

Exclusive
news:
inside

Not a 'silver bullet': observers holding judgment on pick for foreign registry commissioner

► PAGE 3

Defence Investment Agency needs to do more than reshuffle the staff deck, say observers

► PAGE 4



Youth
voting
p. 9



THE HILL TIMES

Hill
Climbers
p. 14

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR, NO. 2296

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 18, 2026 \$5.00

NEWS

Sudanese refugees waiting to come to Canada face deportation risk from Egypt

BY NEIL MOSS

For Sudanese refugees, life in Egypt involves constant dread that they can be deported back to their war-torn homeland as they wait to be accepted to Canada.

Wedad Karim, a 74-year-old from St. Catharines, Ont., has been waiting nearly a year for her 41-year-old son to be welcomed to Canada.

Her son has already been deported to Sudan from Egypt once, and the family worries it will happen again.

"It's a risk I'm facing every minute," said Karim's son. *The Hill Times* isn't naming him due to the sensitivity of his situation.

Since making his way back to Egypt, he doesn't leave his residence as he fears that he could be arrested by Egyptian authorities at any moment. He said he had a severe infection and his ear was bleeding, but he cannot risk seeing a doctor. His sister travelled to Egypt from Canada, and is staying with him in the meantime.

When the Sudanese family resettlement pathway relaunched last year, Karim applied for her son on the first day on Feb. 25, 2025. The pathway was initially open from February to June 2024. The family didn't apply in the first 2024 round due to the financial burden that the government imposed on applicants that requires families to store thousands of dollars in bank accounts.

Delays in processing applications have been heavily criticized, with the Sudanese Canadian community imploring the government to expedite the timeline, asserting that delays are equivalent to a death sentence. Immigration

Continued on page 5

NEWS

Senators 'hopeful' for shifting tide in Congress as U.S. lawmakers rally to Canada's cause

The U.S. Congress has largely abandoned its jurisdictional authority over trade to the Trump White House, but Canadian engagement has continued while waiting for the 'pendulum' to swing back.

BY NEIL MOSS

With the United States House of Representatives voting to overturn President Donald Trump's emergency tariffs on Canada, Canadian Senators who were on a recent delegation to Washington, D.C., say they are hopeful that the tide is changing.

The Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG) travelled to the American capital Jan. 21-22 as part of the Future Borders Coalition Transportation Border Summit. During the trip, the delegation met with a handful of mostly Republican members of Congress.

"I expected that there might be some hostility towards us on a couple of things," said Progressive

Continued on page 11

NEWS

Liberals hope 'national unity' council quells divisions after scrapping Islamophobia and antisemitism envoys

BY STUART BENSON

The government's new "national unity" council replacing dedicated envoys combating antisemitism and Islamophobia must avoid picking "winners and losers," and focus on the unifying thread of extremism facing Canada's vulnerable communities, says Liberal strategist Dan Pujdak.

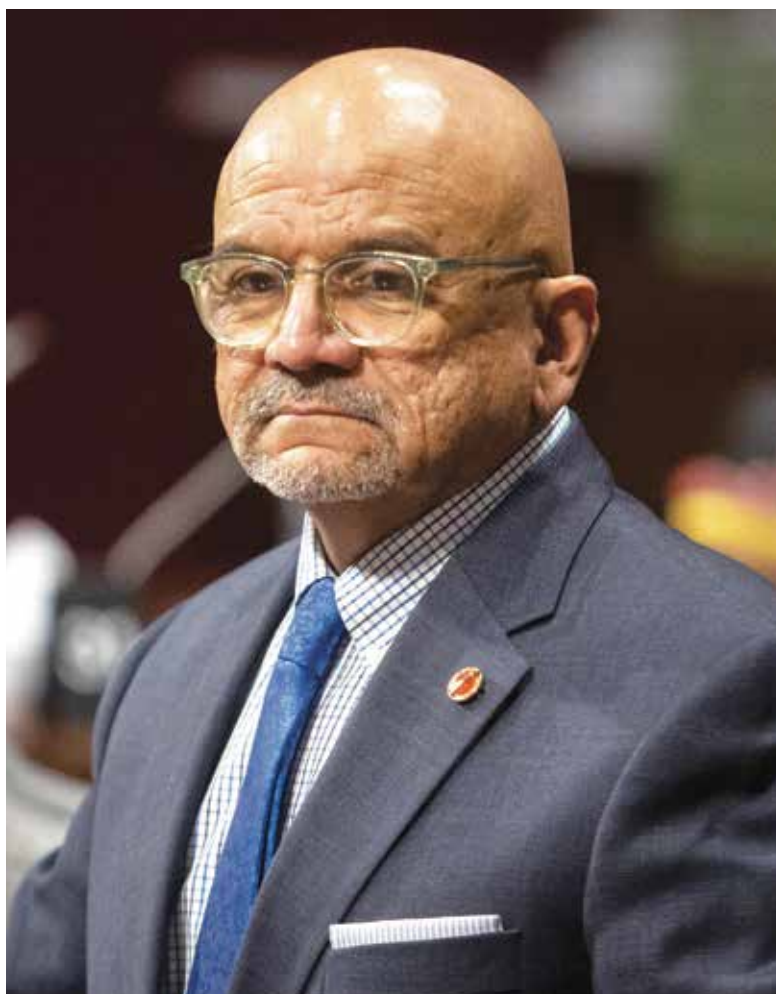
"This new council could be very successful if it focuses on the common elements of extremism without burying the very real experiences and risks for minority communities, like Jews, that experience regular violence and hate," explained Pujdak, a former ministerial staffer and now chief strategy officer at Blackbird Strategies.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Pujdak echoed Jewish community leaders and advocates who expressed concern and trepidation over the government's decision to eliminate the federal government's Special Envoy on Preserving Holocaust Remembrance and Combating Antisemitism in favour of a new Advisory Council on Rights, Equality, and Inclusion.

"The success of the council fully depends on who is appointed and whether it's ultimately mandated to focus on real, common problems like extremism. That's the challenge," Pujdak said. "But it can just as easily fail if the council can only offer platitudes, if it chooses winners and losers, or if the forest is lost for the trees."

First reported by *The Toronto Star*, the federal government announced on Feb. 4 that it would be folding in both the antisemitism envoy and the

Continued on page 12



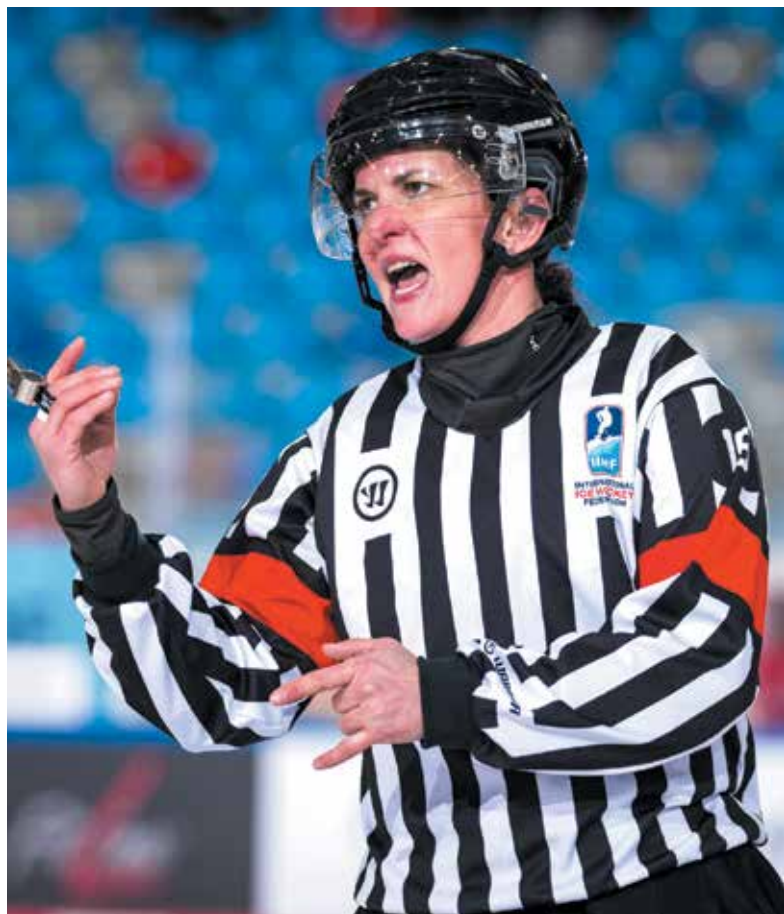
Progressive Senator Andrew Cardozo says the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C., told the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group to be less 'forthright' with their American counterparts. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Halifax-based public servant has front-row seat to Olympic action as women's hockey referee in Italy



The Department of Fisheries and Oceans is cheering on Halifax-based hydrographer Shauna Neary who is in Italy to referee the women's hockey games at the Winter Olympics. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

As Canadians cheer on athletes at the Milano Cortina Winter Olympics, some are rooting for a public servant's big moment on the ice.

The Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced that **Shauna Neary**, a Halifax-based hydrographer, is currently in Italy to referee the women's hockey games.

"We can't wait to cheer on one of our hydrographers on the Olympic Rink!" DFO posted on social media last week.

CBC News reported that Neary spent four years refereeing women's world championships and Olympic qualifiers in order to punch her ticket to Italy. She also travels around North America to referee PWHL games.

As Neary officiates on the ice, DFO showcased her work on the water.

Hydrographers make sure Canadian waters are safe, sustainable, and navigable, a department fact sheet says. Their work ranges from determining Canada's maritime zones and boundaries; monitoring tides, currents, water levels, and other data for detecting and predicting climate change and climate variability; and other natural hazards; producing navigational charts and nautical publications; and collecting data on the oceans, lakes and rivers.

The Olympics began on Feb. 6 and runs until Feb. 22.

—Marlo Glass

Election results overturned in Terrebonne



The Supreme Court has overturned last year's election results in Terrebonne, Que., in which then-incumbent Bloc MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné, left, lost to Liberal candidate Tatiana Auguste by one vote. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of the Liberal Party of Canada

The Liberals are down another MP as the Supreme Court of Canada ruled on Feb. 13 that the 2025 election results in the riding of Terrebonne, Que., be overturned.

Rookie Liberal MP **Tatiana Auguste** unseated the Bloc Québécois incumbent **Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné** by just one vote on April 28, 2025, which was confirmed by judicial recount on May 10.

"A majority of the justices of this court grant the appeal. We declare the annulment of the election of April 28, 2025, in the riding of Terrebonne for the following grounds, including on the issue of legal costs," Supreme Court Justice **Richard Wagner** said in French in giving the court's ruling.

"We welcome today's Supreme Court verdict," said Bloc party president **Suzanne Proulx** in a French statement. "Now that the seat is vacant, we call for an election to be called without delay so that the residents of Terrebonne can cast their ballots as soon as possible."

The court's decision comes four months after Quebec Superior Court judge **Eric Dufour** rejected the Bloc's request for a new election in Terrebonne, saying the postal code error on a special ballot provided by Elections Canada did not constitute an irregularity under federal electoral law.

Greens pick candidates for future Toronto-area byelections

The Green Party announced **Pooja Malhotra** and **Andrew Massey** as its candidates in two yet-to-be-called Toronto-area byelections.

Malhotra will run in Scarborough Southwest, Ont., recently vacated by former Liberal minister **Bill Blair**, while Massey will run for the Greens in University-Rosedale, Ont., which former deputy prime minister **Chrystia Freeland** held for the Liberals for 11 years.

According to Elections Canada, Prime Minister **Mark Carney** has until July 8 to call a byelection in University-Rosedale, and until Aug. 1 in Scarborough Southwest.

Freeland dinged for accidentally being political at government events in 2024

Commissioner of Canada Elections **Caroline Simard** announced that now-former Liberal MP **Chrystia Freeland** "inadvertently" made an error worth just over \$900 for expressing support for a political candidate whilst in a government capacity.

The \$910.58 amount—which the Liberal riding association for University-Rosedale, Ont., paid on Jan. 26—represents "the known quantifiable costs with the June 23 and 24, 2024 events."

On these particular days, while taking part in two separate government press conferences in the Toronto area, Freeland responded to direct media questions about the then-ongoing byelection in Toronto-St. Paul's. She expressed support for the Liberal candidate **Leslie Church**—one

of her former senior staffers. Church was not at either event, nor was Freeland aware of "any restrictions against responding to such unsolicited inquiries."

"Ms. Freeland was unaware that those political statements made in response to unsolicited press questions could turn the bona fide costs of a government event into unlawful contribu-

tions to a federal political entity," pursuant to subsection 521.34(2) of the Canada Elections Act, reads Simard's Feb. 13 statement.

In other Freeland news, the former journalist has joined Bloomberg as a contributor the outlet announced on Feb. 13. She will be appearing regularly on Bloomberg Television, as well as writing essays for *Bloomberg Weekend*.



Then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland in 2024. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Ex-MP Yvonne Rumbolt-Jones to launch memoir in Ottawa

Former Liberal MP **Yvonne Rumbolt-Jones** will be in Ottawa on Feb. 23 for the launch of her memoir *Just Around the Corner*.

The event will feature Rumbolt-Jones in conversation with her former colleague Industry Minister **Mélanie Joly** at the Metropolitan Brasserie.

The book "explores the themes of hope and perseverance through hard-



Former Liberal Yvonne Rumbolt-Jones at the 2025 Politics and the Pen gala. The Hill Times photograph by Cynthia Münster

ship, affirming that relief often awaits those who endure," according to the Pearson Centre, which is hosting the event.

The 57-year-old former journalist has served politically at the municipal, provincial and federal levels in Newfoundland and Labrador. She was the Liberal MP for Labrador from

2013 until 2025 when she did not reoffer.

Former trade minister Mary Ng has a new job

Former trade minister **Mary Ng** announced last week she has a new role.

"I'm very pleased to join the Milken Institute as a senior fellow," she posted on LinkedIn on Feb. 11.

"Drawing on her experience as Canada's longest-serving minister of international trade, Mary will lend her expertise to advance the Institute's work on global trade, capital flows, and economic cooperation, with a focus on strengthening engagement with leaders and investors across Canada, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific," the Institute posted that same day.



Then-international trade minister Mary Ng in February 2025. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

A former staffer, Ng was Liberal MP for Markham-Thornhill, Ont., from 2017 until 2025 when she did not seek re-election. She served as then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau**'s trade minister for seven of those eight years.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Influence registry will deter few foreign agents without independent enforcement, say national security experts

Appointing former B.C. chief elections officer Anton Boegman as the foreign influence and transparency commissioner is a 'positive development,' says the NDP, but Canadians shouldn't expect the watchdog and registry to 'catch spies,' says Dan Stanton.

BY STUART BENSON

Nearly two years after tabling the initial legislation, the government's belated nomination of a former British Columbia Elections head to oversee the foreign agents registry is "better late than never," say NDP public safety critic Jenny Kwan.

Though the Foreign Influence Transparency Registry is not expected to be a "silver bullet" against election interference or transnational repression, much work remains before it is locked and loaded to address the problem, and lingering concerns remain about who will ultimately determine its aim, according to national security experts.

"I really hope Canadians don't take this as some sort of silver bullet," national security expert Dan Stanton told *The Hill Times*. "I think the registry is going to be good for elections and as due diligence to buttress the Lobbying Act, but I think a lot of Canadians believe it's going to catch spies, and it won't."

On Feb. 3, more than 20 months after Bill C-70, the Foreign Influence, Transparency and Accountability Act, received royal assent in June 2024 following all-party support for its expedited passage, Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough-Guildwood-Rouge Park, Ont.) gave notice to the House of Commons that the federal government intended to appoint Anton Boegman, a former B.C. chief electoral officer, as Cana-



Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree's office says it expects the Foreign Influence and Transparency Registry to be operational by this spring. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

da's foreign influence watchdog and oversee the registry.

Boegman served in his most recent role from June 2018 to November 2025.

A week prior, Anandasangaree notified the Conservative Party and Bloc Québécois leaders about the government's choice, as required by the legislation, and requested responses and comments be returned within a week.

According to the legislation, the appointment of the commissioner is to be made after consultations with the leader of the opposition, and the leader of each "recognized party" with at least 12 members in the House of Commons, and leaders of every other recognized party or parliamentary group in the Senate. The appointment will also require approval by resolution in both parliamentary chambers.

The appointment has now been referred to the Procedure and House Affairs Committee (PROC), which is required to complete the study within 30 sitting days and report back to the House no later than April 22. The Senate has no time limit for its consideration of the appointment.

While not required by the legislation to be consulted, interim NDP leader Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.) said that he had been briefed by the minister on the nomination of Boegman, whom Davies said was, "at this point, an acceptable choice" for his party.

"It's a positive development," Davies told reporters during an all-caucus press conference on Jan. 28, but added that the nearly two-year delay since the legislation was passed is "inexcusable."

Davies also added that, while he appreciated the heads-up, his colleague and his party's public safety critic, Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.), had not been provided the same courtesy,

despite her "driving force" in pushing the government to act.

Kwan, who has been warned by the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) that she is an "evergreen target" of interference and repression by the Chinese government due to her advocacy on human rights, told reporters she was "cautiously optimistic" and welcomed Boegman's appointment as "better late than never," but that the work was far from over.

"On the face of it, [Boegman] is someone with a strong track record, so I think that's an important first step, but there's still so much to do," Kwan said. "There's still no office, staff, or IT infrastructure; nearly everything that needs to come into play is still missing."

In response to *The Hill Times'* request for comment, Anandasangaree's office referred questions on timelines for Boegman's approval to PROC, but said the government "looks forward to the process unfolding."

Neither the clerk nor committee chair, Liberal MP Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Ont.), responded to *The Hill Times'* questions about when the group will begin examining Boegman's nomination. The committee's first meeting after Parliament returns, on Feb. 24, is scheduled to study the "Longest Ballot Committee's" activities in last year's general election.

Questions on the timeline for the remaining work that needs to be completed before the registry is up and running were referred to the Department of Public Safety, which said it is working "to ensure full and timely implementation," and is currently analyzing the public consultation comments on the draft regulations before publishing the final version.

"Foreign influence transparency remains a priority for the

Government of Canada, and it will launch the registry in Spring 2026," wrote department spokesperson Max Watson.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* she did not receive a briefing, but was given a verbal "heads-up" from the minister in the House of Commons on Jan. 26 that a nominee had been chosen, though she was not told of Boegman's identity until reading about it in media reports.

While May also said she would withhold judgment on the choice of commissioner, she criticized Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) lacklustre "follow through" on appointments and commitments made by his predecessor's government. May also suggested that, contrary to the criticism that Carney was slow-walking this appointment to avoid offending the governments of China or India, the delay may have more to do with his overall pattern of disinterest in filling vacant jobs.

"There are a bunch of vacant positions, and I don't get the sense that the prime minister is motivated to fill them," May said, noting that there is not currently a permanent candidate for the election debates commissioner, parliamentary budget officer, corporate ombudsman for responsible enterprise, or any of the seven vacant Senate seats.

Regardless of the reason for the delay, Carney has not yet demonstrated the same level of seriousness or care for the issue of foreign interference, May said.

"I think the prime minister's government, in general, can be clearer in calling things out," May said. "It doesn't feel like we've got a really strong moral compass at the moment."

Low political temperature over nomination signals maturity, but Canadians may still expect more than registry can deliver, says Stanton

Stanton said the relative lack of emotion in either direction to Boegman's nomination is potentially a sign of progress and maturity.

"There's been a thundering silence, but that probably reflects how non-polarized this issue has become since two years ago," explained Stanton, a former CSIS executive manager and now

director of national security at the University of Ottawa's Professional Development Institute.

Compared to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's more controversial appointment of former governor general David Johnston as a special rapporteur on election interference in 2023, Boegman's nomination has failed to "provoke any emotion on any side of the fence," Stanton said.

"Sometimes grey is the best colour," Stanton added.

However, former Canadian diplomat Charles Burton told *The Hill Times* that a truly independent watchdog needs "rank and weight" to hold firm against the Prime Minister's Office.

"The job is about defining the limits of acceptable diplomacy by foreign powers, and where they veer into improper influence over Canada's democratic processes or improper engagement with diaspora communities," Burton explained. "We need someone with the requisite background in foreign affairs and national security who can assert their authority and keep the registry truly independent; I'm not yet convinced that we're there."

Burton, who has previously served at the Canadian Embassy in China and worked for the Communications Security Establishment, said his primary concern is that Boegman will be a figurehead, and that the effective authority over investigations and penalties will be relegated to the Office of the National Counter-Foreign Interference Co-ordinator (NCFIC), currently held by associate assistant deputy minister of Public Safety Sébastien Aubertin-Giguère.

"The [NCFIC] has been developing interpretations and regulations for the relevant sections of Bill C-70, but if they really wanted the commissioner to be fully in charge, then they would have appointed him earlier, when he could have participated in the shaping of those regulations," Burton explained. "It feels like an attempt to box in the commissioner before he is even named."

While Stanton said he is generally optimistic about the nominee selection and the independence of the eventually operational registry, one of his primary concerns is that the average Canadian may expect more from it than it can deliver.

Stanton said the registry will create the appearance of deterrence against clandestine influence operations, but the vast majority of registrants will do so for benign relationships and agreements. However, he added that malicious actors would never register in the first place, nor would any proposed financial or criminal penalty be sufficient to deter them in the most extreme cases.

"I don't want to sound like a downer, but this registry is just ticking a box," Stanton explained. "The government shouldn't be let off the hook simply because we have a registry; it's not going to make us safer on its own. That requires better counterintelligence and law enforcement."

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Defence Investment Agency needs to do more than reshuffle the staff deck to succeed, say observers



Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr says he is 'politically accountable' to the prime minister as the political head of new Defence Investment Agency. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Defence Investment Agency CEO Doug Guzman says the 85 full-time staff have been transferred from other federal departments. But bringing people with the same mentality about procurement won't drive change, says former MP John McKay.

BY IREM KOCA

A bureaucratic shuffle to staff the new Defence Investment Agency won't fix the government's procurement woes, say a former MP and senior public servant after the agency's head told MPs this week that the new organization is transferring public servants from multiple departments to do the work.

The Defence Investment Agency (DIA) launched in October 2025 with a mandate to fast-track military and Coast Guard procurements worth more than \$100-million.

DIA CEO Doug Guzman, who officially started in his new role on Nov. 12, 2025, told the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee during a Feb. 10 meeting that the agency currently has 85 full-time employees, and that the "full complement" of the agency is expected to reach about 400 employees.

The CEO said the agency was formed with public servants

and experts from Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC); Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada (ISED); and the Department of National Defence (DND), though he did not know the exact breakdown of who's coming from where. Guzman said the agency intends to supplement that over time with external expertise.

"For the moment I'm the only outside employee today. The rest of it has been a transfer of existing employees from the government," Guzman said, adding that those procurement experts have moved to the DIA with the files they have been following.

Guzman said that DIA still lacks quality control officers, and cost analysis and risk management advisers but that those functions are currently provided by PSPC with the intention of building such capacity within the agency. The DIA is set to receive \$30.8-million over four years, starting in 2026-27, with \$7.7-million ongoing, according to the 2025 budget.

Appointed by Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) Guzman—a former Royal Bank of Canada deputy chair who has expertise in delivering major financial projects—leads the agency in a deputy-minister-like role.

Former Liberal MP John McKay, who served as the chair of the House Defence Committee in the last Parliament, told *The Hill Times* in an interview that while the creation of a defence procurement agency makes sense, "it is only be as good as the mandate it has and the people it has."

"I would like to be persuaded that they will do the job differently, more efficiently, and effectively," he said.

The fact that the DIA is being staffed with people pulled from



Doug Guzman took on the role of CEO of Defence Investment Agency in November 2025. Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu

the departments that have already been involved in defence procurement, although segregated, does not sound "very optimistic" McKay said.

"If you're still dealing with the same methodology, same people who have the same mentality with the same understanding of their roles, then you're going to be very frustrated ... And it's not an answer to our procurement woes ... if you're robbing Peter to pay Paul," he said.

Clem Srou, a former director of the Industrial and Technological Benefits Branch at ISED who has been involved in delivering major defence procurements, said he is "cautiously optimistic" about the creation of the DIA. It signals that Canada is serious about addressing its procurement woes by creating a single point of accountability, he said.

"However, the results are years away and improving our procurement is beyond just what the DIA can do. The DIA alone will not be a panacea to solve this problem," he said.

Srou echoed McKay's point, noting that the creation of the

DIA has not clearly addressed how certain aspects of the procurement system can be improved and streamlined.

"Simply moving people around is not likely to solve all the problems," he said.

"For example, how are Treasury Board processes being modified to allow procurement to move more quickly?" he questioned.

Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna, B.C.) told MPs at the Feb. 10 committee meeting that the agency will look different in the next eight to 12 months, highlighting that the 80 per cent of the focus is now on delivering procurements while the other 20 per cent goes into building up the agency to stand by itself in the future. That might include looking into matters such as whether the Defence Production Act needs amending, or if there are legislative changes needed to enable the agency to be independent—which he said is the ultimate goal.

Srou said it might have been preferable for the government to keep those transferred procure-

ment officers in their original places. "There are potentially important departmental synergies to keeping those functions right where they are, and avoiding a massive move of procurement personnel that can be really disruptive when we least need it."

According to Srou, it seems as though a majority of new DIA employees are former PSPC staff wearing new hats, but it is unclear how many people are coming over from ISED and DND.

"I don't see a situation where the assistant deputy minister of materiel at DND—which is their key operation for project and bid management—will be moving over anytime soon to the DIA. The same can be said for ISED team members," said Srou.

Srou argued that observers should be "realistic" about what the DIA will be able to do, and how much of a "single procurement agency" it is ever going to be.

Oversight of military purchases is shared between several federal departments. PSPC acts as the government's central purchasing agent, and manages the contracting process for most major military acquisitions. DND defines the technical requirements and operational specifications for those acquisitions. The Treasury Board provides oversight by approving most—if not all—major defence contracts, and ensures compliance to federal procurement rules and policies. ISED enforces the government's Industrial and Technological Benefits policy, which requires contractors to deliver economic benefits to the country.

When asked by MPs about to whom he reports, Fuhr said he is "politically accountable" to the prime minister and that he reports to Carney but that he has "delegated authority" from Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.).

Fuhr said the 2024 report by the House Defence Committee looking into defence procurement issues has informed the DIA's work. The report had 36 recommendations, one which was to streamline process and accelerate decisions which is among the new agency's main goals.

McKay said he found it "comforting" and validating that Fuhr has referenced the report but said during his time as a Liberal MP, those recommendations were "politely received, but not much else."

McKay said Carney and those who are close to him have a clear idea about what he wants done, and the intention is obviously to do things better and quicker.

"So if you haven't got the political direction by now, I don't know if you're listening," McKay said.

The government was set to release its first Defence Industrial Strategy—which experts said would give further direction to the DIA—on Feb. 11, but that was postponed following the Tumbler Ridge shooting in British Columbia where eight people were killed.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Sudanese refugees waiting to come to Canada face deportation risk from Egypt

The Sudanese Civil War has produced the world's largest active humanitarian crisis with millions of people displaced. Meanwhile, Canada's resettlement stream has been plagued with delays.

Continued from page 1

Minister Lena Diab (Halifax West, N.S.) has been under fire for her handling of the program since taking on her role last year.

According to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), Canada has approved 15,835 Sudanese people for permanent residence, and 5,555 people for temporary residence since the outbreak of war, as of Nov. 30, 2025.

The Sudanese Civil War—which broke out on April 15, 2023—is largely considered the worst active humanitarian crisis, producing more than 3.5 million refugees outside of the country, and displacing 8.8 million people internally. There have been widespread allegations that war crimes and ethnic cleansing have been carried out during the conflict.

Karim has implored IRCC to act urgently and compassionately to bring her son to Canada.

"Every day feels like a year, and every unanswered question adds to our suffering," she wrote to the department last summer. "If my son is deported, it could cost him his life."

The *Hill Times* has heard of other instances where Sudanese applicants to Canada have been deported or imprisoned by Egyptian authorities. Sudanese people have died as they wait for Canada to process their applications.

Stakeholders and observers, including former Liberal justice minister Irwin Cotler and the All-Party Parliamentary Coalition for Sudan, have called on the Canadian government to fast-track those fleeing the dangers of the civil war.

'Between a rock and a hard place'

Karim's son was in Egypt for a medical procedure, and was scheduled to return to Sudan the same day that the war broke out in the spring of 2023.



Immigration Minister Lena Diab has been criticized for her handling of the Sudanese family resettlement program. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Wedad Karim has been imploring the Canadian government to expedite her son's application to come to Canada as he faces risks of a second deportation from Egypt. *Photograph courtesy of Wedad Karim*

He initially obtained a tourist visa from Egypt to stay for six months as he had his procedure. Throughout his time in Egypt, Karim sent her son money for living expenses since he couldn't work due to his immigration status.

After the onset of the war, he applied to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) to obtain a yellow card that would recognize him as an asylum seeker in Egypt. He obtained an appointment with the UNHCR on Oct. 3, 2023, where he got the documentation. His tourist visa expired on Oct. 27, 2023.

Karim's son is currently in the process of trying to renew a tem-

porary residence permit, but the waiting time for an appointment is more than two years. He initially had a permit issued on Feb. 6, 2024, which expired on Aug. 1, 2024.

He said that he had to move out of the studio apartment because the rent was increasing due to the uptick in Sudanese refugees in Egypt.

"All this time, I'm very cautious and careful. I don't go out because I know what is going on outside in the street. Just for my bad luck, [Egyptian authorities] come in undercover cars. They don't give you a chance to go to your house, grab ID, grab your passport, grab your paperwork," the son said.



Former Liberal justice minister Irwin Cotler has called on Canada to fast-track applications for Sudanese fleeing civil war. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

In October 2025, the 41-year-old was taken to a police station and put in a room with 100 to 150 Sudanese people lying on the ground.

He said that he wasn't able to communicate with the UNHCR despite the agency having issued him documentation recognizing him as an asylum seeker in Egypt.

"If they have the [refugee] card, they rip the card and they will still detain you," he said.

Authorities brought a plate of cheese sandwiches twice daily—once at 6 a.m. and again at midnight. There wasn't enough to go around, Karim's son said.

After a month, he was put on the bed of a crowded truck and was driven to the border, where refugees had to pay out of pocket for a bus ticket to Halfa across the Egyptian border.

According to Amnesty International, Egyptian authorities have resumed a program of arbitrarily detaining Sudanese nationals based on their "irregular immigration status." That includes detaining and deporting those registered with the UNHCR.

Karim's son had no home to go back to in Sudan. His apartment complex in Khartoum—located minutes from Sudan's Ministry of Defence—was destroyed by the Sudanese Armed Forces as a senior member of the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) had lived in the complex.

Al-Nahud in central Sudan—where he was born—has been overrun by the RSF. Many of his family members are missing, including Karim's older son.

"I'm between a rock and a hard place," he said.

He was in Halfa for two days before deciding to go back to Egypt. Joined by more than a dozen others, he walked through the desert and mountains, away from the Nile River to avoid border control.

As the group made its way north, passersby helped out—sometimes offering a ride and other times food and water.

"My feet were so swollen. I was dehydrated. Like, I almost died," he said. Not everyone survived, he added.

After more than a week, Karim's son was able to smuggle himself on a train to make his way to the heart of Egypt.

'Losing hope'

Karim said that she is concerned that her son will be deported again.

"Even if you have proper documents, they still deport you back without even giving you a chance to tell your family," she said. "People disappear. We don't know if they've made it to Sudan or they're still in jail."

Karim's son is still waiting to be contacted by the Canadian government to have his medical exam.

Only after the office of Conservative MP Dean Allison (Niagara West, Ont.)—Karim's federal representative—contacted IRCC did Karim hear that her son's criminality check was passed, but other assessments were ongoing.

An IRCC official in Canada's Embassy in Rome told Karim that the application was being processed on a "first in, first out" basis. The Embassy in Italy is handling immigration matters for Sudan since the suspension of operations in Canada's Embassy in Khartoum.

Karim's son said notifications for a medical exam should take around three weeks after having done biometrics, but the delay has been double that.

"I start losing hope," he said. "There are delays on delays on delays."

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

COMMENT

The politicking of identity has always been a nation-building project

Reinforcing Canada's national identity as white, male, and British—even if it includes historical lies—is a projection of one of this country's main characteristics: insecurity.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—Both the Liberals and the Conservatives are trying to rewrite the history of Canada to reflect British primacy and supremacy—or white, anglophone identity.

On Jan. 22, Prime Minister Mark Carney had the temerity to go to Quebec City and insult the whole province by telling Quebecers that parts of their history are null and void.

"The Plains of Abraham mark a battlefield, and also the place

where Canada began to make its founding choice of accommodation over assimilation, of partnership over domination, of building together over pulling apart" was more or less the gist of his speech, as recounted on the Prime Minister's Office website. It is factually inaccurate, and is a different side of the same coin to what Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre proclaimed in his convention remarks last month: "And we will celebrate rather than tear down our heroes in history. Our museums and heritage programs will tell the unvarnished truth."

Those two approaches water down atrocities and rewrite history to re-establish anglophone dominance without the pesky inconvenient truths of the brutality that birthed this country. Our leaders are on a mission to sanitize history, to unearth a Canadian identity destroyed by truths uncovered in the last few years. This is another ingredient of the erasure of non-anglophone identity; hence, identity politics.

Reconciliation cannot happen without truth. The adverse reaction to the truth of Canada is cowardly, at best.

Last October, I went back to the country of my heritage, Guyana. I am not the same person who came back. The loss of my own identity and my ancestry

that Canada demands as tribute to belong in society was restored. I had a hole in my soul that I didn't know was there. My sense of belonging was in the soil of the land of my ancestors (my family is part Indigenous, so my ancestors have been on that land since before the slave trade) to my personal characteristics such as my deep laugh, the volume at which I speak, my compassion, my spaced teeth, my entire being. In other words, I met my DNA and never again will I shrink myself to fit the Canadian mould of erasure. The best thing is that I finally found true belonging because they recognize me as one of their own. I now understand Indigenous Peoples' connection to a land where their ancestry, blood, and history coalesce. I now understand the pain of being forcibly uprooted from those connections to the land and to each other.

I will never again mistake my right to reside in Canada as belonging. I always felt as though I was on the outskirts of Canadian identity, since it whittled the presence of Black Canadians down to capitalistic convenience, as the prime minister's statement on Black History Month infers: "Black Canadians have played a vital role in building this nation, leading global companies that



Prime Minister Mark Carney's Feb. 4 remarks at a Black History Month event underscore the theme that belonging in Canada as a Black citizen requires more credits than debits in the ledger, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

drive investment into Canada and creating dynamic local businesses and institutions that build strong communities." The prime minister framed our identities in Canada as "one of injustice, met with resilience" on this 30th anniversary of Black History Month. Canadians' acceptance of Blackness is in the country's economic benefit while being celebrated for retaining our own humanity in the face of unjust systems and practices of the same Canada to which I'm supposed to belong. This is circular reasoning based on transactions. Belonging in Canada as a Black citizen requires more credits than debits in the ledger.

I've always had a problem with the transactional, hierarchical nature of this country that values people based on their position in the hierarchy; my people live in community. As a Black Canadian—according to Carney—I began with the deficit of Blackness, and my belonging is predicated on paying back that deficit to rise to equality to white

anglophones. Apparently, this is to be celebrated as an extraordinary feature of Blackness, and a primary identity marker.

Reinforcing Canada's national identity as white, male, and British, even if it includes historical lies, is part of the nation-building project upon which the Liberals have embarked, and the Conservatives have pushed for years. It is a projection of one of this country's main characteristics: insecurity. Not only did I feel secure in who I was in Guyana, I finally felt free. Capitalist ownership of land is not belonging, which is what this rebrand is supposed to bury. The power structure of Canada is illegitimate because white people do not belong here. This is not their land, nor is their generational occupation ordained. It's a feeling that is understood deep down in much of Canadian society, which is where that insecurity originates.

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

The Hill Times

Milliard takes on the Quebec Liberal mantle

Charles Milliard's approach as the new Quebec Liberal leader is meant to appeal to so-called 'soft nationalists' to drain votes from opposing parties.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



VICTORIA, B.C.—Given my current location, I should be digging into the politics here, and the trials and tribulations of British Columbia's unpopular NDP Premier David Eby. His minority government may be challenged by the provincial Conservative Party, which will have a new leader in late May.

However, it is hard to think about politics in the wake of the tragic mass shooting in Tumbler Ridge last week. It was a shock to every Canadian, but especially to residents of this province. So, familiarizing myself with the West Coast and its politics have been put aside for the time being.

Instead, I will look east to developments in Quebec, where the province's Liberal Party has chosen a new leader, from among a list of one: Charles Milliard. Milliard was my pick in the leadership last June, but he fell short to former federal Liberal cabinet minister Pablo Rodriguez. Rodriguez resigned in December after a series of media stories of vote buying in his leadership campaign, and his decision to expel parliamentary leader Marwah Rizqy over a personnel issue.

Last June, I suggested "the 46-year-old Milliard looks younger than his age ... the next Quebec election will focus on the future of a federal or separate Quebec, between the young [Parti Québécois] leader [Paul St-Pierre] Plamondon and the Liberals. A younger, more dynamic Liberal leader would make a difference."

As they say, a week—or in this case, eight months—is an eternity in politics. The political playing field in Quebec has changed enormously. The Parti Québécois still leads the polls, but not overwhelmingly, and Premier François Legault's decision to resign has given his Coalition Avenir Québec a second chance with the prospect of a new premier in Christine Fréchette after April 12.

Enter Milliard, born in Lévis, with an understanding of "the regions" outside of Montreal, and with experience in business and as the head of the provincial chamber of commerce. An openly gay man in a committed relationship, he is not the first gay leader in Quebec history.

Milliard, 47 in October, will be one of three dark-haired, middle-aged male leaders in blue suits in televised debates for the Oct. 6 election. PQ Leader St-Pierre Plamondon will be 49, and Conservative leader Eric Duhaime 57. Christine Fréchette, at 57, could stand out in this crowd. In her campaign, she has been downplaying the CAQ's extreme nationalism and wooing anglophone voters.

Milliard has his work cut out for him because any split votes between putative federalist parties will more than likely assist the PQ. He intends to campaign as a "Robert Bourassa federalist." This is somewhat anathema to many anglophone Quebecers as Bourassa was famously indifferent to Canadian federalism.

Milliard believes in "asymmetric federalism," which means he thinks Quebec should be even more autonomous. This approach is meant to appeal to so-called "soft nationalists" to drain votes from the CAQ and PQ. He is also calling for greater immigration, more spending on health care, and help to small business, including changes to the language law, Bill 96.

In the June 2025 leadership election, Rodriguez had strong caucus support. When Milliard announced his intention to run in January, he was inundated with backing from the same MNAs. He will presumably be without a seat until October, and in the meantime will rely on Pontiac's André Fortin to lead the Liberals in the Assembly.

I wish Milliard well: being leader of the Quebec Liberal Party at a time of rising nationalism is

not an easy task. The party has won previously by emphasizing federalism and the economy, and the threat of United States President Donald Trump should offer a boost to its fortunes. But with the Péladeau media empire backing the PQ and seeking out corruption in the Liberals, it's an uphill road.

While I might be branded a heretic in suggesting it, I also feel it would be wise to accept a PQ government as a promised referendum on separation might clear the air. With the torrents of abuse heaped on Canada from the social media cesspool, aided and abetted by the PQ's Plamondon and Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, it is time to shut the nationalists up, and a referendum defeat might do that. Canada cannot succeed during an existential crisis when there is a minority fifth column working assiduously to destroy it.

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

COMMENT

Will Trump eventually get Epsteined? The scandal laps closer to the White House door

The astounding story of Jeffrey Epstein's sex abuses and his vast network of friends and contacts continues to spin off in all directions.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Another round in the seemingly endless fight over information on the late convicted pedophile Jeffrey Epstein's connections blew up in recent days.

This past weekend, lawmakers pressing for the full release of documents from the United States Department of Justice's investigation of Epstein renewed accusations of a cover-up by the Trump administration.

They were reacting to a letter sent to members of the U.S. Congress on Feb. 14 in response to a demand that the DOJ explain the extensive redactions in the more than three million documents released so far.

According to *Politico*, the six-page letter to the leaders of the Senate and House Judiciary committees included a list of "all government officials and politically exposed persons" named in the files for any reason. Several high-profile names were on the list, including U.S. President Donald Trump.

But the scattershot nature of the list—which included names of people like singer Janis Joplin who might have been referenced in a media report in some email (she died when Epstein was 17)—sparked more charges that the DOJ was intentionally muddying the waters around the entire probe. "Release the full files. Stop protecting predators. Redact only the survivors' names," Rep. Ro Khanna (D-Calif.), one of the co-sponsors of the Epstein Files Transparency Act, responded.

Trump, who was once friends with Epstein but ceased communication before his fellow New Yorker's 2008 Florida conviction, has never been accused of any wrongdoing in relation to that friendship. And the president has always denied any improper activity arising from his connection to the now-radioactive billionaire child sex offender and sex trafficker.

But prominent political operators, royalty, executives, and educators have been Epsteined around the world, resigning jobs, or—in the case of the former Prince Andrew—losing royal titles. And whiffs of the scandal, which might be the only issue that could alienate some of the president's voter base, are being noticed in the vicinity of the Trump administration.

After poring over the DOJ documents, NBC News said last week that numerous top officials in the current Trump admin-

istration have connections to Epstein and/or his co-conspirator in a sex tracking ring, Ghislaine Maxwell.

The connections vary from superficial to extensive, and involve business, social, political, and other activities. And no major figure in the Trump administration has been accused of wrongdoing.

But one way or another, those mentioned in the Epstein documents—according to U.S. media—include Stephen Feinberg, now the No. 2 official at the Pentagon; Health and Human Services Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr.; Navy Secretary John Phelan; Trump favourite for Federal Reserve Chair Kevin Warsh; and former DOGE boss Elon Musk.

And Commerce Secretary Howard Lutnick, a member of the billionaires for Trump movement whose tariff cheerleading has raised eyebrows on Wall Street, faced calls to resign this month over newly revealed links to Epstein. Despite having said he had nothing to do with the "disgusting" New York predator after 2005, Lutnick had to admit to a Senate committee that he visited Epstein's Caribbean island for a lunch date in December 2012.

Trump, as of the weekend, had brushed aside the resulting uproar and expressed confidence in Lutnick.

Taking all this in, California Governor Gavin Newsom quipped on social media: "Was being in Epstein files a prerequisite for being in Trump cabinet?"

The president has recently urged the American people to move past the Epstein scandal, and it is clear that his administration is working hard to further that objective in its shambolic handling of the document releases. In the Feb. 14 letter to members of Congress, Attorney General Pam Bondi's officials also said her department had met the disclosure terms set by Congress, and nothing further from these files would be made public.

This will further enrage Epstein's victims and lawmakers pressing for more accountability, since the DOJ said on Jan. 30 that another three million documents had yet to be released.

Lawmakers who have been given permission by the DOJ to read the unredacted files say nearly 80 per cent of the material remains secret, including the identities of six wealthy, powerful men. Rep. Jamie Raskin (D-Md.) told Axios that the president's name is mentioned in the documents numerous times.

The astounding story of Epstein's sex abuses and his vast network of friends and contacts continues to spin off in all directions.

By all appearances, it seems to be far from over, and it's obvious that no one knows how many more people will get swept up in it. If nothing else, the ties to Epstein among the president's associates represent a serious political liability for Trump as the U.S. gears up for crucial mid-term Congressional elections eight months from now.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

What will it take to re-arm the Army?

Canada has a chance to move away from American equipment that will not only further entrench our reliance on the U.S., but will also take longer to get to our soldiers.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Canada's defence and security have been at the forefront of public discourse for the past year since United States President Donald Trump was re-elected in late 2024. From the ludicrous notion that Canada will become the 51st state to the very real imposing of trade tariffs, Trump has steadfastly maintained that Canada must make a massive increase to our defence budget or face his wrath.

For his part, Prime Minister Mark Carney has tried to judo-flip the equation by agreeing to spend more in total, but less on U.S.-made defence systems. In other words, we'll beef up our defence budget, but take those dollars anywhere but the U.S. Unfortunately for Carney, not only is that a difficult proposition in the short term, but he also faces resistance from within the ranks of the senior military leadership.

The Royal Canadian Air Force is hell-bent on buying the Lockheed Martin F-35 fighter jets. This is despite the fact that, last spring, Carney ordered a full review of the remainder of that contract before proceeding. In December 2024, Canada agreed to buy a fleet of 88 F-35s at a projected cost of \$19-billion, but only contracted the purchase of 16 aircraft at a cost of \$7-billion. Following Carney's orders for the RCAF to review the remainder of the order, Saab of Sweden has offered to build 72 Gripen fighter jets in Canada along with six GlobalEye surveillance aircraft. It is an attractive offer.

The Gripen came in a close second to the F-35 in the RCAF competition to replace its aged fleet of CF-18 Hornet fighters, and is far cheaper to operate than the F-35. The GlobalEye is already based on a Bombardier Canadian-built aircraft. The proposal estimates the creation of 12,600 jobs in Canada's aviation sector. While there is a lot of public support to scrap the rest of the F-35 order, and diversify Canada's defence expenditure to Sweden, the Air Force brass seem wedded to getting their coveted F-35s. Last week, the CBC reported that a contract had been signed for the key components of an additional 14 F-35s. Talk about tipping your hand that Canada is not seriously thinking of pivoting to the Gripen. Someone at defence procurement should really read a book titled *The Art of the Deal*.

While not quite in the same league in terms of dollar value as the jets, the Canadian Army also has some hefty buying power in the form of several major acquisitions deemed in February 2023 to be Urgent Operational Requirements. At that juncture, the war in Ukraine was entering its second year, and—as remains the case

to this day—the conflict had no signs of ending any time soon.

The Canadian battle group in Latvia is the command element of a multinational NATO brigade aimed at deterring Russian aggression as part of Operation Reassurance. Canada first sent 800 troops on a semi-permanent rotational basis into Latvia in 2017. However, after Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, what had been created as a notional trip-wire deterrent force was suddenly within shooting range of a hostile adversary.

By 2023, the nature of the conflict in Ukraine had become clear. In that near-peer engagement, the battlefield necessities were first-person-view (FPV) drones, counter-drone measures, self-propelled armoured artillery, sophisticated anti-armour missiles, and low-level air defence. Canada possessed none of the above in February 2023. So, given that all of these capabilities were deemed Urgent Operational Requirements three years ago, how much of that kit has been fielded in Latvia? Sadly, there has been no contract issued to date for either FPV drones or drone counter measures. Testing has been conducted in Ottawa, but the boatloads of FPV drones that our troops needed yesterday remain on the to-do list.

Ditto for the acquisition of a fleet of self-propelled howitzers. There is a \$5-billion Indirect Fires Modernization project on the books to buy up to 98, 155mm self-propelled howitzers, along with new 120 mm mortar systems. The Canadian Army scrapped its fleet of aged M-109 self-propelled howitzers in 2005, and we have not had that capacity since. Canada did fast-track the purchase of Spike anti-tank missiles from Rafael of Israel. Worth roughly \$45-million, the Spike project included flying Canadian soldiers to Israel in July 2024 to train on the missile systems. However, those tests unveiled functionality issues that have yet to be resolved. Army planners now hope to have these urgently required missiles in the hands of the Latvia-based battle group by mid-2026. Canada had been completely devoid of any air-defence systems since 2012.

However, the one bright spot in all of this procurement bungling is that, in 2024, the Latvia-based Canadian battle group received a Saab RBS-70 Very Short Range Air Defence System. It is hoped that by 2027, a full counter-rocket artillery and mortar system will be delivered and operational in Latvia using the Saab Giraffe radar system.

Last October, the U.S. approved the sale of 26 high mobility artillery rocket systems (HIMARS) to the Canadian Army at a cost of \$2.4-billion. The sad part about this is threefold. First of all, because of the backlog on Lockheed Martin's HIMARS international order book, Canada will not receive the first launcher until 2029. Secondly, as discovered by the Armed Forces of Ukraine, the HIMARS is only effective at longer ranges if you have access to the U.S. intelligence link.

The final point is the missed opportunity to pivot away from making another major U.S. purchase. Hanwha of South Korea makes the comparable K239 Chunmoo Modular Artillery system with a similar range and lethality to that of the HIMARS. The Hanwha K239 system was recently purchased by Norway and other NATO allies. No doubt Hanwha could also deliver them before 2029.

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

The Hill Times



Editor: Kate Malloy
Managing Editor: Charelle Evelyn
Digital Editor: Samantha Wright Allen
Executive Editor: Peter Mazereeuw
Deputy Editors: Laura Ryckewaert, Tessie Sanci
Deputy Digital Editor: Marlo Glass
Assistant Deputy Editor: Abbas Rana
Publishers: Anne Marie Creskey, Jim Creskey, Leslie Dickson, Ross Dickson
General Manager, CFO: Andrew Morrow

- EDITORIAL**
NEWS REPORTERS
Stuart Benson, Jesse Cnockaert, Riddhi Kachhela, Irem Koca, Neil Moss, and Eleanor Wand
ENGAGEMENT EDITOR
Christina Leadlay
PHOTOGRAPHERS
Sam García, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster
EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
Michael de Adder
COLUMNISTS
Andrew Caddell, John Chenier, Sheila Copps, David Crane, Jim Creskey, Gwynne Dyer, Matt Gurney, Michael Harris, Erica Ifill, Joe Jordan, Rose LeMay, Alex Marland, Arthur Milnes, Tim Powers, Susan Riley, Ken Rubin, Josie Sabatino, Bhagwant Sandhu, Evan Sotiropoulos, Scott Taylor, Lori Turnbull, Nelson Wiseman, and Les Whittington
- ADVERTISING**
VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND MULTIMEDIA SALES
Steve MacDonald
DIRECTORS OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT
Craig Caldbick, Erveina Gosalci, and Martin Reaume
- DIGITAL AND DESIGN**
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
David Little
SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER
Nick Vakulenko
DIGITAL AND PRODUCTION MANAGER
Joey Sabourin
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Neena Singhal
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
Naomi Wildeboer
- ADMINISTRATION**
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
Tracey Wale
- SUBSCRIPTIONS**
MARKETING DIRECTOR
Chris Rivoire
LOYALTY AND SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER
Melanie Grant
SUBSCRIPTION SALES EXECUTIVE
Sean Hansel
OFFICE AND CIRCULATION MANAGER
Irma Guarneros
SALES CONSULTANT
Puran Guram

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

Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

246 Queen Street, Ottawa, Ontario K1P 5E4
(613) 232-5952
Fax (613) 232-9055
Canadian Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
www.hilltimes.com

Please send letters to the editor to the above street address or e-mail to news@hilltimes.com. Deadline is Wednesday at noon, Ottawa time, for the Monday edition and Friday at noon for the Wednesday edition. Please include your full name, address and daytime phone number. The Hill Times reserves the right to edit letters. Letters do not reflect the views of The Hill Times. Thank you.

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN ADDRESSES TO: CIRCULATION DEPT.
246 Queen Street Suite 200, Ottawa, ON K1P 5E4



Editorial

Editorial

RTO remains hypocritical while hybrid Parliament lives

The federal government has issued a mandate to public servants that calls for bureaucrats to have bums in seats four or five days per week, depending on their seniority, as of this summer.

The Treasury Board Secretariat announced on Feb. 5 that executives in the core public administration will be required to work in-office full-time as of May 4. All other employees will be expected to be in-office four days per week as of July 6. Separate agencies within the public service are “strongly encouraged” to follow suit.

With departments under the gun to slash the public service workforce, it’s no surprise that this is the most-recent move to try and incentivize some folks to make their exit.

But the directive raises additional questions about the type of workplace in which Members of Parliament operate.

The House of Commons has been running in a hybrid fashion since the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, and shows no real signs of subsiding.

Meetings via videoconference began in April 2020, and shifted fully to a hybrid virtual format in September that year. Remote voting was adopted in February 2021, and the House permanently changed its rules to continue operating in a hybrid format in 2023, though the shift wasn’t without issue, as virtual proceedings led to a spike in injuries for language interpreters that work on the Hill.

There have been calls for a few years now to do away with hybrid sittings, and those were renewed last week when the House debated changes to the Standing Orders.

Much has been said about the need for the House of Commons to be more family friendly. It’s not a regular job with regular hours, and the people who fill its seats are expected to do more than a traditional commute.

As The Hill Times reported, Bloc Québécois MP Yves Perron agreed that hybrid Parliament needs to be “tweaked,” with remote attendance “a little more of an exception than they are right now,” including for family reasons, or health reasons, as approved by the party whip in order to ensure limited use.

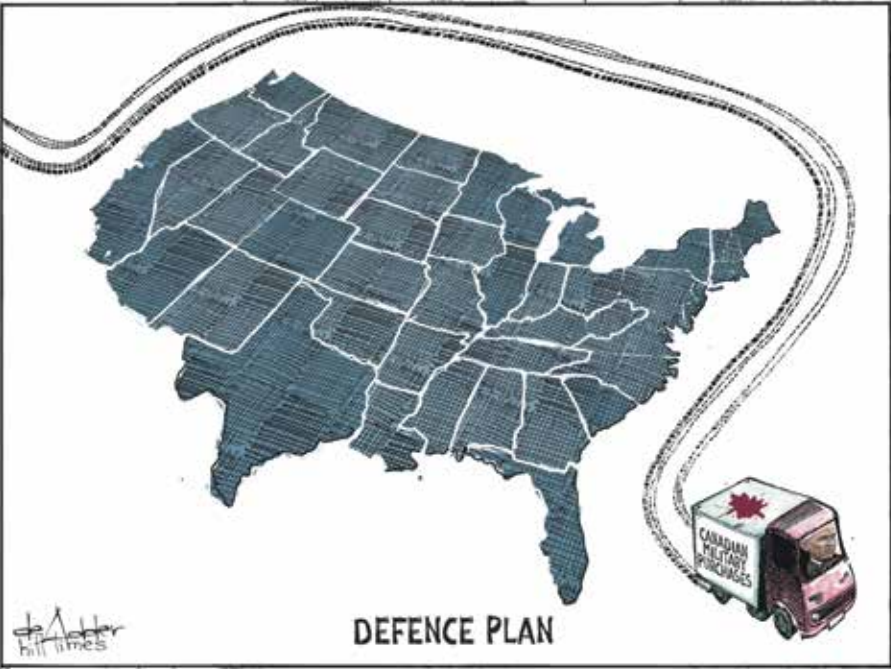
Demanding that public servants get little-to-no flexibility when it comes to their workplace while permitting yourself the opposite seems off.

Even though a couple of MPs in public-servant-heavy Ottawa ridings have spoken up to question or outright rebuff the return-to-office order, the idea seems to be sailing along with little pushback because many people feel that in-office work (despite not having dedicated office space to return to) is the best-case scenario.

Therefore, MPs should seriously grapple with the idea of adjusting their own in-House obligations, and not just put it off until the next Standing Order-sanctioned debate on Standing Order reform that only happens in the opening months of a parliamentary session.

Rules for thee but not for me is a hallmark of any legislative body, but if flexibility can’t be offered to bureaucrats, then those who pass the laws they implement should be held to the same standard.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

In an ‘us vs. them’ situation, what happens when them is us?

Our country started out united against a common enemy. But over the years, our political system has become divisive with both sides perceiving the other as the enemy.

This breakdown in political discourse has been enhanced by social media echo chambers.

Now, how much greater might those feelings of “us versus them” be when you scale up to the level of countries? There is a lot of history, feelings, religions, and different languages and values between many countries. Even then, countries can develop diplomatic ties, treaties, commerce, military alliances, and tourist trade, despite their many apparent differences. The point is that even seemingly large differences and possible strong prejudices between countries can be overcome if governments are motivated to talk and find common ground.

Which brings me to a famous quote that might characterize the current political climate in the United States: “We have met the enemy, and it (or they) are us.” Actually, this popular quote is a misremembering of the actual quote. On Sept. 10, 1813, upon defeating the British in the Battle of Lake Erie, the commander of the American fleet, Oliver Hazard Perry, sent a dispatch to Major General William Henry Harrison saying, “We have met the enemy, and they are ours.” He meant that the U.S. forces had captured the ships (the “they” in his quote) of the British fleet in the battle.

While the federal Conservative Party is frequently identified as the primary source of recent political instability, the political polarization is a complex, long-term trend, with significant contributions from inter-provincial actors. However, the rise of lethal partisanship and aggressive tactics, particularly within the MAGA-aligned wing of the party, is identified as a unique contributor to this instability.

While I personally see United States President Donald Trump as the greater danger; nationally federal Conservatives have become symbols of a larger psychological and social crisis. This crisis has many manifestations—political and cultural divisiveness. But at their core, and at the core of the polarized mind, is emotional impoverishment. And until we address that problem, our leaders—and world—will be perpetually on the brink.

William Perry
Victoria, B.C.

EPA erases climate safeguards

United States President Donald Trump’s administration has repealed the Environmental Protection Agency’s greenhouse gas “endangerment finding.” In 2009, the EPA formally concluded that carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases endanger public health, giving the agency its legal authority to limit pollution from cars, power plants, and oil and gas facilities.

The new rule strips away that foundation, and it is hailed by Trump as “the single largest deregulatory action in American history.” It is, in reality, the deliberate blinding of our primary public-health and environmental watchdog at the very moment the alarms are sounding loudest.

Climate scientists now warn that global warming is accelerating, possibly pushing Earth toward a “hothouse” trajectory. They describe a world in which ice sheets melt, forests die back, and oceans lose their capacity to buffer heat, triggering feedbacks that could lock in catastrophic levels of warming for centuries or more. There is no historical guide for what comes next because humanity has never before forced the climate system so far, so fast.

Scientist and author Jeffrey A. Lockwood, in his essay *The Fine Art of the Good Guest*, reminds us that we are “uninvited, but not unwelcome, guests of the planet.” A good guest, he says, asks little, accepts what is offered, and gives thanks. This decision does the opposite: it demands much, takes more, and denies any obligation to future generations who will live with the consequences.

If we took Lockwood’s ethic seriously, we would be strengthening climate protections, not dismantling them. A decent guest leaves a place better—or at least not worse—than they found it. Right now, the U.S. government is breaking that most basic rule.

Terry Hansen
Grafton, Wis.

OPINION

Could a Canada-Cuba hookup be in the cards?

A Canada-Cuba dalliance that removes the communist stigma could be a face-saving alternative to an unpopular incursion.

Robert Bostelaar

Opinion



Despite its abundance of cane fields, Cuba needs a sugar daddy—pronto. Canada should sign on.

Preposterous? Sure, a year or so ago, the two countries shared little beyond a capital C, a winter tourist trade, and a powerful but predictable mutual neighbour.

Now, Cuba is running out of hope and oil, the United States is trying to redraw every map, and Canada is compelled to find new

economic partners—or at least show that we can—for the “new world order.”

The U.S. itself was Cuba’s daddy for much of the 20th century, although the sugar in that relationship flowed mainly north. After intervening in the island’s struggle to evict its Spanish rulers, the Americans propped up a series of corrupt governments, took over most of Cuba’s arable land, and claimed its eastern tip for the military base it still operates today.

Then, Fidel Castro and his bearded brethren rolled into Havana, nationalized Cuba’s industries, and swung the island toward communism. The U.S. retaliated with a trade embargo—also still around—and Cuba found a new buddy with benefits: the Soviet Union.

Delighted to have a barb just a pelican’s commute from their Cold War foe, the Soviets shipped in oil, Moskvich and Lada cars, and nuclear warheads—that last item triggering a standoff that reached even into the Ontario school where my Grade 2 class practised hiding under our desks. We thought it was a giggle.

Two decades later, Russia had a new plan for nukes, this time in the form of atomic generating stations that would have been a game-changer for an island that burns oil for power. (That these were of a safer design than the Chernobyl plant did little to reassure Cuba’s Florida neighbours.)

But then the Soviet Union had its own meltdown, leaving Cuba with just one half-finished (and now crumbling) reactor, and an urgent need for another benefactor. Enter Venezuela, supplying cut-rate crude over the next quarter-century in exchange for Cuban medics, teachers, and military advisers.

Today that linkage, too, is toast, courtesy of Donald Trump. The U.S. president is also vowing to play match-breaker if any other nation tries to provide fuel to Cuba, and, so far, only Mexico has defied him. Should Canada and Cuba also cozy up, we can imagine a plate-tossing tizzy.

But think of the payoffs. Cuba’s could be no less than energy self-sufficiency. Combine a network of Canada’s pioneering small modular reactors with solar and wind, and the island would need



Sure, there’s some fine print, but opportunities abound if Canada and Cuba cozied up to each other, writes Robert Bostelaar. *Photograph courtesy of dbking/Flickr*

only enough oil to fill the tanks of its tourist-charming old Chevys.

And for Canada, opportunities abound. Access to what could be a quickly developing market of 11 million people. Tech tie-ups well beyond the pint-sized power plants. An economic foothold in the Caribbean. Even a chain of southern retirement homes where Canucks trade snow for sand and sunshine.

Forget the Turks and Caicos.

But oh, Cuba? There’d be some fine print. Canada’s values don’t include supporting an authoritarian regime with a repellent human rights record. The pre-nup for any deal would have to require fair elections in which Cubans can choose the type of government they desire.

Today, that caveat wouldn’t sit well with Cuba’s single-party

bosses. One month from now—or one week?—it could look a lot better than acquiescence to an American takeover.

Same for the U.S., where desire for a Cuban conquest burns brightest among Washington ideologues and the south Florida descendants of the Cuban one per cent whose holdings were seized by Castro and crew. There’s little indication the heartland shares that hate-on, and a Canada-Cuba hookup that removes the communist stigma could be a face-saving alternative to an unpopular incursion.

Sweet deal all round.

A former reporter and editor at The Ottawa Citizen, Robert Bostelaar is an Ottawa writer and regular visitor to Cuba.

The Hill Times

An aging democracy needs youth voices

The most comprehensive studies lowering the voting age have found that 16- and 17-year-olds match adults in their ability to evaluate their voting decisions.

Aleksi Toiviainen & Erika De Torres

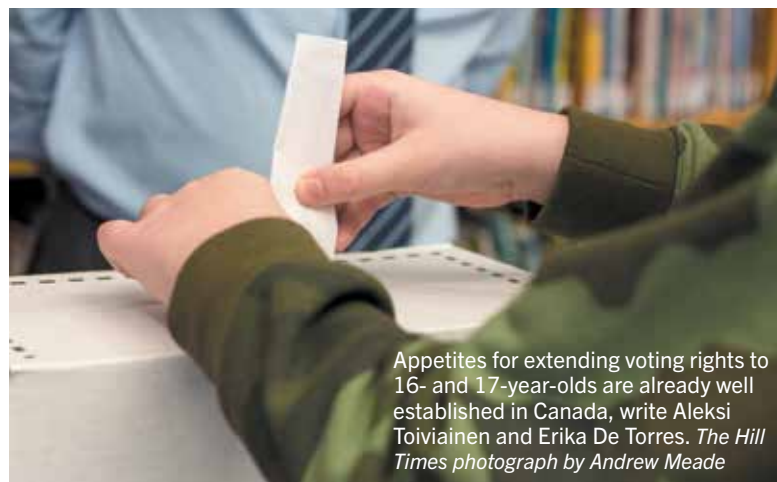
Opinion



In 2026, Canada is becoming a “superaged country.”

Our country now has 15.7 million people over the age of 50, while young people are becoming an ever-smaller share of the electorate. Unless we act, young people’s voices will be increasingly drowned out in our civic life.

Extending the voting age to 16 is a logical next step for our democracy. We’ve seen time and time again that youth in this age range are already participating by attending protests, volunteering, donating money, and signing petitions. These positive impacts



Appetites for extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds are already well established in Canada, write Aleksi Toiviainen and Erika De Torres. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

are shown in jurisdictions that have already adopted it, including Scotland, Wales, Germany, Austria, Argentina, and Brazil. This action will increase political interest and participation, and increase the likelihood of developing strong civic habits.

Across our own country, appetites for extending voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds are already well established. Civil society organizations, Indigenous governments, municipal councils, and school boards—more than 150 in all—have advocated for, or implemented themselves, voting at 16.

At least 15 First Nations, Métis, and Inuit governments have enshrined a voting age of 16 in their election laws, including the Council of the Haida Nation,

the Champagne and Aishihik First Nations, the Nunatsiavut Government, and the Métis Nation of Ontario.

Cities such as Calgary and Edmonton, Alta.; Victoria, Vernon, and Penticton, B.C.; Whitehorse, Yukon; and Pickering, Ont., have formally supported the change, while Toronto has gone further still—extending the vote to roughly 50,000 16- and 17-year-olds in neighbourhood polls within Canada’s largest city.

We can learn from the case of Scotland where youth were granted the right to participate in the 2014 referendum, and fully enfranchised as of the 2016 local and Scottish parliament elections. Looking at effects seven years later, these youth are still more

likely to vote than youth enfranchised at ages 18-21.

Issues such as affordability, the environment, housing, tuition and student debt, mental health, digital rights, and labour market conditions already directly affect 16- and 17-year-olds. By extending the vote, young people will have their voices heard on these issues, leading to stronger substantive representation as youth priorities are reflected in platforms, debates, and policies.

Besides, empowering young people to believe they are not merely passengers shaped by circumstance, but rather agents of their own lives sounds like it could have some upsides.

This past fall, Independent Senator Paulette Senior pointed out the many countries that have adopted the change in recent years:

“The list of democratic nations recognizing the maturity and voting capacity of this age group is growing,” she said. “Canada has always prided itself on being a leader in democratic rights. When it comes to the franchise of our youth, we are now in danger of straggling behind.”

Skeptics like Conservative Senator Denise Batters counter that a voting age of 18 reflects “good common sense,” based on young people’s “capacity” and their potential to be “influenced adversely by emotion” when voting.

Frankly, it would have been easier to understand such objections to this policy 20, even 10 years ago, when the evidence on young people’s civic maturity was not quite so conclusive. But now, 17 countries have enacted this change in elections for at least one level of government, and the stereotypes no longer hold.

The most comprehensive studies on this matter, conducted in Austria, Belgium, and Germany, have found that 16- and 17-year-olds match adults in their ability to evaluate their voting decisions. They’re ready.

Sixteen- and 17-year-olds are already active in our democracy. Not only that, but they’re also already expected to pay taxes and work.

With precedent established at home and abroad, competence affirmed, and participation strengthened wherever it’s been tried, the question is no longer whether they are ready to vote. The question is: why we haven’t done this already?

Aleksi Toiviainen is co-founder and general co-ordinator of Vote16 Canada, a national youth-led organization advocating for a voting age of 16. Erika De Torres is the director of impact with Apathy is Boring, a charitable organization supporting youth to be active citizens in Canada’s democracy.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Here's how Parliament can tackle the rise in anti-feminist ideology

Require parties to run equal numbers of men and women, including in winnable ridings. Those that fail to comply forfeit their right to compete. Period.

Shari Graydon



Opinion

“Your body, my choice—forever.”

That's what anti-feminist online influencer Nick Fuentes posted on X last year, fortified by United States President Donald Trump's election. His boast went viral.

A few months later, the hate-inciting Andrew Tate—accused of human trafficking and rape in Romania—was given sanctuary in the U.S.

Why did Tate base his anti-feminist empire in Romania? Because it's the worst-performing country for gender equality in Europe. Eighty per cent of Romanians believe the lie that women belong at home.

And why did Tate return to America? Because he knew his misogyny would be not only welcome, but celebrated there.



The House Status of Women Committee, chaired by Conservative MP Marilyn Gladu, centre, examining the threats that anti-feminist rhetoric pose in an increasingly online world is a recognition of how high the stakes are, writes Shari Graydon. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Not coincidentally, the U.S. ranks 84th internationally for women's representation in politics. That's a shocking status for a country that, until recently, was considered a beacon of democracy. But at 73rd, Canada is only a few points ahead of our southern neighbour.

This Parliament, led by the members of the House Committee on the Status of Women, has a chance to help change that. That the committee has chosen to focus some of its resources on examining the threats that anti-feminist rhetoric pose in an increasingly online world is a recognition of how high the stakes are.

The lies being spread by the likes of Fuentes and Tate include

the contention that advancing women's rights weakens society; that our role is to be subservient; and that we deserve to be violated. Those lies threaten our freedom, our economy, and our democracy. And one of the best ways to combat them is to ensure that women's contributions are equitable, visible, and recognized as essential.

This week, Informed Perspectives presented a concrete proposal to the committee to oppose the trends being weaponized by authoritarians and their online abettors.

We pointed out that the women members' very presence in Parliament is itself a start. But we argued that passively permitting men to continue to retain 70 per cent of the

electoral power implicitly reinforces the lies being spread.

We're living next door to a terrifying case study, witnessing the catastrophic impact that anti-feminist rhetoric left unchecked can have, destroying decades of democratic norms and equality progress, almost overnight.

Consider: when the U.S. began rolling back abortion rights, the only option many American women had to end an unwanted pregnancy was to turn to feminist networks in one of the most Catholic countries in the world: Mexico.

How did that happen? A dozen years ago, Mexico started requiring all political parties to run as many women as men in their national elections. As a result, a country previously famous for its machismo achieved gender parity.

Not surprisingly, women quickly used their political power to make it much easier to access reproductive health care. Their success benefited not only hundreds of thousands of Mexican women, but also their American sisters.

When a nation ensures that women hold half the seats and visibly exercise political authority, it makes equality the expected standard. It challenges the myths that misogyny spreads. By the same token, continuing to accept men's significant overrepresentation bolsters perceptions that women don't belong and aren't capable of wielding power.

At the turn of this century, out of 181 countries, Canada ranked 28th for women in politics. Now we're 73rd—much closer to the

U.S. than Mexico, which is fifth. We have accepted incremental change, while Mexico—and dozens of other nations—have said no to the status quo, and transformed their systems.

Informed Perspectives has studied the policy measures successful elsewhere. Here's what we know could work in our system:

Require parties to run equal numbers of men and women, including in winnable ridings. Those that fail to comply forfeit their right to compete. Period.

It's not complicated; it wouldn't be costly to implement; and it's not controversial.

Abacus Data polling conducted last fall found that 86 per cent of Canadians believe women and men should be equitably represented. In fact, Canada is now an outlier in the democratic world for having failed to take the kind of concerted action so many other countries have embraced.

We are encouraging the members of the committee—alongside all women MPs and their enlightened male allies—to wield the power they have, and collectively champion this overdue democratic change.

In doing so, they would not only challenge anti-feminist ideology and dramatically amplify women's visibility and impact, but they would also secure their place in history for having achieved this long-sought goal of balancing the power.

Shari Graydon is the catalyst and CEO of Informed Perspectives, a national charity that amplifies the voices of women and gender diverse people. This commentary was adapted from her Feb. 10 presentation to the House Standing Committee on the Status of Women.

The Hill Times

The symbolic vote that signals a deeper shift in North American trade

The Feb. 11 vote in the U.S. Congress shows the free-trade consensus that underpinned the Canada–U.S. relationship is no longer structurally guaranteed.

Akolisa Ufodike



Opinion

The United States House of Representatives' Feb. 11 vote to end



A bipartisan group of U.S. legislators is willing to push back against tariffs on Canada, but it's a symbolic rebuke, not a governing coalition, writes Akolisa Ufodike. *Photograph courtesy of Architect of the Capitol/Flickr*

tariffs on Canada is, on paper, a small event. The resolution passed narrowly, with six Republicans joining Democrats, and is widely

expected to remain symbolic because the President Donald Trump can veto it and Congress lacks the numbers to override.

But for Canada, the vote matters. Not because it will immediately remove tariffs, but because it reveals how much the political foundations of North American free trade have shifted.

The old consensus: free trade as shared ideology

For much of the late 20th century, Canada's trade relationships were built on a bipartisan ideological consensus in Washington, D.C., and London, U.K.

In the 1980s, two political revolutions converged across the Atlantic. In the U.S., then-president Ronald Reagan championed market liberalization, deregulation, and open trade as core conservative principles. In the United Kingdom, then-prime minister Margaret Thatcher did the same, dismantling protectionist structures and positioning

Britain as a champion of global markets.

Canada's 1988 Free Trade Agreement with the U.S. emerged in that climate. It was controversial at home, but in Washington it was anchored in a cross-party belief that freer trade with allies was both economically and strategically sound. That consensus later expanded into the North American Free Trade Agreement and, more recently, the Canada–U.S.–Mexico Agreement.

For decades, the core assumption was simple: conservatives believed in free markets; free markets meant free trade; and free trade with trusted allies like Canada was a political constant.

The new reality: tariffs as mainstream Republican policy

The recent House vote shows how far that world has changed.

The resolution to end tariffs passed only because a handful of Republicans broke ranks. Most members of the party voted to keep the tariffs in place, even

Continued on page 13

Senators 'hopeful' for shifting tide in Congress as U.S. lawmakers rally to Canada's cause

The U.S. Congress has largely abandoned its jurisdictional authority over trade to the Trump White House, but Canadian engagement has continued while waiting for the 'pendulum' to swing back.

Continued from page 1

Senator Andrew Cardozo (Ontario), citing Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) Jan. 20 speech in Davos, Switzerland, and the thaw in Canada's relationship with China. "We didn't find any of that at all."

Cardozo said that leaves him "hopeful that the hostility we get from the administration isn't widely held. At the same time, it was clear [the Republicans] support the president."

In the weeks since the delegation returned to Canada, the U.S. House of Representatives supported a resolution to overturn the International Emergency Economic Powers Act tariffs the Trump administration imposed under the guise of addressing fentanyl crossing the border. The vote passed 219-211 with the support of every Democrat but one, and six Republicans. The resolution is headed to the Senate where similar votes have passed. Based on the tally in the House, the resolution is largely symbolic as it lacks the votes to override a potential Trump veto.

Tariffs aren't the only area where American lawmakers have recently shown support for Canadian interests.

After Trump threatened to postpone the opening of the Gordie Howe Bridge connecting Detroit, Mich., with Windsor, Ont., Democratic Michigan Governor Gretchen Whitmer said that the bridge is going to "open one way or another." Six Democrat House representatives from Michigan districts introduced a bill on Feb. 11 to prevent the U.S. federal government from interfering in the opening and operation of the span that's slated to open this year.

Cardozo said that he had a preference to meet with Republicans on this visit to hear what they had to say.

He said that the reception was frostier when the IPG visited Capitol Hill last March. "We certainly had some hostile meetings last time. We didn't have that this time," he said, but noted that he didn't get an impression that they were willing to break with Trump.

Independent Senator Marty Deacon (Waterloo Region, Ont.), who was also a part of the delegation, said that there was a collaborative instinct in the meetings she attended.

"The conversation was: we need to be working together, we need to be keeping our supply chains, we need to be expanding our work," she said.

Deacon said more people are informed about what is "true and accurate" about the trading relationship at higher levels in Washington.

"And [they are] more and more confident in stepping up and saying, 'Hey, this isn't right' or, 'Hey, we can't do this,'" she said. "That's another shift in business in the last 12 months, and that's a really important piece."

She said that improvements in the relationship have to come from within the leadership in Congress and across Washington.

A congressional 'milestone'

Former Canadian diplomats told *The Hill Times* that the U.S. House vote on tariffs should be seen as a positive, but noted there are also American domestic political considerations at play.

"Whenever we engage with the United States, it's really to get their own system to push back domestically, and this is exactly what's happening," said Louise Blais, who twice served as Canada's consul general in Atlanta, from 2014 to 2017 and later in 2021.

She said that Congress isn't advancing Canadian-friendly interests just because of the engagement of Canadian government officials and businesses—though that work is important and necessary—but what really matters is that they are hearing it from their own people.

"Republicans are getting an earful—as Democrats are—when they go back to their riding," she said.

Roy Norton, who served as consul general in Detroit from 2010 to 2014 and was active in the development of the Gordie Howe Bridge project, said that what is being seen is both reflective of ongoing Canadian engagement and advocacy in the U.S., as well as domestic calculations south of the border.

"To a certain extent we're pushing on an open door, but it's important that we keep pushing on that door and engaging and reminding everyone at every opportunity of the extent to which their lives and ours are integrated and the extent to which it is mutually profitable," said Norton, who serves on the Gordie Howe Bridge's board of International Authority.

But he noted that the Republican defectors on the House vote aren't largely lawmakers with a deep history of being advocates of the Canada-U.S. relationship, but are acting more in an attempt to reassert Congressional authority over tariffs.

Before the vote, Trump threatened Republicans in Congress who vote against tariffs with primary challenges in the mid-term elections.

Trade consultant Eric Miller, president of the Washington-based Rideau Potomac

Strategy Group, said that Canada has been working to "make friends" in Congress even as the body has been disengaged in trade policy—despite having constitutional jurisdiction over it.

"It hasn't hurt that Canada has built these relationships," said Miller, a former official in Canada's Embassy in Washington. But he said the vote has to be kept in perspective, remarking that many of the Republican dissenters "are not exactly friendly with the administration."

He said that Trump will almost certainly veto the resolution, if it passes the Senate. However, it's an indicator of "a certain degree of frustration" that Congress is feeling as it heads towards the midterms, Miller added.

"I think this is milestone of somewhat-growing concern on the part of Congress about the direction of the president's trade policy and the direction of his foreign policy towards Canada," he said.

"It's not fundamentally going to change anything in itself—it's not some *deus ex machina*—but it is an indicator of concern that has been growing in the United States around the trade relationship with Canada," Miller said.

The vote is one of the rare times in Trump's second term when Congress has tried to reassert its authority over trade matters.

Blais said that engaging with Congress is never a waste of time.

"You don't always see the results immediately," she said, remarking that it's about making sure that members of Congress know about the importance of Canada in their state and their district.

"The pendulum always swings. It swings between Democrats and Republicans. And it swings between Congress having a big impact on Canada or the White House," she said. "You just have to cover the waterfront."

Embassy told IPG to be less 'forthright'

Cardozo described Canada's outreach effort as "fairly low key" in comparison to the "Team Canada" charm offensive of the NAFTA renegotiations, remarking that there is a sense that repeating such an advocacy campaign wouldn't be well received by the Trump administration.

He noted that the IPG isn't trying to do an "end run" around Trump. "We know that in this administration there is only one person that counts," he said.

"It's useful to be there to answer questions, tell people who we are, what we expect, but we certainly weren't asking them to go badger the president," he said.

The Ontario Senator said that advice from Canada's Embassy in Washington has shifted compared to what it was a year ago.

"The last time we met [with Congress] they were looking at us to be a little forthright. This time they weren't," he said.

"We're there to keep channels of discussion open. To answer questions. Not to lobby, not to push," he said.

Cardozo said that forthrightness wasn't about being more aggressive, but a matter of tone and being clear what the issues were.

Deacon said the delegation was trying to find what "unites us," and areas where both nations can work together.

She said that there wasn't any information being held back, remarking that the meetings were as professional as ever.

"We were looking to see what we could continue to communicate in small groups about Canada and the work in Canada. And actually clarify some information and misinformation," she said. "But this is a volatile time, so being calm—which might lead into [being] passive, for some—is a strategy."

The IPG trips are just one layer of Canada's outreach with American officials. There are the official levels through the government and the embassy, as well as government and stakeholder groups sending delegations south of the border.

Cardozo said that there's a "basic" level of cohesion through the various levels of outreach, but he said that there should be more formalized debriefings with the government after the IPG has their meetings. He said that Embassy officials heard from the parliamentarians about the meetings because they incidentally ran into them at a separate event.

Deacon echoed Cardozo that co-ordination could be improved with improved follow-up after the meetings.

Mr. Javani goes to Washington

Individual parliamentarians have also gone to the American capital, including Conservative MP Jamil Javani (Bowmanville-Oshawa North, Ont.) in a highly publicized trip.

It's not abnormal for opposition MPs to visit south of the border. Last September, a group of Conservative parliamentarians went down to Washington and had meetings on Capitol Hill and with think tanks. During the NAFTA renegotiations, Conservative MP Randy Hoback (Prince Albert, Sask.) and his then-caucus colleague Erin O'Toole visited the influential Republican Study Committee.

What was notable was the level of meetings in which Javani obtained. During his visit, Javani met with his former college classmate and U.S. Vice-President J.D. Vance, as well as Secretary of State Marco Rubio, and U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer. He also said that he had a brief conversation with Trump.

The IPG is planning to send another delegation to visit Congress in mid-March. The House International Trade Committee is set to travel to Washington and Detroit, in the winter or spring as part of its study into the review of the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement.

Carney has limited the tent used by the government in its outreach efforts. The multi-partisan, cross-society approach by the government of then-prime minister Justin Trudeau has been switched to a select group of interlocutors, centred on Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.).

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



CANADIAN RIVER CRUISING
Experience the beauty and history of the St. Lawrence and Ottawa Rivers on a classic Canadian riverboat. Request our free travel brochure.

1-800-267-7868 www.StLawrenceCruiseLines.com

253 Ontario St., Suite 200, Kingston, ON K7L2Z4 TICO #2168740

NEWS

Liberals hope ‘national unity’ council quells divisions after scrapping Islamophobia and antisemitism envoys

Having Muslim and Jewish communities ‘at the same table’ will help unify Canadians in the ‘fight to put an end to all types of hate’ without leaving anyone behind, says Liberal MP Salma Zahid.

Continued from page 1

Special Representative on Combating Islamophobia—an office held by Amira Elghawaby since its creation in January 2023—in favour of a new advisory council focused on “national unity.”

The special envoy’s office has been vacant since Deborah Lyons announced her resignation from the position “with a heavy heart” in July 2025, three months before the end of her term. Elghawaby’s termination from the role arrived more than a year before the end of her scheduled mandate.

“It was troubling in the last few years to see our lack of patience, lack of tolerance, and inability to reach out across the gulf to one another,” Lyons wrote in her statement, which provided no details on the specific reason for her early departure.

Lyons was appointed to the role in October 2023 in the wake of that year’s Oct. 7 terrorist attack on Israel. She had previously served as Canada’s ambassador to the country, and succeeded former justice minister Irwin Cotler, who had served as the antisemitism envoy since 2020.

On Feb. 5, Cotler told *The Toronto Star* that the government should revisit its “uninformed and ill-advised decision,” which he said “will end up, however inadvertently, making Jews in Canada less safe, and feeling less safe.”

The National Council of Canadian Muslims (NCCM), which lobbied for the creation of Elghawaby’s office in the wake of the 2021 terror killing of the Afzaal family in London, Ont., also expressed its disappointment in the decision, and thanked Elghawaby for her “exemplary and tireless service and advocacy for our community.”

“The Canadian Muslim community deserves sustained and dedicated leadership. We are



Prime Minister Mark Carney’s new Advisory Council on Rights, Equality, and Inclusion must avoid picking ‘winners and losers’ on hate, according to a Liberal strategist. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

similarly concerned by the dissolution of the Office on Combating Antisemitism, at a time when hate is on the rise,” reads NCCM’s statement. “While an Advisory Council on Rights, Equality and Inclusion is being created in lieu of these offices, we will continue our work on combatting Islamophobia. We look forward to working with the prime minister to monitor the new office’s work and ensure this important work continues.”

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, the office of Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) said the new council will be “be comprised of prominent Canadians from academia as well as experts and community leaders ... to foster social cohesion and bring communities together, to rally Canadians around shared identity, combat racism and hate in all their forms, and help guide the efforts of the Government of Canada.”

“This new Advisory Council is about bringing communities together to combat hate. Hate is hate, and as Canadians, we must be united in confronting it,” wrote Miller’s press secretary Hermine Landry, adding that details on the transition of the two roles and appointments to the council “will be finalized in the coming weeks.”

Speaking with reporters following the Liberals’ Feb. 4 caucus meeting, Miller said the new council represents the “next steps” in the important work the two representatives had begun,

and will report directly to him and Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) to “give us their important views and approaches on what we do.”

Miller said that he and Carney are concerned over how divided and polarizing the issues of Islamophobia and antisemitism had become, “in part because of what we’ve seen in the war in Gaza.”

“Now it’s about taking the next step ... that is broad, that does recognize the specificities of Islamophobia and antisemitism, but is focused on national unity, and I think that’s important,” Miller said, adding that the decision “isn’t a cost-saving operation.”

Miller added that “we have to give the opportunity to people to be upset” about the decision, but said the focus should be “on the unity of the country,” and addressing “the division that we know is there.”

Speaking on background in order to speak freely, Liberal MPs admitted that—despite good intentions—the envoy roles had become increasingly divisive, and gave the impression that fighting either form of hate was in competition with the other.

Furthermore, while the government had been facing increasing scrutiny from the Jewish community over its inability to replace Lyon after her resignation, several sources said it was not for lack of trying.

Liberal sources said several candidates were considered to replace Lyons, but that the government had struggled to identify

a suitable candidate with both the prominence and “energy” required for the role.

Several other parliamentarians and community advocates also noted that while the Jewish and Muslim communities were losing their dedicated envoys, there are many other communities targeted by hate and violence who did not have a special representative and who now may have a more equitable voice on the council.

In response to the government’s announcement, the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) thanked both Lyons and Cotler for the work led by the office, and said it expects to see “immediate concrete action on solutions that the Jewish community has long advocated.”

“With antisemitism and extremism continuing to surge across the country, the status quo was untenable,” wrote CIJA CEO Noah Shack on Feb. 4. “It is crucial that the government’s new approach and the composition of the advisory council are designed to achieve meaningful outcomes in combatting the unprecedented wave of antisemitism and extremism in Canada.”

Liberal MP Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre-Don Valley East, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that she’s heard the same concerns over the elimination of the offices raised by constituent communities, but is looking forward to how “parliamentarians and civil society can work with the new council on the real and important work to fight hate.”

Zahid, who met with Carney and several members of the Liberal caucus alongside Muslim community organizations on Feb. 10, said there had been an “important discussion” on how the new council “can focus on the constructive work to make sure that we fight Islamophobia and all forms of hate.”

“It’s really very important that we do the work to fight hate and Islamophobia, because it is real and it exists,” Zahid said.

Zahid said she believes that, although the individual offices had created the appearance that the fight against Islamophobia and antisemitism were at cross purposes, “when everyone is at the same table, we can make sure that we fight for Canada to put an end to all types of hate.”

“At the end of the day, I think we’re all aiming to build a Canada where no one is left behind,” Zahid said, adding that she is a “strong believer in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms as a guiding document” wherein “everyone has a right to speech and to practice their religion, their culture and their heritage.”

The council should focus on domestic issues and threats facing vulnerable communities in Canada, but it cannot do so while ignoring international conflicts, she said.

“What happens internationally does affect Canadians here,” Zahid said, noting the rise in antisemitism and Islamophobia since the Oct. 7, 2023, terrorist attacks and Israel’s responding war in Gaza.

According to Statistics Canada, the Jewish community has faced a significant rise in religiously motivated hate crimes since 2022, in which there were more than 500 police-reported hate crimes targeting Jewish Canadians. Those numbers nearly doubled to 959 in 2023, and hit 920 in 2024.

Police-reported hate crimes targeting the Muslim community increased from 109 reports in 2022 to 220 in 2023, and 229 the following year.

In 2024, 55 per cent of all hate crimes were classified as non-violent, with mischief representing 39 per cent (1,889), while common assault was the most frequent form of violent hate crimes at 15 per cent (741).

Between 2020 and 2024, of the 9,941 hate crimes motivated by race or ethnicity—of which 3,859 targeted Black people—Canada’s Jewish community was the target of 3,229 police-reported crimes, while Muslim people were the targets of 784 hate crimes.

Zahid said that “international events” like the war in Gaza or conflicts with foreign governments have an outsized effect on diaspora and vulnerable communities in Canada who have been the target of increasing hate, but said that ignorance of those issues will only compound divisions.

“It’s important that we do the work needed to bring Canadians together and to learn about each other,” Zahid said. “That’s the beauty of Canada: we come from different parts of the world and live together while at the same time we can practice our faith, culture, and heritage.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

OPINION

The symbolic vote that signals a deeper shift in North American trade

Continued from page 10

against a close ally and integrated economic partner.

This is a profound shift. For most of the post-war era, Republican economic orthodoxy opposed tariffs as taxes on consumers and distortions of markets. Today, tariffs are no longer a fringe idea in the party. They are a central organizing principle of economic nationalism.

The Canada tariffs themselves were imposed under a national-emergency rationale tied to fentanyl flows—claims disputed by officials in both countries. Congressional critics have argued that the measures raise costs for American households and damage relationships with allies.

But the political fact remains: the majority of House Republicans still supported them.

Why the vote is both encouraging and sobering

From a Canadian perspective, the House vote offers two signals at once.

The encouraging signal is institutional. A bipartisan group of U.S. legislators is willing to push back against tariffs on Canada. Some Republicans are still prepared to defend the traditional free-trade logic of the North American relationship.

The sobering signal is political. The opposition to tariffs is no longer the dominant view within the Republican Party. It is a minority position. The House vote was a symbolic rebuke, not a governing coalition.

In other words, the free-trade consensus that underpinned the Canada-U.S. relationship for three decades is no longer structurally guaranteed.

The broader shift: from ideology to instrument

What has changed is not just party politics, but the role of trade itself.

In the Reagan-Thatcher era, trade policy was primarily ideological. It was about efficiency, growth, and the global spread of market capitalism.

In today's environment, trade is increasingly instrumental. Tariffs are used for leverage on border issues, industrial policy, or geopolitical rivalry. The lines between economic policy, national security, and domestic politics have blurred.

The House vote reflects that shift. The debate was not simply about trade theory. It was about executive power, drug policy, and electoral loyalty.

What this means for Canada

Canada's trade strategy has long relied on a basic assumption: that the U.S., regardless of administration, would broadly support open trade with close allies.

That assumption now carries more political risk.

Even when a majority in Congress is uncomfortable with tariffs, it may not be strong enough to stop them. The recent



The tariffs U.S. President Donald Trump has levied are blurring the lines between economic policy, national security, and domestic politics, writes Akolisa Ufodike. *White House photograph by Joyce N. Boghosian*

vote shows that institutional resistance exists but it is limited and fragile.

For Canada, the lesson is not panic. It is diversification and realism.

First, the Canada-U.S. relationship remains deeply integrated. Supply chains, energy flows, and labour markets still bind the two economies together.

Second, Canada can no longer treat free trade as an ideological constant in Washington. It must be treated as a negotiated outcome, subject to domestic U.S. politics.

Third, Canada's long-term resilience will come from widening its network of trade partners: Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and beyond, so that no single political shift in Washington can destabilize the entire economic relationship.

A symbolic vote with real implications

The House vote may never become law. It may not remove a single tariff.

But it marks something more important: a moment when a small group of American legislators defended the old free trade logic against the dominant currents of their own party.

In the 1980s, that logic was the default position of conservative governments on both sides of the Atlantic. Today, it is closer to an act of dissent. And the new trade reality is no longer just an executive anomaly, it is increasingly endorsed in Congress as well. What comes next is harder to predict because the old assumptions no longer hold.

Canada should read the vote for what it is: not a policy victory, but a signal. The politics of trade in the U.S. have changed, and Canada's strategy must change with them.

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

FEATURE

Finland throws house party

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



1. Finnish Ambassador Hanna-Leena Kortenieni delivers remarks at Finland's national day reception at the official residence on Dec. 4, 2025. **2.** Hungarian Ambassador Miklós Lengyel, left, greets Kortenieni and her spouse Pasi-Pekka Tuominen. **3.** Rwandan High Commissioner Prosper Higiro, left, Cameroon High Commissioner Ngole Philip Ngwese, Moroccan Ambassador Souriya Otmani, Kortenieni, Swedish Ambassador Signe Burgstaller, and Anik Aubé, Global Affairs Canada senior official events officer. **4.** Polish Ambassador Witold Dzielski, left, Croatian Ambassador Vice Skračić, Lithuanian Ambassador Egidijus Meilūnas, and Swiss Ambassador Olaf Kjelsen.

Romania hosts Rideau Club revelry



1. Liberal MP Ahmed Hussen, left, Romanian Ambassador Bogdan Manoiu, and Liberal MP Rob Oliphant at Romania's national day party at the Rideau Club on Dec. 8, 2025. **2.** Alina-Victoria Manoiu, left, her husband Ambassador Manoiu, and Ilan Or, defence attaché of the Israeli Embassy. **3.** Alina-Victoria Manoiu, left, Yemeni Ambassador Jamal Abdullah Al-Sallal, and Bogdan Manoiu. **4.** Alina-Victoria Manoiu, left, Armenian Ambassador Anahit Harutyunyan, and Bogdan Manoiu.

Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



Advertising, speechwriting, and appointments advisers among fresh PMO hires

Among the recent additions are research co-ordinator **Matthew Schwarze**, and global affairs communications adviser **Omer Aziz**.

Prime Minister **Mark Carney** has added a number of new aides to his team, including a senior advertising adviser and a research co-ordinator.

Stepping into the former title is **Jack Reid**, who was most recently associate creative director with advertising agency Creative Currency, which, among other things, has previously done work for polling firm Abacus Data. Reid had been with the agency in Toronto since 2023, beginning as a senior strategist and writer, and has also previously been a creative strategist with Manifest Communications.

Reid is the son of political commentator **Scott Reid**, a principal with Feschuk Reid and a former director of communications to then-prime minister **Paul Martin**. Scott Reid noted his son's new job in a recent episode of *The Herle Burly* podcast, estimating that he was heading to Ottawa "12,249 days after I did the same when I was many, many, many, many years younger."

"Very excited for him, very proud of him, obviously," said Scott Reid, noting the advice he gave his son as his new job took shape over the holidays about the opportunity afforded by political work.

"Two years as a young person working in government, working in politics, working on the Hill, working at Queen's Park, the legislature, wherever you are—you can do more in those two years. And it is still a meritocracy. The gamers get noticed. There are 15 people in a minister's office, and two of them—independent of age or station—are the ones that people turn to within the system, and outside of the system," said Scott Reid. "Hard work pays off, ability, intelligence, and industry gets noticed. And so I just think

it's a great place to be, and a great place for someone who's young to work."

Also joining the research and advertising team overseen by director **Rosalie Nadeau** is **Matthew Schwarze**, who's been hired as a research co-ordinator.

Schwarze graduated last year from the double degree program offered by the University of Waterloo and Wilfrid Laurier University, with a bachelor's

degree in mathematics from the former and a bachelor of business administration from the latter. He spent the summer of 2024 as an assistant to Kitchener-Conestoga, Ont., Liberal MP **Tim Louis**. Along with being active in the Waterloo Undergraduate Student Association, in 2022, Schwarze ran as a city council candidate to represent Waterloo's Ward 6, ultimately placing second in the race. He's also been involved in the city's Waterloo Active Transit Advisory Committee.

New to the PMO's global affairs team is special assistant **Nate Feldman**.

Feldman comes fresh from Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister **Julie Dabrusin**'s office where he'd been a senior parliamentary affairs adviser.

Prior to being hired by Dabrusin post-election last year, Feldman had worked for the federal justice minister, beginning as a special assistant for operations to then-minister **Arif Virani** in the summer of 2024. Feldman exited that office as an adviser for Ontario regional affairs and parliamentary affairs. He's also a past constituency assistant to then-Ontario Liberal MP **Ya'ara Saks**.

Omer Aziz is back on the Hill as a global affairs communications adviser to Carney.



Matthew Schwarze is a research co-ordinator. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Aziz was last a policy adviser to **Chrystia Freeland** as then-foreign affairs minister between 2017 and 2018. After leaving, he spoke out about feeling "sidelined" during his time working for **Justin Trudeau**'s government, saying minority staff voices in general were not being empowered or given due regard.

Aziz has since written two books—*Brown*

Boy, a 2023 memoir, and *Shadows of the Republic: The Rebirth of Fascism in America and How to Defeat it for Good*, which comes out later this year—and hosted a podcast, *Minority Views*. He's also been busy as a contributing writer for the *Boston Globe*, and as a fellow with Harvard University's Radcliffe Institute for Advanced Study. According to his LinkedIn profile, he's also been an adviser to Project Liberty (founded by billionaire **Frank McCourt**, it was recently behind The People's Bid consortium that sought—ultimately unsuccessfully—to buy TikTok, an effort that included former Conservative leadership candidate **Kevin O'Leary**).

Among other things, Aziz's CV includes time spent working as a legal clerk with the office of the United Nations Special Envoy for Syria in 2015. He's also recently written op-eds for *The Globe and Mail*.

Lisa Jørgensen is director of global affairs in the PMO, working closely with global affairs adviser **Sarah Manney**.

Late last year, **Elisabeth Paul** and **Rahul Walia** were hired as new appointments advisers

for the top office, joining director **Derek Lipman**.

Paul previously worked at 80 Wellington St. as a special assistant for appointments under then-prime minister **Trudeau** between 2021 and 2023. She's since been executive assistant to then-national revenue minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau** and her chief of staff, and executive assistant to then-heritage minister **Pascale St-Onge** and then-Canadian identity and culture minister **Steven Guilbeault**. Paul is also a past special assistant with the Liberal research bureau (LRB).

Walia most recently worked as a regional adviser to then-transport and internal trade minister **Freeland**, having previously done the same for then-transport minister **Pablo Rodriguez**. He's also a former constituency assistant to Winnipeg South, Man., Liberal MP **Terry Duguid**.

Last spring, Walia ran as the Liberal candidate in Winnipeg Centre, Man., ultimately placing second behind NDP incumbent **Leah Gazan** with 35.3 per cent of the vote to Gazan's almost 39.5 per cent support.

Two more staffers, **Linda Campbell** and **Jonah Rosen**, started as managing director for ministers' regional offices (MRO), and issues management and parliamentary affairs adviser, respectively, on Feb. 2.

Now responsible for helping oversee MROs—16 of which exist across Canada, offering support to all of cabinet, and staffed by a mix of public servants and political staff—Campbell was previously managing director of the LRB, a Parliament-funded office that supports the Liberal caucus.

Campbell had been leading the research office since 2022, having originally joined it as director of caucus services and operations in 2021.



Elisabeth Paul is an appointments adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Tristan Lamonica is the new head of the LRB. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

She's also a former aide to then-small business and tourism minister **Bardish Chagger**, then-small business and export promotion minister **Mary Ng**, Guilbeault as then-heritage minister, and to then-British Columbia Liberal MP **Joyce Murray**.

In 2020, oversight of the MROs was transferred from Public Services and Procurement Canada to the Privy Council Office, with then-deputy PM **Freeland** tapped as the minister responsible. Given cabinet changes since, ministerial responsibility now falls to the PMO.

With **Campbell** now in the PMO, **Tristan Lamonica** has replaced her as head of the LRB.

He's been with the research office since 2017, and was most recently director of communications and deputy managing director.

Rosen, meanwhile, joins the PMO from Indigenous Services Minister **Mandy Gull-Masty**'s office where he'd been an issues manager and parliamentary affairs adviser since last July.

A former Toronto regional co-ordinator for the Ontario Young Liberals, **Rosen** worked on Dabrusin's successful re-election campaign in Toronto-Danforth, Ont., last spring. A recent graduate of the University of Toronto, he's a past associate with The Park Group in Toronto, and an ex-fellow with the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee. Rosen is already familiar with the halls of 80 Wellington, having previously walked them as a 2023 and 2024 summer intern under then-PM **Trudeau**.

Jeffrey is director of issues management in the PMO, supported by deputy director **Alexann Kropman**, while **Kathleen**

Legault-Meek is director of parliamentary affairs. **Marc-André Blanchard** is chief of staff to Carney, backed by deputy chiefs of staff **Braeden Caley** and **Andrée-Lyne Hallé**.

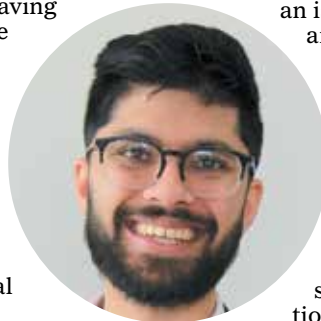
lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Jack Reid is a senior advertising adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Omer Aziz is a global affairs communications adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Rahul Walia is an appointments adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Nate Feldman is a special assistant for global affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Jonah Rosen is an issues management and parliamentary affairs adviser. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn



Parliamentary Calendar

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

NDP leadership hopefuls head to West Coast for second official debate on Feb. 19



NDP leadership candidates Tanille Johnston, left, Avi Lewis, Tony McQuail, Heather McPherson, and Rob Ashton will face off in their second official debate in British Columbia on Feb. 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 18

Black History Month—It's Black History Month, and the Government of Canada is calling this year's theme, '30 Years of Black History Month: Honouring Black Brilliance Across Generations'—From Nation Builders to Tomorrow's Visionaries.'

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.

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.

Minister MacKinnon to Deliver Remarks—Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon will take part in a fireside chat hosted by the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 11:30 a.m. MT at the Hyatt Regency Calgary, 700 Centre St. S., Calgary. Details: calgarychamber.com.

Ministers Olszewski and Valdez at Fundraiser—Emergency Management Minister Eleanor Olszewski and Minister for Women and Gender Equality Rechie Valdez will take part in a fundraising event hosted by the Edmonton Centre Federal Liberal Association. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 6:30 p.m. MT at The Lingnan, 10582 104 Street NW, Edmonton. Details: liberal.ca.

Lecture: 'Demolition By Neglect'—Heritage Ottawa hosts its annual Bob and Mary Anne Phillips Memorial Lecture on "Demolition By Neglect: Preserving the Past Before It's Too Late." Four panellists will look at various causes of demolition by neglect—from wilful abandonment to costs of rehabilitation—consider possible solutions, and share examples of both positive and negative situations in Ottawa. Wednesday, Feb. 18, at 7 p.m. ET happening online: heritageottawa.org.

THURSDAY, FEB. 19

Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks—Industry Minister Mélanie Joly will deliver a keynote address at an event for the launch of the 10th Ontario Economic Report hosted by the Empire Club of Canada and the Ontario Chamber of Commerce. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 11:30 a.m. ET happening in person in Toronto and online: empireclubofcanada.com.

Black Public Servants Networking Mixer—The Black Employees Network

at the Treasury Board Secretariat hosts a Black Public Servants Networking Mixer on the theme "Building Legacy, Shaping the Future" encouraging dialogue, relationship-building, mentorship and career development for Black employees and allies. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 5 p.m. ET at 240 Sparks St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Sugar Shack Supper with MP Lapointe—Liberal MP Linda Lapointe will take part in a sugar shack supper hosted by the Rivière-des-Mille-Îles Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 5 p.m. ET in Saint-Eustache, Que. Details: liberal.ca.

Gwynne Dyer to Deliver Remarks—Freelance columnist Gwynne Dyer, whose writing appears in *The Hill Times*, will deliver remarks entitled "WAR – The Great Forgetting" hosted by Algonquin College's Pembroke Campus. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 7 p.m. ET at Algonquin College Pembroke Campus, Frank Nighbor Street, Pembroke, Ont. Details via Eventbrite.

Second NDP Leadership Debate—Global Public Affairs' Hannah Thibeau will moderate the second debate between the five candidates vying to lead the federal New Democratic Party. Thursday, Feb. 19 at 5 p.m. PT in B.C.'s Lower Mainland. Details: ndp.ca.

Lecture: 'The Second Emancipation'—As part of the "On the Frontlines of Democracy" lecture series, the Toronto Public Library and Toronto Metropolitan University co-host renowned journalist and scholar Howard W. French who will discuss "The Second Emancipation," exploring Pan-Africanism and anti-colonial movements of the 1960s and today. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 7 p.m. ET at the Toronto Reference Library, 789 Yonge St. Details via Eventbrite.

An Evening with Minister Alty—Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations Rebecca Alty will join Liberal MP Jake Sawatzky for an evening event hosted by the New Westminster—Burnaby—Maillardville Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, Feb. 19, at 6:30 p.m. PT, at location to be confirmed in New Westminster, B.C. Details: liberal.ca.

FRIDAY, FEB. 20

Seminar: 'Opening Parliament'—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts a seminar, "Opening Parliament," looking at how institutions can facilitate both citizen engagement within them and the study of how they operate. Friday, Feb. 20, at 8:30 a.m. ET at 111 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Minister Robertson to Deliver Remarks—Housing Minister Gregor Robertson will offer insights on how the federal government is advancing

housing and infrastructure initiatives to meet community needs and drive inclusive economic growth at an event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Friday, Feb. 20, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W. Georgia St., Vancouver. Details: boardoftrade.com.

SATURDAY, FEB. 21

Welcome Home Ralph Goodale—The Regina-Lewvan, Regina-Wascana, and Regina-Qu'Appelle federal Liberal riding associations host a welcome home event for former Liberal MP Ralph Goodale who has wrapped up his posting as Canada's high commissioner to the United Kingdom. Saturday, Feb. 21, at 4:30 p.m. CT at 200 Lakeshore Dr., Regina, Sask. Details: liberal.ca.

Lunar New Year Event with MP Klassen—Liberal MP Ernie Klassen will take part in a Lunar New Year celebration hosted by the South Surrey—White Rock Federal Liberal Association. Saturday, Feb. 21, at 6 p.m. PT at Ming Yang Seafood Restaurant, 3238 King George Blvd., Surrey, B.C. Details: liberal.ca.

MONDAY, FEB. 23

Sec State Fuhr to Deliver Remarks—Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr will deliver remarks titled, "A New Era of Defence Investment in Canada," hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Monday, Feb. 23, at 7:30 a.m. ET at Le Westin Montréal, 270 Saint-Antoine St. W., Montreal. Details: corim.qc.ca.

NextGen 2026—Parl Sec for Foreign Affairs Mona Fortier, Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger, and former Conservative chief of staff Guy Giorno are among the speakers at "NextGen 2026: Shaping the Future of Public Affairs Today." Monday, Feb. 23, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Westin Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: nhmconnect.ca.

Debate: 'Is Canada Spending Too Much?'—Build Canada hosts a live debate on the motion "Be it resolved, current levels of federal deficit spending are a viable approach to building sustainable economic growth." Arguing in favour will be Kevin Page, former parliamentary budget officer. Arguing against the motion is Tim Sargent, senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute. Moderated by Build Canada co-founder and CEO Lucy Hargreaves. Monday Feb 23, at 6 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register: luma.com/7pij87v5.

Former MP Yvonne Jones' Book Launch—Industry Minister Mélanie

Joly will host a fireside chat with former Liberal MP Yvonne Rumbolt-Jones as part of the launch of her memoir, *Just Around the Corner*, hosted by the Pearson Centre. Monday, Feb. 23, at 6 p.m. ET at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Register: thepearsoncentre.ca.

TUESDAY, FEB. 24

Roundtable on Food Allergy—Senators Andrew Cardozo and Mohamed-Iqbal Ravallia, and Conservative MP Ben Lobb will host a roundtable on how significant advances over the past decade are shaping new approaches to the prevention, treatment, and management of food allergy and anaphylaxis. Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 8 a.m. ET in Room W-180, Senate of Canada, 1 Wellington St., Ottawa. RSVP: info.cardozo@sen.parl.gc.ca.

Quantum Power and National Security—The Empire Club of Canada hosts "Quantum Power and National Security: Canada's New Strategic Imperative." Former Conservative leader Erin O'Toole will moderate the discussion featuring Lt.-Gen. Darcy Molstad, CD, Commander Canadian Joint Forces Command; and Lisa Lambert, CEO of Quantum Industry Canada, among other participants. Tuesday, Feb. 24, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Arcadian Court, Simpson Tower, 8th floor, Toronto. Register: empireclubofcanada.com.

Chief Justice Wagner to Deliver Remarks—Rescheduled from Jan. 27, Chief Justice Richard Wagner will take part in a roundtable luncheon, titled "An Independent Judiciary for a Strong Economy," hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, Feb. 24, at 12 p.m. ET at 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, FEB. 25

Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine to Deliver Remarks—Canada's Ambassador to Ukraine Natalka Cmoc will deliver remarks virtually on "Ukraine and the West: Canada's Role in a Pivotal Year," hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, Feb. 25, happening online: cdhowe.org.

Book Talk: 'The Beaver and the Dragon'—The University of Ottawa host talk on Charles Burton's latest book, *The Beaver and the Dragon: How China Out-Manoeuvred Canada's Diplomacy, Security, and Sovereignty*, a collection of essays, written in real time across four Canadian governments from 2009 to 2025, expose the illusions of engagement and the emergence of an authoritarian power that seeks to dominate the 21st century. Wednesday, Feb. 25, at 12 p.m. ET at the University

of Ottawa, FSS 4006, 120 University Priv., Ottawa. Details: cips-cepi.ca.

Book Talk: 'Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets'—Stephen Azzi and Patrice Dutil will discuss the recently published book they edited, *Statecraft: Canadian Prime Ministers and Their Cabinets*, hosted by the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary History. Historian Robert Bothwell will also take part. Wednesday, Feb. 25, at 4 p.m. ET at the Campbell Conference Facility, 1 Devonshire Place, Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

THURSDAY, FEB. 26

Michaëlle Jean to Deliver Remarks—Former governor general Michaëlle Jean will take part in a French discussion with Toronto francophone youth, "La relève rencontre l'histoire," a Black History Month event hosted by Le Club canadien de Toronto. Thursday, Feb. 26, at 11:30 a.m. ET at The National Club, 303 Bay St., Toronto. Details: clubcanadien.ca.

Bombardier President and CEO to Deliver Remarks—Éric Martel, president and CEO of Bombardier, will deliver remarks on "Canadian Industrial Leadership and Global Dynamics" at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Feb. 26, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Fairmont Le Reine-Elizabeth, 900 René-Levesque Blvd. O., Montreal. Register: corim.qc.ca.

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Deliver Remarks—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will deliver a keynote address and take part in a fireside chat on "A Vision for Canada-U.S. Relations," hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Thursday, Feb. 26, at 11:45 a.m. ET at Delta Hotels Toronto. Register: economicclub.ca.

Minister LeBlanc to Deliver Remarks—Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Thursday, Feb. 26, at 11:45 a.m. ET at an undisclosed location in Toronto. Register: canadianclub.org.

MP Kayabaga to Take Part in Panel—Deputy Government House Leader Arielle Kayabaga will take part in a panel, "Africa, the Caribbean and Canada: Unlocking Growth Across the New Trade Frontier," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Other participants include Nickolas Steele, former Grenadian politician and cabinet minister; Nimal Amitirigala, president of Grace Foods Canada; and Dexter John, CEO, Financial Services Regulatory Authority of Ontario. Thursday, Feb. 26, at 5:30 p.m. ET at a location to be announced. Register: empireclubofcanada.com.

FRIDAY, FEB. 27

Black History Month Closing Celebration—Elevate International hosts a Black History Month Closing Celebration honouring the legacy of Black people while recognizing and celebrating Black women's leadership. Participants will include heads of mission and community builders. Friday, Feb. 27, at 5:15 p.m. ET at Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, MARCH 2—TUESDAY, MARCH 3

AFN's Economic and Infrastructure Summit—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 2025 Economic and Infrastructure Summit, "Strategies for Closing the Socioeconomic, Housing, and Infrastructure Gaps in First Nations." Monday, March 2, to Tuesday, March 3, at Le Westin Montréal, 270 rue Saint-Antoine O., Montreal. Details: afn.ca.

TUESDAY, MARCH 3

Lessons from the First Female Clerk of the Privy Council—Jocelyne Bourgon will share powerful insights from her groundbreaking career with members of the Institute of Public Administration of Canada. Her latest book, *A Public Servant's Voice: Through the Words of the First Woman Clerk of the Privy Council for Canada*, offers personal reflection and visionary advice for the future of Canadian government. Tuesday, March 3, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Institute on Governance, 60 George St., Ottawa. Details online.

Our plan to protect Ontario is diversifying our trade

As Canada stares down economic uncertainty, we're ready with a plan to protect Ontario. Diversifying our trade will connect our province to new markets.

That's how we protect Ontario.



ontario.ca/ProtectOntario

Paid for by the Government of Ontario

Ontario

