for Maynard said that, "generally speaking," the office does not track an institution's compliance with an order.

"When institutions still do not implement her orders and do not apply to the Federal Court, the Commissioner has no power under the Access to Information Act to force the institution to implement an order," the Office of the Information Commissioner said. "At that point, she may take action by applying to the Federal Court for a writ of mandamus under the Federal Courts Act." DND didn't respond to the question before publication deadline.

The information commissioner's office noted that a head of a government institution is "legally obligated" to abide by Maynard's orders. However, they can apply for a court review of the order, which stays the order until a ruling is made.

"The Access to Information Act does not provide any other alternative to complying with the order," the office said.

The spokesperson noted that there are no active court orders to comply with Maynard's orders against DND, and that Maynard doesn't "contemplate" applying for an order at "the present time."

A Jan. 26 response to an Order Paper question from Conservative MP Colin Reynolds (Elmwood-Transcona, Man.) showed that DND has 941 access-to-info requests that have extensions in excess of 30 days. There are 360 in excess of 90 days, 112 exceeding 180 days, 31 asking for more than a year, and 15 with more than two years.

The longest extension that the department is currently processing is 2,555 days, or seven years.

"This extension was deemed necessary and reasonable as the scope of the request spanned eight years and requires a search through 30 gigabytes of data to identify relevant records. Several attempts were made to engage the requester in a discussion with the objective of more specifically identifying the information sought to reduce the time necessary to produce a release, however these efforts were unsuccessful," the response noted.

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NEWS



PSAC national president Sharon DeSousa, centre left, and vice-president Alex Silas join union members at a picket outside the West Block on Jan. 28. Newly released data identifies at least 8,230 jobs to be cut across dozens of departments via the workforce adjustment program. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Public servant says spending review is 'gutting the wrong people' as notices continue to hit desks

Anne Lavergne is just one of 22,000 workers from across the federal public service who have received notices that their job may be at risk.

BY MARLO GLASS

A public servant whose job has been cut says the comprehensive spending review is "gutting the wrong people" as she grapples with finding a new job after nearly three decades in the federal bureaucracy.

Speaking to *The Hill Times* outside a rally on Parliament Hill on Jan. 28, Anne Lavergne said she recently received a letter indicating her job at Health Canada has been cut. She said she worked on a cybersecurity team, and her role included hiring consultants to work on projects like the Canadian Dental Care Plan.

"They are gutting the wrong people, in my opinion," she said.

"They should be cutting on the real-estate budgets, they should be cutting at higher-up positions."

Lavergne describes herself as educated, experienced, and valued by her team. Now that her job has been declared surplus, Lavergne has 120 days to decide if she wants to job hunt in the public service, or move on.

"I have a friend who wants to buy goats, and I might be a shepherd and go cut grass and fields," she said. "I really, really don't know, but I'll probably end up on unemployment for a while, which is sad."

Lavergne is just one of thousands of workers who have received notices that their job may be at risk.

Newly released data from the Treasury Board Secretariat identifies at least 8,230 jobs to be cut from the federal bureaucracy across 24 departments via the workforce adjustment program, out of 15,775 positions planned to be removed from these organizations, including through attrition. Since December 2025, shortly after that year's budget was tabled, 22,181 staff and 882 executives have been notified they may be affected by the workforce adjustment. The data set distin-

guishes between employees, who are represented by federal public service unions, and executives, who are not. Of the 642 executive jobs being removed from these departments, 425 are being cut through the ongoing workforce adjustment.

Last week alone, thousands of employees at Health Canada, Agriculture and Agri-food Canada, and the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) were informed their jobs may be at risk.

Aaron Lakoff, a representative for the Agriculture Union, a local of the Public Service Alliance of Canada (PSAC), said CFIA employees were told "1,371 jobs would be affected by employment transition measures, and 587 would be cut altogether as part of the Carney government's austerity measures." The CFIA had 6,380 employees as of March 2025.

The Agriculture Union called it "a massive blow that cannot be absorbed by an already struggling agency," and urged the government to "change course."

The union said staffing levels at the CFIA have declined by three per cent over the last decade, while the broader public service has increased by 30 per cent.

"This while accelerating climate change is multiplying food safety risks, the Trump administration has gutted the U.S. Food and Drug Administration, thereby throwing the quality of American food imports into doubt, and the CFIA itself admits it is ill-equipped to handle multiple emergencies at once," the union said in a statement.

PSAC president Sharon DeSousa said the CFIA is losing more than 20 per of its workforce, "on top of years of understaffing," and that means fewer food safety inspectors and slower responses to foodborne illnesses outbreaks.

"This government is asking for trouble," she told reporters on Parliament Hill on Jan. 28.

Many departments haven't released full impact of cuts, PBO says

The Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) has requested that all departments provide information on how spending cuts may affect jobs and service delivery. While the PBO received responses from all departments, "several organizations sent responses but did not provide a breakdown of their planned savings as they have not yet been finalized and approved," the PBO said on Jan. 27.

"While most respondents disclosed the requested data in full, a significant proportion did not provide detailed information on impacts related to full-time equivalent reductions or service levels."

Frances McRae, deputy minister of Women and Gender Equality, told the PBO that the planned cuts for the department are "pending," and "detailed information on program-level savings, planned personnel reductions, and potential service-level impacts is not yet available." WAGE is among the few departments only expected to cut spending by two per cent, according to the 2025 budget.

Other departments that did not provide information about job

losses and spending cuts to the PBO include Indigenous Services Canada, and the Canada Revenue Agency, with Commissioner Bob Hamilton saying in response that "CRA officials would be pleased to offer you and your officials a briefing."

The PBO said several departments "partially provided" information, including Transport Canada; Public Services and Procurement Canada; the Department of Justice; Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada; and Global Affairs Canada.

Agencies that handed over the requested information include Veterans Affairs; Treasury Board; the Privy Council Office; Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada; Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada; Health Canada; and others.

Based on the information it did receive, the PBO estimates departments will shed "at least" 13,169 full-time equivalent positions, and cut \$12.3-billion in spending by 2029-30.

"Nearly all organizations that provided service-level impact assessment indicated that the savings would be realized with minimal or no impact on service levels," the analysis says, adding only a few organizations provided "concrete examples" on the potential impacts on program delivery.

DeSousa said the government "needs to be very clear with the public on how many programs and services will be affected by the result of these reckless cuts."

"People across Canada are being kept in the dark on how these service cuts will impact them, but we know cuts won't strengthen our communities," she said.

"These cuts will kill the good work being done to protect our public health, the environment, our IT, infrastructure, cybersecurity, transportation safety, and regional economic growth across communities in Canada," she said, including slowing down services and weakening programs.

Last week, Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) repeated that the government has "no objective for job losses," and the strategy includes "minimizing any dislocation" of public service while "maximizing the number of voluntary departures or attrition."

He said the impact of the comprehensive expenditure review will prove to be "very minimal."

DeSousa, though, said "a lot" of workforce adjustment notices are located in the National Capital Region, where approximately 40 per cent of the federal bureaucracy is located.

"They need to be well aware of the impact to the community that it will have," DeSousa said of MacKinnon's comments. "And that's something that's not clear. We're receiving piecemeal notices from the various departments and agencies, and that's not right because we won't know until the last notice is received to have a full picture on which community is going to be affected."

"And so my question is: what are they willing to do to fight to keep these jobs in the National Capital Region?"

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FOR POLICY WONKS AND POLITICAL INSIDERS



OPINION

The world has too much LNG—so why is Canada fast-tracking more?

Trends in global gas markets are flashing warning signs and pointing to mounting risks for Canada's LNG strategy.

Mark Kalegha & Olaf Weber

Opinion

The Canadian government is attempting to fast-track policy initiatives targeting the build out of liquefied natural gas infrastructure, claiming Canadian oil will be competitive even amidst a United States occupation of Venezuela.

This follows Prime Minister Mark Carney referring a proposed gas terminal—Ksi Lisims LNG—to the Major Projects Office (MPO) as a project of national interest. This is the second LNG project referred to the MPO for potential enhanced federal co-ordination, streamlined regulatory approvals, and financing assistance.

While this aims to diversify trade and strengthen self-sufficiency, it is economic fundamentals—not removing bureaucratic bottlenecks—that will determine what projects attract capital, generate returns, and function as growth engines for the Canadian economy.

In this context, trends in global gas markets are flashing warning signs and pointing to mounting risks for Canada's LNG strategy.

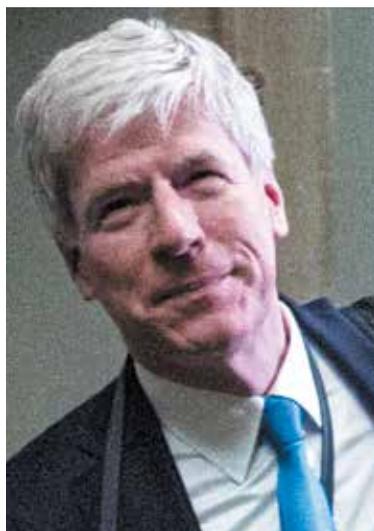
Financial risks: growing evidence of LNG glut

Growing consensus among economists, industry executives, and intergovernmental agencies alike reveal a risky oversupply of LNG in global markets.

The Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis (IEEFA) projects global LNG supply rising more than 40 per cent due to an unprecedented capacity surge from countries like the U.S. and Qatar. In its 2025 World Energy Outlook, the International Energy Agency (IEA) also questioned the capacity for global markets to absorb new supply.

Market analysts at Morgan Stanley, RBC Capital, and S&P Global note the impending oversupply as differing substantially from previous waves, with some terming current behaviour as "irrational exuberance" and characterizing market dynamics as contributing to a decade of turmoil.

Even LNG industry insiders warn that the gas boom has gone too far. Patrick Pouyanne, CEO of TotalEnergies, warned of risky excess LNG capacity build-out. Similarly, Royal Dutch Shell CEO Wael Sawan questioned the economic rationale behind recent positive Final Investment Decisions, stating that Shell would re-examine market conditions before deciding advancement of LNG Canada



Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson. The mismatch between rapid LNG supply growth and weak demand growth portends a price collapse, write Mark Kalegha and Olaf Weber. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Phase 2—another project Canada is considering fast-tracking.

While gas supply is set to skyrocket, the same cannot be said for demand. The global energy transition is expected to decelerate gas demand growth, with long-term consumption expected to flatten or fall as clean energy sources become cheaper, more reliable, and gain market share. Mature regions like Europe are boosting the share of renewables in their energy mix, and are making structural adjustments to meet energy security and climate goals.

While there are widespread claims that Canadian LNG will serve Asian markets, bullish demand scenarios may be unduly optimistic. Led by China, major Asian market LNG consumption is weakening, where imports last year decreased 12 per cent as the country turns to renewable and domestically-produced fuels for energy security. Similarly, LNG imports in Japan and South Korea are expected to fall, while demand in India is shrinking due to fuel substitution in its fertilizer, refinery, and power sectors.

In countries including Vietnam, Bangladesh, Thailand, and Pakistan, LNG demand faces structural headwinds ranging from price sensitivity and renewables displacement, to shifting policies likely to curb LNG's role in future energy portfolios. Overall, the IEA projects Asia-Pacific gas demand growth last year slowed to less than one per cent—the weakest rate since 2022.

This mismatch between rapid supply growth and weak demand growth portends a price collapse. In Europe, LNG prices fell by about 40 per cent at the end of 2025 (before recovering slightly earlier this year due to an unusually cold winter).

Ksi Lisims LNG: Indigenous sovereignty and cost challenges

A recent IEEFA report reveals the proposed Ksi Lisims LNG project faces structural hurdles, including infrastructure develop-

ment, cost escalation, and product marketability risks. The report finds that initial cost estimates for the project appear outdated, concluding that the final tally for the terminal may be up to triple its initial estimate. Similar cost escalation has undermined the economics of both the LNG Canada project and Woodfibre LNG.

On top of economic headwinds, the Ksi Lisims project faces organized opposition from Indigenous communities. Gitanyow Hereditary Chiefs, on whose territory the project is cited, sent a letter to more than 40 financial institutions urging against financing of the project, with 125 civil society organizations endorsing it ahead of an anticipated FID in 2026.

Fork in the road: pathway to prosperity and economic resilience

While project economics are inherently dynamic, the momentum of the energy transition is clear and inevitable.

Canada's current LNG push is a high-risk gamble: there's already too much supply being built, and demand is slowing. If built, Ksi Lisims could add unneeded supply to an oversaturated market—a financial albatross for stakeholders.

In a global market defined by oversupply, high-cost LNG projects become high-risk propositions that can jeopardize investor returns, underperform government royalties' projections, and fail to function as reliable economic engines.

Mark Kalegha is an energy finance analyst at the Institute for Energy Economics and Financial Analysis.

Olaf Weber is a professor at the Schulich School of Business, York University.

The Hill Times

America's drug-pricing reset will reverberate far beyond Washington

Continued from page 11

and supply decisions, but it also increases pressure on domestic pricing frameworks to remain defensible and predictable.

Second, the implications extend well beyond health policy into capital markets. Canadian pension funds and institutional investors are heavily exposed to global pharmaceutical firms. Margin compression driven by MFN-style convergence would not simply reduce drug prices; it would affect earnings expectations, valuation models, and long-term investment returns. For funds managing retirement security for millions of Canadians, drug pricing reform in the U.S. is not an abstract policy debate—it is a material financial variable.

Third, MFN pricing forces a reconsideration of Canada's

innovation posture. Canadian governments have long sought to position the country as a destination for life-sciences investment, clinical trials, and biomanufacturing. That strategy implicitly assumes that global pricing dynamics will continue to support high returns in large markets. If U.S. prices move closer to Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development norms, firms may reassess where they invest, which markets they prioritize, and how they recover research and development costs. Canada will need to ensure that its regulatory, intellectual-property, and commercialization policies remain competitive in a more price-disciplined global environment.

To be clear, there are reasons for cautious optimism. Prescription drug spending is one of the fastest-growing components of

health-care costs across advanced economies. Efforts to improve price transparency and restrain excessive pricing can enhance affordability without necessarily undermining innovation. From a payer and employer perspective, predictable pricing anchored to international benchmarks reduces fiscal risk and improves planning.

Early MFN developments also suggest a more incremental approach than critics initially feared. Participation by manufacturers has been largely negotiated rather than imposed, focused first on public programs and direct-purchase channels. That reduces the risk of abrupt market disruption and allows firms time to adapt.

Still, the challenges ahead are substantial.

MFN pricing does not automatically translate into sav-

ings for most privately insured patients. Complex rebate structures, pharmacy benefit managers, and insurer cost-sharing arrangements can dilute headline price cuts. Without complementary reforms, MFN may reshape prices at the margin without fundamentally bending the cost curve.

There are also global spillover risks. If the U.S. pegs prices to the lowest available benchmarks, manufacturers may respond by delaying launches or limiting supply in smaller markets to protect reference prices. Countries like Canada—mid-sized markets with strong public purchasing power, but limited global leverage—could find themselves navigating tighter negotiations and slower access to new therapies. We learnt this lesson during COVID-19.

From a governance standpoint, the key lesson is that drug pricing

is no longer a siloed policy issue. It is a strategic economic variable that intersects with trade, industrial policy, capital markets, and demographic sustainability. Boards, investors, and policymakers should treat it accordingly.

For Canadian firms and governments, the prudent response is neither panic nor complacency. Diversifying life-sciences investment beyond pricing arbitrage, strengthening domestic productivity in health innovation, and maintaining regulatory credibility will matter more than rhetorical positioning.

America's MFN experiment may yet evolve, stall, or be reshaped by courts and politics. But the signal is already clear: the era in which the U.S. unquestioningly absorbed the highest global drug prices is ending. Countries and companies that adapt early to that reality will fare better than those that assume yesterday's pricing model will quietly endure.

Dr. Akolisa (Ako) Ufodike, PhD, is an associate professor at York University, and a public administration executive recognized for advancing equity in governance and public policy.

The Hill Times

Despite early ‘spirit of co-operation’ on some bills, Liberal agenda still failing to launch in Parliament, say politicians

The Conservatives have offered avenues for progress on government justice bills and a proposed GST credit, but far too much of the prime minister’s agenda is ‘still waiting at the starting gate,’ says Liberal strategist Joe Jordan.

Continued from page 1

Parliament as a whole, and will only delay the inevitable.

“Either the Liberals gain a majority in the House and control of committees, or I predict that sometime between now and the summer adjournment, if Parliament looks like it’s opposing critical elements of Carney’s plan, that gives him the option to go to Canadians for a new mandate,” Jordan said.

Jordan pointed to the House Finance Committee’s ongoing study of Bill C-15, the Budget 2025 Implementation Act, as an example. The committee has scheduled at least 19 meetings to study the legislation and question cabinet ministers. Several sections of the bill have also been referred to 12 other committees, each with five weeks to return recommendations.

With only 12 sitting weeks remaining before the summer break, Jordan said he doubts the bill will return to the House before the fall.

“At that point, you’ll have had an entire parliamentary session and Carney’s agenda is still sitting at the starting gate,” he said. “The prime minister needs a majority to get his agenda passed, either through floor crossings or an election. There’s no other way.”

Speculation about a third path—securing NDP support through additional resources or committee participation—was dismissed last week by both Jordan and interim New Democrat leader Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.).

“That’s a dead issue,” Davies told reporters on Jan. 26, adding

that there have been no discussions with the Liberals about resources or recognized party status since last June.

Davies also signalled that, unlike the previous supply-and-confidence agreement with then-prime minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal government, the NDP is “reverting to our historical position as a traditional opposition party.”

“We will support policies that we believe in, and we will oppose policies that we don’t,” Davies told reporters, adding that the Liberals have a “recurring problem” of a “refusal to accept that they’re in a minority government and that the obvious conclusion is that they need to reach out to other parties in order to get anything done.”

On Jan. 26, the Justice Committee resumed its clause-by-clause study of Bill C-9—which first began on Dec. 9, 2025—following Conservative filibustering in response to the Liberals’ acceptance of a Bloc Québécois amendment to the religious exemption from Canada’s hate speech laws. During the meeting last week, the committee finally agreed to pause the study and move on to C-14.

Earlier that day, Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) called on the Conservatives to “put up or shut up on crime.”

During MacKinnon’s West Block press conference, he urged Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) to “get out of the way, and allow his MPs to vote on an ambitious crime-fighting agenda.”

“There is no way that this plan should not receive the approval of this Parliament. There is a majority in that room for that plan,” MacKinnon told reporters on Jan. 26, noting that Canadians voted for the Liberals’ plan during last year’s general election.

“The police dropped the ball, that’s what this issue really is,” Conservative committee vice-chair Larry Brock (Brantford–Brant South–Six Nations, Ont.) said of his objection to Bill C-9 before introducing a motion to move on to the bail-reform bill.

After deliberating in camera following Brock’s motion, the Justice Committee voted unanimously on a modified Liberal motion to pause its study on C-9 and fast-track its study of C-14, with clause-by-clause scheduled to begin on Feb. 4.

Liberal MP Anthony Housefather (Mount Royal, Que.) said while he would have preferred to finish C-9 first, he is “perfectly happy” to temporarily pivot to bail reform.

“I would have liked the Conservatives to have worked with us to finish instead of filibustering, but I don’t mind moving to a bail bill that I think is also very important and finishing it in three meetings, then going back to the Combatting Hate Act,” Housefather said.

Liberal’s discomfort with Conservative civility no excuse for an election, says strategist Cole Hogan

Conservative strategist Cole Hogan told *The Hill Times* he was “surprised” by MacKinnon’s comments, and got the impression the Liberals weren’t prepared for a scenario in which the Conservatives decide to co-operate.

“They really don’t seem to like it,” Hogan said, adding that if the Liberals are “trying to paint the opposition as obstructionist but start rejecting their help, it undercuts their whole argument.”

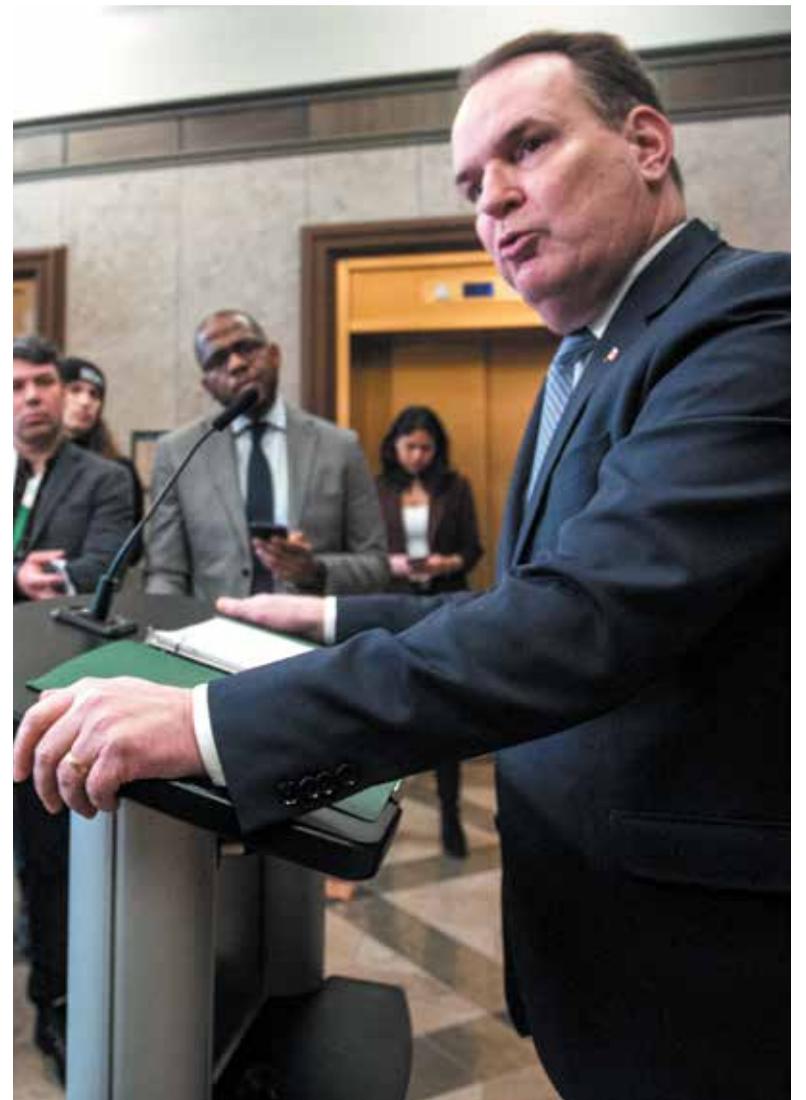
While he said he “optimistically” hopes the co-operation is genuine, Hogan argued Conservatives should continue to be courteous and constructive—“if for no other reason than the Liberals seem to really not like it.”

“They’re having a hard time adjusting to a world where Poilievre and the Conservatives are offering support,” he said. “If Liberals ask for co-operation and then reject it, that’s a hell of a contrast—and it looks worse for them.”

Hogan agreed the Liberals’ only paths to majority support are floor crossings or an election, but warned the latter is risky.

“It’s a tie game out there,” he said. “If you go to the polls, there’s no guarantee of a resounding majority. You can’t ask for Team Canada unity and then reject it when it shows up and run back to the voters.”

During his own press conference following the Justice Committee’s meeting on Jan. 26, Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina–Qu’Appelle, Sask.) said his party is doing its “due diligence,” and said MacKinnon’s comments are “contradicted by reality,” pointing to the Liberal legislation



Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon says the official opposition needs to ‘get out of the way’ to make legislative progress, but Conservatives say the Liberals are being ‘contradicted by reality.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the Conservatives have already helped pass, including Bill C-5, the One Canadian Economy Act.

On Feb. 2, the Conservatives continued in the co-operative spirit, supporting the Liberals’ Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, to pass second reading on division and referring it to the Justice Committee, as well as agreeing to do the same with C-19, the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit Act, which is expected to clear second reading and progress to the House Finance committee on Feb. 4.

“Where there are improvements on things we have been calling for, and they have adopted our ideas, of course we have allowed those things to pass,” Scheer told reporters.

However, both Liberal and Conservative parliamentarians and insiders who spoke with *The Hill Times* on background in order to speak freely, said they expect further trouble when the Justice Committee returns to C-9—unless the bill is significantly amended or the Bloc’s controversial change is removed, which would also risk losing that party’s support of the bill.

In voicing his opposition to C-9, Brock told his fellow committee members on Jan. 26 that the bill is “insincere” and politically motivated.

“We already have hate laws ... this is not about police lacking tools; this was a political decision by police services—on their own or under the direction of municipal leaders—not to do their job.” Brock continued, suggesting

those police services have failed to properly address “criminal activity” at protests against Israel’s war in Gaza.

Housefather defended C-9 at the meeting, noting that Australia’s parliament recently adopted similar anti-hate legislation—which he said “ironically” had been opposed by that country’s conservative parties for including a religious exemption. In contrast, he called his own Conservative colleagues’ claims that its removal would mean Canadians would not be able to preach religious texts are “absurd” and undeserving of the credence they are being given.

“This bill is really important to me ... I don’t want to see this bill disappear off the parliamentary radar because people are misrepresenting what it does,” he said, urging colleagues to allow clause-by-clause review to proceed after dispensing with C-14.

Justice Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) struck an optimistic tone ahead of the committee’s first meeting on C-14, saying the government remains committed to the anti-hate bill while welcoming signs of collaboration.

“This is an opportunity for us to advance different priorities for Canadians on the justice file, and I’m encouraged by the early signs of collaboration that we witnessed at committee earlier this week,” Fraser told reporters on Jan. 28. “I hope that spirit continues.”

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NEWS

Tory Senator Housakos proposes invoking notwithstanding clause to uphold certain mandatory minimums

Bill S-240 responds to an October 2025 Supreme Court ruling that mandatory minimums for child sexual abuse material offences violate Sec. 12 of the Charter.

Continued from page 1

partisan arena,” and spark a “cerebral, transparent discussion.”

“In a nutshell, I want to restore the effect of the mandatory minimum sentence for the offences of possession and accessing child sexual material. I believe that these predators in our society are the worst form of life, and we need to be most severe with them,” said Housakos (Wellington, Que.) in a recent interview with *The Hill Times*. “We have an obligation to protect young people who can’t protect themselves and ... who are at the foundation of our future.”

On Oct. 31, 2025, the Supreme Court delivered a majority, 5-4 ruling in the Attorney General of Quebec v. Senneville case, which struck down mandatory minimum sentences for possessing and accessing child sexual abuse material (CSAM) set out in sections 163.1(4)(a) and 163.1(4.1)(a) of the Criminal Code based on Sec. 12 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protects against “cruel and unusual” punishment. Those mandatory mini-

mums set out that guilty individuals be sentenced to at least one year in prison, and no more than 10 years, for such offences.

The constitutional challenge stemmed from two Quebec court cases involving two individuals who pled guilty to CSAM offences, but argued the sentences attached were unconstitutional.

Weighing a “reasonably foreseeable scenario” rather than the specific cases, a majority of judges found that such mandatory minimums could be “grossly disproportionate,” and “have the effect of removing judges’ discretion to impose sentences other than imprisonment in the appropriate circumstances.”

The hypothetical scenario considered was that of an 18-year-old person who received—from an 18-year-old friend—a “sext” originally sent to the friend by their 17-year-old girlfriend, and kept the image on their phone.

Less than a week after the Supreme Court ruling was delivered, on Nov. 5, 2025, Housakos tabled his public bill, S-240, which proposes to amend the Criminal Code to declare that sections 163.1(4)(a) and 163.1(4.1)(a) “operate notwithstanding” Sec. 12 of the Charter.

“The court decision was a low-end hypothetical,” said Housakos.

“Where there has to be debate on issues at times that are controversial and divisive is not in the court of law. The court of law is there to interpret laws, but even in this particular instance, I can point that the Supreme Court was split down the middle. So if that doesn’t reinforce more than ever that there has to be a robust

debate and a review of this in our legislatures—both Houses—I don’t know what does,” he said.

If it were to pass, S-240 would be the first use of Sec. 33 of the Charter, known as the notwithstanding clause, at the federal level.

“The notwithstanding clause is part of our Constitution; it’s part and parcel of our system. It’s in the Charter. It’s not something that politicians invented in order to circumvent the rule of the law, and ... has been put into the Charter specifically to create a balance between the role of our legislative branch and the judiciary,” said Housakos.

He said he decided to pursue such a change through a Senate public bill as “there’s an inherent reflex always in the House of Commons—when dealing with government and the opposition—of politicizing it.”

“I’m trying to take an avenue through the Senate, hoping that we can have a cerebral discussion on an issue facing young Canadians from a nonpartisan point of view,” he said.

On Dec. 9, 2025, Justice Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) tabled Bill C-16, dubbed the Protecting Victims Act, in the House.

Debated at second reading for the first time on Jan. 26, the 166-page bill proposes a range of changes, including to address the Senneville ruling by allowing for judicial discretion in sentencing “in rare cases where applying the specific mandatory minimum would be grossly disproportionate punishment for the offender,” as explained in a Justice Department backgrounder.

Housakos said that, in his view, C-16 “is window dressing” as it “restores the minimum just in principle, but not as an absolute floor.”

“S-240 asserts a clear parliamentary choice, and it does not leave for any wiggle room,” he said. “If we’re going to deal, like I said, with these disgusting predators in our society and protect our youth, there has to be complete, clear, transparent laws in place that doesn’t allow for any wiggle room on the part of the judiciary.”

Housakos invited fellow parliamentarians to consider his bill “carefully.”

“I hope it passes expeditiously, but I also recognize that it does require a thorough, robust, transparent debate,” he said.



Conservative Senate Leader Leo Housakos called the government’s response to the Senneville ruling in Bill C-16 insufficient ‘window dressing.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Housakos said he hopes to see second reading debate on S-240 begin later this month.

PSG Senator Peter Harder (Ontario), whose own public bill targets potential future federal use of the notwithstanding clause, was not available for comment.

Tabled in May 2025, Bill S-218 would set terms for federal invocation of Sec. 33, requiring a bill proposing its use be tabled in the House of Commons by a minister, and only after a court ruling, and disallowing the use of time allocation in debate on the bill, or consideration through a Committee of the Whole. It would also require two-thirds support from MPs from at least two recognized parties to pass.

The office of PSG Senator Kristopher Wells (Alberta), who spoke in support of Harder’s bill during second reading debate last fall, said he did not have a comment at this time, but noted he would be following debate on both S-240 and C-16.

ISG Senator Kim Pate (Algonquin Anishinabe Aki, Ont.), who has also spoken in support of S-218 and advocates against mandatory minimum penalties (MMPs) in general, was not available for a phone interview, but by email spoke against S-240 both in terms of its support for MMPs, and its use of Sec. 33.

Pate tabled her own public bill, S-208, in May 2025, proposing to give courts discretion to vary from prescribed MMPs, and to require them to “consider all available options before imposing a minimum punishment of imprisonment or period of parole ineligibility,” and offer written reasons for pursuing related minimums.

“The reasons I, many others, and evidence-based research do not support mandatory minimum penalties is primarily because—contrary to pro-MMP rhetoric—they do not result in equitable treatment and sentencing,” wrote Pate. “There is abundant evidence that the law is not applied equally to all, especially when it comes to Indigenous, Black, poor, and those disabled by mental health

and addiction issues related to past trauma and abuse.”

“Like other mandatory minimum penalties, this bill will not result in more people being held accountable or the exercising of fair or consistent sentencing,” she argued. Instead, contrary to the calls of both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, “as well as the Indigenous and Black Justice Strategies, it will feed the current discriminatory criminalization and incarceration of those who are already subject to over-representation in our criminal legal and penal systems.”

Pate said there’s a “good reason” the notwithstanding clause hasn’t been used federally, “and especially not with respect to issues of criminal law.”

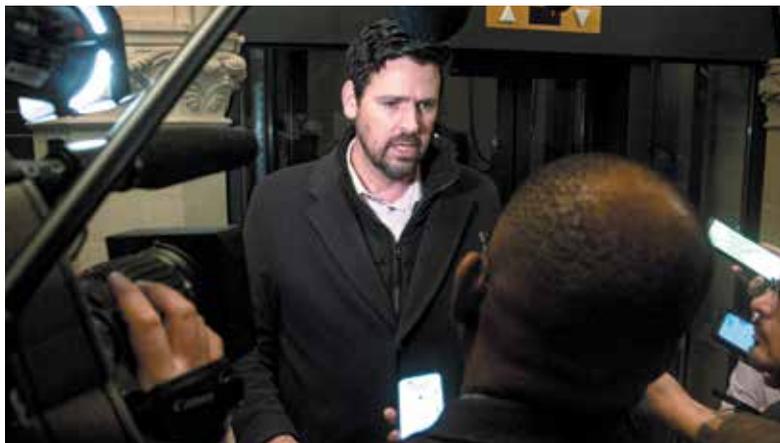
“Canadian governments should not be passing laws that are unconstitutional, and certainly not ones that courts have previously reviewed and ruled as such, especially when they go on to categorize them as cruel and unusual,” she argued.

Instead, she said “[w]e must address societal resistance to truly addressing violence against women and sexual assault, including child sexual abuse and exploitation,” and the “social, racial, gender, and economic realities that permit those with privilege and power to evade justice.”

University of Ottawa law professor Natasha Bakht, who noted she generally doesn’t believe MMPs “are particularly helpful when it comes to rehabilitating society,” said the proposed use of Sec. 33 federally and in relation to criminal sentencing is “very unusual.”

She said she thinks S-240 is “unlikely to pass,” and highlighted that the federal government has filed a factum in a Supreme Court challenge of Quebec’s use of the notwithstanding clause of its secularism law, Bill 21, asking the top court to set limits on how the clause can be invoked.

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Justice Minister and Attorney General Sean Fraser speaks with reporters before a Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on Dec. 10, 2025, the day after tabling Bill C-16. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Feds prioritize speed in trade agenda as MPs raise alarm over transparency

Unlike the U.S. consultations for the CUSMA review, Canadian submissions have remained secret, and House International Trade Committee members are pushing for more information.

Continued from page 1

Trade negotiations are under the jurisdiction of the executive branch in Canada, but increasingly, MPs have tried to fight for more transparency.

“Mark Carney is more acting like a CEO than like a prime minister [or] leader of government,” said Bloc Québécois MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot-Acton, Que.), who serves as vice-chair of the House Committee for International Trade.

He said that when the committee hears from government witnesses, they provide little information.

“They are very, very silent, and they never directly answer our questions, which is quite frustrating in the long run,” Savard-Tremblay said.

Conservative MP Jacob Mantle (York-Durham, Ont.), who sits on the Trade Committee, said the default position of the government appears to be that of secrecy and withholding information.

“I’ve seen no indication that the government is going to move to more openness,” said Mantle, a former trade lawyer.

He said that secrecy doesn’t result in good decision-making.

“How can Canadians and parliamentarians make a fair assessment of whether we think a deal that’s on the table is good, bad, or something else if we don’t have an understanding of how Canadians view their interests in the review,” said Mantle, who has been pushing to shine light on secretive consultation submissions for the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) review.

MPs learned from U.S. media that Carney had a call with U.S. President Donald Trump on Jan. 26. U.S. Treasury Secretary Scott Bessent told Fox News that Carney “very aggressively” walked back comments he made during his much-lauded Jan. 20 speech in

Davos, Switzerland. Carney denied Bessent’s account of the call.

On multiple occasions, the PMO has not released readouts of calls Carney has held with Trump, as previously reported by *The Hill Times*.

Conservative MP Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills North, Ont.), his party’s foreign affairs critic, wrote on X that “Canadians have the right to know,” noting the lack of a readout from the call.

“It is unacceptable that Canadians and journalists learned of this recent call from American media,” he wrote. “In these challenging times, the public interest is best served by accurate, forthright information from government.”

Center for North American Prosperity and Security executive director Jamie Tronnes said that when conducting trade negotiations with the Trump White House, there is a need for Canada to be very clear in its messaging.

“Sometimes that need to control the message about the trade agenda and trade priorities sometimes conflicts with the public’s right to know about what’s being discussed,” she said.

Tronnes said that while releasing a readout is a tradition, it is not a requirement to do so, especially in modern times with world leaders speaking informally more frequently.

“It’s not entirely up to Canada to how and when to provide readouts,” she said. “But that being said, I have been surprised by the sheer number of times that we’ve read about Carney and Trump having a conversation because someone else talked about the conversation they had, and not because there was any communication that they spoke or what they spoke about.”

Feds ignore own transparency policy

To inject greater transparency in the negotiation process, Bloc Québécois MP Mario Simard (Jonquière, Que.) put forward a private member’s bill to require the tabling of a treaty in the House 21 sitting days before ratifying it. Bill C-228 also sought to have the government obtain advice from the House on a trade agreement before it is ratified.

Speaking in the Chamber on Oct. 21, 2025, Simard described the treaty-making process as “undemocratic,” and remarked that Parliament is “relegated to the role of a rubber-stamp chamber.” He said that Canada is “lagging behind” Europe and the U.S. when it comes to transparency in the treaty process.



Prime Minister Mark Carney’s default position is that Canada won’t conduct trade negotiations in public. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Parliament does not vote to ratify trade bills; instead, an implementation bill changes domestic laws so that a new pact would acquiesce to them.

Bill C-228 was defeated 302-32 at second reading on Jan. 28. It was supported by the Bloc, the NDP, Conservative MPs Mantle and Matt Strauss (Kitchener South-Hespeler, Ont.), and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanic-Gulf Islands, B.C.). The Liberals opposed it, as did most Conservatives.

“When we brought the bill,” Savard-Tremblay said, “we were told, ‘we don’t need those kind of laws because we already have the official policy.’”

“But the very day they told us that, they just betrayed their own policy,” he said. “That is one of the main reasons we need a law and not just an official policy.”

The government’s policy sets out that the protocol of a trade pact has to be tabled in Parliament 21 sitting days prior to the introduction of an implementation bill. The government only waited 15 days before it introduced C-13, the implementation bill for the United Kingdom’s accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.) told the House Trade Committee on Jan. 27 that Canada must diversify its trade “as fast as possible.”

“I think we need to keep that in mind as we move forward that we’re not in normal times anymore,” he said.

He said that Canada is affected by many things from other governments that it can’t control.

“What we control is how fast we open doors, how fast we move in Parliament, how fast we’re able to get workers more opportunities so they can export their goods to other countries around the world,” Sidhu said.

‘A matter of democracy’

Savard-Tremblay told *The Hill Times* that there would be no change in Canada’s diversification agenda if the bill was implemented in a week or a month, noting that it is a generational project.

“If you have a policy, you should respect what’s in it,” he said. “As parliamentarians, it is a matter of democracy; we have the right to have some surveillance of what the government does.”

Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.), chair of the International Trade Committee, said MPs have “plenty of time” to ask questions and to get whatever information is needed, remarking that the minister and officials have been readily available to the committee.

“I think we’ve been providing the information and time,” she said.

Sgro said the committee is feeling the pressure from Canada’s precarious position with the U.S., and the desire to move trade deals along as fast as possible in “an appropriate manner.”

Asked about the decision not to follow the government’s policy by tabling Bill C-13 prior to the completion of 21 sitting days, Sgro said that policy was created when Canada was “in a very different place.”

She said Canadians without jobs aren’t concerned with the committee having a longer study.

“We need to do adequate research and ask adequate questions, and then attempt to be efficient and move the bills forward,” she said.

May told *The Hill Times* that she doesn’t find the Carney government’s approach to trade transparent, but noted that is echoed in other ways that the government operates, including with the appointment of officials.

“The Trudeau administration set a high bar for transparency in the first round of CUSMA negotiations,” she said, noting that union and industry leaders were represented at the negotiation table.

“It was more transparent than any trade negotiation that I’ve seen in the past,” she said. “I think we’re likely to see Mr. Carney play his cards closer to his vest.”

She said that she hasn’t been offered briefings by the government like she has been in the past.

“In general, this is a very non-transparent government,” May said. “I think it’s going to get a degree of tolerance ... because these are tough times we are dealing with Trump—that will keep people from being too angry from the degree that we’ve moved to being a very non-transparent government.”

May said that Carney isn’t used to nor would he welcome the restraints on a prime minister when gaining support from opposition parties.

“He’s shown a real bristling at the degree to which Parliament might slow him down,” she said.

Mantle’s push to unseal consultation submissions

Mantle has put forward a motion to force Global Affairs Canada (GAC) to hand over submissions it received as part of a 2025 consultation for the CUSMA review, as well as an earlier consultation it had in 2024 on the pact. That motion was passed by the House Trade Committee on Nov. 3, 2025.

“It shouldn’t take a production order from the committee to understand what Canadians think about the CUSMA review,” Mantle told *The Hill Times*.

Mantle said that he has begun to receive submissions from GAC’s initial consultation in 2024, but has yet to receive anything from its 2025 work.

The consultations for the CUSMA review were open to the public in the U.S.

In a committee meeting on Nov. 17, 2025, Mantle pressed GAC’s chief trade negotiator Aaron Fowler for more information about the talks with the U.S.

“I would encourage Global Affairs, you as chief negotiator, and others to offer more information and more transparency to Canadians about this process,” he said. “In your last appearance, you said, ‘I hope that the committee and, more generally, Parliament feel that they are well informed about our agenda.’ My answer is, ‘no, we don’t feel well informed.’”

While Fowler serves as the department’s chief negotiator, he isn’t the chief negotiator for Canada-U.S. trade. That role is held by Canada’s Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman who is leaving her post this month.

Fowler told the committee that the government was being sufficiently transparent.

“I believe the level of transparency that has been provided is appropriate to the level of sensitivity that those negotiations entail,” he said at the time.

When GAC officials appeared before the committee for Bill C-13, Mantle told them that their department has a “culture of secrecy.”

“When we have engaged in trade negotiations, there is no public process that is permitted. There are comments that are received often times by the government and then curated reports are issued sometimes about what the government heard,” he said on Jan. 27. “However, there is no transparency about what industries may say to the government or written comments that may be provided to the government.”

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Party Central



By Stuart Benson

Return of the Parliamentarians, Part 2: PM Carney and the Hollander Fleece

Heated Rivalry-mania hit Ottawa on Jan. 29 to close out Day 2 of CMPA's Prime Time conference and Week 1 of 2026 parliamentary parties.

Move over, *Bonhomme* and Ontario Premier **Doug Ford**: Prime Minister **Mark Carney** has a novel heated bromance brewing with his "new best friend," **Hudson Williams**, the breakout Canadian star of seemingly everyone's favourite show, *Heated Rivalry*.

Williams' "surprise" appearance closing the second night of the Canadian Media Producers Association's (CMPA) 2026 Prime Time conference on Jan. 29 was an open secret in the Ottawa bubble by the time the actor stepped into the Westin Hotel, but based on the response *Party Central* received via DM, text message, and phone call after posting videos online, this reporter has a newfound respect for the extra layers of operational security that the red carpet organizers—Rise PR—employed to keep a lid on things in the lead up.

While Rise made the decision over who managed to snag one of the exclusive spots alongside the walkway—leaving behind a wake of wounded press gallery principles and bruised egos from those on the other side of the velvet rope—the CMPA sends its apologies for the planning misfires.

Fortunately for them, *Party Central* is nothing if not magnanimous, and was willing to momentarily tag out from his position—nestled between the Canadian Press' **David Friend** and some of the good folks from the Canada Media Fund (CMF)—so his less-fortunate colleagues could ask a few questions to Canadian Identity and Culture

Minister **Marc Miller** regarding his "red line" comments from his talk earlier in the day with host **George "Strombo" Stroumbouloupoulos** on the Online Streaming Act and United States trade negotiations, or to AI and Digital Innovation Minister **Evan Solomon** about Canadian-made vehicles for the American Department of Homeland Security's Immigration and Customs and Enforcement agency.

Joining the red carpet procession, ahead of the night's VIP arrival, and alongside the aforementioned Miller, Solomon, and Strombo, *Party Central* also spotted Liberal MP **Rob Oliphant**, who recently toured *Heated Rivalry*'s Dark Slope Studios in Scarborough, Ont., with Miller; Conservative MP **Eric Duncan**; CMPA CEO **Reynolds Mastin**; CMF CEO **Valerie Creighton**; and Bell Media president **Sean Cohan**.

Also spotted lending their star power to the red carpet were **Hollywood Jade Anderson**, season 3 winner of *Traitors Canada* and a *Canada's Drag Race* regular; and **Roma Roth**, producer of another Canadian sneak hit, *Sullivan's Crossing*; alongside actress **Morgan Kohan**, who plays **Dr. Maggie Sutherland**; and her co-star **Meghan Ory**, who plays **Sedona Jones** on the series.

Of course, *Heated Rivalry*'s creator, **Jacob Tierney**—who writes, produces, and directs the show based off the series of novels by Canadian author **Rachel Reid**—also returned to the Westin after his own panel earlier in the day, and a meeting with Ottawa Mayor **Mark Sutcliffe**. The mayor had officially declared Jan. 29 "**Shane Hollander Day**" in honour of Williams' character on the show while sporting a—*SPOILER*—personalized Ottawa Senators Hollander jersey. Presumably, the designation is part of the overall appeal to Tierney for season 2 to shoot on location in the nation's capital.

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The Hill Times
photographs by
Sam Garcia

1. *Heated Rivalry*'s Hudson 'Shane Hollander' Williams goes knee-up with Prime Minister Mark Carney on the red carpet after presenting him with the episode 2 fleecy jacket at the Canadian Media Producers Association's Prime Time conference at the Westin Hotel in Ottawa on Jan. 29. 2. AI and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon. 3. Conservative MP Eric Duncan. 4. Bell Media President Sean Cohan, left, chats with Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller. 5. Duncan, centre, and Miller, right, take questions from journalists on the red carpet. 6. CMPA board chair Kyle Irving, left, and CMPA president and CEO Reynolds Mastin. 7. *etalk*'s Lainey Liu, left, and George 'Strombo' Stroumbouloupoulos. 8. Diana Fox Carney, left, Brendan Brady, Carney, Williams, Tierney, and Sophie Nélisse. 9. Hollywood Jade Anderson.

PARTY CENTRAL

Continued from page 20

Tierney was joined by fellow executive producer **Brendan Brady**, and **Sophie Nélisse**, the Canadian actress who plays **Rose Landry**—Hollander’s beautiful “beard,” which, this reporter is reliably informed, is the technical term.

Mini-scoop: for those of you who are fans of Tierney’s past projects, from the curt reaction **Party Central** got in response, don’t expect an MHL-NOSHO exhibition match or a road trip through *Letterkenny* any time soon.

By the time Williams and Carney arrived—the latter accompanied by his wife, **Diana Fox Carney**—the assembled press were completely surrounded by an ever-encroaching crowd of onlookers roughly 10 rows deep, whose roars upon catching a glimpse of the 24-year-old heartthrob were (presumably) a rough approximation of Beatlemania.

Once the screams and wolf whistles had died down, *etalk’s* **Lainey Liu** broke up the bromancing for a feature red-carpet interview, which was probably of more

value that night than if they had given the duties to a gallery reporter to ask about the Online Streaming Act for the 100th time, or how Carney plans to pass the Budget Implementation Act.

In that alternate timeline, we may not have gotten Carney asking for “knees up” in the now most-famous image of the evening, or seen the prime minister blushing like a cheerleader being gifted their crush’s letterman jacket when he was similarly presented with the genuine-article Hollander fleece from episode 2.

If, like millions of others in Canada, you are extremely jealous and would like an official replica as consolation, the good folks over at Accent Aigu Entertainment and Province of Canada have heard your cries and announced they will be “releasing the fleece” as official merchandise, “coming soon.”

Not since **Jason’s** voyage with the Greek Argonauts has the acquisition of a fleece held greater cultural impact.

Once everyone had taken their turn strutting their respective stuff and gathered for a group photo, it was over

to the Westin’s Confederation Room for a behind-the-scenes panel discussion with Tierney, Brady, Nélisse, and Williams, moderated by Liu, and featuring exclusive clips from the show, plenty of raunchy banter, and just so many double entendres, both intentional and “unintended.”

Heated Rivalry seemed to have had that effect on much of Ottawa on Jan. 29, with plenty of fairly eyebrow-raising—and potentially poorly considered—references and allusions to the show, particularly at the day’s gathering of the premiers. Between the purported “heated rivalry” between Manitoba Premier **Wab Kinew** and Ford, or Carney’s quip that “there’s no topping” Kinew, **Party Central** is calling for a complete shutdown of these allusions until there is better consideration of the mental image being elicited.

While there has been plenty of coverage of Carney’s speech and the panel—both domestically, in *Politico’s* Canada Playbook, and internationally in *The New York Times*—*The Wire Report’s* **Maria Collins**

has you covered with all of the highlights conveniently clipped for social media over on X.

Once the panel was over, the PM, VIPs, and executives headed into the green room, presumably for a much cooler, sexier party. As a man of the people, **Party Central** joined the rest of the conference attendees for the night’s after-hours reception, complete with live band and dance floor, carnival games, a cotton-candy booth, and all the corndogs and pretzel sticks you could dip into the big bowls of hot mustard.

By that point, however, this reporter was heading into the 13th hour of active duty and was mostly interested in the open bar and the rejuvenating properties of a confidential number of rum-and-Cokes. To be sure, this reporter remained composed and limited himself to a reasonable number before heading home, and the fact that the timing coincided with the switch to a cash bar just before midnight is entirely coincidental.

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The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia & Stuart Benson

1. Carney, left, and Williams are interviewed by Liu on the red carpet after the prime minister tries on his gifted Hollander fleece. 2. CMPA COO Liz Shorten, left, and Andrew Addison, SVP strategic communications. 3. Williams, left, and Nélisse. 4. Roma Roth, executive producer of *Sullivan’s Crossing*. 5. Brady, left, Williams, Nélisse, and Tierney. 6. Canada Media Fund CEO Valerie Creighton, left, and Telefilm CEO Julie Roy. 7. Morgan Kohan, left, and Meghan Ory. 8. Justin Stockman, Bell Media vice-president of content and development, left; Cohan; and Carlyn Klebuc, general manager of original programming. 9. Carney delivers opening remarks ahead of the evening’s very special behind-the-scenes *Heated Rivalry* panel following the red carpet. 10. Liu, left, moderates the post-red-carpet panel while Brady, Tierney, Nélisse, and Williams poke fun at the nervous laughter emanating from the Bell executives’ table during the spicier scenes. 11. The ‘90s perform for guests to help keep the energy going well past midnight at the Prime Time After Party, sponsored by Blink49 Studios. 12. Liu, left, Brady, Tierney, Nélisse, and Williams. 13. Access Canada’s Stacey Silverstein, left, Anderson, and Andrea Hecht. 14. Liberal staffer Samantha Jerome, left, Play It Loud’s Andrew Munger, actress Amy Matysio, ACTRA Toronto vice president, and CION’s Michael Naphan. 15. Eagle Vision’s Katy Hanes, left, and Katie Tyson; Benoit Lamarche, producer; Emma Guzzo, media and communication master’s student at uOttawa; and Ethan Levy, director and producer.

Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert



Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound, left, and Secretary of State for Sport Adam van Koeverden each have new faces in their respective offices. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Minister Lightbound, Secretary of State van Koeverden add to teams

Recent additions in Secretary of State for Sport Adam van Koeverden's shop include Charlie Skipworth as a senior strategy and insight adviser.

Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound saw some changes to his policy team since *Hill Climbers*' last check in.

Policy adviser Whitney McDiarmid marked her last day in the minister's office on Nov. 7, 2025, and a few days later, on Nov. 10, Chanel Sterie officially joined the team as a new senior policy adviser.

McDiarmid had only been with Lightbound's office for a few months in all, having been brought on earlier in the fall after roughly



Whitney McDiarmid has exited Minister Lightbound's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

two-and-a-half years working for Alto, a Crown corporation under Transport Canada working on the federal high-speed rail initiative, last as a strategic policy analyst.

Stay tuned for an update on where she's landed.

Sterie comes fresh from Air Canada where she spent almost the last full year as a senior legal counsel. She holds a law degree from Montreal's McGill University, and since graduating in 2011, she's been an articling student with Baker & McKenzie in Toronto; an associate with Blake, Cassels & Graydon LLP; an associate with Lavery, de Billy in Montreal; an associate with Norton Rose Fulbright; and spent more than three years working for Borden Ladner Gervais LLP, ending as a senior associate, among other past jobs.

In terms of past work at the federal level, Sterie's online CV notes a 2009 summer student posting with Justice Canada.

Wilder Walker-Stewart is director of policy to Lightbound, and currently also oversees policy adviser **Kabisan Thanendran**.

Chief of staff **Allie Chalke** oversees the public works minister's current 16-member office, which otherwise includes: **Yianni**

Papadatos, director of parliamentary affairs; **Simone Racanelli**, senior parliamentary affairs adviser; **Ahmed Absiye**, issues adviser; **Élisabeth d'Amours**, director of operations; **Victor Kandasamy**, director of regional affairs; **Danielle Racanelli**, Ontario regional adviser; **Chloë Anderson**, Atlantic regional adviser; **Lucia Liang**, West and North regional adviser and executive assistant to the chief of staff; **Loïc Sénéchal**, special assistant for communications and Quebec regional adviser; **Laurent de Casanove**, director of communications; **Leela Polushin**, press secretary; and ministerial driver **Marc Charbonneau**.

Ski jumping over to Secretary of State for Sport **Adam van Koeverden**'s office, three staff have been added to the team since November.

Team van Koeverden has been busy gearing up for the upcoming Winter Olympics in Milan, Italy, which officially begin on Feb. 6. Van Koeverden will be heading to Milan on Feb. 5 to attend the opening ceremony.



Charlie Skipworth now works for the secretary of state for sport. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Starting with the most recent additions: in late January, **Charlie Skipworth** and **Grace a Dieu Lushando** both joined the team as a senior strategy and insight adviser, and a special assistant for operations, respectively.

Skipworth comes straight from Justice Minister **Sean Fraser**'s office where he most recently was an operations and appointments adviser. Skipworth had been working for the

federal justice minister since 2023, beginning as a parliamentary affairs assistant to then-minister **Arif Virani**, who later promoted Skipworth to deputy director of operations and Atlantic regional adviser.

Skipworth previously worked as an assistant to Virani—who served as justice minister from July 2023 until March 2025—as the parliamentary secretary to



Caela Fenton joined the secretary of state for sport's office in November. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

a content co-ordinator, she was most recently an associate editor of content marketing for the COC. Fenton's work history also includes time spent as a content specialist for the Sport Information Resource Centre, and as a staff writer with *Canadian Running Magazine*, among other things.

Lauren Hadaller is chief of staff to van Koeverden, whose office also currently includes director of operations **Daniel Turner**, director of communications **Alyson Fair**, senior policy adviser **Nathan Abdelnour**, and communications and digital media adviser **Veronica Dhindsa**.

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Grace a Dieu Lushando is another new staffer to van Koeverden. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Parliamentary Calendar

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

GG Mary Simon wraps six-day Nordic tour on Feb. 7



Governor General Mary Simon will conclude her trip abroad to Norway, Denmark, and Greenland on Feb. 7. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

MONDAY, FEB. 2— SATURDAY, FEB. 7

Governor General to visit Norway, Denmark and Greenland—Governor General Mary Simon will visit Norway from Feb. 2 to Feb. 4 to take part in the Arctic Frontiers Conference in Tromsø, and meet with Their Majesties King Harald V and Queen Sonja, as well as Crown Prince Haakon, in Oslo. Then from Feb. 4 to Feb. 7, Simon will visit Denmark where she will have an audience with Danish King Frederik X, and meet with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen in Copenhagen. Simon will also travel to Greenland to meet with Prime Minister Jens-Frederik Nielsen, and attend the opening of the Canadian consulate in Nuuk.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 4

House Schedule—The House of Commons 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.

Christia Freeland to Deliver Remarks—Former Liberal cabinet minister Christia Freeland will take part in a discussion titled "The securitization of trade: Where is globalization going?" part of the Trade Winds series hosted by the Peterson Institute for International Economics. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at 9 a.m. ET happening online: piie.com.

Panel: 'Venezuela and After'—The Bill Graham Centre hosts a discussion on "Venezuela and After." Canada's former envoy to the United Nations Bob Rae and former Canadian ambassador to Venezuela Ben Rowswell will explore questions about regional and global stability, the fate of the liberal international order, and the role of the United States in the Western Hemisphere and the world. Wednesday, Feb. 4, at 3 p.m. ET at 1 Devonshire Pl., Toronto. Details: billgramcentre.utoronto.ca.

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.

THURSDAY, FEB. 5

Breakfast: 'Securing Canada's Strategic Supply Chains'—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts an invitation-only breakfast event on "Securing Canada's Strategic Supply Chains: Critical Minerals for Defence,

Economic Development, and Technology." Thursday, Feb. 5, at 7 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: cgai.ca.

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 Shivaloy 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.

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.

Minister McGuinty to Attend Meet and Greet—Defence Minister David McGuinty will take part in a meeting hosted by the Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands-Rideau Lakes Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, Feb. 5, at 5 p.m. ET at a private residence in Mallorytown, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

REEL Politics Film Series—As part of the ongoing REEL Politics Film Series fundraiser, tonight's screening is the 1999 film *Election* starring Matthew Broderick and Reese Witherspoon. Thursday, Feb. 5, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: reelpolitics.ca.

Minister Hodgson and MP St-Pierre to Attend Fundraiser—Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson and Liberal MP Eric St-Pierre will attend a party fundraiser hosted by the Honoré-Mercier Federal Riding Association. Thursday, Feb. 5, at 6 p.m. ET at a venue to be announced. Details: liberal.ca.

FRIDAY, FEB. 6

An Evening with Sec State Zerucelli and MP McKinnon—The Coquitlam-Port Coquitlam Federal Liberal Association hosts an evening event with Secretary of State for Labour John Zerucelli and Liberal MP Ron McKinnon. Friday, Feb. 6, at 7 p.m. PT at Grelhados Restaurant, 855 Village Dr., Unit 110, Port Coquitlam, B.C. Details: liberal.ca.

FRIDAY, FEB. 6— UNDAY, 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.

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.

SUNDAY, FEB. 8

MP Chagger to Attend 'Friend-raiser'—Liberal MP Bardish Chagger will take part in the second annual "Winter Warm-up and Friendraiser" hosted by the Waterloo Federal Liberal Association. Sunday, Feb. 8, at 1:30 p.m. ET at a location to be announced in Waterloo, Ont. Details: liberal.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.

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.

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.

TUESDAY, FEB. 10

'Diagnosing and Combatting Health Misinformation'—The Empire Club of Canada and the Canadian Medical Association host "Diagnosing and Combatting Health Misinformation: 2026 CMA Health and Media Tracking Survey Launch," featuring Abacus Data's David Coletto, Dr. Jen Gunter, Vass Bednar, and Dr. Tom Frieden, former director of the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Tuesday, Feb. 10, in Ottawa (location to be confirmed). Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

Carbon Business Council Reception—The Carbon Business Council hosts an Industry Leaders' Reception. The process of removing carbon from the atmosphere is key to reaching net-zero targets and has billions of dollars in private and public sector investment. Hear from industry leaders on why Canada is uniquely positioned to lead in this rapidly growing sector. Tuesday, Feb. 10, at 5:30 p.m. at the Lord Elgin Hotel, 100 Elgin St., Ottawa. Free admission. Details via Eventbrite.

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.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11

Thomas Feeney Memorial Lecture—The University of Ottawa hosts the 2026 Thomas Feeney Memorial Lecture featuring Glenn Joyal, chief justice of the Court of King's Bench of Manitoba, who will speak on "The Paradox of Judicial Independence: A Framework for Exploring Issues in Judicial Ethics, Judicial Freedom and Judicial Conduct." Wednesday, Feb. 11, at 5 p.m. ET at Fauteux Hall, University of Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 11— THURSDAY, FEB. 12

Italian Ambassador to Visit B.C.—Italy's Ambassador to Canada Alessandro Cattaneo will visit British Columbia from Feb. 11-12. He is expected to meet with Italian researchers at Vancouver's TRIUMF research institute, and deliver remarks at the "Canada-Italy Green Building Forum. In Victoria, Cattaneo will meet with Lieutenant Governor Wendy Cocchia, Premier David Eby, and attend the Throne Speech for the opening of the legislature.

THURSDAY, FEB. 12

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.

Panel: 'Parliamentary Outlook'—The Government Relations Institute of Canada hosts a panel discussion, "Parliamentary Outlook: Strategic Considerations," featuring former NDP MP Matthew Dubé, now vice-president, Proof Strategies; former Liberal senior staffer Cyndi Jenkins, now vice-president of public affairs, Burson; and former Conservative senior staffer David Murray, now senior VP at One Persuasion. Thursday, Feb. 12, at 8 a.m. ET at Constitution Square, 2nd floor, 340 Albert St., Ottawa. Details: gric-irgc.ca.

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.

Katie Telford to Deliver Remarks—Katie Telford, former chief of staff to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, will chat with Australian author Phoebe Saintilan-Stocks, author of *The Right Hand*, at an event hosted by the Australian High Commission, Library and Archives Canada, and the University of Ottawa. Thursday, Feb. 12, at 6 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 365 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, FEB. 13

Mayor's Breakfast with Rick Hillier—Former chief of defence staff retired General Rick Hillier is the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast where he will speak about his current role as honorary chair of the National Defence Innovation Hub Task Force for Canada's Capital Region. Friday, Feb. 13, at 7 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details: business.ottawabot.ca.

Webinar: 'America First Goes Hemispheric'—McGill University hosts a webinar, "America First Goes Hemispheric: Trump's Foreign Policy and Canada's Strategic Dilemmas," featuring Vincent Rigby, former national security adviser to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau; McGill professor Maria Popova; and Cambridge University professor Carsten-Andreas Schulz. Friday, Feb. 13, at 12 p.m. ET happening online. Register 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.

SATURDAY, FEB. 14

Minister Ali to Attend Fundraiser—Treasury Board President Shafiq Ali will take part in a fundraiser hosted by the Brampton-Chinguacousy Park Federal Liberal Association. Saturday, Feb. 14, at 6 p.m. ET at the Capitol Banquet Hall, 6435 Dixie Rd., Mississauga, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

SUNDAY, FEB. 15

Flag Day—On this day in 1965, then-prime minister Lester B. Pearson inaugurated our current Canadian Flag.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18

Minister Diab to Deliver Remarks—Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister Lena Metlege Diab will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 11:45 a.m. ET. RSVP for location address. Details: canadianclub.org.

POLICY BRIEFING

TRANSPORTATION AND TRADE

Publication date:
Monday, February 23, 2026

Advertising deadline:
Tuesday, February 17, 2026

Regulatory barriers between provinces and territories create frictions that are equivalent to an average ad valorem tariff of about nine per cent, according to a report by the International Monetary Fund released on Jan. 21. What progress has been made in eliminating internal trade barriers in Canada? What challenges remain?

What are the major challenges as Canada seeks to diversify its international trade partners? How monumental is this shift in our trade practices?

How can the federal government help ensure Indigenous peoples in Canada benefit from opportunities involving international trade and investment? What role do Indigenous businesses have in trade?

What are the challenges in adapting transportation infrastructure to contend with climate change and extreme weather? What progress has been made? What regions are most vulnerable?

How is trade and transportation affected by the green transition? What are the opportunities or difficulties facing Canada in this shift?



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