



# Agriculture policy briefing

pp. 15-27

# We need far more political staffers, not fewer

JAMIE CARROLL p. 4

# Pondering Poilievre's options

GERRY NICHOLLS p. 10



Michael Harris p. 9

Rose LeMay p. 5

Matt Gurney p. 11



# THE HILL TIMES

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## NEWS

### 'What's going on?': Canadians wonder why Conservatives losing MPs, says Nanos of Carney's growing popularity

BY TESSIE SANCI

Prime Minister Mark Carney's level of popularity—and that of his party—continues to grow among Canadians as the Liberals nabbed their third floor-crosser

Continued on page 37

## NEWS

### 'Take that risk': Poilievre's new communications strategy could alienate MAGA-style Conservatives, but necessary to appeal to broader voter base, say political players

BY ABBAS RANA

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's recent shift in strategy to expand his voter pool is critical for his political success,

Continued on page 38

## NEWS

# Carney should have consulted Grit caucus before supporting U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran, say some Liberal MPs: 'what the hell'

BY ABBAS RANA

Prime Minister Mark Carney declared his support for the deadly American-Israeli attack on Iran shortly after it began on Feb. 28, which has drawn a significant amount of pushback from Liberal MPs. Some caucus members say he should have consulted

caucus before endorsing such a consequential move, and add they hope to receive a clear explanation at this week's caucus meeting about why Canada took this position in the first place.

"I don't know why he jumped into this to support him [United States President Donald Trump] for no reason without speaking

to caucus," said one Liberal MP who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis to offer their candid views.

"The prime minister should not be making statements like that without going to the caucus and talking about the issues."

Continued on page 36

# House of Commons comes back, no more skiing



Fancy a ski and don't mind the cranes: Fineen Davis, left, a para nordic skier from Nakkertok Ski Club in Quebec, Conservative MP Gabriel Hardy, Senator Marty Deacon and Secretary of State for Sport Adam van Koeverden try sit skis at Ski Day on the Hill on Feb. 24, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



By Christina Leadlay

# Heard on the Hill

## Five takeaways from Pierre Poilievre's interview with Peter Mansbridge



That's a good one: Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, right, laughs with *The Bridge* podcast host Peter Mansbridge at the end of their 40-minute chat, which aired March 2. Screenshots courtesy of YouTube

While much ink has been spilled about Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre's** appearance on **Peter Mansbridge's** *The Bridge* podcast which aired March 2—including that he doesn't support an election now, that he and Prime Minister **Mark Carney** have a mutual respect, and how he's not afraid to say the name **Donald Trump**—here are **Heard on the Hill's** top five takeaways from the 40-minute chat.

Being official opposition leader sucks: "It's the worst damn job in the country," Poilievre told Mansbridge as the men stumbled over whether to address each other using honorifics. "You should be calling me by my first name. I'm a mere commoner after all."

He's expanding his communications diet to include a wide range of "fruits," so to speak: "I still love apples," Poilievre told Mansbridge, referring to the 2023

video of himself eating an apple in an interview. "I went from having a very focused strategy of talking to and using social media and reaching out, to in a very controlled way, to specific outlets. Whereas now, I think, I'm just going to talk to everybody," he said, acknowledging this was his first time on the former CBC chief correspondent's podcast. "I like to think that I'm improving all the time."

The career politician dislikes the "inside baseball" of the Parliament Hill bubble: "This is one of the problems I have with Ottawa and the entire political discourse in Ottawa is that it is absolutely fixated on the 'inside baseball' machinations in the halls of power and not at all focused on the real lives of people," he replied when asked about the three MPs who've recently left the Conservative caucus for the governing Liberals.

He wants Canada's defence spending to work smarter, not harder: "We don't necessarily need to spend all of our money on the most expensive exquisite 15-year defence industrial complex systems that break the back of the taxpayer," Poilievre said, noting how the Ukrainians have been very effective in using homemade, affordable drones against Russia. "We should be narrowly targeting the money to the things that increase our power and security at the minimal cost of the taxpayer."

And he still refuses to get security clearance: "I don't want my tongue to be tied by a process that prevents me from speaking openly and clearly about issues that are highly important and on which I, as a leader of the opposition, have to be very present," he told Mansbridge.

## The Globe stands by columnist as U.S. envoy demands apology

*The Globe and Mail* is standing by its chief sports columnist **Cathal Kelly**, whose recent column on the United States Olympic men's hockey team inspired U.S. Ambassador to Canada **Pete Hoekstra** to write a letter to the editor, asking for an apology.

"Hoekstra said the column by Cathal Kelly, published online [on Feb. 25] and in print on [on Feb. 26] under the headline 'The State of the Union was a zoo—and Team USA the monkeys,' left him disappointed and outraged," wrote journalist **Simon Houpt** on March 3 in the *Globe* in a piece entitled, "U.S. ambassador to Canada requests apology for *Globe and Mail* column."

In his Feb. 28 letter to editor-in-chief **David Walmsley**, Hoekstra said Kelly's column mocked the "intelligence, education, and character" of the athletes who attended the Feb. 24 State of the Union address in Washington, D.C.

"While we respect press freedom and expect robust commentary on matters of public interest, this article crosses the line from legitimate criticism



U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

into gratuitous insult," Hoekstra wrote. "The headline alone—comparing American athletes to monkeys in a zoo—is demeaning and unworthy of a publication of *The Globe and Mail's* stature."

"Try to remember that these men were not raised to be independent thinkers. That would be antithetical to getting where they've gotten. They are designed from childhood to live in packs," wrote Kelly in his Feb. 25 column. "Whenever a new alpha—like the current U.S. President—wanders into their midst, even telephonically, their instinct is to roll over and start chattering."

In response, Walmsley issued a statement that "Strong opinion is a hallmark of independent journalism and sometimes along the way that leads to reader disappointment and offence," and that "Some of the assertions, such as hockey culture's pack mentality and players' lack of interest in literature, are common fare for Mr. Kelly."

An award-winning columnist, Kelly has been with the *Globe and Mail* since 2014.

## Graham Richardson to lead CTV's Hill bureau

Former longtime CTV Ottawa news anchor

**Graham Richardson** is returning to the world of journalism after an almost two-year hiatus. CTV announced on March 4 that Richardson will come back as its Parliament Hill bureau chief, starting March 23.

A veteran reporter with past experience covering the Hill and Queen's Park, Richardson called the move "the right time to return to my reporting roots and my journalistic home at CTV," in a



Former CTV news anchor Graham Richardson is returning to the broadcaster on March 13. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

March 4 post on LinkedIn. He also thanked his colleagues at Edelman Canada, where he's been working since August 2024.

In addition to running CTV's Hill bureau, Richardson will be the back-up host for the network's weekday political program *Power Play*, and will also host the weekly Friday

editions of Bell Media's syndicated noon-hour national news/talk radio program, *The Vassy Kapelos Show*.

## Northstar launches its first internship

Northstar Public Affairs is looking for its first intern.

The Ottawa-based boutique government-relations shop—co-founded in 2023 by former Conservative staffers **Fred DeLorey** and **Adam Taylor**, and ex-Liberal adviser **Greg MacNeil**—is looking for a recent graduate for a six-month term from April to September who would support Northstar's office with "political and policy monitoring, research and analysis, stakeholder mapping, briefing note preparation, media tracking,

and internal project co-ordination," reads the job posting on the office's website.

In a post on X last week, DeLorey called for applicants who "love politics (regardless of your 'stripe')." The ideal candidate is "driven and detail-oriented" whose post-secondary education is in either "public policy, political science, economics, law, or a related field who wants real exposure to Canadian politics, government relations, and strategic communications."

Applications are due March 13.

## David Frum to speak at Press Freedom event next month in Ottawa

*The Atlantic's* senior editor **David Frum** is expected to be in Ottawa on April 29 for World Press Freedom Canada's awards luncheon in honour of World Press Freedom Day.

The Canadian-born writer—who is the brother of retired Senator **Linda Frum**—will give the event's keynote speech at the National Arts Centre in Ottawa where various Press Freedom awards will be presented.

Based in Washington, D.C., Frum is a former speechwriter for then-United States President **George W. Bush**. His mother was former CBC journalist **Barbara Frum**.



David Frum in Ottawa on Oct. 22, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

## EX-N.L. premier Andrew Furey is taking it to the bank

Former Newfoundland and Labrador premier **Andrew Furey** is joining the financial sector.

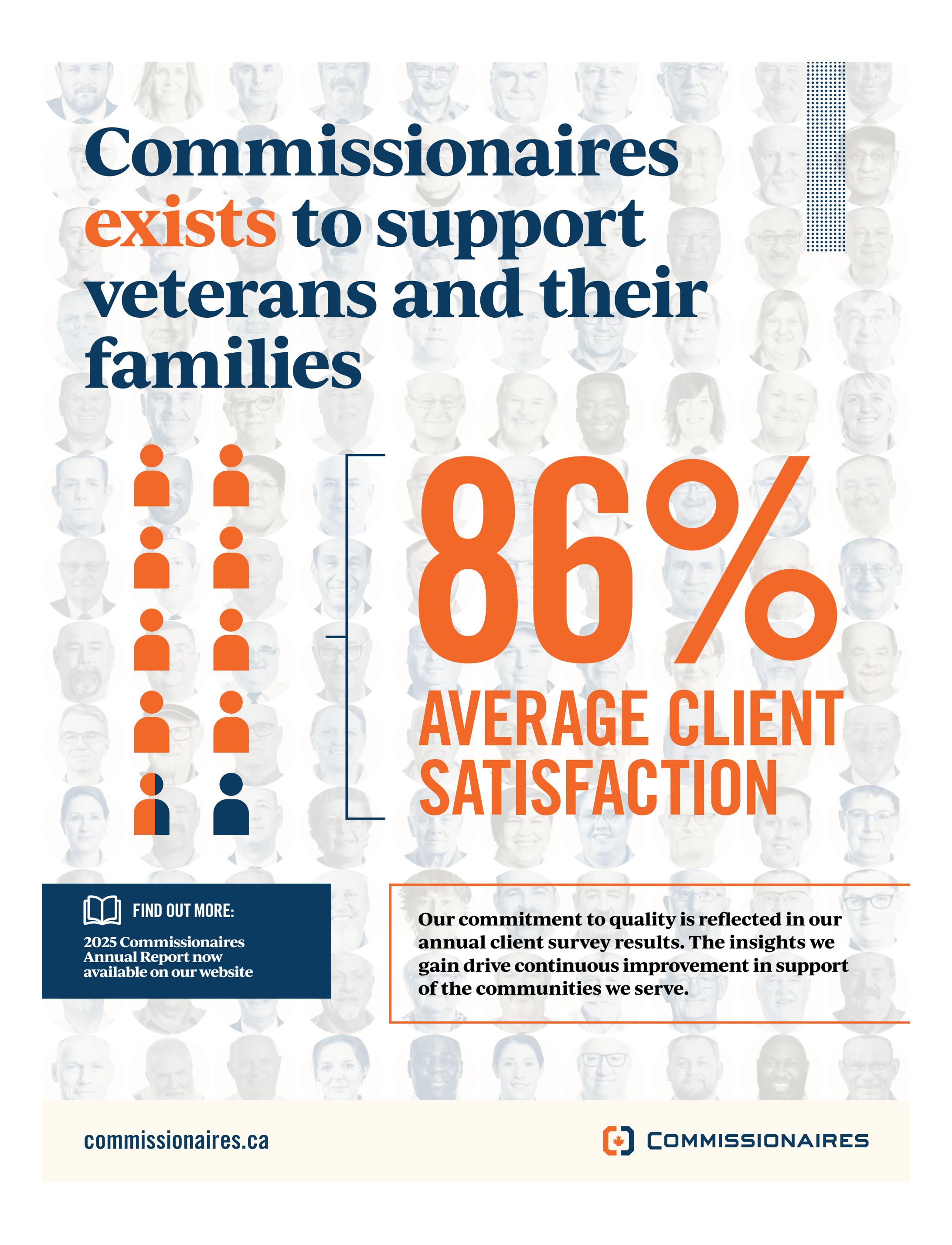
An orthopedic surgeon prior to a five-year career in provincial politics, Furey—son of former Senator **George Furey**—is joining the National Bank of Canada as vice-chair of its commercial banking and capital markets teams. He will start his new job on March 16.

The bank's president and CEO **Laurent Ferreira** called the 50-year-old Furey "an outstanding

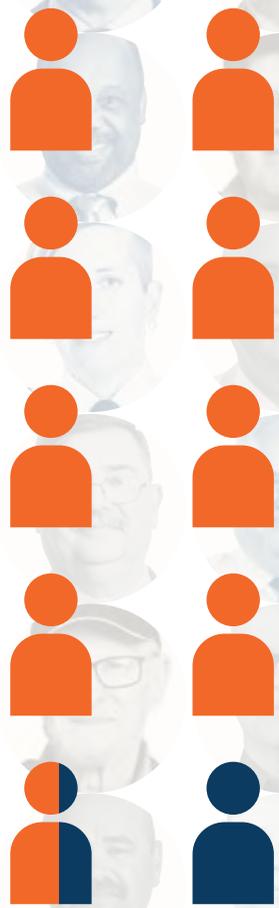
candidate to further develop our ties with the business community not only in Atlantic Canada, but across the country," in a March 4 press release.

Then a political rookie, Furey was elected leader of the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Party in August 2020 and became the province's premier. He was re-elected in 2021, but stepped down in February 2025.

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## NEWS

# LeBlanc, Michel meet with pharma sector as U.S. buckles down on cutting drug prices

U.S. President Donald Trump is pushing the sector to negotiate for drug prices similar to those in Canada, which could impact whether companies choose to list their medicines here.

BY TESSIE SANCI

United States President Donald Trump's efforts to reset how pharmaceutical firms negotiate drug prices with his government—and the consequences for countries including Canada—were recently discussed at an in-person meeting between pharmaceutical representatives and Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, Health Minister Marjorie Michel, and Janice Charette, the newly appointed chief trade negotiator to the U.S.

Innovative Medicines CEO and president Bettina Hamelin said she attended the Feb. 23 meeting in Ottawa along with representatives of some pharmaceutical companies, all of whom were invited by LeBlanc's office.

"The goal, as far as I'm concerned, from the minister was to understand the sector better, and to get advice from us on how to address the pharmaceutical question with the U.S.," said Hamelin of the meeting.

"From our perspective, it was to educate ... both ministers and Ms. Charette on the state of the industry and the threat of the U.S. pricing approach, etc."

Known for having the highest drug prices among OECD countries, the U.S. wants to implement a "most favoured nation" (MFN) policy to bring those down. The idea behind MFN policy—a principle of trade—is that countries should treat all their trading partners equally. In Trump's case, he wants pharmaceutical firms to negotiate prices that are comparable to those in nations with 60 per cent of the U.S.'s gross domestic product per capita.

An explainer from Norton Rose Fulbright on MFN states the GDP criteria could capture Canada, Australia, and many European nations.

America's propensity for paying some of the world's highest drug prices has been "a policy irritant for the United States for quite some time. And not just with Canada, but with other countries. [There is] a feeling that



Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, left, and Health Minister Marjorie Michel met with industry advocates on Feb. 23 to discuss the U.S.'s new approach to drug pricing. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia and Andrew Meade

they're shouldering a disproportionate burden of pharmaceutical innovation," said Liam MacDonald, director of policy and government relations at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

*The Hill Times* asked LeBlanc's (Beauséjour, N.B.) office why it called the meeting, and what actions Ottawa is considering to mitigate the impact of MFN drug pricing on Canada's access to medicines.

Gabriel Brunet, a spokesperson for LeBlanc, said by email that the meeting was one of a series held with different sectors to prepare for the upcoming trilateral review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA).

The purpose "was to hear directly from stakeholders about their priorities and concerns, and to inform Canada's positions throughout the course of the CUSMA review," Brunet said.

The office was unable to provide a response before deadline about how Canada might try to mitigate the impact of MFN.

## Risk of listing new medicines here 'just too high' if Canadian drug prices are compared to those in U.S., says Cleary

So far, the U.S. policy has resulted in one-on-one agreements with multiple pharmaceutical manufacturers, including Merck, Novartis, and Sanofi, to reduce prices for specific drugs available through the publicly funded U.S. Medicaid program.

Peter Cleary, a principal at Santis Health, said it's hard to understand the full impact on Canada at this point because Trump's agreements are with specific firms, and those deals have not been made public.

But, hypothetically, if a specific drug were to fall under the MFN policy, and the Canadian price was lower, it would create a dynamic where a company would not want to list in Canada, he said.

"Canada's market is so small and the United States market is so big. If you lower the price of those drugs in the United States—

impacting your margins significantly—the risk of listing in Canada is just too high," Cleary said.

Connected to this policy are two investigations: the U.S. Trade Representative's Sec. 301 investigation, which focuses on unfair trading practices by other nations, and a Sec. 232 investigation from the U.S. Department of Commerce entitled, "Effect of Imports of Pharmaceuticals and Pharmaceutical Ingredients on the National Security."

Hamelin said the Sec. 301 investigation is "kind of looming over everyone's head. ... It's used as a tool by the U.S. administration to put pressure on other countries."

Hamelin's American counterparts have told her the report for the Sec. 232 investigation is expected at the end of this month, she said.

Hamelin said her organization has put out a survey to understand the policy's impact on IMC members. Anecdotally, IMC is hearing that the U.S.'s stance is impacting members' ability to launch medicines in other countries, including Canada.

The U.S. also seems to be looking at levelling the playing field by encouraging other countries to spend more on new medicines. A deal reached last December between the United Kingdom and the U.S. "will reverse the decade-long trend of declining" spending in the U.K. on innovative medicines, "and increase the net price it pays for new medicines by 25 per cent," reads a press release from the U.S. Trade Representative.

A statement from the U.K. government about the deal states that public funding would be available to medicines that might not have previously received it due to "cost-effectiveness grounds."

Hamelin told *The Hill Times* that her group would support Ottawa in pursuing a similar bilateral agreement with the U.S. though the content would have to be modified to fit the Canadian context. If a deal were to occur, an increase to what federal, provincial, and territorial governments pay—which tend to be much lower than companies' list prices—to include medicines on their formularies should be on the table.

"The idea is for Canada to value innovation, and that would

relate to some increases in funding for new medicines that come to Canada. We're not suggesting that all the drug prices in Canada need to go up. What we're suggesting is that as new medicines get launched in Canada, that the price is recognizing the value of the innovation that went into discovering and developing this new medicine," said Hamelin.

*The Hill Times* asked LeBlanc's office if it was open to such a deal, but a response was unavailable by deadline.

MacDonald said that this type of agreement between Canada and the U.S. "could be an option," but would be a "difficult discussion" in Canada because of the sensitivity around the regulation of medicines, and the fact that health-care spending and delivery is mainly a provincial and territorial responsibility.

## More cash for pharma research, shorter timeline for pricing talks could keep Canada attractive

It would be "easier" if Canada increased its financial investments in homegrown research, according to MacDonald.

Canada spends less on pharmaceutical research—0.32 per cent of GDP per capita—than the U.S. which spends 0.78 per cent of GDP per capita, according to MacDonald, who cited statistics included in his recent op-ed about MFN published in *The Hill Times*.

MacDonald recommended that Canada develop a pharmaceutical innovation fund in order to remain an attractive launching pad for new medicines.

Cutting the amount of time—more than two years—it takes for Canadian governments to negotiate the prices of new medicines before including them on public formularies is also a key step, according to MacDonald.

"Introducing new medicines anywhere is very, very expensive so there needs to be some sort of return on investment," said MacDonald about why the two-year timeline is a problem for pharmaceutical companies.

"If it takes two years in Canada [and] it may only takes

a couple of months elsewhere, where would you put more effort? You're going to look at those other markets first and you're going to go there first."

The other side of the conundrum, according to Cleary, is that the firms themselves are more likely to invest in research in countries where they are listing their products.

Hamelin said cutting the timeline is one of the "main things" that her group wants to see in addition to a modernization of the health technology assessment process.

This process is conducted by organizations that are arm's-length from government to determine if new medicines provide the appropriate level of value as compared to their quoted price. A decision supporting this typically leads to a recommendation to governments that they include the medicine on their formularies.

## Both Canada and U.S. trying to cut drug prices

MFN isn't Trump's first foray into lowering drug prices. In his first presidential term, Trump unsuccessfully attempted to implement the policy and made headlines when he proposed importing cheaper drugs from Canada.

The Canadian government has also made strides to cut drug prices. A process to reform how the Patented Medicine Prices Review Board ensures that prices are not "excessive," as per its mandate, began in 2017. It was subject to delays, controversy, and legal challenges instigated by the pharmaceutical industry.

Not all proposals from the process survived those challenges, but what's in place is an updated basket of countries the PMPRB uses to compare companies' proposed drug prices against those in the other countries. The U.S., which until 2022 was a part of the Canadian basket, is no longer included specifically because its drug prices are the highest in the world.

"It's certainly awkward timing," said Cleary about the parallel between the Canadian and American attempts to reduce drug prices.

"It also speaks to how far Canada can go to lower drug prices as an individual country because this is a global market, and the United States demands a significant chunk of that global market."

*The Hill Times* asked Hamelin whether the Canadian and U.S. governments' actions are suggesting that drug prices are unsustainable for public funding.

She said "it is important to recognize" that patented medicines make up six per cent of provincial and territorial drug spending and generic drugs make up approximately another six per cent.

She added that her organization recognizes that "our health care systems are incredibly stretched."

Hamelin said her group would like to work with Ottawa to see how health care systems can be more efficient so that budgets are reallocated to treatment that prevent hospitalization and reduce hospital stays, which would reduce the overall cost of health care delivery.

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## COMMENT

# Projects of national interest should include modernizing Highways 17 and 11

Highways 11 and 17 are dangerously outdated and this is a major project begging for support. The infrastructure of the east-west corridor is critical infrastructure. Imagine the support: First Nations, local communities in northern Ontario, ambulance drivers and trucking firms.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—The Government of Canada politely says that “Canada must build critical new infrastructure at speeds not seen in generations. This includes the infrastructure that diversify our trading relationships and to become an energy superpower.” The conversation in Ontario has veered into a high-speed train that would run across farmers’ fields from Toronto to Quebec City, and has already dug up some serious grassroots resistance.

Here’s another idea: twin the Trans-Canada Highway across Ontario over the Great Lakes to Manitoba. This is a nightmare of a road that shouldn’t even bear the name ‘road’. It’s a linear map of accidents more than a road. It’s so bad that newcomers to Ontario are routinely advised when driving west to go through the United States.

Just think about that. A middle power and all, but you can’t drive across Ontario safely.

Highway 11 routes from Barrie to Timmins before it loops back to Nipigon, a risky back road of 1,750 kilometres that is the only lifeline to 14

First Nations situated close to the road and another 106 First Nations who connect to it from locations farther north. Then there’s Highway 17 which makes a direct run from North Bay and hugs the Lakes through Nipigon and on to Thunder Bay. For anybody who has driven this highway, you know it feels like there’s maybe one passing lane on the whole route, somewhere near the Winnie the Pooh statue in White River.

In Ontario Premier Doug Ford’s world, if it ain’t in Etobicoke then it don’t matter. NDP MPP Sol Mamakwa, who represents the riding of Kiiwetinoong, Ont., which is north of Thunder Bay and includes the whole massive district of Kenora all the way up to Hudson Bay, has a strong message for him: at least six people have died since mid-December on Highway 11, and there have been five fatal collisions in the last five days on the two highways, combined. First Nations are over-represented in the losses because there are simply so many First Nations communities who have no choice but to use these roads.

Both highways are dangerously outdated for the amount of traffic, including truck and tractor rigs. In a time of conflict with the tyranny to the south of us, it seems prudent that we have safe and usable east-west corridors, does it not?

Ontario has more trucks moving than other provinces because a good chunk of stuff that imports into Ontario is then moved out to the Prairies. So the Trans-Canada is truly a Canadian asset through Ontario.

Setting aside all the freight-moving stats, let’s focus on Canadian lives. It isn’t supposed to be dangerous to drive our roads. But Mamakwa and five other MPPs left Toronto on March 2 to drive across Ontario to Manitoba on Highways 11 and 17 in order to drive home the point that the roads must be modernized. Ottawa is well-advised to take notice because this is of national importance.

To be clear, this is a major project begging for support. The infrastructure of the east-west corridor is critical infrastructure that has been left to rot for far too long. Imagine the support

for this project! First Nations, local communities in northern Ontario, ambulance drivers and their unions, trucking firms: the list is lengthy on who all would support modernizing Highways 11 and 17.

While we’re at it, ensure cell coverage across every kilometre. The Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls final report called for cell coverage on highways as one way to reduce the risk to women, so this major project could also be called reconciliation.

This would be a win for the Major Projects Office. Modernize highways to be capable to manage all the country’s east-west freight requirements now.

*Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.*

The Hill Times

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## Medicine Security Is National Security: The Case for Canadian Pharmaceutical Sovereignty



**TERRY CREIGHTON,**  
PRESIDENT, CANADIAN  
PHARMACEUTICAL  
MANUFACTURERS AND  
EXPORTERS ALLIANCE

I recently attended a National Security Summit where, over the course of three days, we heard fascinating presentations from senior military officials from the U.S. and numerous allied nations on the future of combat, asymmetric warfare and the speed of technological innovation in drone and autonomous weaponry. As captivating as these topics were, what really grasped my attention was the “weaponization of medicines” by adversaries as a military and security threat in the same category as cyber-attacks and space-based warfare.

Coincidentally, on the last day of the Summit, the Supreme Court decision on the IEEPA tariffs was released and we gathered around our devices to watch how the Administration would respond and threaten to keep tariffs in place using other trade measures such as Section 232 and Section 301.

This is very real to us in Canada’s pharmaceutical manufacturing sector. Since May 2025 when the U.S. launched a Section 232 Investigation into Trade in Pharmaceuticals, Canadian pharmaceutical exporters have been anxiously waiting for its publication. Despite assurances the 232 would likely include exemptions for generic and biosimilar medicines, our relief has now been displaced by worry that the rejection of IEEPA tariffs will embolden the Administration to strengthen its national security focus and use its 232 delegated authority to hit hard. The U.S. Administration clearly considers reshoring of domestic pharmaceutical production as vital for its national security and defence.

All of this is highly relevant here in Canada as the Standing Committee on Health holds an upcoming Hearing to examine Canada’s pharmaceutical sovereignty and develop recommendations for how Canada can best promote pharmaceutical production. As it stands today, Canadians are equally reliant on imported medicines from foreign sources and extremely vulnerable to geopolitical events. Let’s not forget the huge impact of the pandemic on pharmaceutical supply chains, medicines shortages, and panic buying.

**Canada’s pharmaceutical manufacturers are a strategic asset necessary for Canada’s pharmaceutical sovereignty**

Canada’s pharmaceutical manufacturers need to be seen as the strategic national assets they are. The Canadian Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Exporters Alliance represents companies operating production facilities in Canada that collectively supply 30 percent of all prescriptions Canadians rely on every day.

Pharmaceutical sovereignty means ensuring reliable access to essential medicines produced here at home. It means reducing vulnerability to trade disputes, export restrictions and global supply chain disruptions. Drug shortages remain a persistent concern in Canada, particularly for generic medicines that operate on thin margins and depend on complex international supply chains. When production is concentrated offshore, disruptions quickly reach Canadian hospitals and pharmacies.

Other countries recognize this risk and are acting decisively. The United States has introduced

aggressive measures to reshore pharmaceutical production and incentivize domestic manufacturing. The European Union is advancing similar industrial policies. These governments understand that pharmaceutical manufacturing is a national security imperative.

Canada must respond with equal resolve.

The federal government has already identified biomanufacturing as a strategic sector essential to protecting Canada’s sovereignty and economic resilience. That recognition must now translate into policies that strengthen domestic pharmaceutical production.

Canada has also recognized the national security imperative of domestic production of medicines as part of our National Defense Industrial Strategy which promises investments in the production of medical countermeasures and stockpiling to ensure access to essential medicines here at home. Canada’s domestic drug manufacturers are ready to participate in Canada’s defence.

To secure Canada’s pharmaceutical sovereignty, CPMEA has advanced a **Five-Point Action Plan for Canadian Domestic Pharmaceutical Production**:

- 1. Canada-First procurement.** Federal drug programs and provincial plans should prioritize medicines manufactured in Canada. Even directing a portion of public spending toward Canadian-made medicines would create stable demand and support long-term investment.
- 2. Priority regulatory review for Canadian producers.** A dedicated pathway for domestic manufacturers would incentivize production in Canada while accelerating access to essential medicines.

**3. Competitive tax policy.** Pharmaceutical manufacturing is capital-intensive. Canada’s tax framework must support investment in facilities, equipment and workforce development.

**4. Under Canada’s Defence Industrial Strategy,** investments in the production of medical countermeasures and stockpiling to ensure access to essential medicines. Access to pharmaceuticals can be weaponized and supply disrupted by geopolitical events. Domestic manufacturing must be treated as critical infrastructure within national security and defence planning.

**5. Strategic trade alliances with trusted partners** to strengthen supply chain cooperation while ensuring Canada maintains robust domestic capacity.

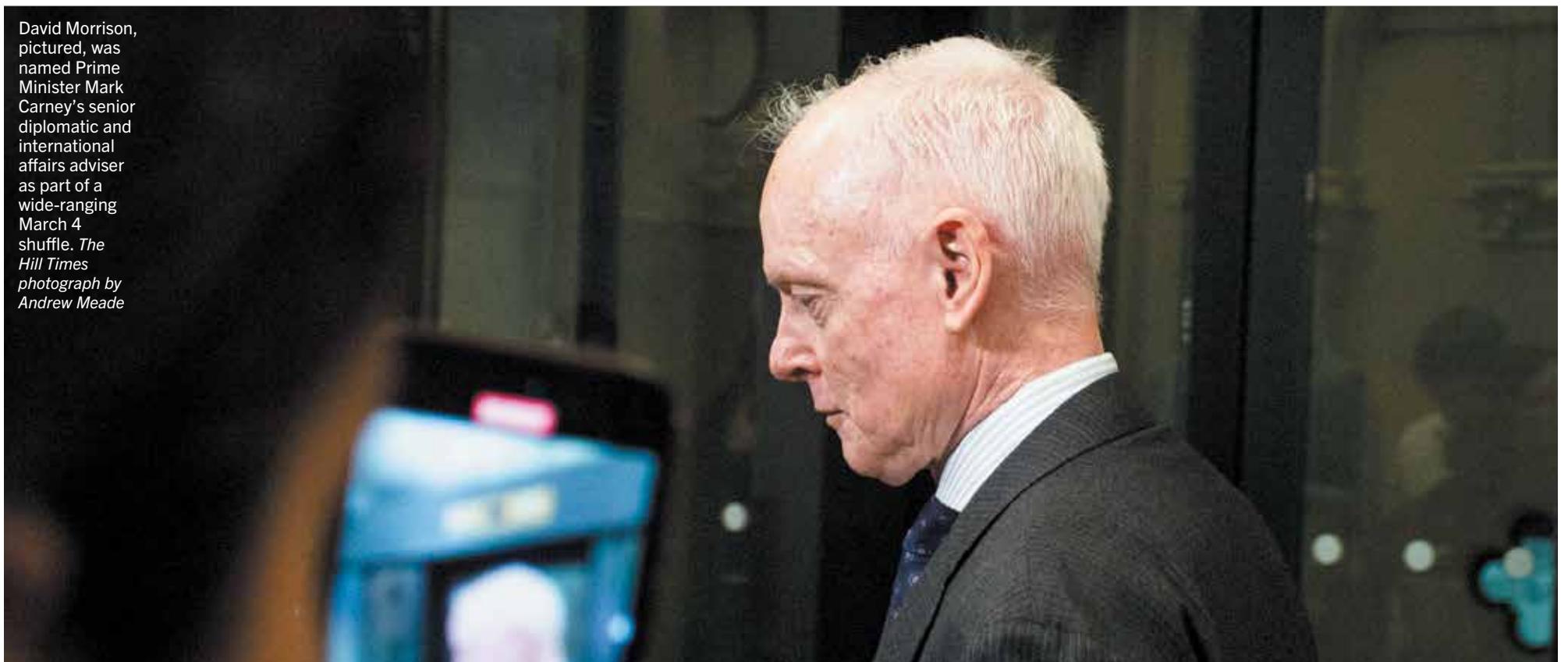
These measures are about preparedness and resilience. Domestic producers provide oversight, transparency and responsiveness that offshore supply chains cannot match.

The Standing Committee on Health’s study of pharmaceutical sovereignty is an opportunity to act with foresight. Canada has the industrial base, skilled workforce and regulatory expertise to safeguard its pharmaceutical future. What is required now is policy alignment that recognizes domestic pharmaceutical production as essential infrastructure.

The time to strengthen Canada’s domestic pharmaceutical manufacturing capacity is now.

 **CPMEA** Canadian Pharmaceutical Manufacturers and Exporters Alliance  
Learn more at [www.cpmea.ca](http://www.cpmea.ca)

## NEWS



David Morrison, pictured, was named Prime Minister Mark Carney's senior diplomatic and international affairs adviser as part of a wide-ranging March 4 shuffle. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Major public service shakeup taps David Morrison to 'elevated' key foreign policy role in the centre

The March 4 announcement names 15 senior civil servants to new roles, and brings in one person from the private sector as Prime Minister Mark Carney continues to reshape the federal bureaucracy, from Foreign Affairs to Fisheries and Oceans.

BY MARLO GLASS & NEIL MOSS

Prime Minister Mark Carney is shuffling the most senior officials on the international file, with the No. 2 at Global Affairs Canada heading to the Privy Council Office as Canada's foreign policy inner circle is being increasingly centralized.

In a wide-reaching shuffle—that will take place in “the coming weeks,” according to the Prime Minister's Office—foreign affairs deputy minister David Morrison has been appointed as Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) new senior diplomatic and international affairs adviser. He also is returning as G7 sherpa, and adding the same role



Rob Stewart, right, pictured with Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc, has been named to lead the Financial Crimes Agency. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Arun Thangaraj returns to Global Affairs Canada from Transport Canada where he was most recently deputy minister. *Photograph courtesy of the Government of Canada*



Cindy Termorshuizen was named the next deputy minister of international development on March 4. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

for G20—posts that will now be in the Privy Council Office (PCO) instead of being housed at Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

“From a historical perspective, there hasn't been this much

concentration at the centre since Prime Minister Trudeau the elder,” said Independent Senator Peter Boehm (Ontario), who is a former G7 sherpa for then-prime minister Justin Trudeau.

It's the second sweeping change to the top ranks of the public service in recent months, filling gaps left in the December 2025 shuffle. The March 4 announcement names 15 senior

civil servants who are stepping into new roles. Many are currently deputy ministers moving to new departments, but Carney is also bringing in one person from the private sector as he continues to reshape the federal bureaucracy.

Morrison has been a central figure in Canada's international file for years, having served in the PCO as foreign and defence policy adviser to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau from 2019-2022. He moved back over to the Pearson Building in 2022, becoming deputy minister for international trade, and moving over to deputy head of foreign affairs later that year.

“You have a highly qualified individual—and very experienced—who is being given an elevated role that translates that the prime minister is very serious about his emerging policy as he defined it in his Davos speech,” said Boehm, a former senior executive in Canada's foreign ministry.

“He [Morrison] goes in [to the role] with obviously a wealth of experience, and the trust of the prime minister.”

Boehm said that he foresees Morrison's new job being an “elevation” from the past PCO role of foreign and defence policy adviser, remarking that it is “symptomatic” of greater centralization in the PCO and PMO of the foreign file.

The PCO didn't respond to questions about the organization structure of the changes before publication deadline.

Colin Robertson, a former diplomat and fellow at Canadian Global Affairs Institute, said Morrison is “hugely experienced” after several years as GAC's deputy minister. Morrison's new role “makes sense,” given his extensive experience in Canada's foreign affairs scene, Robertson said.

Replacing Morrison as the second in command at Global Affairs is Arun Thangaraj, who

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# Editorial

## Editorial

## Next parliamentary budget officer needs to be top-notch, unfettered, fearless, without bluster

Canada doesn't have a parliamentary budget officer right now, and that's an issue because Parliament needs to be well-informed on the federal government's finances as it steers the country through the trade war with the United States. This independent officer of Parliament is vitally important for a thriving and well-informed democracy, which is also why the next PBO needs to be top-notch, unfettered, fearless, and without bluster.

Kevin Page, Canada's first parliamentary budget officer who's now president of the University of Ottawa's Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy, told *The Hill Times* that, ideally, the government should have announced a new PBO weeks ago, but said he's also aware that it's been working to deepen the list of candidates. Page said the process started months ago.

But this should be a top priority. Page also made a key observation about the PBO's role today. "Many believe we are living through an historical, pivotal moment—geo-political, trade, technology. Helping Parliament and Canadians understand what this means for Canada's public finances and how we can use fiscal policy responsibly to navigate the best path ahead for our country is a critical role," Page told *The Hill Times*.

The most recent PBO, Jason Jacques, ended his interim six-month term on March 2. Former PBO Yves Giroux, who completed his seven-year term in the office in 2025, accused the feds of silencing an agent of Parliament by not filling the role immediately, saying it

shows the government is "not concerned at all" that the post is vacant.

The PBO is a governor-in-council appointment, but it must be approved by Parliament. The Privy Council Office and the Prime Minister's Office, which have to recommend candidates, approved Jacques' interim appointment, but were only able to do so for the six months because that is the maximum time limit available for such an appointment without Parliament's approval. Giroux's term as PBO was set to expire before the return of Parliament in 2025.

During his term, Giroux was criticized after acknowledging an "inadvertent error" in the office's calculations of the impact of the consumer carbon tax. The PBO re-ran the numbers and found the cost was less than it had earlier estimated. Giroux flagged the error publicly, recalculated it, and republished the report.

Jacques, in his temporary term, was criticized for his message delivery, and had to walk back comments when he called the government's fiscal track "on the precipice," "alarming," "stupefying," and "unsustainable."

Despite the differing styles of previous officers, the government should make this appointment a top priority when Parliament returns this week because, as the Organisation for the Economic Co-Operation and Development pointed out in its first-ever review of the PBO (which was conducted at Jacques' request), this office is the best in the world.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

## Government should re-invest in student financial aid: Canadian Alliance of Student Associations

It's common wisdom that young people are not a reliable set of voters. If they were not, maybe the conversations about housing development charges, lifetime income tax exemptions, and the carbon economy would all look different.

Maybe that reliability question was on the mind of Ontario Premier Doug Ford when his government decided to shift Ontario Student Assistance Program funding model away from grants to loans. Maybe that will also be on the prime minister's mind when the federal government considers renewing its student assistance investments, which are slated to decrease for the fall. And, unlike the province changing the grant-loan mix, unless Ottawa acts, a federal decrease will impact both grants and loans. This is why thousands of youth are now petitioning the government to re-invest in student financial assistance, continuing and expanding their legacy of increasing access to the young people who have the grades, but by circumstance of birth do not have the resources to attend college or university.

The federal contributions to student assistance are lesser known, and today's students might not care about reversing cuts if they graduate before the next election. But, at any given

time, around 700,000 students benefit from the Canada Student Financial Assistance program, not to mention the parental contributors that the government requires those students to get to co-invest.

Governments may be inclined to write youth off as non-voters for the time being. But that ignores the cross section between education and age. Although only 50 per cent of 18-to-24-year-olds with a high-school education voted in the last election for which we have cross-sectional data, overall turnout among 18-to-24-year-olds with university degrees more closely resembles that of the average 50 year old. For those young adults, voter participation rates nears 70 per cent, and those 18-to-24 year olds with college diplomas vote more reliably than the average 35-to-44-year-old with a high school diploma alone.

The myth that there is a monolithic youth cohort is dangerous. It's dangerous for educated youth who put the time in to vote who may have that participation overlooked. But all parties and the government also should ignore this vote-happy group at their peril.

**Matthew Gerrits**

*(The letter writer is a senior government relations specialist at the Canadian Alliance of Student Associations).*

## India needs more Canada: letter writer

Lots of people have been saying lots of things about Prime Minister Mark Carney's trip to India, both negative comments and positive, but most of us remember what former United States president Barack Obama said during his visit to Ottawa in 2016 in his address to Parliament: "The world needs more of Canada."

I say India needs Canada, and Canada needs India.

There's no denying the things that have happened between Canada and India. But look at the awful things happening between Canada

and the United States almost on a daily basis. However, Canada and the U.S. cannot walk alone since we both need each other.

It's time Canada and India move on in the right direction and with baby steps. We don't need to jump to conclusions. We should have an open mind, and, hopefully, things will fall into the right spots.

So I say again: Canada needs India and India needs Canada, and the world needs more of Canada.

Obama was right.

**Anant Nagpur**  
 Ottawa, Ont.



# Politics

## Why, prime minister, did Canada support an increasingly belligerent U.S. president in unleashing the dogs of war?

The prime minister is too intelligent not to realize that a lot of people in this country strongly disagree with his decision to support U.S. air strikes on Iran, which is why he has been distancing himself from both U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Michael Harris

Harris



**H**ALIFAX—Even the most partisan Conservative has to admit that Prime Minister Mark Carney has had a pretty solid first year as prime minister.

True, the official opposition has accused him of conflicts of interest flowing from his corporate connections before entering politics. And, yes, they have tried to paint him as a sneaky, rich guy.

Those scurrilous allegations didn't take root. Instead, there was Carney's record in office. Mega trade deals like the recent one with India, improved working relationships with the provinces, renewed international respect for this country, and a growing lead in the polls over his rival, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre.

That last point is dramatic. According to the most recent Leger poll, Carney's Liberals have a 14-point lead over the Conservatives, the largest spread in 10 years.

So, it is something of a surprise that Carney may have made his first unforced error as prime minister. He gave his blessing to the United States' military attack on Iran, an assault that took place



Mark Carney's first unforced error as prime minister was giving his blessing to the U.S. military attack on Iran, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

just days before negotiations aimed at coming to an agreement on that country's nuclear program were set to resume.

Of note, in supporting U.S. President Donald Trump, Carney is endorsing a patently illegal war. Trump did not, as required by the U.S. Constitution, seek congressional approval before ordering military action in Iran.

Carney's support is all the harder to understand because Trump triggered this war of choice. Up until now, Carney seemed to understand that Canadians don't much like the current U.S. president. With good reason. They didn't appreciate his punitive tariffs, and they especially disliked his stated desire to make this country America's 51<sup>st</sup> state.

During last year's federal election, Carney stood up to Trump, while Poilievre was slow to realize how much of a problem this rogue president was with voters in Canada. Polling showed that approximately 60 per cent of Canadians saw the U.S. as a "threat." During the election, Carney reaped the political dividend for getting that right.

Now, both leaders of Canada's major parties have endorsed Trump's use of military power to achieve his goals, a course he is taking with alarming regularity these days.

Since returning to office, Trump has used the U.S. military seven times against various countries, including Venezuela, Nigeria, Somalia, and Syria.

He is now threatening Cuba, and vowing a deeper assault inside Iran. Does Carney really want to support what amounts to a return to the gunboat diplomacy of former U.S. president Teddy Roosevelt?

The prime minister's expression of support for Trump's war also puts Canada on the wrong side of international law. Since the Second World War, this country has been a staunch supporter of a rules-based world order. The bedrock of those rules is respect for every country's sovereignty.

That's why the United Nations has forcefully denounced Trump's war. That is why Pedro Sánchez, Spain's prime minister, has said "no to war." They both understand that in the absence of international law, the law of the jungle

quickly takes over. And they know that war is like an untended grass fire—it spreads.

Consider how things have already escalated in the wake of Trump's invasion of Iran. Iran has now attacked multiple countries in the region, NATO has shot down a ballistic missile fired on Turkey, and the U.S. has sunk an Iranian warship in the Indian Ocean near Sri Lanka. A crew of 180 were on board. An Iranian elementary school for girls was bombed, killing at least 168 people.

All this after just a few days of war.

And there is another problem with Carney's thumbs up for Trump's war: the loss of the moral high ground. How do you denounce the invasion of Ukraine by Russia, or the potential annexation of Taiwan by China, if you support Trump's invasion of Iran?

In supporting the attack on Iran, Carney parroted another element of Trump's bogus justifications for the bombing: the country's leader, the recently killed Ayatollah Khamenei, was a bad person.

There are a lot of bad people running countries these days, political thugs who kill their own citizens and savagely suppress all opposition. But no one is advocating removing Vladimir Putin or Xi Jinping as leaders of Russia and China. Regime change almost never comes at the barrel of a gun. To be authentic and lasting, it must come from the will of the citizens of the country involved.

There is some history worth remembering here. When Jean Chrétien was prime minister, Canada refused to participate in the U.S.-led invasion of Iraq. Did that mean that he liked Saddam Hussein?

Of course not. What it meant was that the prime minister of the day would not take Canada to war against Iraq without an authorization from the UN Security Council. In other words, Chrétien would not let this country get involved in an illegal war.

Carney's support of Trump's war has raised eyebrows in a lot of places, including amongst Liberals who understand why Chrétien did not join the American war in 2003. One of those critics is Canada's former Liberal foreign minister Lloyd Axworthy. In a recent op-ed, Axworthy lamented Canada's support of America's obviously aggressive and illegal war.

It is really quite simple. According to the UN Charter, cross-border military intervention is forbidden without Security Council approval or an imminent threat. Trump's war satisfied neither of those exceptions.

Carney seems to be relying on Iran's nuclear threat to justify his support for Trump's war. There are two problems here. The U.S. has produced zero evidence to back up Trump's claim that Tehran was just days away from having a nuclear weapon.

And Carney seems to have forgotten that it was Trump who ripped up former U.S. president Barack Obama's deal with Iran aimed at preventing that country from getting a nuclear weapon.

The prime minister is too intelligent not to realize that a lot of people in this country strongly disagree with his decision to support U.S. air strikes on Iran. That's why he has been distancing himself from both Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, partners in this particular war. Carney now says through a statement that he backed the military action "with regret."

Why regret? Because, he says, the use of military force is a failure of the rules-based world order and a violation of international law.

That is inarguably true. And it raises a big question. Why, prime minister, did Canada support an increasingly belligerent U.S. president in unleashing the dogs of war?

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist. *The Hill Times*

# Politics

## Carney threads the needle of support for American-Israeli attacks on Iran

Most Canadians believe that Trump cannot be trusted on the trade file. That same fear will heat up as the war escalates. No one seems to know what the end game is. If regime change involves simply swapping out the murderous Ayatollah for his son, Canadian appetite for this war effort will quickly fade.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



Prime Minister Mark Carney is facing his greatest challenge yet. He must thread the needle of support for an American-Israeli attack on Iran that ignored international law.

While Spain has made it very clear that it will have nothing to do with the attacks on Iran, Canada was one of the first countries to come out in support of the unilateral American-Israeli action.

Canada's outright support was not shared by some allies, including French President Emmanuel Macron.

Macron said France "cannot approve" of the strikes because they were carried out "outside the world order."

Macron also added that the death of Ayatollah Ali Khomeini would not be mourned because "history never weeps for the executioners of their own people."

British Prime Minister Keir Starmer told his Parliament that the United Kingdom "does not believe in regime change from the sky." He also added that "President Trump does not agree with our decision not to get involved in the initial strikes."

For his part, American President Donald Trump responded to Starmer saying the prime minister "is no Winston Churchill."

His response to Spain's refusal to allow Americans to use the country's military bases was swift. After Deputy Prime Minister María Jesús Montero said Spaniards "will not be vassals" to another country, Trump threatened to impose complete sanctions on all trade.

Spain appears to be the only European country refusing to let Americans use its military bases. Britain initially refused, but reversed itself when Iranian attacks spread to areas that Starmer said involved British self-defence.

Britain, Germany, and France issued a joint statement claiming that the Iranian attacks all over the Middle East were a disproportionate response, and, therefore, they would work with the United States and other allies in their own defence in the relevant areas.

So the Europeans have now aligned their perspective with that of Canada, but in the meantime, it appears as though the American people are divided on the nature and conclusion of the attacks on Iran.

Congress is upset that the military actions were undertaken without any congressional input, and some polls show the majority of Americans do not support the attacks.

In a Reuters/Ipsos poll, it was reported last week that only one in four Americans approve of the action. Some 27 per cent said they favoured the attacks, while 43 per cent were opposed. A further 29 per cent were unsure, even though 90 per cent of the respondents had learned of the attacks.

Approval ratings seem to be politically aligned, with 78 per cent of Democrats opposing the attacks, and 11 per cent approving while 76 per cent of Republicans approve with 10 per cent disapproving.

In Canada, Carney's initial statement of support for Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu appeared to cause some consternation amongst colleagues whose own comments on the subject appeared more nuanced.

But his later clarification appeared to line him up well with other international players.

Carney told an Australian audience that the government's approval of the attacks was not a blank cheque. He also said it reinforced his view that a new world order means traditional multilateral decision-making is not necessarily an option in this political climate.

Repeating some of the messaging delivered in Davos, Switzerland, Carney once again

repeated that "we are actively taking on the world as it is, not passively waiting for the world we wish it to be. But we also take this position with some regret because the current conflict is another example of the failure of the international order."

Speaking at the Lowy Institute, Carney also stated that "geostrategically, hegemons are increasingly acting without constraint or respect for international norms while others bear the consequences."

Carney first refused to weigh in the legality of the American-Israeli intervention, claiming that was a judgment for others to make. He subsequently clarified his comments, saying the attack appears to be a *prima facie* case of breaking international law.

While threading that needle, Carney managed to avoid the ire of Trump, who had harsh words and actions for all countries who did not support the attacks.

Most Canadians believe that Trump cannot be trusted on the trade file, as he changes his position almost daily. That same fear will heat up as the war escalates and other parts of the Arab Gulf are under siege. No one seems to know what the end game is. If regime change involves simply swapping out the murderous Ayatollah for his son, Canadian appetite for this war effort will quickly fade.

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

## Pondering Poilievre's options

Conservatives are hoping Canadians will buy a new, less strident Pierre Poilievre brand. It's a plan that likely won't work. But then again, having a plan is certainly better than having no plan.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Few politicians have had as quick and dramatic a fall from grace as Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre.

After all, not that long ago, he seemed to be riding the wave of an unstoppable political juggernaut, one that was poised to sweep away the governing Liberals.

His triumph seemed all but inevitable; momentum was all on his side.

But then United States President Donald Trump happened, and Canada's political landscape completely changed almost overnight and not in a way that favoured Poilievre and his Conservatives.

Indeed, Trump's emergence did to Poilievre's electoral chances what Godzilla did to Tokyo.

Not only did the Conservatives lose the last federal election, but we're currently in a situation where it's nearly impossible to conjure up a scenario that sees them winning the next one.

In fact, the polling news for the Conservatives is consistently dreadful, with one recent Angus Reid poll showing them trailing the Liberals by a whopping 13 points.

On top of that, just to add insult to injury, some Conserva-

tive MPs have abandoned Poilievre's party and crossed the floor to join the Liberals.

Meanwhile, the bad polls and the defections have generated a seemingly endless stream of negative media for the Conservatives.

So not only has Poilievre completely lost any momentum he once enjoyed, but also he now seems to be experiencing what might be termed "anti-momentum."

That's to say, Poilievre's political machine seems to be stuck in reverse.

The strategic communication problem this presents to the Conservative Party is obvious: how do you convince Canadian voters to jump aboard a train that seems to be heading in the wrong direction?

Keep in mind, the typical voter wants to be part of a winning team.

Of course, Poilievre and his advisers fully understand the massive challenge they face.

The question is: what, if anything, can a campaign do when every indicator is negative, when defeat seems certain?

Well, in my view, Poilievre has three options on the table.

Option One is to keep doing what worked in the past, and hope it works again in the future.

For this to work, Canada would need to experience another major seismic political shift: perhaps Prime Minister Mark Carney will become embroiled in some sort of massive scandal, or maybe Canada will tumble into a severe economic recession.

Under such circumstances, Poilievre's aggressive populist rhetoric might resonate once again.

Option Two is to accept defeat, but to go down in a blaze of ideological glory.

That's to say, knowing he's going to lose, Poilievre could fully and unabashedly embrace core conservative principles on issues like economics, culture and immigration in the hopes that, if nothing else, this approach would mobilize and energize his base and inspire future generations of conservatives.

Perhaps defeat can plant the seeds for future victory.

Option three is to totally scrap your old plan and come up with a brand-new marketing and communications approach.

This means changing a campaign's tone, altering its emphasis and rearranging priorities to better match the public mood.

So far, it seems Poilievre is adopting Option Three.

As pollster David Coletto has noted, the Conservative leader recently delivered a speech that seemed like a "tonal reset."

According to Coletto, Poilievre's address "felt calmer and more reflective .... it sounded less like a rallying cry and more like an alternative governing blueprint."

Coletto also noted that Poilievre was "less insurgent critic, more national strategist."

So yes, it seems the Conservatives are hoping Canadians will buy a new, less strident Poilievre brand.

It's a plan that likely won't work.

But then again, having a plan is certainly better than having no plan.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant. *The Hill Times*

## COMMENT

# Carney has a hard time explaining Canada's position towards India

This is a classic example where the government is clearly pursuing a strategy—a reset of our relationship with India—while also trying not to provoke any political backlash among voters who will be angered by such a reset. Maybe the government just doesn't know what its plan is or how to message it.

Matt Gurney

Opinion



**T**ORONTO—For the last week or two, any time the federal government has tried to explain what this country's position actually is towards India, we haven't come off looking great. There is a very simple explanation for this incoherence, but there is also a more alarming one, and I think that one is worth spending a minute thinking about.

First, let's talk about the incoherence itself. Ahead of Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent trip to India, a senior federal official, speaking to the media on background, said that India had ceased its operations directed at Canada. "I think we could say we're confident that that activity is not continuing," the official said, as quoted by the CBC. "If we believed that the government of India was actively interfering in the Canadian democratic process, we probably would not be taking this trip."

It was a bold statement suggesting that a real problem had been resolved, but drew immediate pushback by Canadian Sikhs who very much continue to feel targeted. A few days later, an official at CSIS confirmed to the *National Post* that the intelligence service continues to believe that India is still engaged in the alarming behaviour. This was followed by Carney and Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand refusing to answer direct questions about what concerns may remain.

There is, as noted, a really simple explanation for this: ruthlessly pragmatic politics. This is a classic example where the government is very clearly pursuing a strategy—namely a reset of our relationship with India—while also trying not to provoke any political backlash among that segment of the electorate that will be angered by such a reset. If governments were more in the habit of simply speaking blunt truth, they would probably just come out and announce that, yes, it was

awful that we had to do this, and we wouldn't be cozying up to India in a perfect world. But, given the obvious realignment of geopolitical forces, we need India on our side, and we're prepared to throw some of our own people under the bus in order to accomplish that.

No one would feel nice about saying that, but it would at least be true.

So, the simple explanation is that the government simply doesn't want to say aloud what we can all conclude for ourselves that it is doing. We could probably end this column here, and my editor would need to slap a big picture on the bottom of it to fill the space. Or maybe bump up the font size a bit.

But where's the fun in that? So let's consider another possible explanation.

Maybe the government just doesn't know what its plan is, or how to message it.

I'd like to be able to add a wryly self-conscious note here acknowledging or even lamenting my own cynicism. Alas, I cannot. Take it from a guy who sat down and read his way through both of the reports produced by the recent inquiries the federal government held: the Public Order Emergency Commission, and the Foreign Interference Commission. Neither was reassuring, but the POEC report was positively terrifying in terms of what it revealed about the challenges our government has communicating urgent information to itself.

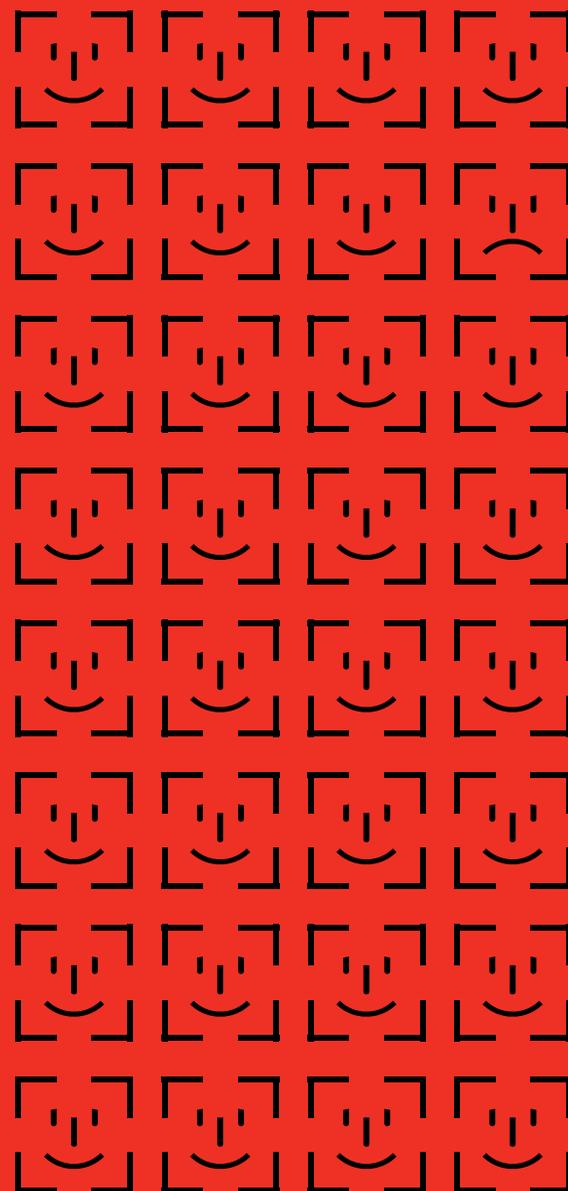
And this is not a problem that we can safely assume has been solved in the years since.

Yes, yes. I know. It's much more likely that the confusion we're seeing in the statements coming from federal officials—confusion that Carney and Anand are choosing to not clarify—is explained by the shabby politics of a reset with India. If asked, I'd probably bet on this being just a pretty awkward example of a government needing to do a thing it can't admit that it's doing.

But it's important that we not lose sight of just how much dysfunction the recent inquiries revealed. We can't always assume that incoherence on matters of national security is driven by politics. Sometimes, in this country, it's just plain-old ineptitude, and we should be honest with ourselves about that. If we are truly committed to taking down signs from windows, to reprise the PM's recent reference, let's make sure this one is one of them.

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

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## COMMENT

# Carney's jarring, bloodless, and defensive response to Donald Trump's war on Iran

A more restrained reaction from Mark Carney on the U.S.-Israeli attack on Iran—less cheer-leading and more of the caution displayed by some European leaders—would have sat better at home.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



Prime Minister Mark Carney's response to war in the Middle East has so far seemed hasty, morally queasy, intellectually convoluted and—attempts at clarification, notwithstanding—continues to be deeply disappointing to many Canadians.

His first statement, within hours of the beginning of hostilities, stopped just short of full-throated support for the United States-Israeli campaign, surprising from a prime minister who lectured the world at Davos recently about not “going along to get along,” about the virtue of middle powers creating a path independent of the hegemons.

Days later, Carney interrupted his world-trade tour to take reporters' questions and attempted to clarify: Canada respects the international law that requires United Nations sanction for defensive military actions, and, because there is no such permission for the Iran attack, we would not have joined U.S. President Donald Trump and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's war, if asked—which Canada wasn't. If asked in future, the prime minister first said Canada will not offer military support, but nuanced the statement later, saying he would not categorically rule out future involvement in the wider conflict in the interests of defending Canadians or allies.

This will be cold comfort to Canadians warily watching the widening devastation in the Middle East.

As to the U.S. and Israel, it is up to them to explain why they ignored long-standing international protocols intended to stop rogue states from invading and crushing smaller neighbours, said



Prime Minister Mark Carney's response to war in the Middle East has so far seemed hasty, morally queasy, intellectually convoluted and—attempts at clarification, notwithstanding—continues to be deeply disappointing to many Canadians, writes Susan Riley. Photograph courtesy of the World Economic Forum/Ciaran McCrickard

Carney. So, there, all clear: Canada believes the action against Iran is “inconsistent with international law,” but we support it anyway, “in context.”

This may not satisfy Carney's critics on the left—including those within his own Liberal Party—who are appalled at Trump's tacit declaration of war, without congressional approval, a UN Security Council resolution, or a coalition of like-minded allies. It isn't the first time a country has ignored international

rules of warfare (see Russia/Ukraine), but Canada has stoutly opposed Russia's illegal incursion and continues to help finance the Ukrainian resistance. When it comes to the U.S. and Israel, however, Carney is prepared to look the other way.

He calls this “dealing with the world as it is, not as we wish it to be.” But it looks, to many, less pragmatic than unprincipled—or, perhaps, both.

Throughout, Carney has justified the war by emphasizing the

evil of the Iranian regime, which has murdered thousands of its neighbours and its own citizens (and Canadians), oppresses women, and has been a major “exporter of terror” since the 1979 Islamic revolution. So far, so fair. Iran acquiring a nuclear bomb, he says, would be a “massive threat.” Also true.

But, despite his sophistication, Carney apparently accepts the immediacy of the Iranian nuclear threat and the urgent need for the recent action—this, despite the fact that ongoing nuclear negotiations with Iran were, apparently, nearing agreement; that Trump supposedly “obliterated” the Iranian nuclear program 10 months ago; that the U.S. president provided no credible evidence of an imminent threat to America; and, that Trump's bottomless need for praise, his failing polls, and ongoing scandals are the true driver behind everything he does. And oil, too; Trump loves to get his hands on other countries' resources.

Which isn't to say that Carney should have personally criticized Trump and his cartoonish Operation Epic Fury, the way Spain's president did, for example. For his efforts—Pedro Sanchez called the war “reckless and illegal”—Spain has been threatened with a total ban on trade with the U.S., although it isn't particularly dependent on the U.S. economy.

Canada has been, however, and, given our unique economic vulnerability, there's no use needlessly provoking the notoriously vengeful U.S. president with such a flat-out denunciation. Not that playing nice would get us a beneficial CUSMA deal, or any favours at all. But explicitly criticizing Trump's dangerous folly could spell even more trouble.

Trump doesn't reward loyalty, but he punishes any sign of disrespect.

Still, a more restrained reaction from Carney—less cheer-leading and more of the caution displayed by some European leaders—would have sat better at home.

That said, many of the 300,000 Iranian Canadians are applauding the U.S. action and the assassination of Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, while simultaneously worrying about relatives living in the Islamic Republic. Another potential beneficiary of the war is the Canadian oil patch. Indeed, Energy Minister Tim Hodgson, with a hint of a grin, said the world's oil consumers are already looking to a stable, predictable supplier, should oil flow from the Middle East remain disrupted for a while.

So, more oil revenues for Alberta, while across the Middle East, ordinary citizens cower in shelters or homes, waiting for bombs to rain down. As U.S. Secretary of War Pete Hegseth recently crowed: “Death and destruction from the sky, all day long!”

Meanwhile, Carney is—laughably, given this context—trying to shift the narrative to diplomatic efforts to end the war, reminding combatants of the obligation of “protecting innocent civilians”—without mentioning the estimated 165 Iranian school girls and their teachers who were among the first victims of Operation Epic Fury bombs.

There will be many more civilians, from the Gulf States to Lebanon, Iran, and Israel killed before this war ends—over weeks, or months—and, as the death-toll mounts, it will make Carney's “realistic” approach, and his silence about specific “collateral damage,” look like something darker.

As to Carney's reminder that all belligerents are required to abide by established “rules of engagement”—which include not targeting civilians—Hegseth doesn't agree, noting that U.S. troops will not be hamstrung by “stupid rules of engagement.” The objective, he said, is “to kill people and break things,” and not get into a “nation-building quagmire.”

Trump sounds equally indifferent about the long-term fate of Iran and its people. As he told reporters last week, “most of the people we had in mind (to succeed Khamenei) are dead.” He added “pretty soon we're not going to know anybody,” but, he added, the next leader could be “another bad guy.” It is up to Iranians to sort it out.

Emphasizing a diplomatic solution when Trump is calling the tune—as Carney and other European leaders have—looks like either wishful thinking or deliberate ignorance. Have they learned nothing from previous, failed attempts by U.S.-led forces to impose change in the Mideast from 50,000 feet—in Afghanistan, Iraq, Libya, Gaza, Syria? Are they deaf to the specious, revolving pretexts Trump has offered for this war: an imminent threat to the U.S. mainland from Iranian missiles, the non-existent nuclear bomb, the fact that Iran's leaders are “sick, nasty people” and “religious lunatics”?

Clearly, Iran doesn't have exclusive claim on lunacy, either religious or otherwise.

Trump's short attention span, and pressure from his MAGA base, who did not sign up for another “forever war,” may portend a limited campaign. Whenever it ends, it will leave a blighted landscape, another generation with ample reason to hate Israel and the U.S., and a Canadian prime minister with a diminished reputation.

And some Canadians, at least, may have a lingering sense of shame.

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

The Hill Times

# Canada can no longer pretend the U.S. is 'safe' for refugees

We cannot claim moral leadership while outsourcing our conscience to a treaty signed under political conditions that no longer exist.

Washim Ahmed

Opinion



An intensive-care nurse is dead in the snow in South Minneapolis after an encounter with United States immigration agents.

The precise details are still being debated, but the takeaway for Canada is unmistakable. In today's America, Immigration and

Customs Enforcement (ICE) has spilled into public life with lethal consequences. These operations are no longer confined to detention centres or border zones.

They are unfolding in neighbourhoods, outside schools, and on city streets, targeting migrants, asylum seekers, and even those who try to protect them.

This is the same population Canada continues to send back across the border under the Safe Third Country Agreement (STCA).

For Canadians, this should not register as distant American news. It should land much closer to home. Under the STCA, Canada certifies the U.S. as a "safe" place for asylum seekers and returns people fleeing persecution into this very system.

The STCA rests on a simple premise: that the U.S. provides access to fair and humane asylum procedures compliant with international refugee law.

That premise is no longer true.

This month alone, American media reported a second fatal ICE shooting in Minneapolis. Earlier, Renee Nicole Good, a 37-year-old mother of three, was shot and killed by an immigration agent after she stopped her car to support immigrant neighbours. These incidents reflect an enforcement regime that increasingly treats migration as a security threat rather than a humanitarian responsibility.

Even more disturbing are the images involving children.

In Minnesota, school officials confirmed that armed ICE agents detained at least four minors, including a five-year-old child taken into custody with his father after preschool. Other reporting describes teenagers and toddlers detained during the same enforcement surge. These scenes do not resemble due process.

When a country detains children at school and kills civilians during immigration operations, the word "safe" loses any credible meaning.

The Supreme Court of Canada has been very clear that this country remains responsible for ensuring that its actions comply with the cornerstone of international refugee law, the prohibition on refoulement, which forbids returning people to countries where they face serious harm.

Law does not operate in a vacuum. It depends on facts. And the facts with our neighbour to the south have changed.

I have seen this conveyor belt up close. Refugees who sought safety in the U.S. and then turned to Canada as a last resort have been sent back into detention and deportation systems that international refugee law was designed to prevent.

This is what makes Prime Minister Mark Carney's recent Davos speech so consequential.

Carney spoke of "values-based realism." He urged countries to stop pretending that institutions and international agreements still work when they no longer do. He

called for honesty about global disorder, and for rebuilding systems that reflect human rights and dignity.

Those words now face their first real test.

If Canada continues to designate the U.S. as "safe" while children are detained and civilians are killed in immigration operations, then our realism is selective and our values conditional. We cannot claim moral leadership while outsourcing our conscience to a treaty signed under political conditions that no longer exist.

Canada cannot validate a system that has drifted so far from refugee protection that it now produces fear instead of refuge.

Parliament and the immigration minister should immediately suspend the Safe Third Country Agreement so Canada can meet its own legal and moral obligations.

Doing so would signal that this country will not participate in a system built on deterrence, detention, and violence. And it would give real meaning to the prime minister's call for values-based realism.

Canada can no longer pretend not to see.

*Washim Ahmed is a refugee and human rights lawyer. He is a co-founder of OWS Law.*

*The Hill Times*

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# OPINION

# Canada's trade ambitions rest on a food system we're dismantling

The assumption appears to be that fewer experts can somehow do more with less—an impossibility in a system already stretched past its limits.

Sean O'Reilly

Opinion



Canada is entering a defining trade moment.

With relations with the United States increasingly volatile, Prime Minister Mark Carney has been clear about the path forward: reduce Canada's dependence on the U.S., and grow non-American exports by 50 per cent over the next decade.

That goal is ambitious and necessary. But it rests on a critical assumption: that Canada has the public infrastructure needed to earn and maintain the trust of global markets. Right now, that foundation is being weakened.

Cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) threaten one of this country's most valuable trade assets: confidence in our food safety, and animal and plant health systems. At the precise moment when credibility and speed matter most, Canada is stripping capacity from the system that underpins access to hundreds of international markets.



Cuts to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, overseen by Health Minister Marjorie Michel, threaten one of Canada's most valuable trade assets: confidence in our food safety, and animal and plant health systems, writes Sean O'Reilly. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada's food and agriculture economy is worth \$100-billion annually. CFIA's \$839-million budget protects that entire

ecosystem of trade—an extraordinary return on investment. Yet, these cuts put it at risk by eliminating over a million hours

of inspection, surveillance, and scientific expertise each year. This is not trimming bureaucracy; it is removing the experts who stop disease before it shuts borders down.

Trading partners do not take a country's word that its animals, plants, or food are safe. Veterinary epidemiologists, disease and insect vector surveillance, and risk analysis are core trade requirements. Cutting this expertise increases the risk of undetected diseases entering Canada, and jeopardizes access to export markets by laying off the very experts who help keep them open.

Imagine an outbreak of a disease such as bluetongue, African swine fever, or even a single case of foot-and-mouth disease without adequate domestic surveillance in place. Canada would lose its export status overnight, devastating entire sectors. Without veterinarians to investigate, contain, and certify disease status, outbreaks spread faster, markets stay closed longer, and losses compound. The risk of zoonotic disease spilling into the human population also grows.

There is no plan for managing these risks under the proposed cuts.

The assumption appears to be that fewer experts can somehow do more with less—an impossibility in a system already stretched past its limits. Workload has surged in the last decade, but staffing hasn't kept up. Already, this country lacks sufficient veterinary capacity to inspect export trucks before they leave the country. The system is operating without redundancy; further cuts risk removing the safety margin entirely.

The expertise required is neither abundant, nor replaceable. There are only a handful of veterinary epidemiologists in Canada, and only dozens globally. We cannot afford to lose them. Universities and the private sector do not maintain national surveillance systems, nor should they. If CFIA were to lose capacity, the work does not get "streamlined." It stops.

Diversifying trade to non-U.S. markets will only increase the pressure CFIA faces. Canada's trade negotiators cannot secure new market access without the surveillance, data, and controls provided by CFIA. Every trading partner imposes commodity-specific requirements that CFIA regulates for export.

To trade, Canada must be able to demonstrate compliance. If a large partner requires expanded monitoring—for example, for insects that may carry bluetongue—and this country lacks the capacity to deliver it, market access is lost and industry suffers the loss. Expanding market access is not achievable if importing countries do not maintain confidence in CFIA's inspection systems. This makes the Canadian economy more reliant on the U.S., not less.

Strong surveillance is not a luxury; it is the lowest-cost alternative to export bans and preventable public-health emergencies. At a time when Canada is trying to build resilience, economic sovereignty, and independence from a single hegemonic market, weakening the CFIA is reckless and entirely unnecessary, putting billions of dollars in trade at risk.

Sean O'Reilly is the president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada.

*The Hill Times*

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# AGRICULTURE

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AGRICULTURE IS  
IS SMART TRADE  
**POLICY**

FEEDING  
**THE WORLD IS**  
**AN ECONOMIC**  
OPPORTUNITY

UNLEASHING  
CANADA'S  
AGRICULTURE  
POTENTIAL

**SCIENCE**  
**BEHIND**  
SOLVING FOOD  
INSECURITY

AGRICULTURE R&D,  
COMMERCIALIZATION:  
**DRIVERS OF**  
**A RESILIENT**  
**FUTURE**

FARMERS  
**MUST BE PROTECTED**  
FROM CLIMATE  
**CHAOS**

CANADA'S  
AGRICULTURE  
**SECTOR**  
MUST BE RESILIENT

**TIME**  
TO PROCESS  
**WHAT WE**  
GROW

SUPPLY MANAGEMENT **SHOULD BE SAFE** UNDER  
CUSMA REVIEW, SAY AGRICULTURE SECTOR REPS

# AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing



Agriculture Minister Heath MacDonald told *The Hill Times* that the Liberal government 'will continue to protect supply-managed sectors,' and that 'supply management is not on the table,' in the CUSMA review. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Protect supply management in CUSMA review, agriculture sector reps tell feds

'There's never been a more important time to ensure that our domestic production is robust and protected,' says David Wiens, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Canada's agri-food trade system may face scrutiny in the upcoming review of North America's free trade pact, with some pressure from the United States to reduce tariff barriers and to secure greater market access, even as domestic agriculture sector representatives argue supply management provides stability for farmers in an increasingly unstable global trading environment.



David Wiens, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada, says that supply management has 'ensured that dairy, poultry and eggs are produced here in Canada for Canadians,' even in 'volatile times.' Photograph courtesy of the DFC

"It's important for Canada to ensure that no additional market access or any other dairy concession is granted," said David Wiens, president of the Dairy Farmers of Canada.

"There's never been a more important time to ensure that our domestic production is robust

and protected as we face unprecedented global uncertainty, and that's what we live with now."

Established in 1972, Canada's supply management system is a national regulatory framework for the dairy, poultry, and egg sectors intended to balance production with consumer demand as a

way to ensure stable prices and fair farmer income. The framework includes the use of tariffs and quotas on certain products as a way to prevent foreign imports from undermining the domestic market.

The first joint review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) is coming up on July 1. U.S. Trade Representative Jamieson Greer said back in December that the White House is not prepared to extend the pact without addressing "specific and structural issues," and also expressed concerns about "dairy market access in Canada" and "Canada's exports of certain dairy products," CBC News reported on Dec. 18, 2025.

In response, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) said at the time that supply management is "not on the table."

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, Wiens described supply management as a means of preventing "wild swings in pricing," which is key in a time of trade uncertainty.

"[Supply management] does work very well in terms of creating that predictability and

stability, especially ... in light of the volatility that we're seeing worldwide when it comes to the economy," he said.

"Supply management has in the past—and continues even through volatile times that we experience now—ensured that dairy, poultry and eggs are produced here in Canada for Canadians, and it's also really important to our national food security."

In a emailed statement to *The Hill Times* on March 3, Agriculture Minister Heath MacDonald (Malpeque, P.E.I.) reaffirmed that supply management would not be a part of CUSMA negotiations.

"As we approach the trilateral review of the [CUSMA], our government's position on supply management remains clear: we fully support the system and will continue to protect supply-managed sectors. Supply management is not on the table," said MacDonald in the email.

"Our focus will be on strengthening trade relationships with the United States and Mexico, ensuring fair market access, and building greater resilience and long-term stability for Canadian farmers and processors."

Adding a layer of protection to this country's supply management system, Bill C-202 received royal assent on June 26, 2025. The legislation prohibits Canadian trade negotiators from making concessions that increase import quotas or lower tariffs on supply-managed goods, such as dairy, poultry and eggs, in trade agreements.

Tyler McCann, managing director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, told *The Hill Times* that supply management, by and large, brings stability to this country's milk, chicken, egg, and poultry production, but also described it as a large trade irritant with the U.S.

Continued on page 27



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# AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

## With global volatility the new normal, Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector must be resilient, innovative, and competitive

The goal is clear: ensure that Canadian producers and processors are equipped to face emerging risks while capturing new opportunities.

Liberal MP  
Sophie Chatel

Opinion



In today's world, food production is not just an economic activity; it is a pillar of sovereignty, writes Liberal MP Sophie Chatel. Photograph courtesy of the Office of Sophie Chatel

As Prime Minister Mark Carney said in Davos back in January, "A country that cannot feed itself has few options."

In today's world, food production is not just an economic activity; it is a pillar of sovereignty.

A country that cannot feed itself risks vulnerability in a volatile global order.

That is why Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector sits at

the heart of our prosperity and national resilience.

The sector supports roughly one in nine jobs in Canada across farming, processing, and retail. It

contributes approximately seven per cent of GDP, making it one of the country's largest sectors. With nearly \$100-billion in annual exports, it is one of this coun-

try's top export sectors and the largest manufacturing industry; more geographically diverse and employment-intensive than almost any other export sector.

From producers to processors to retailers, this ecosystem drives rural economies, strengthens manufacturing, boosts exports, and reinforces food security.

### Building value at home

If we want agriculture to remain competitive and sovereign, productivity and value-added processing must be central to our strategy.

Recently, I picked up a jar of pickles at the grocery. The cucumbers were grown in Canada, but the product had been processed and packaged abroad before returning home. This illustrates a broader challenge: while we grow exceptional food, too much of the value-added transformation happens elsewhere.

I also visited Ideal Can in Quebec, a Canadian firm producing steel food cans domestically. For years, Canada exported raw steel and aluminum, often to the United States, while importing finished packaging back. In a context of tariffs and trade disruptions, that model exposes vulnerabilities and opportunities.

Companies like Ideal Can are strengthening domestic processing capacity. Our tomatoes, and so much of what we grow, should be produced, processed, and packaged here at home, using

Continued on page 26

## Unleashing Canada's agricultural potential

Innovation is in Canadian agriculture's DNA. Our farmers, ranchers, and processors have embraced new varieties, new technologies, and smarter stewardship practices, all while feeding Canadians and millions more people around the world.

Conservative MP  
John Barlow

Opinion



Prior to the previous election, I asked every farming asso-

ciation and stakeholder group to give me their top five priorities. If Conservatives earned the honour of forming government, what did producers want us to focus on within the first 100 days.

Every single response included ensuring the priority for Agriculture and Agri-food Canada (AAFC) would be research and innovation.

I assumed producers shared the same list with all political parties. A list which included an accountable Canada Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) and Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA); eliminate tariffs, taxes, and red tape; diversify global trade markets; and ensure a reliable supply chain to get commodities to those markets.

Did producers give the Carney Liberals a different list? Did they ask to maintain the status quo at the regulatory agencies, retain red tape, increase tariffs and taxes, delay building critical 'nation-building projects,' and shut down irreplaceable research facilities across the country?

I do not believe that to be the case, but judging by the actions of the Liberal government, that's what they heard.

Clearly, the Conservatives are listening to the priorities of farmers, while agriculture continues to

be an afterthought for the Carney Liberals.

The closure of the research centres is a devastating blow to Canadian food production and food security.

Innovation is in Canadian agriculture's DNA. Our farmers, ranchers, and processors have embraced new varieties, new technologies, and smarter stewardship practices, all while feeding Canadians and millions more people around the world.

Consider what Canadian ingenuity has already given the world.

Canola, one of the most widely consumed vegetable oils on the planet, was born right here in Canada. It is a true testament to what happens when brilliant researchers are given the tools and the freedom to innovate. Canada is also the birthplace of zero-till farming. Again, developed right here at home and exported around the world to improve soil health and increase drought-resilience. About 80 per cent of the wheat varieties planted each spring in Canada were developed by AAFC.

Advances in gene-editing, drought-resilient seed varieties, genomics, these are not small achievements; they have changed the course of global agriculture.

Our edge was not built on luck. It was built on science, research, and a federal government that understood its role in championing our incredible agriculture sector. That partnership is broken after a decade of Liberal leadership.

The decision to shut down seven agricultural research stations across the country is a reflection of misaligned Liberal priorities. These facilities provided Canadian producers with generational crop science, soil research, livestock innovation, and on-the-ground expertise, helping to make Canadian agriculture world-class.

Saying that there is no money is not a budget decision. That is a values decision, and it is the wrong one.

The Liberals suggest universities or provinces will absorb the work, but those groups are clear: they do not have the resources to take on Liberal downloading. This means we are losing irreplaceable research that takes decades to develop unless we fight back.

Prime Minister Mark Carney said a country that cannot feed itself, fuel itself, or defend itself has few options. I agree with him; however, the bitter irony is his own government is dismantling

the foundations of domestic food production and food security.

To support research does not mean spending \$16-million on consultants, \$33-million on a prison farm, \$8-million for 'gender-just, low-carbon' rice in Vietnam, or losing millions on a failed cricket farm. It means funding scientists and research right here at home, sending the message that agricultural research is a national priority.

Conservatives will cut red tape and the industrial carbon tax, realign the CFIA and PMRA to ensure they are partners—not adversaries—and we will build the infrastructure we need to access global markets to unleash our food production potential.

Canadian agriculture is not in decline because farmers lack ambition or ability. It is being drowned by a deaf Liberal government that has chosen the wrong priorities at the worst possible time.

The potential is there. The people are there. The only thing standing in the way is the current government itself.

Conservative MP John Barlow, who represents Foothills, Alta., is also his party's official critic for agriculture and agri-food.

The Hill Times



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# AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

## Farmers must be protected from climate chaos

We are a long way from the worst. Humanity still has a chance to reduce our risks to those to which we can adapt. Still, British Columbia has had staggering losses.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May



Opinion

Back in 1986, when I first started working on climate change within Environment Canada, the future threat of global warming had been identified. Agriculture was understood to be one of the most exposed economic sectors. Scientists were clear that unless governments acted to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, and protect and restore forests globally, we were headed for increased drought and increased crop losses. We knew that increased intensity and frequency of extreme weather events would take their toll on food production. None of this should come as a surprise.

But 40 years of inaction and procrastination is delivering hard times for a sector that is hugely dependent on somewhat predictable rains. While weather is rarely predictable, the larger frame of hospitable climate used to be a



Agricultural losses extend across North America, and wheat crops alone in Canada and the U.S. have lost \$2.9-billion, writes Green Party Leader Elizabeth May. Photograph courtesy of Bataolis Panagiotis, Pixabay.com

given. No more. We do not ask often enough, 'can we reduce GHG emissions to avoid the worst?' And we do not even want to know 'what is the worst case scenario?' Ultimately, the worst is too terrifying to be shared. To even speak it is to be accused of fear-mongering.

We are a long way from the worst. Humanity still has a chance to reduce our risks to those to which we can adapt. Still, British Columbia has had staggering losses. First, to our forestry sector, from the pine beetle outbreak (2004-2015); an epidemic created by winter warming. A 2016 economic study in *Forestry: An International*

*Journal of Forest Research* estimated cumulative losses at over \$57-billion. Then the extended wildfire seasons destroying property, and then the heat dome that killed 619 British Columbians in four days in early summer 2021. The atmospheric rivers of the fall of 2021 were devastating for B.C. farmers. More than 600,000 farm animals died, largely poultry in the Sumas Prairie, as well as hogs and cattle. This year, once again, the floods brought ruin. Attention almost immediately turns to governments' failing to do enough for man-made infrastructure.

My husband's family has a farm in Ashcroft, B.C. He used to farm there. In the 2021 floods, he lost a friend whose house was washed down the river. Her body was never found. And young friends of his nearly lost their lives managing to escape and rescue most of their animals, but the Nicola River carved a new path. His friends' carefully tended organic farm lost its land base as 8.5 acres fell into the river. Talk about a devastating loss to farmers. A story seldom shared.

To protect our economy and our larger society, we must reduce GHGs as quickly as possible while, simultaneously, ramping up measures to adapt to the warming climate and prevent avoidable losses.

All told, in 2024, B.C. farmers were hit harder than farmers in any other province, losing \$456.9-million in net farm income.

The B.C. Agriculture Council has asked the provincial government to update the Agriculture

Land Reserve policy, and increase compensation programs for those displaced by the climate crisis.

Agricultural losses extend across North America. Wheat crops alone in Canada and the United States have lost \$2.9-billion. The crisis in food affordability and climate impacts is obvious. We need local, healthy affordable food. Climate events undermine those goals.

Farmers need better supports for financial losses and governmental back-stops where insurance falls short, especially as harvests fall, physical damage and livestock deaths and costs from drought and floods and fire mount. As we monetize carbon, farmers who have adopted no-till agriculture should be paid for the carbon their practices sequester in the soil. Those who manage riparian zones for greater biodiversity should not be expected to do so out of their own pockets. They should be paid for creating green infrastructure.

It is an odd time to be pressing for expansion of fossil fuel infrastructure, and an even worse time to be cutting agricultural science. In slashing the public service, we are seeing agricultural science undermined across Canada, Farm families must be at the heart of climate policy. Pitting farmers against climate action is deeply counter-intuitive. As climate crisis losses mount for farmers, we must form common cause.

Green Party Leader Elizabeth May has served as MP for Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C., since 2011. *The Hill Times*

## Agricultural research, innovation, and commercialization: drivers of a resilient future, says Sen. Black

Farming is certainly not without its challenges; however, research, innovation, science and technology create tangible tools and resources that will help farmers and producers overcome some of the challenges facing the industry.

CSG Senator Rob Black



Opinion



Senator Rob Black of the Canadian Senators Group is shown here in Willow Creek, Alta., while on a study for the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry's soil health study in August 2023. Last year, he introduced Bill S-230, the National Strategy for Soil Health Act. Photograph courtesy of the Senate of Canada

Agricultural research and innovation are intertwined,

and are fundamental to the competitiveness and resiliency of the

Canadian agriculture sector. Yet, in January, the federal govern-

ment announced the closure of three Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada research and development centres located in Ontario, Quebec, and Alberta, and four satellite research farms located in Nova Scotia, Manitoba, and two in Saskatchewan.

Although these federal research sites are closing, the minister has expressed hope that the government will do as much agricultural research as it did before. If this is an essential step to strengthen and sustain Canada's agricultural industry, there must be thorough consideration of the effects of these closures and diligent planning that safeguards our country's agricultural research and innovation capacity.

Soil health types vary across the country, and there is no one-size-fits-all method to protecting soils. We cannot discount the value of having satellite research farms in different locations, climates, and ecosystems across our vast and diverse landscape. These facilities allow for sound testing of, for example, seed varieties, farming practices and technologies, that can support evidence-based decision-making and strengthen long-term agricultural resilience.

We know that, every day, Canada is losing prime agricultural farmland from coast to coast to coast, and soil health degradation is occurring in every province and territory. It is imperative we support the scientists and

# Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**

## Feeding the world is an economic opportunity

Canada can be an agri-food leader, but to compete globally, producers and industry need access to the latest tools and technology.

Liam MacDonald

Opinion



Nearly a decade ago, the federal government released its Economic Strategy Tables report on agri-food, and laid out an ambitious plan to turn Canada into a global agricultural superpower. Through market diversification, a competitive regulatory environment, transportation and digital infrastructure, and a stable labour supply, Canada could become a top five exporter of agri-food products globally.

Spoiler: Canada did not achieve these lofty goals. Instead of becoming top five, our market share shrunk. We now rank behind countries like China and Brazil, whose exports have grown even faster to fill demand in high-growth regions. While it's true that we have surpassed nominal export goals—more than 50 per cent growth between 2017 and 2024, from \$65-billion to \$100-billion—declining market share means that we are leaving agri-food potential untapped, translating to billions of dollars in lost economic opportunity.

Much has changed since the report's release, but one very important factor remains: the world's population is still growing rapidly and needs more food. Estimates predict food demand growth of up to 100 per cent by 2050. Burgeoning middle classes in high-growth regions are changing dietary habits, accelerating demand for high-quality, protein-rich foods. Against this backdrop, and given our significant reserves of arable land and global recognition of our high-quality agri-food products and sustainable production, it seems obvious

that Canada should be an agri-food leader.

And we can be, but to compete globally, Canadian producers and industry need access to the latest tools and technology. Unfortunately, access is often restricted or delayed for reasons that seem inconsistent with scientific evidence, such as limits on pesticide use that differ from our global competitors, or because there is a lack of co-ordination between the various regulatory agencies with mandates touching the sector, leaving the industry facing a series of conflicting requirements, such as the recent slew of new packaging and labelling rules.

We should preserve our trustworthy regulatory system—after all, it's largely why our food products enjoy such a strong reputation globally—but we also need to give producers and industry more freedom to innovate and adopt new technologies. The federal Red Tape Review is a good start to creating an agile regulatory system, but changes relating to agriculture have so far lacked the needed ambition.

Similarly, the sector not only needs access to the latest tools



Analyses have shown that we could grow our market share by 30 per cent and add \$44-billion in exports by 2035 if we commit to the necessary policy actions, writes Liam MacDonald. Photograph courtesy of Tom Fisk, Pexels.com

and technology, but also support in adopting them. Our industry needs to keep pace as global food production becomes increasingly automated and digitized. However, our R&D investment lags behind peers—research cuts at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada could further hamper the sector's performance—and uptake of digital tools is relatively slow. The sector has not received its share from federal innovation programs, such as the Strategic Response Fund. Addressing these gaps will boost productivity and support the development of new products that can compete globally, as well as helping to address labour constraints.

Innovation and productivity growth are key to regaining our market share, but with that comes the imperative that we are ready to meet increased demand. Our customers must be able to trust that we will consistently deliver our quality product on time, particularly as the global geo-

political environment becomes more volatile, because there are few things more important to national security than a stable food supply. Yet, Canada's current trade infrastructure status quo won't be enough to accommodate increased capacity, needing an additional \$13–20-billion in investment to catch up to our competitors. This will also need to be combined with faster project approvals and fewer damaging labour disruptions that bring our supply chains to a grinding halt.

Canada's agri-food opportunity is clear: analyses have shown that we could grow our market share by 30 per cent and add \$44-billion in exports by 2035 if we commit to the necessary policy actions as outlined above. But, as the last decade has proved, others will step up if we don't.

Liam MacDonald is the director of policy and government relations with the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

The Hill Times

## SUSTAINABILITY IN ACTION

How Canadian Chicken Farmers Are Reducing Their Environmental Footprint

Canadian chicken farmers are proving that sustainability isn't just a goal—it's part of how they farm every day.



The latest Life Cycle Assessment, conducted by Groupe AGÉCO, shows that since 2016, the carbon footprint per kilogram of chicken has fallen by 6%.

Chicken production accounts for just 0.4% of Canada's total greenhouse gas emissions, and supported by supply management, farmers have the stability to invest in smart technologies.

Learn more at [chickenfarmers.ca](http://chickenfarmers.ca).



# AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

## Food affordability isn't the problem, it's a symptom

Canada is well-placed to conquer our agri-food innovation problems; through a strong innovation culture with proven ventures that are ready to scale, a globally respected agriculture and food sector, and a desire to diversify our trade partners.

Dana McCauley

Opinion



From farm to fork, the Canadian food sector is stressed out. Whether you're a producer, a manufacturer or a consumer, constant and unpredictable change is taking a toll. Recent initiatives, like Bill C-19, the Groceries and



Food affordability is just one symptom of a much larger systemic problem that has yet to be addressed in a substantial, national way, writes the Canadian Food Innovation Network's Dana McCauley. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Essentials Benefit Act, make it clear that government leaders are recognizing how this stress is affecting everyday Canadians.

However, food affordability is just one symptom of a much larger systemic problem that has yet to be addressed in a substantial, national way.

Despite being a global agriculture powerhouse, Canada's agri-food sector has fallen behind other countries. We rely heavily on food imports and exports with our neighbour to the South. Recent and ongoing tariffs make it more important than ever for this country's agri-food sector to

build a resilient, domestic supply chain to ensure food security.

Canada ranks seventh among the most influential agri-food nations globally. Despite our agricultural prowess, nearly one in five Canadians experiences moderate to severe food insecurity. One major cause is a historic lack of investment in domesticating the cycle of getting food from farm to fork—an end-to-end food supply chain that could be dominated by home-grown companies, but isn't.

Growth investment in Canadian agri-food is lower than it was a decade ago, with values down 32 per cent and deals down

29 per cent. This has slowed commercialization and scale-up opportunities for the majority of agri-food businesses.

That underinvestment has left Canada exposed.

Our food sector runs on razor-thin margins and is exposed to constant global supply chain volatility. When disruptions hit—tariffs, climate events, a weak dollar—businesses without the capacity to anticipate and adapt have one option: pass the cost to consumers. Grocery prices have climbed 22 per cent since 2022, nearly double broader inflation. Canada's dependence on processed food imported from the United States is a major reason why imports were the single-largest driver of price increases in 2025.

Now, more than ever, we need to diversify our food exports and imports beyond the U.S., but also ensure that we are building a strong, domestic infrastructure to shield us from ongoing global turmoil. Investing in agri-food innovation and supply chain modernization means securing our food sovereignty.

Canada is well-placed to conquer our agri-food innovation problems through a strong innovation culture with proven ventures that are ready to scale, a globally respected agriculture and food sector, and a desire to diversify our trade partners.

The Strategic Response Fund is one example of utilizing innovation to defend against tariffs and trade disruptions. With funding for the Canada Groceries and Essentials Benefit, Ottawa is off to a good start. However, the

government needs to be prepared to invest further as they learn what is effective in bolstering our food sector.

Affordability and cost of living—of which food plays a major part—is ranked the number one issue for Canadians. Putting focus and energy into optimizing how our agri-food sector works will stabilize food prices and have a sizeable impact on everyday Canadians' household budgets.

Canada needs a shift of focus from new venture creation and invention to adoption and scale. We need to invest in the creation and growth of medium-sized processors, which are export-oriented, revenue-generating, and positioned to anchor domestic capacity. Canada also needs a shift from isolated project grants to multi-year investment strategies that connect innovation to adoption. Food affordability is directly linked to Canada's willingness and ability to invest in modernizing the food sector—encouraging food companies to adopt home-grown solutions that will fortify the nation's food supply chain and move the sector toward Industry 4.0. A goal of owning more of our farm to food infrastructure will have a direct impact on Canadians' wallets, and on food sovereignty. And the federal government has signalled it understands this. Now the investment has to follow—sustained, scaled, and directed at connecting innovation to the food businesses that need it.

*Dana McCauley is CEO of the Canadian Food Innovation Network.*

*The Hill Times*

## Canada's family farms are strategic assets, and our tax laws are putting them at risk

Changing the Income Tax Act in this way is a win for government, a win for rural communities, and a win for farming families.

Derryn Shrobbree

Opinion



Canada is facing a quiet but consequential threat to its

food security, rural communities, and economic sovereignty which is embedded in our tax code.

Family farms—long the backbone of Canada's agricultural system—are disappearing. Not because families want to sell, but because our laws make it harder for farms to stay in families as families themselves change.

At the centre of this issue is Sec. 73(3) of the Income Tax Act, which governs tax deferrals on intergenerational farm transfers. Today, tax-deferred transfers apply to sons and daughters, but exclude nieces and nephews.

That distinction no longer reflects modern Canada, nor does it reflect the hostile global political environment in which land, water, and resources are

perceived as fair game for other nations.

These days, many farmers do not have children. Or, they have kids who don't want to stay on the farm while nieces and nephews are eager to carry on the family tradition.

Our nieces and nephews are natural successors, and should be treated as such. Yet, under current law, they are treated as strangers.

The consequences of this outdated Income Tax Act definition are profound and long-lasting.

When a family farm cannot be transferred without triggering a significant and immediate tax burden, owners are often left with one option: sell to the highest bidder. Too often, that bidder is a large consolidated operator or a

foreign-backed interest with the capital to absorb the cost.

In Canada, death is a deemed disposition of assets. The CRA looks at you like you've sold all your assets, and within 31 days this triggers a large tax liability. So while you're grieving for the person who died, lawyers, accountants and the CRA crystallize your tax bill. It's ruinous for families.

And if you can't pay that tax bill, the land goes to power of sale, and the banks end up taking the lands and assets from families who have been farming for three or four generations.

Nieces and nephews must be brought under the inheritance tree for farm inheritance.

This is not an abstract policy problem. The numbers are frightening as 88 per cent of Canadian farm families do not have a succession plan, leaving them vulnerable to losing their farm and their legacy.

I know this personally. It happened to my family.

I now own and operate a farm in Mount Forest, Ont. Before that, I spent more than a decade on Wall Street working in derivatives after growing up on a farm that tore my family apart when it came time for inheritance.

My father had no succession plan. The fallout was disastrous. We lost the land and we lost each other. That experience shaped my life and my work. It is why I now help farm families

plan for continuity rather than crisis.

Let's be honest: food security is national security. A food system anchored by independent, family-run farms is more resilient, more accountable, and more rooted in Canadian communities than one dominated by a small number of large players. It keeps decision-making local, sustains rural economies, and preserves generations of agricultural knowledge.

We need a policy change immediately. Amending Sec. 73(3) of the Income Tax Act to extend tax-deferred treatment to nieces and nephews would align federal tax policy with modern family realities while preserving the original intent of intergenerational farm transfers.

This is not a tax giveaway. The tax is deferred, not eliminated. Government revenue is preserved, farms remain productive, and families are given the time and flexibility needed to transition responsibly.

Changing the Income Tax Act in this way is a win for government, a win for rural communities, and a win for farming families. It slows unnecessary consolidation, keeps Canadian land in Canadian hands, and strengthens the fabric of our domestic food system.

*Derryn Shrobbree is the CEO of 33seven.*

*The Hill Times*

# Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**

## From pulses to power: why plant-based agriculture is smart trade policy



As governments speak of 'building Canada up,' the conversation has centred on industrial policy, supply chains, and trade resilience. Yet, one of the most significant economic opportunities remains under-leveraged: plant-based agriculture as a core pillar of our national economic strategy, writes Colin Saravanamuttoo. *Photograph courtesy of Wikipedia/Creative Commons*

By expanding plant-based production alongside smaller-scale, higher-welfare animal agriculture, Canada can strengthen farm incomes, meet consumer expectations, reduce the pressures of concentrated systems. Diversified operations are often more stable and more connected to local communities.

Colin Saravanamuttoo

Opinion



Canada's economic strategy is at an inflection point.

As governments speak of "building Canada up," the conversation has centred on industrial policy, supply chains, and trade resilience. Yet, one of the most significant economic opportunities remains under-leveraged: plant-based agriculture as a core pillar of our national economic strategy.

This is not a niche environmental agenda. It is a strategic economic opportunity.

Global demand for plant-based proteins is expanding, driven by population growth, health priorities, environmental concerns and cultural preferences. Canada is uniquely positioned to lead. We are the world's largest exporter of lentils and among the top exporters of dry peas, accounting for roughly one-third of global trade in key pulse categories.

We have world-class farmers, research institutions, and food-processing capacity. What we lack is a co-ordinated strategy to make plant-based agriculture a driver of growth and trade diversification.

A credible national strategy should invest in domestic processing, innovation, and export capacity. Rather than exporting raw commodities and importing value-added goods, Canada should build high-value supply chains at home. That means investing in processing infrastructure, supporting farmers transitioning to

high-demand crops and aligning trade policy with emerging markets.

The export opportunity is significant. Food manufacturing generates higher GDP and employment multipliers than primary production alone. Canada already exports billions of dollars in pulses annually. By scaling up value-added processing of plant proteins, the sector could generate up to \$25-billion annually and create 17,000 jobs by 2035, according to Protein Industries Canada.

Canada's diverse diasporas maintain strong economic and cultural ties to countries where plant-based diets are the norm. India, for example, has one of the world's largest vegetarian populations and a fast-growing middle class seeking high-quality, reliable food imports. As Canada advances free-trade discussions with India, plant-based protein exports should be a defined priority.

As Canada works to stabilize economic relations with China, food security and protein diversification should remain strategic priorities. China is actively diversifying protein sources due to supply volatility, disease outbreaks in livestock sectors and environmental constraints. Canadian-grown pulses and plant proteins can meet that demand while positioning us as a reliable partner in a shifting geopolitical landscape.

By investing in plant-based agriculture for export, Canada can diversify trade relationships, reduce reliance on volatile commodity markets and strengthen our standing as a stable food supplier. This is smart trade policy.

It is also sound risk management. Livestock production is vulnerable to zoonotic disease, antimicrobial resistance and climate-related disruptions. Agriculture accounts for roughly one-tenth of Canada's greenhouse gas emissions, with livestock production representing more than half of that share. Diversifying protein production can help reduce exposure to climate-related policy and market pressures.

The livestock processing sector is highly concentrated, increasing vulnerability to supply disruptions, as demonstrated during COVID-19, underscoring the interconnection of animal health and welfare, human health and economic stability. The 'One Health' framework recognizes that human, animal and environmental health are inseparable. Expanding plant-based agriculture reduces systemic risks tied to intensive animal farming while strengthening long-term resilience in our food system.

There is a clear benefit to both rural economic development and animal welfare in modernizing our agricultural model. Canada was built on family farms, diversified production, and strong, local food systems. Over time, consolidation and

industrial-scale production have reshaped parts of the livestock sector, often squeezing margins for farmers while increasing scrutiny over animal transport, confinement, and environmental impacts.

Canada's farmers are on the front lines of the climate crisis, and are central to restoring resilience in our agricultural economy. By expanding plant-based production alongside support for smaller-scale, higher-welfare animal agriculture, this country

can strengthen farm incomes, meet evolving consumer expectations and reduce the pressures of concentrated systems. Diversified operations are often more stable and more connected to local communities.

Canadian farmers are pragmatic entrepreneurs. When public policy provides clear market signals, producers adapt.

A forward-looking agricultural strategy should include targeted transition incentives, increased research and innovation funding, and focused export market development. Together, these measures can encourage diversification into high-demand plant proteins, while strengthening local and regional livestock operations that prioritize quality, traceability and higher environmental and welfare standards.

The question is not whether global demand will shift. It already has. Will Canada leverage this opportunity to lead and be the next plant-based economic superpower?

Colin Saravanamuttoo is the CEO of World Animal Protection Canada.  
*The Hill Times*



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# AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

## It's time to process what we grow

The public opinion in this area is clear: Canadians see agriculture and food production as central to our economic future. They want stronger domestic supply chains.



As global demand for protein and functional ingredient rises, so does Canada's potential to capture new trade opportunities, writes Tyler Groeneveld. *Image courtesy of Protein Industries Canada*

Tyler Groeneveld

Opinion



Canada has long been a trusted supplier of raw agricultural commodities. For nearly a century, we've grown high-quality crops and shipped them around the world. That legacy is a strength, but in today's geopolitical and economic climate it's no longer enough. We need to shift to a wider opportunity.

Prime Minister Mark Carney has spoken about the need to focus on what we can control, and to catalyze far greater private investment with public capital. Few sectors offer a clearer opportunity to do exactly that than

food production and value-added agriculture.

That is why Protein Industries Canada has just launched the *Make it Here* campaign: a national call to strengthen our economy by ensuring that in addition to growing world-class crops, we also build the facilities that turn them into high-value ingredients and food products here at home.

When we export the whole seed, we sell it once. When we process it here into ingredients and foods, we multiply its value; we create skilled jobs; we anchor intellectual property; we attract long-term capital; and we embed Canadian ingredients deeper into global supply chains. Doing so has the potential to generate tens of billions of dollars in new economic activity annually. Plant-based protein production alone could add up

to \$25-billion annually and support up to 17,000 jobs by 2035.

If Canada doesn't seize this opportunity now, someone else will. Companies are looking to build facilities. The question is—where?

In an increasingly protectionist world, that choice matters. Commodities are easy to tariff and substitute. High-value ingredients are not. Once integrated into formulations, contracts and manufacturing systems, they become far harder to displace. That is how we future-proof our agriculture and food sector, and its seven percent of GDP and over two million people it supports. We cannot continue to send our value abroad and expect to retain the leverage, resilience, and security that come from keeping it here.

The public opinion in this area is clear: Canadians see agri-

culture and food production as central to our economic future. They want stronger domestic supply chains. They want more processing done here. They understand that food security is strategic. They want to *Make It Here*.

Primary agriculture remains foundational to that work. Farmers are the starting point of Canada's agriculture and food potential. Value-added processing simply ensures that more of the economic return from what they grow stays in Canada. It creates additional markets, more competitive pricing, and greater resilience against trade shocks.

Canada has one of the most extensive networks of free trade agreements in the world. We are politically stable. We are sustainable producers. We are seen as trusted partners.

That is a powerful combination, if we use it.

As global demand for protein and functional ingredient rises, so does Canada's potential to capture new trade opportunities. With countries in Southeast Asia and Europe actively seeking reliable suppliers, Canada can and should be the preferred ingredient partner to the world. But to do that, we need to manufacture here at home and enter global value chains with finished ingredients, not just raw crops.

Doing so requires coordinated action.

We need to mobilize private capital at scale. We need investment incentives that recognize value-added agriculture as a priority sector. We need modern, predictable regulations that keep pace with innovation; and we need the federal government to recognize value-added agriculture as a national economic and security priority.

Federal investment has helped this sector find its footing. But the job isn't finished.

The *Make It Here* imperative is not a slogan—it is a strategy. It is about owning more of the value chain. It is about strengthening productivity at a time when Canada urgently needs it. And it is about ensuring that the next generation of food manufacturing assets—long-term, capital-intensive facilities—are built in Canadian communities.

We grow it here.

Now is the time to make it here.

Tyler Groeneveld is CEO of Protein Industries Canada.

*The Hill Times*

## The science behind solving food insecurity in Canada

Food security is not simply about supply. It requires adaptability which is rooted in ingenuity, advanced through science and translated into practical solutions through research.

Gabriel Miller

Opinion



For generations, Canada has been able to rely on a strong and stable food system. That assumption is now being tested.

Climate pressures, rising input costs, global instability, and shifting environmental conditions are creating new risks for farmers and food producers. These challenges affect not only what Canadians pay at the grocery store, but also, more fundamentally, they test the resilience of one of the country's most essential sectors. Meeting these challenges will depend on sustained federal investment in research and innovation that strengthens the agri-food sector. Canadian universities, which have long been central to that effort, are developing solutions that enhance agricultural productivity, improve sustainability and support the people and communities who produce our food.

Food security is not simply about supply. It requires adaptability. And adaptability is rooted in ingenuity, advanced through science, and translated into practical solutions through research.

Across the country, federally supported university researchers

are delivering practical, science-based solutions producers can use.

At the University of Saskatchewan, agricultural researchers are developing more resilient crop varieties and digital tools to help farmers adapt to changing environmental conditions. At the University of Waterloo, researchers are using artificial intelligence to improve drought prediction, giving producers better information to manage risk. At the University of Guelph, the Food From Thought initiative—which received \$76-million in federal support through the Canada First Research Excellence Fund—is advancing sustainable food production by improving soil health, strengthening crop performance, and developing more efficient agricultural systems.

Together, these initiatives show how federal research investments translate directly into on-farm productivity and long-term resilience.

Similar work is underway at universities in every region of the

country, reflecting the national importance of agricultural research to Canada's economic strength, food security and long-term competitiveness in a changing global climate. This research strengthens rural economies, stabilizes domestic food supply and reinforces this country's position in global agri-food markets, a sector that contributes billions of dollars to the GDP, and supports hundreds of thousands of jobs.

Research conducted at Canadian universities plays a crucial role in translating scientific discovery into real-world impact. Working in partnership with producers, industry, and governments, universities help accelerate commercialization, strengthen Canada's talent pipeline, and ensure producers have access to the innovations they need to remain competitive in a rapidly evolving global market.

This is especially important as climate change intensifies, and global supply chains face increasing disruption. Other leading agricultural economies are increasing their investments

in research and innovation to secure productivity gains and climate resilience. Canada cannot afford to fall behind. Our ability to adapt will depend on continued investment in the science, research and talent that underpin agricultural resilience.

Food security is not an abstract concept. It is the result of deliberate policy choices—choices to invest in research, support innovation, and ensure producers have the tools they need to succeed. Canadian universities translate federal research investments into practical solutions that strengthen Canada's food system, rural communities and export capacity.

If Canada is serious about long-term food security, driving economic competitiveness and supporting rural communities, sustained federal investment in university agricultural research must remain a national priority.

At a time of mounting uncertainty, investing in the science that safeguards the resiliency of our food system is not optional. It's essential to this country's future.

Gabriel Miller is the president and chief executive officer of Universities Canada. With more than 22 years experience in not-for-profit leadership, he has developed expertise in member relations, advocacy, stakeholder engagement and public policy.

*The Hill Times*

Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**


# New Democrats will always support and defend supply management

Supply management is one of the few tools Canada has that keeps production aligned with need, preventing overproduction, and protecting rural communities from price volatility, writes NDP MP Gord Johns. *Photograph courtesy of Pixabay*

Supply management is not a loophole. It is not a handout. It is a deliberate public policy choice that has kept family farms viable, food local, and rural communities strong for more than 50 years.

NDP MP  
Gord Johns



Opinion

Supply management is, once again, being whispered about as a trade concession in negotiations with the United States. We have seen this pattern before. We are told not to worry. We are told the system is protected. And then, quietly, another slice of our domestic market is carved away.

Let me be clear: supply management is not a loophole. It is not a handout. It is a deliberate public-policy choice that has kept family farms viable, food local, and rural communities strong for more than 50 years.

Created in the 1970s when farmers were being crushed by wild price swings and unfair competition, the solution was straightforward: match supply with domestic demand, ensuring farmers are paid based on their cost of production, and prevent dumping from jurisdictions that do not operate under the same standards. That is the model.

To understand what “glut” means: the state of Wisconsin dumps more dairy milk into holes in the ground than the entirety of milk produced in Canada each year. Make that make sense.

When governments say they support supply management, Canadians should look at the record. Successive trade agreements have carved away access to our dairy and poultry markets. Each time, farmers were promised compensation. Each time, they were told it would not happen again.

New Democrats have been clear and consistent. We oppose putting supply management on the negotiating table. In Parliament, members like my predecessor, former NDP agriculture critic, Alistair MacGregor, repeatedly pressed successive Liberal governments to defend the system in full, not in talking points. Words of support mean little if supply management continues to erode.

Canadian farmers should not be used to solve overproduction problems created elsewhere. Canadian producers do not flood

“  
What is needed now is the political will to defend it fully, strengthen it meaningfully, and pair it with the environmental investments that will ensure there is something left to pass on to the next generation of farmers.”

global markets. They produce for Canadians, under strict standards, with disciplined quotas. Undermining that system does not strengthen trade. It weakens our food sovereignty.

At the same time, farmers face pressures previous generations couldn't have imagined. Droughts, floods, and record wildfire seasons are no longer rare events. They are annual realities. In 2025, through tireless advocacy and conversations across the aisle in Parliament, I helped secure federal funding for aerial firefighting because rural communities need and deserve protection in the face of accelerating climate change.

But protecting farms from fire is only part of the story. Agriculture must also be a part of the climate solution. Farmers across Canada are already leading by restoring soil health, reducing synthetic inputs, and adopting regenerative practices. Healthy soils store carbon, hold water in dry spells, and drain better during flooding events. It strengthens yields without sacrificing the land, itself.

However, farmers cannot invest in long-term environmental transition if their domestic market is steadily being traded away. Stability is what allows innovation.

The government must work with farmers facilitate innovation, instead of undermining farmers' ability to adapt to a changing world. That is why measures such as a biomass tax credit, which I

championed to include in the 2025 federal budget, are so important. Turning agricultural waste into renewable energy keeps revenue on the farm, lowering emissions, and building rural economic resilience. These are practical solutions that connect economic stability with environmental responsibility.

This debate should not pit trade against farmers, or environment against economics. We should ask a simple question: do we value a domestic food system that is stable, high standard, and locally rooted, or do we see it as expendable in negotiations?

Supply management is not outdated. It is one of the few tools Canada has that keeps production aligned with need, preventing overproduction, and protecting rural communities from price volatility. In a world facing climate disruption and geopolitical uncertainty, that stability is an asset, not a burden.

Let me end where I began: supply management is not the problem. It is part of the solution.

What is needed now is the political will to defend it fully, strengthen it meaningfully, and pair it with the environmental investments that will ensure there is something left to pass on to the next generation of farmers.

NDP MP Gord Johns, who represents Courtenay-Alberni, B.C., is his party's agriculture and agri-food critic.

The Hill Times

## AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

# Agricultural research, innovation, and commercialization: drivers of a resilient future, says Sen. Black

Continued from page 20

researchers who are exploring techniques to increase yields and grow more food per acre, or are working to improve the resiliency of our crops. Now is the time for strong investment in comprehensive research and innovation in the industry.

Farming is certainly not without its challenges; however, research, innovation, science and technology create tangible tools and resources that will help farmers and producers overcome some of the challenges facing the industry. Plant breeding, for instance, can support higher food production, climate resilience, and increased pest resistance, which inevitably contributes to increased yields and higher quality products. In fact, many of the crops we eat today have gone through significant development through

plant breeding research and development.

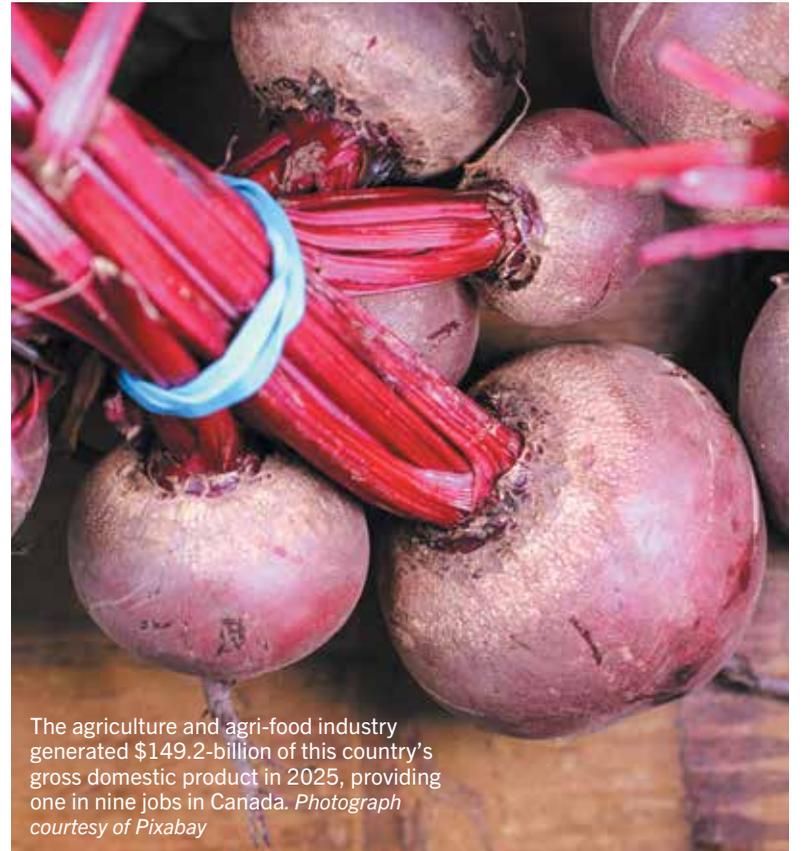
Soil health protection, conservation and enhancement includes advocating for better land use planning. This includes supporting the researchers, scientists, agronomists and innovators who are actively exploring how we can reverse or prevent soil degradation across the country.

In June 2025, I tabled Bill S-230, *An Act Respecting the Development of a National Strategy for Soil Health Protection, Conservation and Enhancement*—or the National Strategy for Soil Health Act—in the Senate of Canada with the hope that it will raise awareness of the important role healthy soil plays in our economy and for our collective well-being. I have received significant support from all levels of government, agricultural industry representatives, and farmers, ranchers and producers

from across the country. However, more must be done to ensure our sector remains competitive, including protecting and supporting agricultural research, infrastructure, and innovation.

I have seen first-hand the innovation and on-farm research taking place across the country. There are great ideas and tremendous technologies being developed throughout Canada which have the potential to advance the industry. However, this country's ecosystem is ill equipped to support the development and commercialization of new innovations. In fact, many researchers and entrepreneurs find it easier to implement their innovations and commercialize in other countries due to the roadblocks and red tape they face in Canada.

The federal government must make a commitment to cultivating not only our soils, but also an environment where Canadian



The agriculture and agri-food industry generated \$149.2-billion of this country's gross domestic product in 2025, providing one in nine jobs in Canada. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

innovation can thrive and grow, thereby strengthening our competitiveness internationally and inevitably boosting our economy. This can be done by enhancing research capacity across our country, investing in Canadian innovation and protecting our critical ground.

The agriculture and agri-food industry generated \$149.2-billion of this country's gross domestic product in 2025, providing one in nine jobs in Canada. The federal government must secure and strengthen our agricultural sector, and support research and

innovation, before the industry falls further behind our international trading partners. With the closures of these federal research facilities, just like the agriculture minister, I, too, hope the government will do as much agricultural research as it did before, but I'm just not sure how it will do so!

*Senator Rob Black is a passionate advocate for agriculture and is a member of the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. He represents Ontario in the Senate of Canada.*  
The Hill Times

# With global volatility the new normal, Canada's agriculture and agri-food sector must be resilient, innovative, and competitive

Continued from page 18

Canadian steel and aluminum, creating jobs at every step.

That is why the 2025 federal budget introduced the Productivity Super-Deduction. Now, entrepreneurs can immediately deduct 100 per cent of the cost of eligible processing equipment and facilities in the year. This improves cash flow and accelerates modernization, automation, and clean-technology adoption in agri-food processing, Canada's largest manufacturing sector.

The government has also introduced 100-per-cent immediate expensing for new greenhouse infrastructure, enabling

producers to expand year-round domestic production.

In addition, targeted support, including a \$500-million Strategic Response Fund and \$150-million for food-sector SMEs, is helping producers and processors manage cost pressures, strengthen supply chains, and remain competitive.

Farm Credit Canada has also mobilized up to \$7-billion from a number of investment partners to accelerate agricultural and food innovation in Canada.

### Climate and Resilience

As parliamentary secretary for the agriculture and agri-food minister, I have met farmers across

Canada who are among the most resilient entrepreneurs in our economy. They produce some of the safest and highest-quality food in the world under rigorous standards.

But 2025 was challenging. Rising input costs, extreme weather, and global trade uncertainty have increased pressure on producers. Analysis from the Bank of Canada and Canada's Food Price Report 2026 shows food prices are influenced by supply chain disruptions, exchange rates, climate impacts, labour shortages, and trade pressures.

Drought in Western Canada has reduced cattle herds to their lowest levels since the late 1980s, and lowered crop yields.

Across the country, producers face a persistent "dry trend." Climate extremes are reducing yields, stressing livestock, and affecting farm incomes and food supply.

Our government is working closely with provinces, territories, and industry to respond. Our Business Risk Management programs—AgriInvest, AgriStability, AgriInsurance, and AgriRecovery—are essential tools that help producers manage risks.

### Looking Ahead: The Next Policy Framework

As global volatility becomes the new normal, our agriculture and agri-food sector must

be resilient, innovative, and competitive.

Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada has launched consultations for the next five-year agricultural policy framework (2028–2033), which will succeed the current Sustainable Canadian Agricultural Partnership. This framework will guide federal, provincial, and territorial support across business risk management, sustainability, innovation, and competitiveness.

The goal is clear: ensure that Canadian producers and processors are equipped to face emerging risks while capturing new opportunities.

### Conclusion

At Davos, the prime minister reminded the world that food security is sovereignty.

For Canada, that means more than growing food. It means building a resilient ecosystem, from soil health and climate adaptation to domestic processing, advanced manufacturing, and global market leadership.

*Liberal MP Sophie Chatel, who represents Pontiac—Kitigan Zibi, Que., is the parliamentary secretary to the minister of agriculture and agri-food.*

The Hill Times

# Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**

## Protect supply management in CUSMA review, agriculture sector reps tell feds



Daniel Schwanen, the C.D. Howe Institute's senior vice-president, says Canada could address supply management through reforms outside of trade talks with the U.S. Photograph courtesy of the C.D. Howe Institute



Sylvain Charlebois, director of the Agri-Food Analytics Lab at Dalhousie University, says Canada's supply management system is 'incredibly not transparent.' Photograph courtesy of Sylvain Charlebois

Continued from page 16

When it comes to trade negotiations, McCann argued that for supply management to be truly off-limits is a non-sequitur. He questioned if Canada would walk away from a deal with the U.S. if it were to demand more access on dairy products.

"In any trade agreement, you only have a meaningful agreement and negotiation if everything is on the table. Every country has got sensitive issues. Canada and supply management is no different than any others," he said.

"I think the Canadian government needs to be clear that any concessions to supply management will be extremely painful, and I think ... you need to make sure the Americans are paying for that access that you would give up."

McCann argued that supply management could be modernized without being completely dismantled.

"There are opportunities to reform the system that should always be looked at, [and] that should be looked at independent of a trade deal or negotiation," he said.

"It's very messy with [U.S. President] Donald Trump, and yes, it's very unpredictable, and so it is hard to know ... but I don't think it's logical to say in an era when tariffs are the new reality that Canada needs to disarm its tariffs."

### The system 'hasn't aged well': Sylvain Charlebois

Daniel Schwanen, an economist and senior vice-president at the C.D. Howe Institute, argued

that supply management is in need of reform. He said that even if Canada cannot make concessions to supply management as part of trade talks, that doesn't mean this country cannot make changes to supply management on its own.

"We just need to take ... that marginal supply out of the Canadian market, which is also a high-cost supply, and then that means, almost by definition, that there's going to be room for importers to expand their access to the Canadian market," said Schwanen.

"We don't need to do it through trade negotiations, necessarily. We just have to have the Americans recognize, 'Hey, Canada did some great reforms, right? We're happy with those reforms. We get a little bit more of their market, and that's sufficient for our purpose.'"

Schwanen criticized supply management as a system that wasn't designed "with the consumers in mind."

"Other countries have done a better job at supporting their farmers without hurting their consumers, and we're not really doing a good job of that," he said.

"Some other people that I respect would say, 'just eliminate [supply management].' But at a minimum, [it] needs major reforms."

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development released a report in October 2025 that argued for supply management reform. The report argued that market price support in dairy, poultry and egg sectors, generated by tariff-rate quotas, "distorts production and trade and inflates domestic

prices." These "forms of protection hinder market responsiveness and discourage innovation in those sectors," according to the report, adding that reforms should be undertaken involving larger production quotas and gradual reduction of price support for greater efficiency and diversification into higher value products.

A 2023 McGill University report also argued for reforms to supply management. Among other issues, the report argued that the price-setting formula used by the Canadian Dairy Commission has "implicitly subsidized high-cost farms."

"By offering a price for milk that considers the expenses incurred by these farms manually instead of being determined by the market, the system essentially cushions them from the full impact of their financial burden. This practice weakens the incentive for such farms to actively seek ways to lower their costs and increase efficiency," reads the report overview.

Sylvain Charlebois, director of Dalhousie University's Agri-Food Analytics Lab, described supply management as "an important piece of policy for Canada's food security," but added that the system "hasn't aged well."

"For poultry and eggs, I actually do think that we're in good shape. The system is actually working quite well. There are some flaws here and there, but overall, our industries are very competitive. But that's not the case with dairy," he said.

Charlebois referred to a roadmap released by Dalhousie and the University of Guelph in

October 2020 intended to provide a roadmap for Canada's dairy sector. The roadmap argued that without fundamental changes to supply management, Canada could see half of its current dairy farms disappear by 2030.

"The system right now is incredibly not transparent. We don't know exactly which farms are being considered as part of the calculation when it comes to compensating farmers. That needs to change. I would start with that," said Charlebois.

"If you're a cheesemaker, pizzeria, or a dairy processor, you do pay premium for Canadian milk and Canadian butter fat. I would actually look into how to reduce prices to make industrial milk more competitive."

Phil Mount, vice-president for policy with the National Farmers Union, told *The Hill Times* that supply management should be off the table in the upcoming CUSMA review, adding he believes both Carney and MacDonald have said as much.

Mount said that domestic critics of supply management have been "more vociferous" in the last year, which he argued is driving most of the conversation around supply management.

"[Discussions around supply management have] definitely been a bit of a drumbeat over the last 12 months. Quite frankly, that has done more to embolden U.S. negotiators and bring this into the view of the president south of us than anything to actually do with supply management itself as an actual sticking point on trade," he said. "It's just the constant drumbeat from these critics, none of whom are in the sector [or] have any skin in the game."

Mount argued supply management offers protection for the dairy, poultry, and egg sectors in a way no other agriculture supply is protected.

"Supply management, in a nutshell, works by the farmers agreeing to restrain their production to specific levels. We use quotas to provide those levels, and in exchange, consumers agree that farmers should be paid a fair basic rate for their production," he said.

"The Americans are massive producers of all these products [dairy, poultry, and egg], and left unrestrained, that would just wash across Canada and demolish all of our sectors. It's a reasonable process, and it has worked very well for the last 50 years."

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*The Hill Times*

### Canada Dairy, Poultry and Egg Statistics



Image courtesy of Pixabay

- In 2024, imports of dairy products totaled approximately \$1.6-billion and exports reached \$554.73 million. This represents an annual increase of 9.18 per cent in import value and an annual increase of 12.37 per cent in export value from the previous year.
- In 2024, Canada produced poultry and egg products worth \$6.8-billion, contributing seven per cent of cash receipts to farming operations.
- In 2024, there were 2,884 regulated chicken producers and 504 registered turkey producers, 237 broiler hatching egg producers and 1,270 egg producers in Canada. In addition to the 4,895 commercial poultry and egg producers in this country, there were a large number of businesses associated with these production activities.
- In 2024, Canada exported 11.7 million chicks and poults, worth \$61.9-million to 16 countries. The U.S. was the largest market, representing 74.6 per cent of our exports in Canadian dollars.
- In 2024, Canada exported 2.9 million hatching eggs of different species, worth \$77.3-million, to 18 countries. The U.S. was the largest export market with 69.8 per cent of our value exported heading south of the border, while other primary countries included Russia, Turkey and Mexico.
- In 2024, Canada exported over 3.2 million kilograms of processed eggs worth \$15.4-million and 2.8 million shell eggs worth \$5.5-million.

Source: Agriculture Canada

# OPINION



Prime Minister Mark Carney supports the actions of a country many Canadians now see as either an unreliable ally or a destabilizing force. His near-unqualified endorsement risks sending mixed signals leading to policy failure, writes David Carment. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Mark Carney's 50 shades of grey zones

Mark Carney may believe calibrated alignment buys time and space. The risk is that, in a world of strategic realism, shades of grey can gradually harden back into dependency.

David Carment

Opinion



In endorsing the United States and Israeli strikes on Iran, Prime Minister Mark Carney supported the actions of a country many Canadians now see as either an unreliable ally, or a destabilizing force. His near-unqualified endorsement risks sending mixed signals leading to policy failure. At a time when Ottawa speaks of sovereignty and diversification, such alignment can look less like strategic calculation and more like impulsive deference.

Carney describes his foreign policy as “pragmatic and principled.” In his Davos speech back in January, he argued that

economic and sovereign survival must guide Canada in a world where rules are fading and great-power politics is back. From that perspective, his position on Iran appears transactional; make concessions in the security domain to ease pressure in the economic one.

The logic is clear. By aligning with American security interests, Carney may hope to reduce friction with Washington, and create room to diversify trade with India, China, and Europe. In effect, Carney seems willing to accept short-term subordination in security policy to avoid economic discomfort at home.

But this approach carries significant risks.

First, it misjudges the main source of disruption. For years, Ottawa focused on authoritarian states such as Iran, China, and Russia while underestimating the impact of U.S. “weaponized interdependence” exercised through grey-zone strategies. Recent experience and research shows that American economic coercion, legal ambiguity, shifting trade rules and direct interference can be just as or more destabilizing to Canadian interests. Sufficient warning regarding America’s increasing use of economic coercion was given, but largely ignored.

Washington’s emphasis on securing relative gains—benefiting more than both rivals and allies—has altered how it treats its partners. Smaller countries are seen less as equal partners

and more as vassals to leverage or liabilities to manage. In that environment, concessions in one policy area do not necessarily produce relief in another.

Cuba illustrates this dilemma. The U.S. has framed its long-standing embargo as a national security issue, now invoking emergency acts to justify its oil blockade. Canada, by contrast, is one of Cuba’s largest investors and its primary tourism source. It risks losing all that despite Ottawa’s limited aid packages, routed through multilateral channels, designed to avoid direct confrontation with Washington. The broader point is this: if economic coercion has become a routine instrument of U.S. policy, alignment on Iran (or Cuba) will not shield Canada from pressure elsewhere.

Second, Carney’s signalling on Iran assumes Washington is willing to bargain in good faith. Recent trade talks suggest otherwise. U.S. officials have stated that Canada must accept higher tariffs and support American “reshoring” if it wants to preserve preferential access under CUSMA. This is exactly the “salami slicing” I predict in my engineered vulnerabilities report. In essence, the U.S. is incrementally raising the “cost” of Canadian trade independence. By invoking Sec. 122 of the Trade Act, immediately after losing the International Emergency Economic Powers Act case at the Supreme Court, the U.S. simply pivoted to whatever legal ambi-

guity is available to maintain pressure and uncertainty. Each negotiation appears to raise the baseline cost of preserving market access.

The result is a trade relationship that is formally intact, persistently unstable, and ultimately unsustainable in its current form. For Canadian businesses and investors, ambiguity becomes an uncomfortable norm. If pressure and uncertainty are deliberate tools rather than temporary tactics, then there may be no lasting deal to strike. Concessions from Canada do not end the negotiation; they reset it.

Third, mixed signalling risks confusion at home. For decades, federal officials were trained in a policy culture where aligning with Washington was the default. Influence was assumed to flow from integration. Among bureaucrats open disagreement was rare, and condemnation of U.S. policy rarer still. That mindset shaped trade, defence, security and diplomacy for decades.

Now, those same institutions are being asked to strengthen domestic resilience and reduce dependence. This is not a minor adjustment, but a fundamental shift. Universities and public policy schools also reflect the old model. Defence and foreign-policy specialists are socialized within U.S.-centric frameworks. Career advancement often means mastering American strategic language and institutional norms. “Washington speak” means access and influence.

Yet, that socialization is largely one-way. Canadian officials learn to understand Washington’s priorities; American counterparts rarely develop the same sensitivity to Canada’s limitations. In that asymmetric relationship, carefully calibrated gestures from Ottawa may not be read as intended. Or read at all.

Finally, this country has been slow to treat American unilateralism as a structural challenge. When tariffs were imposed on Canada and sovereignty-related disputes surfaced, many policymakers lacked a framework for understanding an ally as a source of grey-zone pressure.

The old models equated integration with influence. Deeper ties were expected to increase leverage. The conventional response was to portray economic coercion and trade frictions as part of the “negotiation process.” If negotiations were difficult it was because the U.S. was “disorganized” or “distracted.”

Similarly, defence experts argued that Canada could manage a volatile U.S. administration by “pandering”—making tactical concessions to avoid upsetting the president—while “pricing in” Donald Trump’s anger as a temporary cost. Recent events, however, have shattered those calculations.

Carney faces a real dilemma. Canada cannot confront its largest trading partner without incurring serious economic costs. Yet, selective accommodation in security policy does not guarantee economic relief. If the underlying issue is structural asymmetry, then short-term concessions may deepen long-term vulnerability.

At the same time, Carney must avoid giving cover to the “old guard” who, having convinced Canadians that integration with the U.S. was our best bet, are now desperate to prove they are leading the Carney pivot. Standing beside the U.S. on Iran is proof of his “new realpolitik” they argue. In reality, Carney’s “variable geometry” and “third way” make their deeply entrenched “good vs. evil” binary look dangerous and outdated.

The challenge is not simply managing authoritarian states abroad. It is managing asymmetry with a powerful “predator” whose policies are increasingly driven by relative advantage rather than shared rules. Carney may believe calibrated alignment buys time and space. The risk is that, in a world of strategic realism, shades of grey can gradually harden back into dependency.

David Carment is a fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy. He’s led the Country Indicators for Policy project, a risk assessment and forecasting tool focused on diaspora, fragile states, and grey-zone conflict. He is the founding series editor of Canada and International Affairs, and served as editor of Canadian Foreign Policy Journal for 14 years. His most recent books include *Democracy and Foreign Policy in an Era of Uncertainty*, and *The Handbook of Fragile States*.

*The Hill Times*

# Carney takes first critical steps with India and China

This is only the beginning of a long and challenging journey for a new Canada. Success will take much more work.

David Crane

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



**T**ORONTO—Despite ongoing public suspicion of both China and India—and for understandable reasons—Prime Minister Mark Carney's bid to reset relations with both these superpowers nonetheless appears to have broad public backing. China and India can thank United States President Donald Trump for this. His actions have made the U.S. a bigger perceived threat to Canadian well-being than either China or India, and has fostered a drive to make Canada less dependent on the U.S. for trade and investment.

A recent poll by Abacus Data found that Canadians believe that building alliances to counterbalance the U.S. is their first choice in how to deal with our southern neighbour. "Canadians increasingly support diversification, strategic autonomy, and bilateral alliances," Abacus Data's David Coletto said. "They are comfortable with a Canada that stands firm and expands its network of partnerships."

Carney travelled to China in January for a reset of that

relationship. Now, he has just finished a similar reset with a visit to India. This doesn't mean concerns over past Chinese or Indian actions against Canadians are forgiven. A recent Angus Reid poll, for example, found that while 53 per cent of Canadians believed this was the right time for a reset with India while another seven per cent said that it should have happened sooner, some 20 per cent of Canadians view India as either an enemy or potential threat to Canada (the same poll showed 49 per cent of Canadians view the U.S. as an enemy or a potential threat).

The Canadian approach is pragmatic: some 57 per cent say the Carney government should prioritize trade and investment in our relationship with India despite charges of past illegal actions in Canada. The same appears true for China. As Carney has put it, we have to deal with the world as it is, not the world we want. Where interests align, cooperation is possible. And if Canada is to reduce its dependence on trade with the U.S., it has to seek and expand markets elsewhere.

While we still want to export to the U.S., and it will remain our biggest trading partner, we want our exports to the rest of the world to grow faster, leading to a bigger share of our export pie, this would be a futile exercise if China and India were excluded. They are growing middle-class superpowers with a great need for imports that Canada can supply. A successful trade diversification strategy is meaningless without China and India.

In his visit to India, and in meetings with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Indian business leaders, Car-



The goal, Prime Minister Mark Carney said, is to raise Canadian goods and services exports to China—from nearly \$40-billion annually now—by 50 per cent, or \$20-billion, by 2030. While one purpose in his visit was to address trade irritants, the real purpose was to reset after many years of diplomatic deep-freeze. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ney and his delegation signed a series of agreements, including closer ties between universities, a strategic energy partnership with increased energy trade and investment, co-operation on critical minerals, clean energy co-operation, and an agreement on agriculture including research on pulse production and innovation.

But success depends on the effective follow-up by both Canadian officials and Canadian business. Government enables, but business has to implement. As Cameco president Tim Gitzel, who was in the delegation to sign a \$2.6-billion sale of uranium for nuclear energy to India, said it's up to companies to do the "business-to-business" stuff, which is possible after government opens the doors.

Carney's goal is to boost two-way trade to India to \$70-billion by 2030—a huge challenge; two-way trade in goods and services in 2024 was just under \$35-billion (with education our biggest export based on the large number of Indian students in our universities and colleges). He has said the two countries will work together to negotiate a Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement by the end of the year. Modi has accepted an invitation to visit Canada, and the two nations have agreed that Canada will send two ministerial-led trade and investment missions to India, and India

will send two similar missions to Canada.

Likewise, the Carney mission to China in January ended with similar ambitious agreements following meetings with the top leadership, including President Xi Jinping and Premier Li Qiang, along with business leaders.

Canada's goal, Carney said, was to raise this country's goods and services exports to China—from nearly \$40-billion annually now—by 50 per cent, or \$20-billion, by 2030. While one purpose in his visit was to address trade irritants—restoring the market for Canadian canola and other agricultural products and allowing Chinese automakers some but limited access to the Canadian market—the real purpose was to reset after many years of diplomatic deep-freeze.

The two countries agreed to pursue a new strategic partnership, with a big focus on clean energy and climate combativeness and on expanding trade, especially in agriculture and food. While the decision—unavoidable in the long run because of consumer demand—to allow Chinese automakers access to the Canadian market was controversial, "it is expected that within three years, this agreement will drive considerable Chinese investment into Canada's auto sector," Carney says.

What was most important, though, was the revitalization

of the Joint Economic and Trade Commission as the principal channel to manage and expand the relationship, with a meeting planned for the summer/fall of 2026, along with the adoption of a Canada-China Economic and Trade Cooperation Roadmap.

A key part of the roadmap states that both countries are looking for increased investment. "The Canadian side," it said, "welcomes Chinese investments in Canada in areas such as energy, agriculture, consumer products and other sectors," adding that "the Chinese side welcomes Canadian investments in China and the expansion of investment in service consumption, energy, new materials, aerospace, modern agriculture, advanced manufacturing, and other fields."

But it is one thing to negotiate aspirational agreements. It is quite another to deliver results. Canada needs something like a war room to keep on top of these goals and to track implementation. More businesses need to wake up and look beyond North America. Carney has taken critical first steps—but they are just first steps. This is only the beginning of a long and challenging journey for a new Canada. Success will take much more work.

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

*The Hill Times*

## OPINION

# We need far more political staffers, not fewer

There are an estimated 365,000 public servants who work for the federal government. There are fewer than 650 exempt staff in total. That's 0.18 per cent of all the people paid by the feds. The political staff cost less than \$90-million, compared to about \$80-billion for the public service. Hardly a creeping majority.

Jamie Carroll



Opinion

OTTAWA—“There are no ends in administration. Only loose ends. Administration is eternal.”—Sir Humphrey Appleby in *Yes, Minister*

In recent weeks, there's been a marked increase in media attention relating to political staffers. Not controversy about politics, but about things ranging from their roles and responsibilities including whether or not they need to exist (sort of).

Specifically, there have been two issues—over the course of several articles here in *The Hill Times*—that have caught my attention: ministerial staff budgets and the role of staff policy

advisers compared to public servants.

In both cases, much of the content with which I disagree has come from Donald Savoie, who is, beyond a doubt, *the* pre-eminent Canadian expert on governance and public administration. But on these particular points, he's dead wrong.

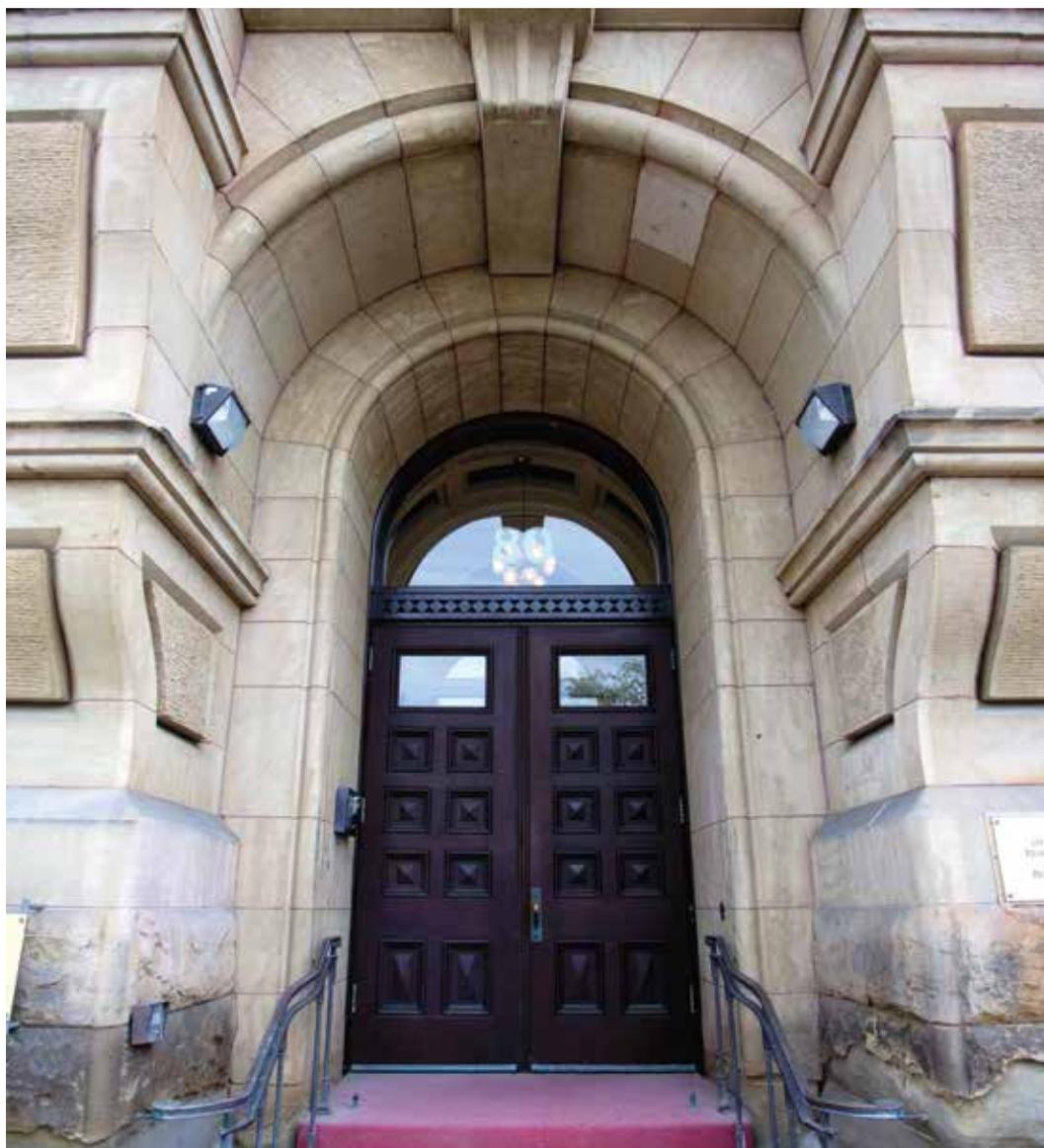
Happens to the best of us. First and foremost, let's be clear: the roles of political staff and professional public servants are inherently different in Ottawa, and require both overlapping and vastly different skill sets. They also have completely different loyalties and obligations, despite both providing advice to the same minister.

Political staff serve at the pleasure of their minister. They can be fired at any time for no cause. Their sole obligation, as a natural result, is to that minister. Their job is to provide that minister with advice specific to their area of responsibility (e.g., communications, operations, policy) but the advice is a) only for their minister, b) entirely political and c) always focused on getting them re-elected.

Their relationship to the minister is much more like the minister's to the PM than anything in the public service.

Public servants—no matter how senior—are non-partisan. Despite their preferences, experiences, and points of view, their fundamental job is to “provide ministers with our best professional advice—frankly, candidly and with faithful regard to Public Service values and ethics,” or so says the Privy Council Office.

Those are not the same jobs. Nor should they be. But they necessarily intersect on a daily basis: what should the minister say? What is the government's position on ‘x’ based on the things they said to get elected? How are they planning to get re-elected? What are the trade-offs with other



The Prime Minister's Office on Wellington Street in Ottawa. There are about 100 staffers working in the PMO. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

areas of government and/or the electorate?

Both sides need to make their arguments to their minister, and it is the minister's job to decide—no one else.

On the idea there are too many political staff and they should be cut back along with the rest of the public service via an overall spending review, I take the opposite position.

There are an estimated 365,000 public servants who work for the Government of Canada. There are fewer than 650 exempt (political) staff in total. That's 0.18 per cent of all the people paid by the Government of Canada. Not surprisingly, the political staff cost less than \$90-million, compared to about \$80-billion for the public service. Hardly a creeping majority.

In fact, I would argue vociferously that Parliament Hill needs far more staff—especially in the offices of backbench and opposition MPs, as well as professional research and legal staff assigned to House committees and the offices of committee chairs. If you want MPs to provide the sort of meaningful oversight—particularly when it comes to properly scrutinizing the ever-increasing estimates which is their one, truly indispensable job—then they need the resources to properly do so.

Part of the point of electing people to run the country is that they are necessarily not subject-matter experts. They are ordinary citizens who are temporarily tasked with making decisions about things that can literally

mean life or death for their fellow Canadians. They deserve to have all the input from all the perspectives they want.

But here's the stark reality of the difference between the two groups: accountability. While both groups technically work for and advise the minister, only one group—the political staff—are actually in the minister's control.



First and foremost, let's be clear: the roles of political staff and professional public servants are inherently different in Ottawa, and require both overlapping and vastly different skill sets. They also have completely different loyalties and obligations, despite both providing advice to the same minister.

Public servants have the luxury of time. Ministers answer to the prime minister and—like the political staff—can be sacked at will. And this PM, in particular, is not known for either patience, or being okay with delays. So, sometimes when the minister wants something done fast and done a certain way, it gets done in their own office.

Public servants also sometimes like to have a monopoly on the information provided to ministers for decisions. In government, information is power, and if a deputy minister can prevent a minister from being influenced by outside stakeholders with disparate points of view, more's the better.

Why did I start with a quote from *Yes, Minister*? Because, aside from there being one available for literally every situation in government, despite the British show being 40-plus years old, *Yes, Minister* is absolutely accurate as a parody of the relationship between the political and the professional.

The point is this: the tension between the professional and the political is a feature of the system, not a bug. Ministers must be able to go outside the public service to get information, answers, and—yes—policy ideas if they see fit.

Because, despite the wishes of some, it is and of a right ought to be ministers who are the decision-makers in any government.

Jamie Carroll is a former national director of the Liberal Party of Canada, and is now a consultant and entrepreneur. *The Hill Times*

# Major public service shakeup taps David Morrison to 'elevated' key foreign policy role in the centre

Continued from page 6

will return to GAC from Transport where he has been serving as deputy minister.

Thangaraj previously served in the foreign ministry from 2015 to 2020 as chief financial officer. He returns to the department as it faces billions of dollars of cuts in the coming years.

The last federal budget projected cuts for GAC of \$506-million in 2026-27, \$747-million in 2027-28, \$1.1-billion in 2028-29, and \$1.1-billion in 2029-30. The recently tabled main estimates forecast a \$7.2-billion budget for the department in 2026-27, down from the \$8.4-billion set out in the 2025-26 main estimates. The department ultimately had \$9.4-billion set out in the estimates last fiscal year.

Boehm called Thangaraj's appointment an "interesting and smart" choice, remarking that with the department on the cusp of making cuts and examining its budgets, Thangaraj has the needed experience with his history at both GAC and managing a large department at Transport.

Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers president Pamela Isfeld said that, as the department's CFO, Thangaraj had a "good grasp" of where to prioritize finances on foreign policy.

The associate deputy minister is typically the senior corporate position responsible for internal operations of the department, she noted.

David Angell, a diplomat with a wealth of foreign policy experience, has been appointed to that post at GAC. Less than a year ago, Angell was appointed as foreign and defence policy adviser to the prime minister. He also served as Canada's ambassador to NATO from 2019 to 2024.

"[The appointment of Thangaraj] does say something about the priorities that are being outlined by the prime minister and his inner circle," Isfeld said.

"[It] sounds to me more and more like the foreign-policy thinking is going to continue to be done downtown and out of the Prime Minister Office and his circle, and Global Affairs will be operations," she said.

In the last Parliament, the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee—chaired by Boehm—recommended in its report on reforming the foreign service that the government ensure senior officials at GAC, including deputy ministers, have "in-depth knowledge of and experience in international affairs." The government endorsed that recommendation in 2024.

Boehm said that while Thangaraj has not been posted abroad, he has experience from sitting at the executive table, and as part of decision making in the department.

As part of the shuffle, Cindy Termorshuizen has been named deputy minister for international development. She was previously the G7 and G20 sherpa, and served as deputy head of mission at Canada's Embassy in China from 2015 to 2018.

## New DMs tapped for International Trade, Immigration, Transport

New faces have been placed in other key priority files, including international trade and immigration.

Dominic Rochon has been appointed deputy secretary to the cabinet in the PCO



Kaili Levesque becomes associate deputy minister at Innovation, and president of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

for national security and intelligence. He has previous experience as chief information officer at the Treasury Board Secretariat, as well as at Communications Security Establishment Canada.

Glenn Purves is coming in from Black-Rock Investment Institute, an international investment firm, to serve as the new deputy minister of international trade, under Minister Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.).

The outgoing deputy of international trade, Rob Stewart, has been tapped to run Carney's promised Financial Crimes Agency. His CV includes roles at Finance Canada, and he also served as deputy minister of Public Safety from 2019 until 2022.

Michael Vandergrift will move from Natural Resources to Transport, but his replacement has yet to be announced. He's been at Natural Resources since 2023.

Ted Gallivan, formerly interim deputy of national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister, steps into a new role at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship after stints at the Canada Border Services Agency and Canada Revenue Agency.

## Veterans Affairs, Fisheries roles filled

Harpreet S. Kochhar has held the deputy minister role at Immigration since January 2024, and he now will become president of the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. His predecessor, Paul MacKinnon, becomes deputy minister of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO).

The March 4 shuffle also plugs two holes left in previous shuffles at DFO and Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC), the latter of which has been without a deputy minister for nearly four months. When asked about when the PCO planned to fill the roles, spokesperson Pierre Cuguen said on Feb. 27 that "additional changes to the senior ranks of the public service will be announced in due course."

Former deputy minister Paul Ledwell held the role at Veterans Affairs for nearly five years, saying on LinkedIn that it was "the honour of his professional life." Ledwell has been praised by critics of the department for being a fresh-faced outsider, coming to Ottawa from the ranks of the Prince Edward Island provincial government. His replacement, Nancy Gardiner, risks being "institutionalized far too long to be an effective deputy minister," said Sean Bruyca, a retired Air Force officer who advocates for veterans and regularly deals with department brass.

Gardiner has more than two decades of experience in the top ranks of the public service, holding senior roles previously in Employment and Social Development Canada, and Women and Gender Equality, amongst other departments. She has been

president of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario since 2021.

Ahead of the March 4 announcement, Bruyca told *The Hill Times* that a good deputy minister can "cushion" the effect of a weak cabinet minister.

Following the shuffle, Carolyn Hughes, director of Veterans Services at the Royal Canadian Legion, said via email that, "given the significant turnover of VAC ministers over the last decade, we also hope this appointment is part of a period of stability within the department, to help with sustained progress and improved services and benefits for veterans and their families."

Kaili Levesque, associate deputy minister at DFO, becomes associate deputy minister of Innovation, Science, and Economic Development, and president of the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario.

Speaking to *The Hill Times* ahead of the shuffle, Tim Kennedy, president and CEO of the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance, said it was "confusing" within his industry that Levesque hadn't been named DFO's permanent deputy minister. She had been serving as the department's acting top boss since former deputy minister Annette Gibbons' retirement in late 2025.

"She's extremely capable," Kennedy said of Levesque. "So they put a very good person there, but, again, we don't have an answer to why she has not been confirmed there."

In Levesque's new role at ISED, she will continue to support the secretary of state for nature, the PMO said.

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*The Hill Times*

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## NEWS

# Main estimates set out \$502.8-billion for 2026-27 as National Defence tops voted spending

National Defence's \$48.4-billion represents the biggest ask of the \$230.4-billion set to be voted on by MPs, with five more departments seeking approval for more than \$10-billion.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali has tabled the Carney government's main estimates for 2026-27, outlining \$502.8-billion in spending, with the Department of National Defence requesting the most funds of the public service's 130 federal departments.

Six departments are seeking parliamentary approval for over \$10-billion in non-statutory funds—money that has yet to be approved by Parliament—with the Department of National Defence (DND) seeking the largest voted sum at \$48.4-billion.

Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is requesting the second-highest non-statutory sum at \$23.9-billion, followed by Employment and Social Development's \$13.6-billion ask, and Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs (CIRNAC) and the Treasury Board Secretariat, which are each asking for \$11.8-billion. Health Canada is asking for \$10.4-billion.

The funding request comes as Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has signed on to increase Canada's military investments as part of a NATO pledge to invest five per cent of this country's GDP in defence last summer. Three-and-a-half per cent of that investment is for "core military capabilities."

"The main estimates include over \$48-billion to strengthen and modernize the Canadian Armed Forces, supporting Canada's security, Canadians, and economic growth," Ali (Brampton—Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) is quoted as saying in a Feb. 26 press release, the day the mains were tabled in Parliament.

The feds' most recent spending boost, too, was focused on defence. In the supplementary estimates C, \$2.2-billion of the \$5.4-billion requested was for DND, which experts told *The Hill*

*Times* was "all about" meeting the NATO pledge.

Of the \$502.8-billion in budgetary spending outlined in the latest estimates, Parliament will vote on \$230.4-billion, as \$272.4-billion of the estimates are covered by statutory spending—money that has already been authorized under previous legislation.

The spend is an increase of about 3.3 per cent from the 2025-26 mains from May of last year, where the feds sought \$486.9-billion, which was an increase of about 8.4 per cent from the year before that.

The bulk of the spending ask—\$300.5-billion, which is about 59.8 per cent of the total funds—is slated for transfer payments. The most notable transfers are for "elderly benefits, the Canada Health Transfer, and fiscal equalization," reads the document.

The Canada Health Transfer is a federal transfer to provincial and territorial governments. It is the largest major federal transfer of its kind.

An additional \$148.6-billion, close to 30 per cent, is for operating and capital expenditures.

The feds are also slating \$53.74-billion for servicing public debt—which is about 10.7 per cent of the total spending ask this fiscal year. That's an increase from the 2025-26 mains, where the feds committed \$49.1-billion—just over 10 per cent—of that year's budget to public debt. The document attributes the increased spend "an increase in interest on unmatured debt."

An additional \$2.9-billion of non-budgetary spending are forecasted for loans, investments, and advances.

Including statutory spends, DND is requesting a total \$50.7-billion in federal funding. That means that over 95 per cent of the department's funds are subject to Parliament's vote.

Carney's Liberals don't yet have a majority in the House, still being three seats shy, despite the prime minister picking up three Conservative MPs through recent floor-crossing deals. In November 2025, Parliament narrowly passed the Liberals' budget implementation bill, thanks to abstentions from the NDP.

In Carney's first spending ask—which was delayed because of last April's election, and tabled at the end of May 2025—DND also sought the highest amount of the some 130 federal departments, requesting \$35.7-billion at the time. That places this year's spending request this year at about 42 per cent higher than last year's.

The bulk of the department's \$48.4-billion is slated for operating expenditures, coming in at \$21.5-billion. About 22 per cent of the funds—approximately \$18-billion—are for capital expenditures, with an additional \$3.3-billion for grants and contributions, and about \$447-million for long-term disability and life insurance plans for Canadian military members.

Broken down by purpose, the largest sum of those funds—about \$14.6-billion—is set to be used for "Ready Forces," with \$12.8-billion



Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali tabled the 2026-27 main estimates in the House of Commons on Feb. 26. About 59.8 per cent of feds' spending ask is being requested for transfer payments. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

for procurement of capabilities, \$7.3-billion for sustainable bases and IT systems and infrastructure, and \$5.4-billion for defence teams. The department is also requesting about \$4-billion for operations and \$3.6-billion for marine operations and response.

## Indigenous Services, Employment and Social Development among top spenders

The majority of ISC's total \$24.1-billion budget is grants and contributions, representing about \$20.7-billion or 86 per cent of the voted funding request. About \$3.2-billion is being requested for operating costs. Of those grants and contributions, \$3.9-billion will go towards prevention and protection services, an additional \$3.8-billion will fund infrastructure maintenance and construction, and \$2.6-billion will support First Nations and Inuit primary health care. The department also says \$1.2-billion will be used to provide income support to Status Indians living on reserves in Yukon.

Employment and Social Development Canada is seeking the third-highest amount for parliamentary approval, but is also set to receive \$96.5-billion in statutory funds that have already been

approved. Of the \$13.6-billion set to be voted on by Parliament, the vast majority—\$12.4-billion—is for grants and contributions, and about \$1.1-billion for operating costs.

The department's primary spend is benefits and pensions, amounting to \$91.3-billion, about 83 per cent of the total requested funds.

But close to \$10-billion is also tied to the purpose of social development, with \$7.9-billion for "learning, skills development, and employment," and an additional \$357-million sought for internal services. The department is also seeking \$504-million for "information delivery and services for other departments" and \$182.3-million for "working conditions and workplace relations."

CIRNAC—which is often a heavy spender in the public service, due to a series of court-mandated federal payouts on its docket in recent years—is requesting \$7.7-billion for grants and contributions, \$4-billion for operating expenditures, and \$225,000 for capital expenditures out of a total \$11.7-billion budget.

About \$10-billion of the department's requested funds are set to be used by Crown-Indigenous Relations, with \$1.2-billion for Northern and Arctic Affairs. About \$155-million is tied to the department's internal services.

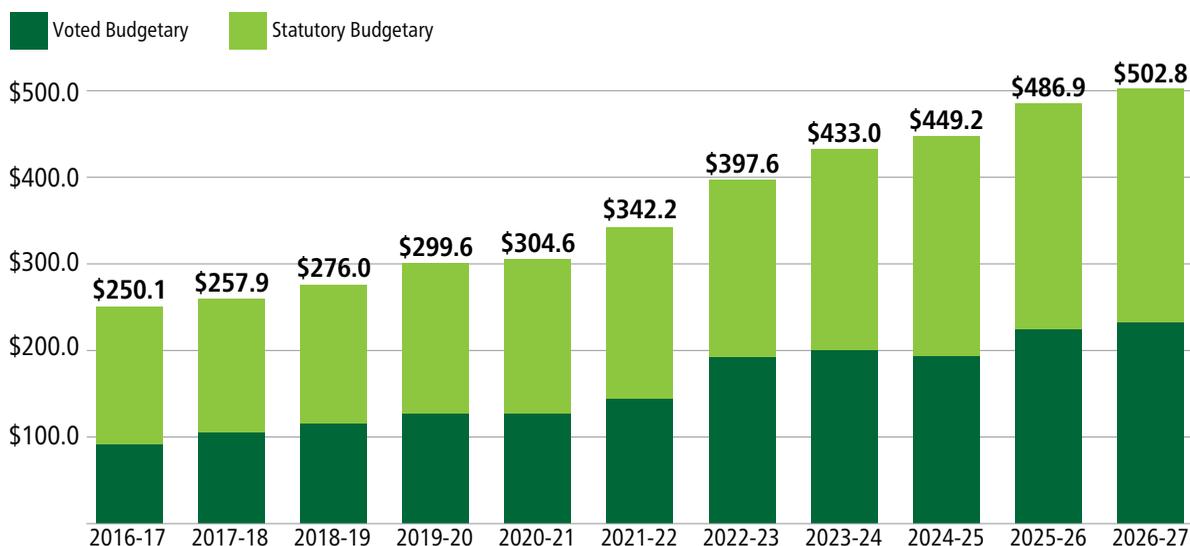
The Treasury Board's main spend is on public service insurance, representing about \$5-billion of the total \$11.8-billion budget. The board is also requesting \$1-billion for defence and security initiatives, as well as \$1-billion in government contingency funds. A further \$3-billion is for the operating budget's carry forward. By purpose, the board says \$6.4-billion is for spending oversight, \$5.1-billion for the employer, and \$130.1-million for administrative leadership.

Of the total almost \$11-billion being requested by the Department of Health, \$4.5-billion is set to go towards operating costs, \$5.9-billion for grants and contributions, and \$22.5-million for capital expenditures.

The department says \$9.8-billion of those funds are for health care systems, \$828-million for health protection and promotion, and \$333.8-million for its internal services.

## Main Estimates, year over year

The following chart lists the total budgetary spending (in billions of dollars) requested through the main estimates year over year, going back to 2016-17.



Source: Treasury Board Secretariat

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The Hill Times

# Liberals to cut CBC by \$192-million in 2026-2027

Last month, Canadian Identity Minister Marc Miller defended recent funding boosts from opposition criticism. 'Suggesting that we cut its funding would, I believe, undermine public confidence in this immensely important broadcaster,' he told a parliamentary committee. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

This year's estimates include \$1.38-billion in funding for the CBC, representing a marked decrease from the \$1.58-billion allotted to the public broadcaster during the 2025-26 fiscal year.

BY DAVIS LEGREE

Government funding for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is set to fall by \$192-million during the 2026-27 fiscal year, as Ottawa opts not to continue provisional funding boosts for the country's public broadcaster.

Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton—Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) released the government's annual main estimates on Feb. 26, which outline planned expenditures for the upcoming fiscal year. The funding includes a combination of statutory resources, as prescribed in legislation, and budgetary measures, which are at the discretion of the government.

This year's estimates include \$1.38-billion in funding for the CBC, all of which was categorized as budgetary spending, representing a marked decrease from the \$1.58-billion allotted to the broadcaster during the 2025-26 fiscal year.

Most of the cuts will impact the broadcaster's operational budget.

Last year's main estimates earmarked \$1.43-billion for the CBC, which included a continuation of a \$42-million injection originally announced in 2024-25. The broadcaster later received an

additional \$150-million during the 2025 federal budget (funding that was later included in supplementary estimates for 2025-26).

However, the latest round of estimates include neither the \$150-million nor \$42-million top-ups—and there's no indication that the CBC should expect the funding moving forward.

"[The \$42-million boost] will not be repeated in 2026-2027," said Leon Mar, a CBC spokesperson, in a statement to *The Wire Report*. "We do not know if [the \$150-million injection] will be repeated in the future; but..., the government has signalled its intention to examine the funding model for the public broadcaster."

"In the meantime, as always, we will work with the parliamentary allocation we are given, together with our revenue from other sources, to continue serving Canadians."

Mar would not comment on the reduction's potential impact. Meanwhile, Canadian Identity Minister Marc Miller's (Ville-Marie—Le Sud-Ouest—Île-des-Sœurs, Que.) office said it "cannot speculate on future budgetary decisions for 2026-2027."

"However, per our platform, we are working to bring CBC/Radio Canada's long-term funding levels in line with the average funding of other national public broadcasters over time," reads a

statement from Hermine Landry, Miller's spokesperson.

Last month, Miller defended recent funding boosts from opposition criticisms during a Feb. 10 appearance before the House Finance Committee.

"As a beacon in that sometimes vomitorium, you need an independent broadcaster that has the resources, often supported by the state, without the influence of the state," Miller told committee members.

Miller later called the CBC an important element of "the fourth pillar of democracy."

"Those who conduct research in this area aren't surprised to see that [funding for] CBC/Radio-Can-

ada, compared to its peers, ranks below the OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development] and G7 average," he added in French.

"Not funding this broadcaster or suggesting that we cut its funding would, I believe, undermine public confidence in this immensely important broadcaster, not only in terms of the reliability of news, but also in terms of democracy."

In 2022, public funding for CBC/Radio-Canada totalled \$32 per capita, which is far below countries like the United Kingdom (\$96 per capita) and France (\$70 per capita), according to a study commissioned by the CBC.

A government report introduced last year by then-heritage minister Pascale St-Onge called for a reformed funding model for the broadcaster, among other changes, as part of a large-scale mandate review.

While Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) government has endorsed some proposals included in St-Onge's vision, opposition MPs and media stakeholders are still waiting for the CBC's mandate to be modernized.

This year's main estimates featured the lowest annual funding total for the CBC since the 2023-24 fiscal year. However, subsequent investments could be announced later this year, including during this fall's federal budget, as the government traditionally provides three routine updates to the estimates.

Despite the reduction, the government's total budgetary spending is set to increase by \$15.9-billion in 2026-27, compared to last year's main estimates, for a total of \$502.8-billion.

The associated bill for the main estimates, known as an appropriation act, must be approved by the House of Commons in a vote customarily considered a confidence matter. This means, should the estimates be defeated by parliamentarians, the government will be forced to call another federal election.

*Davis Legree is the editor of The Wire Report where this piece was first published. The Wire Report covers the intersection of business, technology, and government, with a special focus on the regulatory sphere.*

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The Hill Times*



Prime Minister Mark Carney, centre, has endorsed some proposals included in then-heritage minister Pascale St-Onge's vision, but opposition MPs and media stakeholders are still waiting for the CBC's mandate to be modernized. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



Before the 2025 election, then-heritage minister Pascale St-Onge called for a reformed funding model for the CBC as part of a large-scale mandate review. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

## CBC's annual government funding in recent years:

- 2026-27: \$1,383,252,311
- 2025-26: \$1,425,237,411 (later rose to \$1,575,237,411)
- 2024-25: \$1,383,237,411 (later rose to \$1,425,237,411)
- 2023-24: \$1,287,169,435 (no subsequent expenditures)
- 2022-23: \$1,266,123,241 (later rose to \$1,287,123,241)
- 2021-22: \$1,229,423,241 (later rose to \$1,250,423,241)
- 2020-21: \$1,210,797,846 (later rose to \$1,247,497,846)
- 2020-21: \$1,210,797,846 (later rose to \$1,247,497,846)

## NEWS

# Veteran rehab contract under scrutiny as observers call on government to return the work in-house

The five-year, \$572-million contract with Partners in Canadian Veterans Rehabilitation Services should not be renewed because it ‘does nothing to promote the continuity of care,’ and ‘push[es] bureaucracy to the point of absurdity,’ MPs on the Veterans Affairs Committee are told.

BY IREM KOCA

Veterans and health-care professionals are calling on the government to cancel a multi-million-dollar contract for rehab services amid concerns about jeopardizing veterans’ well-being due to “absurd” and “cumbersome” management of the program.

Tim Laidler, executive director of Veterans Transition Centre, told *The Hill Times* in a Feb. 27 interview that the federal government should not extend its \$572-million contract with a private provider of rehabilitation services for veterans.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) awarded a contract in June 2021 to Partners in Canadian Veterans Rehabilitation Services (PCVRS), a joint venture between Toronto-based private health-care firm Lifemark Health Group and Australian staffing firm WCG International on behalf of Veterans Affairs Canada (VAC). The contract, awarded through a competitive process, is set to expire on Dec. 31, 2026. When asked for further details about the contract, including whether an extension is under consideration, PSPC said by email that it cannot publicly disclose contract details.

“[The government] should not renew the contract, and go back to having the vocation rehabili-

tation program administration to VAC case managers,” said Laidler, who is a trained counsellor and veteran who served in Afghanistan as an Army corporal.

“I think PCVRS overpromised and underdelivered it.”

The contractor began providing services in November 2022, including medical, psychological, and vocational assistance to veterans and their families. Since the work was contracted out, PCVRS has been both administering and delivering the rehabilitation programs. Previously, VAC ran the program in-house, but the delivery of services was done by private health-care providers.

Marc-André Bernard, a psychologist with Institut Alpha, one of the suppliers under the program that has assisted military personnel with their transition out of the Canadian Armed Forces for more than a decade, told *The Hill Times* on a Feb. 27 interview that, “from a clinical perspective,” he also does not think the contract should be renewed, and that the way rehabilitation services are administered should be “rethought.”

Questions to PCVRS were directed to VAC. Marc Lescoutre, a department spokesperson, told *The Hill Times* in an email that currently close to 12,000 veterans are participating in the department’s Rehabilitation Services and Vocational Assistance Program, which represents about six per cent of overall VAC clients. He said the department monitors the performance, quality, and timeliness of services delivered through PCVRS.

“This involves meeting regularly to review contractual performance and quality assurance, including service delivery results, and feedback collected directly from veterans at multiple stages of their rehabilitation journey,” he said.

## ‘No counsellor would ever put their patient or their client through this,’ House committee hears

The House Veterans Affairs Committee held its first meeting to study the PCVRS contract—“as well as any company mandated to provide health care and psychological services to veterans”—on Feb. 23, hearing from professionals involved in the system, includ-

ing Laidler and Bernard. The committee has allocated three meetings to the study, and agreed on Nov. 25, 2025, to invite the Veterans Ombud, ministry officials, and Veterans Affairs Minister Jill McKnight (Delta, B.C.) to appear.

Bernard told MPs that since PCVRS took charge of the rehabilitation services, there have been significant changes to the delivery of programs that have not been for the better.

“I could give you many examples of questionable program operations that push bureaucracy to the point of absurdity, but I would summarize by saying that the program seems to exist for its own sake, piling on administrative requirements that make the process extremely cumbersome and painful for veterans and irritating and suffocating for health-care professionals,” Bernard said in French.

The program “does nothing to promote the continuity of care,” and that there’s a perception that professionals are incapable of being objective or ethical, and that veterans want to abuse the system, Bernard said. “Which, in itself, breaks users’ trust in the structure.”

Conservative MP Fraser Tolmie (Moose Jaw–Lake Centre–Lanigan, Sask.) asked Laidler if he thinks PCVRS is “trying to validate their contract with the government by showing the number of appointments as opposed to the proper care that should be provided to veterans?”

“Yeah, absolutely,” Laidler replied, calling the number of assessments which veterans undergo—taking about three hours and requiring going over 300 questions with a therapist—“astronomical.”

Laidler told MPs on Feb. 23 that “no counsellor would ever put their patient or their client through this sort of assessment.” He said that after the PCVRS assessments, there’s no follow up to ensure veterans are receiving the therapy they need.

“I don’t know the motivation, but it seems highly suspicious that there’s so much assessment being done. I’m very curious how much money is being spent on a veteran just to assess them.”

Union of Veterans’ Affairs Employees (UVAE) national president Toufic El-Daher echoed Bernard and Laidler’s sentiments in a Feb. 27 interview with the *Hill Times* that the PCVRS



Canadian soldiers, pictured in March 2014 in Ottawa after returning home from Afghanistan. Veterans and advocates are raising issues with the private administration of rehabilitation services due to what they say are lingering delays, arbitrary decisions, and a cumbersome process. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

contract should not be extended due to poor program delivery. He argued that the government should reconsider privatizing the rehab programs.

“We were very clear that VAC must show leadership and bring work back inhouse as it was done before these contracts were awarded,” he said, referring to his conversation with VAC officials in a January meeting.

“This contract must not be extended beyond 2026.”

El-Daher argued that the government is “paying twice” for the same services with veterans increasingly turning to other services available to them such as their Blue Cross card, which covers similar but less extensive benefits instead of going through PCVRS. The UVAE has raised concerns about the privatization of the services since the contract was awarded.

“This situation clearly shows that the contract is not meeting its objectives and that veterans are being forced to navigate two systems to get the care they need,” he said.

## Health-care providers face pressure, says union

El-Daher said an ongoing challenge with PCVRS is “the lack of a truly trauma-informed approach” when interacting with veterans. He argued that the program operates with a “very numbers-driven mindset” that’s dismissive of the years of service-related trauma, operation of stress injuries, and post-traumatic stress disorders veterans deal with.

The focus tends to be on meeting targets, completing assessments, and moving files forward as quickly as possible, El-Daher said, adding the excessive assessment process and repeated questioning forces veterans to relive traumatic experiences.

“From our perspective, this is not just an administrative issue. It has a real emotional and psychological impact. Veterans frequently express that they feel unheard, misunderstood, or

treated as case numbers rather than individuals with complex needs,” he said, arguing that risks discouraging veterans from fully engaging in their rehabilitation process.

According to El-Daher, another “major concern” for VAC’s case managers is that their decisionmaking authority is being undermined by the main contractor. VAC case managers work in collaboration with the PCVRS specialists in delivering services.

“Many of them feel pressured to accept whatever PCVRS proposes, even when it goes against their professional ethics. This is a serious problem, because while the employer insists that case managers remain the final decisionmakers, in practice that is not what is happening,” he said, adding that the union has raised the issue repeatedly with the contractor who has denied the issue.

Bernard accused the contractor of putting “a lot of pressure” on practitioners “for things to go faster,” asking for constant measurement of patients’ improvement, and doing arbitrary work such as assigning new doctors to those who transitioned to being a veteran after serving in the Forces, despite them having a doctor familiar with their case. Bernard said such pressure has led to multiple providers ending their collaboration with the program.

El-Daher testified that due to program management issues within PCVRS, such as delayed payments and excessive administrative requirements, some of the preferred and previously used service providers do not work with the contractor. As a result, veterans are being forced to give up or switch to new PCVRS providers, which means choice can be limited in some regions, and do not offer the language services needed, he explained.

Laidler said veterans’ participation in rehabilitation programs are mandatory for those who want to receive their income replacement benefit.

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# Feds are ‘silencing’ an agent of Parliament by leaving post vacant, says ex-budget watchdog Giroux

Conservative MP Stephanie Kusie says the PBO is ‘unable to do its job of providing government oversight.’ But another former budget watchdog Kevin Page says the prime minister has ‘deep respect for the legislative budget offices,’ adding that the next PBO will be faced with ‘enormous challenges’ in the months and years ahead and will be playing a critical role.

BY IREM KOCA

Canada’s former budget watchdog Yves Giroux says the government’s failure to appoint a new parliamentary budget officer after both his and his interim successor’s terms expired is a “conscious decision” to silence the office and prevent it from holding the government accountable.

Jason Jacques’ six-month term as the interim parliamentary budget officer (PBO) ended on March 2 without Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) government appointing a successor. It’s the second time the Liberals have put off making a permanent appointment, after Giroux’s term expired in September 2025.

Giroux, who left after completing a seven-year term, said this shows the government is “not concerned at all” with this position being empty.

“The position being vacant means that the office cannot answer MPs’ or committees’ requests, and they cannot publish anything. So, *de facto*, it means that, for parliamentarians, the office is shut down, and it means the same thing for the media and Canadians because the longer the position remains empty, the longer the PBO or the office cannot publish anything,” he told *The Hill Times* in a March 2 interview.

The Privy Council Office (PCO) and Prime Minister’s Office are responsible for recommending candidates for the governor-in-council appointment, which last year could only be



Prime Minister Mark Carney appointed Jason Jacques, pictured, as the interim parliamentary budget officer on Sept. 2, 2025, for a six-month term, which ended on March 2. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former parliamentary budget officer Yves Giroux says he thinks the government had enough time to appoint a replacement, but decided to leave the role empty. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page says he thinks the prime minister has a ‘deep respect for the work of legislative budget offices,’ and that there will be enormous challenges for the PBO in the months and years ahead. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

done on an interim basis for six months, the limit for such an appointment without Parliament’s approval.

“So it’s in effect silencing an agent of Parliament and preventing the office from fulfilling its mandate,” said Giroux.

“It’s clear to me that it is a conscious decision to have the PBO quiet, or to ensure that the institution is quiet for some time.”

The PBO’s office confirmed in a March 3 statement that it won’t be publishing any reports or taking on requests from parliamentarians until the vacancy is filled.

“We continue to progress on existing files and will resume full operations once an appointment is made,” the office said.

Conservative MP and Treasury Board critic Stephanie Kusie (Calgary Midnapore, Alta.) said the vacancy’s timing is “questionable enough to appear deliberate” given the government recently tabled the 2026-27 main estimates, which ask for Parliament’s approval of over \$500-billion in spending.

“Without the PBO in place, parliamentarians are left without one of our most valuable resources in holding the government to account on this spending,” she said in a March 3 interview.

“I am very concerned by Liberal inaction and politicization which has left the office of the PBO essentially unable to do its job of providing government oversight.”

Kusie said the Liberals must act immediately to appoint another interim PBO so that the office can resume functioning, and to work with the opposition to get a permanent PBO in place.

Pierre Cuguen, a PCO spokesman, said by email that the PBO’s work continues under the guidance of the senior leadership within the office of the PBO.

Citing the Parliament of Canada Act, Cuguen said the governor-in-council appointment would occur “after consultation” with leaders of every recognized party in the House of Commons, and their representatives in the Senate.

“Information regarding the appointment of a PBO will be made available in due course,” the email reads.

Giroux said the government had enough notice and time to fill the position, given it was known that he would be stepping down from the PBO role on Sept. 2, 2025—a deadline mandated by the government—as well as Jacques’ departure on March 2, 2026.

fiscal track. At a September 2025 House committee meeting, he told the MPs that the government’s projections for increasing federal debt service payments were “stupefying” and “shocking,” and said they should be considered “very alarming.” Jacques has since walked back from those comments, saying it was “totally unnecessary” for him to define things in such a way, and said this was part of his learning process on the job.

Jacques directed *The Hill Times* to the Privy Council Office for further questions.

The House is not sitting this week. MPs will return to work on March 9. Given that the Senate does not sit on Mondays, the earliest a new PBO could be appointed is no sooner than March 11, according to Giroux.

## Replacement process ‘started months ago,’ says ex-PBO Page

Kevin Page, president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa and Canada’s first parliamentary budget officer, told *The Hill Times* on March 2 that, ideally, the government should have announced the name of a new PBO weeks ago.

“We are aware that the government has run a selection process. Why the delay? Are there last-minute hurdles in the announcement of a candidate?” Page said by email.

“Behind the scenes, I am aware that the government and public service have worked hard to broaden and deepen the list of candidates for the new PBO. This process started months ago,” said Page, who served from 2008 to 2013.

The PBO role became an independent officer of Parliament in 2017, with amendments made to the Parliament of Canada Act, while Jean-Denis Fréchette served in the role.

“Top candidates have strong credentials, experience in central agencies, and direct experience with the budget process; and graduate degrees in economics. It is a much deeper pool than when I was selected. Few people wanted to be the PBO in 2008,” said Page.

Page disagreed with Giroux’s perception of the government’s position.

“I believe Prime Minister Carney has a deep respect for the work of legislative budget offices,” Page said, adding that Carney, as the former leader of two central banks, has seen the work of Canada’s PBO and the United Kingdom’s Office for Budget Responsibility up close in promoting fiscal transparency, analysis, and discourse.

Page argued that there are “enormous challenges” for the PBO in the months and years ahead.

“Many believe we are living through an historical pivotal moment—geo-political, trade, technology. Helping Parliament and Canadians understand what this means for Canada’s public finances and how we can use fiscal policy responsibly to navigate the best path ahead for our country is a critical role,” he said.

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## NEWS

# Carney should have consulted caucus before supporting U.S.-Israeli strikes on Iran, say some Liberal MPs: 'what the hell'

Liberal MP Will Greaves publicly criticized Prime Minister Mark Carney's stance in a social media post liked by many of his caucus peers. But B.C. Liberal MP Parm Bains says he's received positive feedback from Iranian-Canadians in his riding.

Continued from page 1

This MP said that, based on the goals of this war as declared by the U.S., Canada's support for the attack could become complicated in the coming weeks and months if this war drags on. They argued that when the U.S. says it wants to prevent Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons, they feel like this war could be "Iraq 2.0," referring to America's invasion of Iraq in 2003 under then-president George W. Bush, which the U.S. justified on the claim that Iraq possessed weapons of mass destruction, which it did not. It took the U.S. two decades to pull out of that war.

The MP also said that attacking a sovereign nation without authorization from the United Nations and targeting its leaders has violated international law.

"What we've done now is we basically say, 'Canada is okay attacking other countries,'" said the MP. "We've basically agreed to attacking a sovereign nation. That's what we've agreed to. Wouldn't you say this is a massive change in [Canada's] foreign policy?"

Shortly after the Prime Minister's Office released the statement supporting U.S. and Israeli strikes on Iran on Feb. 28, Liberal MP Will Greaves (Victoria, B.C.) released a video on social media disagreeing with the prime minister's position, arguing that the strikes violate international law and contradict what Carney (Nepean, Ont.) had said in his widely praised speech in Davos, Switzerland.

Carney was in Mumbai, India, on Feb. 28.

"Canada cannot endorse the unilateral and illegal use of military force, the killing of civilians, or the kidnap and assassination of foreign heads of government, while also insisting that our sovereignty, our rights, and our independence must be respected," said Greaves, an international-relations professor, in his video statement.

The post was liked by multiple Liberal MPs, including former cabinet minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.), Braedon Clark (Sackville-Bedford-Preston, N.S.), Ginette Lavack (St. Boniface-St. Vital, Man.), Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country, B.C.), and Sameer Zuberi (Pierrefonds-Dollard, Que.). It was also initially liked by Health Minister Marjorie Michel (Papineau, Que.), who removed her "like" later on, saying a staff member had supported the post in error.

In his video, Greaves pointed out that Carney, in his widely praised Davos speech, talked about the importance of "independence, consistency and principled pragmatism in our foreign policy, even when it's uncomfortable."

"It was a powerful expression of Canada's place in a changed world, and I proudly support it. Today's statement from Canada about the U.S. and Israeli strikes in Iran feels different," said Greaves.

On March 3, Carney released another statement from Sydney, Australia, which was more nuanced than the first one and called for "de-escalation," and that all parties should "respect the rules of international engagement."

"Canada stands with the Iranian people in their long and courageous struggle against the regime's oppressive rule," said Carney.

"Which is why we support efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon and to prevent its regime from further threatening international peace and security. Because Canada is actively taking on the world as it is, not passively waiting for a world we wish to be."

In a March 4 press conference in Australia, Carney declined to rule out Canadian participation in military action in Iran. He also said that the U.S.-Israeli airstrikes on Iran appear to violate international law.

"One can never categorically rule out participation," Carney told reporters during a joint press conference with Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. "We will stand by our allies, when [it] makes sense."

The House was not sitting last week. Carney issued both statements while travelling on his Indo-Pacific trade diversification tour.

## 'I'm very disappointed... People are not happy,' says a Liberal MP

In interviews with *The Hill Times*, MPs acknowledged that the caucus could not meet in person when Parliament is not sitting, but said the prime minister could have had a conference call with caucus members to get a good handle on his parliamentary colleagues' views on the issue. Or, he could have designated a cabinet minister to convene a caucus consultation and relay the feedback to him, they said.

A second MP said they had hoped that, under Carney's leadership, Canada would not support Israel and the U.S. on issues where they are seen to be in violation of international law. However, they say Carney now appears to be backing both countries, and said it's unclear why he took that position in the first place. They said the only possible explanation they can think of was that Carney could have been trying to avoid antagonizing Trump, fearing it could further negatively impact the ongoing bilateral trade dispute, and complicate the upcoming review of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement.

They said they expect Carney to explain his reasoning at this week's national caucus meeting on March 11. MPs said March 9 will also be an important day, as it will be the first time they will meet in person after the constituency week and will hold informal discussions on the issue amongst themselves.

CBC News, meanwhile, reported on March 5 that Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) would be holding a conference call with all Liberal MPs on March 6 to brief them on Canada's position on Iran, and the consular services being provided by Global Affairs Canada.

"I expect a vigorous caucus discussion on this on Wednesday [March 11]," said the second MP.

The MPs said that they would have preferred Canada take a more nuanced position like the United Kingdom, Germany, and France where they did not state clear support for the U.S.-Israeli strikes in Iran.

"Carney's advisers, either they are not well-versed in principles of international law or they miscalculated, thinking that Europe would have also been supporting," said a second MP.

This MP was interviewed after the prime minister issued his first statement, and predicted that Carney would have no choice but to adjust his position due to public pressure as well as media commentary and pressure from his caucus.

According to an Angus Reid poll released March 3, 49 per cent of Canadians said they were opposed to the U.S.-Israeli strikes while 34 per cent said they were supportive.

A third MP also questioned why Carney took this kind of position on a key international issue without any caucus consultation. They said that a number of their colleagues are saying that this is an important foreign policy position where Liberal MPs' perspectives should have been considered.

"I'm very disappointed, as well ... this is really in my estimation a big missed opportunity," said the third MP.

"We were so unclear about what [the statement] actually meant. Are we supporting the attacks? Are we supporting the principle? What the hell is this? ... People are not happy [with] how we've handled this."

The second and third MPs predicted that Carney's position on Iran would damage his credibility both internationally and at home. Also, they said, this issue could become even more troublesome for Carney and Canada if oil prices rise as a result of this conflict.

"It's a total disaster," the third MP said. "He's going to lose a ton of credibility on the international scene [and within Canada] as a result of this. That's a fact."

## MPs Ehsassi, Dzerowicz and Bains support Carney's position

Roland Paris, a former senior policy adviser to then-Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau, said on X that he finds it puzzling that, on the one hand, Carney wants Canadians to accept "the world as it is," but on the other

hand—through the prime minister's second statement—he's calling for respect for international law.

"This Carney statement is puzzling. If, as he says, we must accept 'the world as it is'—including the purported failure of previous diplomatic efforts and of the international order—then why call for a diplomatic solution, de-escalation, and respect for international law?" wrote Paris, who is a director of the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa.

In a written statement provided to *The Hill Times*, Liberal MP Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to the intergovernmental affairs minister, said that he supports the government's position on Iran. He also said that Canada's position on this issue is very similar to most European countries.

"The response of other countries to the situation in Iran has been as varied as the number of rationales offered by the U.S. administration," said Ehsassi, who has Iranian heritage.

"Only Switzerland, Spain, [and] several Nordic countries appear to have criticized the strikes on Iran. Canada's general position shares the greatest overarching similarity with that of the European Union and our closest European allies. ... In addition, our prime minister has also condemned the unlawful use of force against all civilians in the region."

Liberal MP Parm Bains (Richmond East-Steveston, B.C.) said that he's not concerned about the pushback from some of his colleagues about the position the government has taken on this issue as the Liberals are a big-tent party and there's room for a variety of opinions. Bains said he's received positive feedback from his constituents who are of Iranian descent.

"The community here in Richmond has reached out to me and [they] are extremely excited about the thought of the freedom that this will bring," said Bains.

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.) said that she trusts the prime minister's judgment and supports his position. She said that if Carney had not been out of country or if Parliament had not been on a break week, it would have been a lot easier for him to consult his caucus members.

"It's very easy for us in the public to say, 'Let's draw conclusions,'" said Dzerowicz, who is the chair of the House Citizenship and Immigration Committee.

"It is much better to wait and see. We have to trust our leaders. I very much trust Prime Minister Carney. I trust his judgment. ... I support very much his [PM's] call and our minister of foreign affairs' call for de-escalation, immediately, and everything that they are doing to support Canadians."

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# ‘What’s going on?’: Canadians wonder why Conservatives losing MPs, says Nanos of Carney’s growing popularity

But pollster Nik Nanos also says he thinks Iran is ‘the new wildcard’ in public opinion. He will be looking to see if it has changed Canadians’ perceptions of Prime Minister Mark Carney or if it’s led to more concerns about U.S. President Donald Trump’s actions.

Continued from page 1

in former Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux last month.

Veteran pollster Nik Nanos said his political tracking shows that the “numbers really started to move” after Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.) announced he was joining the Liberal caucus on Feb. 18.

Jeneroux followed Michael Ma (Markham-Unionville, Ont.), who crossed the floor back in December, and Chris d’Entremont (Acadie-Annapolis, N.S.), who joined the Liberals last November.

Nanos said that Canadians aren’t “experts” who know the party leaders or are very familiar with the policies, but hearing about floor-crossings “grabs people’s attention.”

“When people hear about one defection, they probably think, ‘Oh, there’s some malcontent in a party.’ And then they hear about two, and then they’re thinking, ‘What’s this about?’ I think when they hear about a third caucus member changing parties, then they start to wonder, ‘What’s going on? And for these people that are leaving, what does it mean in terms of Pierre Poilievre and the type of leader that he is?’” Nanos added.

In Nanos’ weekly poll ending on Feb. 27 and released on March 3, Carney (Nepean, Ont.) was the preferred prime minister for 56 per cent of respondents compared to the 22 per cent of people who chose Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.).

With a 34-point difference, this is the widest gap between the two



Canadians are left wondering what three recent defections from the Conservative Party say about the leadership of Pierre Poilievre, left, says Nik Nanos, while Prime Minister Mark Carney, right, is benefitting from still being in a ‘honeymoon’ phase. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

leaders seen in Nanos’ weekly surveys throughout February.

At 44 per cent, the Liberals continue their weekly pattern of polling far behind their leader. But the poll released on March 3 shows the party managed to widen their lead over the Conservatives, who received 33 per cent. It’s also the Liberals’ highest level of support for the month of February.

Also showing high approval ratings for Carney is a March 2 Leger poll stating that 61 per cent of Canadians either strongly or somewhat approve of his performance. If a federal election were held today, 49 per cent would vote for the Liberals, a jump of two points over a poll released in January, while 35 per cent would vote for the Conservative party, a decline of three points.

But 49 per cent say there shouldn’t be an election until 2029, which is the next fixed election date, compared to those—10 to 11 per cent—who feel it should happen before this summer.

The Leger poll did not question respondents on Poilievre’s performance.

## Carney error-proof so far, but impact of his support for U.S. military action unknown

Carney continues to be in a political honeymoon phase, which is helping his popularity. Contributing to the high level of support, according to Nanos, is that the prime minister so far hasn’t made a mistake.

Carney’s past experience as a central banker in the United Kingdom and here in Canada, and as a special envoy to the United Nations for climate action and finance—and more recently his well-received speech in Davos, Switzerland, in his current role—has made him somewhat of an international darling.

But Carney has begun to receive some criticism about his government’s position on Canada’s renewed relationship with India, as well as his support for the United States’ recent military action against Iran.

Relations between Canada and India were strained under the previous Liberal government after then-prime minister Justin Trudeau in September 2023 accused India of being involved in the murder of Canadian Sikh leader Hardeep Singh Nijjar in British Columbia earlier that year.

Carney has attempted to reset that relationship in order to diversify Canada’s trading options, but there have been questions about this approach considering relatively recent security concerns.

An unnamed senior official made headlines two weeks ago when they told reporters during a briefing about the prime minister’s travel to India, Australia, and Japan—which took place between Feb. 27 and March 7—that the Canadian government does not believe India is still engaging in political interference. This led to both Carney and Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand (Oakville East, Ont.) distancing themselves from the official’s comment with both saying last week that they would not have used those words.

Following U.S. President Donald Trump’s strike against Iran on Feb. 28—which was conducted without the American Congress’ approval—Carney issued a strongly worded statement throwing Canada’s support behind the actions. He cited Iran’s nuclear program and its regime’s oppressive treatment against its own people as some of the reasons for this position.

Criticism came from within Carney’s own party with Liberal MP Will Greaves (Victoria, B.C.), an international-relations professor, issuing a video on March 1 on Instagram in which he said,

“We can be clear-eyed about Iran’s human-rights record and its abuses and the disruptive role that it has played in the Middle East. ... But Canada cannot endorse the unilateral and illegal use of military force, the killing of civilians or the kidnap and assassination of foreign heads of government, while also insisting that our sovereignty, our rights and our independence must be respected.”

Within three days amid reports of growing civilian casualties, a follow-up statement from Carney’s office took a milder tone, saying that while Canada “support[s] efforts to prevent Iran from obtaining a nuclear weapon ... We take this position with regret, because the current conflict is another example of the failure of the international order.”

The statement also said that Canada is calling for a “rapid de-escalation of hostilities.”

Polling from the Angus Reid Institute on March 5 states that 47 per cent of Americans opposed the recent actions in Iran, while 32 per cent support them. This is nearly identical to Canadians’ feelings as per a March 3 poll also from Angus Reid where 49 per cent were against the U.S.-initiated conflict as compared to 34 per cent that supported it.

“I think that Iran is the new wildcard [in] that we don’t know what impact it might have on the public opinion environment,” said Nanos, adding that he will be looking to see if it has changed Canadians’ perception of Carney and whether Canadians are more concerned about Trump’s behaviour in light of the conflict.

## Poilievre has to break through on Canada-U.S. relations: Nanos

For the time being, the three Conservative MP defections “say more than anything else” about

how Canadians feel about the prime minister, Nanos said.

The poll was released as both Carney and Poilievre were separately overseas. On March 3, Carney was in Australia, while Poilievre was in the United Kingdom meeting the country’s MPs and business professionals.

That same day, Poilievre delivered the Margaret Thatcher lecture at the Centre for Policy Studies. The Conservative leader’s European trip—which included three days in Germany—follows his Feb. 26 speech to the Economic Club of Canada in Toronto where he provided extensive comments about how Canada should interact with the Trump administration. This follows ongoing criticism that Poilievre has not focused enough on Canadians’ concerns about the U.S., and that his reticence to do so during the 2025 general election campaign contributed to his party’s loss.

In another pivot, Poilievre appeared on former CBC News anchor Peter Mansbridge’s *The Bridge* podcast, which aired on March 2 but was recorded in Feb. 26.

“I think what’s fairly clear is that [Poilievre’s] old strategy of not talking to journalists is completely out the door. The guy’s now on a charm offensive,” said Nanos.

The pollster said it will be interesting to see whether Poilievre’s new strategy will have an effect on polling numbers for himself or for his party.

“The thing is Pierre Poilievre [is] still doing well among younger Canadians, and we know that younger Canadians are more worried about issues like the cost of living. Pierre Poilievre has built a personal brand about people ... worrying about paying for the groceries and paying for housing ... and the rising cost of living. He needs somehow to articulate a sharper difference from Mark Carney on the Canada-U.S. relationship without looking like Canadians are divided,” Nanos said about what Poilievre needs to do to break through to voters.

He added that the leaders’ international blitzes and their daily public speeches are signaling that they are in a pre-campaign period.

While public-opinion numbers are currently working in Carney’s favour, Nanos said it will be hard for the Liberals to maintain this advantage because they will have to account for their record while in government.

One aspect of that record is that while the Liberals have made announcements about work on major projects, they actually haven’t delivered any, according to the pollster, who says Canadians know about these projects and want to see results.

“I think one of the reasons why [Carney] might want to go [to election] earlier rather than later is because the longer that he’s in power, the higher the expectation is that he should be delivering. And he’s in a bit of a sweet spot right now,” Nanos said.

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## NEWS

# ‘Take that risk’: Poilievre’s new communications strategy could alienate MAGA-style Conservatives, but necessary to appeal to broader voter base, say political players

Conservatives are still competitive with the Liberals. The only difference is Pierre Poilievre is significantly behind Mark Carney by a high margin on who is best placed to lead the country, says pollster Darrell Bricker.

Continued from page 1

but it risks alienating a significant portion of the party’s base which supports United States President Donald Trump, say some political players, but others argue the Conservative leader could easily manage it through deft political handling and message discipline.

After winning his leadership review back in January with 87-per-cent support, Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) has switched strategic gears in the last two weeks by reaching out to people who did not vote for him in the last election. In this effort, he’s giving speeches and doing media interviews in which he’s critical of Trump’s annexation talk and his unfair imposition of tariffs on Canadian goods and services. Poilievre is calling for a full exemption from the president’s “Buy American” policies, and the restart of negotiations over the Keystone XL pipeline. He has also floated the idea of a new auto pact with the U.S. and Mexico to strengthen North America’s position against the dominant Chinese electric vehicle industry.

“Our trade surplus does not represent exploitation by Canada of the United States of America—quite the opposite. In fact, it is the result of us selling very good and very well-priced—in fact, below market-priced—raw materials which America then upgrades and turns into massive profits for its economy,” Poilievre said in his Feb. 26 speech at the Economic Club of Canada in Toronto.

Trump “is also wrong to ignore the sacrifices Canada has made for the United States,” Poilievre said. “Canadians fought and died alongside Americans in

Afghanistan after 9/11. And let’s be clear: we did that exclusively in a response to an attack on our American neighbours.”

After the speech, Poilievre did an interview with former CBC News anchor Peter Mansbridge for his popular podcast, *The Bridge*. In that interview, the Conservative leader said that the next election should not be called until the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement is re-negotiated. He called on Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) to set up an all-party committee on this issue.

Last week, during his trip to Europe, Poilievre talked about the possibility of free trade agreements among English-speaking Commonwealth nations like the United Kingdom, New Zealand and Australia that would give them leverage over the U.S.

Poilievre is known for his confrontational communication style. Up until the April 2025 election, he did interviews with mainly right-leaning news organizations, and avoided the mainstream media.

He’s now using a more moderate and measured tone, and seems willing to do interviews with a broader range of news organizations.

He acknowledged the change in his conversation with Mansbridge.

“I went from having a very focused strategy of talking to and using social media and reaching out, in a very controlled way, to specific outlets. Whereas now, I think, I’m just going to talk to everybody,” Poilievre said. “I like to think that I’m improving all the time.”

Until the January leadership review in Calgary, Poilievre avoided criticizing the U.S. president and would not even mention his name. The bilateral trade dispute was one of the defining issues in the last election on which he largely stayed silent. A number of veteran Conservative insiders urged Poilievre to address the issue, but he chose not to. Political insiders said it was because a significant portion of his party base supports Trump, and Poilievre was careful not to alienate them.

## New comms strategy risky, but worth a try, says David Coletto

David Coletto, CEO of Abacus Data, told *The Hill Times*

that even though Poilievre’s new strategy is risky, his only option is try it.

Based on Coletto’s assessment, 15 to 20 per cent of the Conservative Party base consists of Trump supporters, and there’s a risk that the new strategy could result in those voters moving to the People’s Party of Canada (PPC) or staying at home in the next election.

Either way, it could mean serious electoral trouble for the Conservatives. According to an analysis of the 2021 election by University of Calgary economics professor Trevor Tombe, there were 25 seats where the combined Conservative and PPC vote was greater than the winner’s vote share.

Of the last eight federal elections, six have yielded minority governments. In this close contest among parties, every vote counts.

“I don’t know how big of a risk—there’s still a risk, though—that by trying to [be] moderate or trying to enter the fray on some of these issues, that [Poilievre] does alienate some of his actual hard-core base who do have positive feelings towards Trump, who do think that the things that Donald Trump is doing, particularly on trade, particularly on some of the domestic stuff that Trump’s doing, are good,” said Coletto.

But the pollster said that if Poilievre is able to expand his broader political base of support with this new strategy, it could convince potential floor-crossers not to switch parties.

Since last November, three Conservative MPs—Matt Jeneroux (Edmonton Riverbend, Alta.), Michael Ma (Markham-Unionville, Ont.) and Chris d’Entremont (Acadie-Annapolis, N.S.)—have crossed the floor to join the Liberal ranks. All three MPs are from different regions of the country, with Jeneroux from Alberta, the heartland of the Conservative Party’s voter base.

And there are rumours that more MPs from the Conservatives and the NDP could join the governing Liberal Party.

Coletto pointed out that Poilievre has been the Conservative leader since 2022, and so Canadians already have a perception of him in their minds. With the new communications strategy, Poilievre is trying to reshape that image, but it will take time to be successful in this endeavor.

our. Coletto said that a potential spring election would not be enough time to change the minds of those who didn’t vote for Poilievre last year.

At the same time, Coletto said, if the Liberals were to call a spring election, they would have to present a compelling case to convince Canadians that one is needed. Poilievre needs to work with the government in a skillful way to ensure the Liberals don’t find an excuse to pull the plug on this Parliament anytime soon.

## ‘It’s Pierre Poilievre’s turn to figure that out’: Darrell Bricker

David McLaughlin, a former chief of staff to then-Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney, said that after the 2025 election loss and tanking public opinion polling numbers, Poilievre has no choice but to switch gears and to adopt a new approach. With a new communication style and talking more about Trump—which is a top-of-mind issue for Canadians—Poilievre has recognized that he needs to try something different. McLaughlin said that this is an attempt on Poilievre’s part to regain relevance.

By using a different tone, Poilievre is trying to regain credibility with voters as a legitimate and viable potential prime minister. To successfully criticize Trump, McLaughlin said, the Conservative leader needs to be careful about his tone and choice of words. He should criticize Trump about his 51<sup>st</sup>-state rhetoric, and his approach in terms of what it means for Canada.

McLaughlin said that he has seen Poilievre focusing only on those two issues, which is the right approach. He said that the new strategy is risky and while some of his party base could migrate to the PPC, Poilievre is still a stronger agent of their concerns.

“If I was a political strategist [advising Poilievre], it’s a risk I would take,” said McLaughlin.

“I would advise, ‘Take that risk.’ Take [those Trump supporters] for granted, if that’s what you have to [do]. It’s a small amount, and it doesn’t make enough difference. If those folks are staying home, [that] is something you have to always pay attention to, and there are other ways to get to stimulate your vote.”

To win the election, McLaughlin said, Poilievre should talk more about economic issues. Unless the Conservative Party becomes a credible vehicle for economic growth and economic prosperity, they cannot win an election.

Recent polls have shown the Liberals are leading by as many as 15 points.

A Leger poll released last week indicated that the Liberals were at 49 per cent of support, the Conservatives 35 per cent, the Bloc and NDP at five per cent each, and the Greens three per cent.

In the 2025 election, the Liberals won 43.7 per cent of the vote and secured 169 seats, which are just three short of a majority in the 343-member House of Commons. The Conservatives won 41.3 per cent of the vote and 144 seats. The Bloc Québécois—which fields candidates only in Quebec—and the New Democratic Party each garnered 6.3 per cent of the vote, with the Bloc winning 22 seats and NDP taking seven. The Greens earned 1.2 per cent of the vote, and won just one seat.

Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, said that Poilievre has taken a logical approach to the political situation, and is realizing that he’s going to have to campaign in a different way in order to appeal to Canadians. Bricker said that it’s going to take some time before Poilievre is able to revamp his impression in the minds of Canadians. He said that the Conservatives are still competitive with the Liberals on most policy issues. The main difference, Bricker said, is that the Conservative leader is behind Carney by a significantly high margin in terms of who is best placed to lead the country.

“It’s going to take a while [to change] the impression of him, that he worked so hard to burn in and that is what campaign discipline does, and message discipline does,” said Bricker.

“It burns in a uni-dimensional image, and it’s quite powerful in an election campaign. If it’s the wrong one, then it takes an equally long period of time to change it. And sometimes it never changes.”

Bricker said that, with skillful handling, Poilievre can manage the party’s MAGA base. He said that all Conservative leaders in the past have managed competing regional and ideological groups. He cited Mulroney, who had soft Quebec nationalists in his base in Quebec, and some “pretty right-wing voters” in Alberta who were upset with the National Energy Program. Similarly, Bricker said, then-prime minister Stephen Harper won three back-to-back elections by managing party members in his base who had competing ideological views in different regions of the country.

“Stephen Harper figured that out, Brian Mulroney figured that out,” said Bricker. “Now, it’s Pierre Poilievre’s turn to figure that out.”

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# Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

## Two fresh hires for Finance Minister Champagne

Plus, Hill Climbers catches up with Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree's office where there's a new director of stakeholder relations on deck.

Finance and National Revenue Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** has a couple of new hires in his office, including **Morgan McCullough**, who's moved over from Fisheries Minister **Joanne Thompson**'s team.

McCullough had until recently been director of operations and aquaculture to Thompson, whose team he first joined as a senior adviser post-election last June, and is now director of operations to Champagne.

Up until the end of last year, **Pierre-Yves Bourque** had been Champagne's operations director, and in January, now-former deputy director of operations and Ontario adviser **Rachel Sutton** left the finance office to become an issues manager to Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand**.

McCullough has been working in federal politics since 2016, beginning as an assistant to British Columbia Liberal MP **Patrick Weiler**. He's since been a policy and regional adviser to then-fisheries ministers **Bernadette Jordan** and **Joyce Murray**, director of operations to then-citizens' services minister **Terry Beech**, and director of operations focused on aquaculture to Anand as then-innovation minister and briefly to Industry Minister **Mélanie Joly**.

**Sarphina Chui** has also recently relocated to Champagne's office, in her case as a senior strategic communications and digital adviser.

Chui arrived fresh from Women and Gender Equality Minister, and Secretary of State for Small Business **Rechie Valdez**'s shop where she'd most recently been press secretary to the minister.

Chui was originally hired to Valdez's team as a senior digital and strategic communications adviser last July—a title she'd previously held in Valdez's former office as then-small business minister—but switched titles late last year.



Finance and National Revenue Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** now has a 29-member office at his back. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Chui, who spent last year's election doing communications for Valdez's successful re-election campaign in Mississauga–Streetsville, Ont., is also a former assistant to then-emergency preparedness minister and Privy Council president **Harjit Sajjan**, and a past assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Lisa Hepfner**.

Now in Champagne's office, she's working alongside director of communications **Audrey Milette**, press secretary

**John Fragos**, and communications adviser **Simon Leblanc**.

In other office news, senior policy adviser **Fahim Khan** has been given the added role of Ontario adviser to Champagne—a regional desk previously covered by Sutton.

Currently covering other regional desks for the minister are **Élyse Moisan**, who's responsible for Quebec; **François Massicotte**, senior Quebec affairs adviser; **Quinn Ferris**, senior regional adviser for the West and North; and **Jessica Fullerton**, senior policy adviser and Atlantic adviser.

Overseeing Champagne's now 29-member office is chief of staff **Ian Foucher**. Aside from those already mentioned, the team includes: **Varun Srivatsan**, director of policy; **Kyle Fox**, deputy director of policy; **Matthew O'Connell**, deputy director of financial sector policy; **Niloofer Boroun**, director of international policy; senior policy advisers **Rémi Gagnon** and **Jeffrey Li**;

senior policy adviser **Jérôme Côté**, who's the senior-most staffer responsible for the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA); policy advisers **Charles-Olivier Dubé** and **Mackenzey Metcalfe**; **Nicholas Malouin**,

who covers the CRA desk for the Atlantic and Quebec; **Cheryl Cardinal**, director of Indigenous affairs; **Francesco Sorbara**, caucus liaison; **Sean O'Neill**, director of parliamentary affairs; **Bryn Woolstencroft**, legislative assistant; **Ashton Ross**, director of issues management; **Hélène Botelho**, office manager; **Hirra Majid**, executive assistant to the chief of staff; and the minister's driver, **Nasser Abdulkader**. Also tied to Champagne's office is **Sofiya Sapeha**, who is assistant to the parliamentary secretary to both Champagne and Secretary of State **Wayne Long** in addition to being a parliamentary affairs and issues management adviser to Long.

### Catching up with the public safety team

Public Safety Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** has likewise added a pair of new hires since *Hill Climbers*' last check in, including **Kyle Leonard** as director of stakeholder relations.

Leonard started with Anandasangaree's team in January, and before then was most recently an account director with Spark Advocacy.

which he worked on digital advertising for the party's campaign. Then-Data Sciences CEO **Tom Pitfield**, who's now principal secretary in Prime Minister **Mark Carney**'s office, stepped in as executive campaign director for the Liberals last year.

Leonard is also an ex-assistant to Ontario Liberal **Sonia Sidhu**, among other past jobs.

**Alexander Mendes** likewise joined Anandasangaree's office in January, in his case as executive assistant to the chief of staff.



**Alexander Mendes** is executive assistant to Minister Anandasangaree's chief of staff. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Mendes has been active with the Young Liberals of Canada, and with the party's West Vancouver–Sunshine Coast–Sea to Sky Country's federal electoral district association. He's also done past internships through the Liberal Summer Leadership Program in Weiler's office in 2023, and in the ministers' regional office in Vancouver in 2024—one of 16 such offices across Canada which support all of cabinet.

In a more belated update, unmentioned in Anandasangaree's office to date is digital communications assistant **Luke Villemaire**, who has been with the minister's team since the election, and before then was an assistant to Anandasangaree as then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister.

These updates bring the public safety team under chief of staff **François Giroux** to 18 staff in all. That includes: **Sarah Cozzi**, director of policy; **Nina Sartor**, senior policy adviser; **Zachary Torok**, policy adviser; **Sabrina Sutherland**, director of operations; **Kara Thompson**, West and North regional adviser; **Joshua Mariampillai**, Ontario regional adviser; **Patrick Mangan**, Quebec regional adviser; **Suren Kunasegar**, Atlantic regional adviser and executive assistant;

**Arielle Mantes**, director of parliamentary affairs; **Calum McPhee**, parliamentary affairs adviser; **Frédéric Rivard**, assistant to the parliamentary secretary; **David Taylor**, director of communications; **Simon Lafortune**, deputy director of communications and press secretary; and **Maha Jawass**, issues manager and communications adviser.

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*The Hill Times*



Public Safety Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** at a press conference at the G7 Interior and Security Ministers' Meeting in Ottawa on Nov. 23, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Leonard previously worked for Anandasangaree during his time as then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister, starting in the summer of 2023 as a legislative assistant and assistant to the parliamentary secretary.

He later switched to focus on communications and issues management work in the office, which he stuck with through to last year's federal election.

Leonard spent the election as a copywriter with Data Sciences, which is contracted by the federal Liberal Party and through



**Kyle Leonard** is now director of stakeholder relations to Minister Anandasangaree. *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](mailto:news@hilltimes.com) by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

## Hodgson to talk about Canada's energy sector on March 9 at the Rideau Club in Ottawa



Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson will deliver remarks at the '2026 CGAI Energy Analyst Summit: Is Canadian Energy Competitive Internationally?' Monday, March 9, at 8 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

### MONDAY, MARCH 9

**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 Hodgson to Deliver Remarks**—Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson will deliver remarks at the "2026 CGAI Energy Analyst Summit: Is Canadian Energy Competitive Internationally?" Monday, March 9, at 8 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

### TUESDAY, MARCH 10

**Conference: 'Building an Energy Superpower'**—Canada 2020 hosts "Building an Energy Superpower: Canada's Energy Future," a policy conference focused on the ideas, investments, and partnerships needed to secure Canada's energy future. Tuesday, March 10, at Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details: [canada2020.ca](http://canada2020.ca).

**Chief of Defence Staff to Deliver Remarks**—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan will deliver remarks titled, "Global Security and The Power of Partnership," at a lunch event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Tuesday, March 10, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W Georgia St., Vancouver. Details: [boardoftrade.com](http://boardoftrade.com).

**Screening of Prime Minister**—As part of The Power Shift's Ottawa launch, a screening of the Jacinda Ardern documentary *Prime Minister* will take place, followed by a moderated conversation on women and power featuring Liberal MPs Karina Gould and Chi Nguyen, and Ketty Nivyabandi, secretary general of Amnesty International. Tuesday, March 10, at 7 p.m. ET at allsaints, 330 Laurier Ave. E., Ottawa. Details: [thepersoncentre.ca](http://thepersoncentre.ca).

### TUESDAY, MARCH 10—WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

**Energy Security Summit 2026**—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts the two-day Energy Security Summit 2026 exploring the most urgent energy security challenges facing Canada today. Participants include the Netherlands Ambassador to Canada Margaret Vonno, Indian High Commissioner to Canada Dinesh Patnaik, and Maj.-Gen. D.R. Yarker, commander of the Canadian Armed Forces Cyber Command. Tuesday, March 10 to Wednesday, March 11 at the Fairmont Château

Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: [macdonaldlaurier.ca](http://macdonaldlaurier.ca).

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 11

**Panel: 'Canada's AI Strategy'**—The Canadian Internet Society and Telus host a breakfast panel, "Canada's AI Strategy: Reading Between the Lines of 'What We Heard,'" a practical and policy-focused panel discussion with clear options and trade-offs for decision-makers, practitioners, and stakeholders as Canada moves toward the release of the strategy. Wednesday, March 11, at 8 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank Street, 15<sup>th</sup> Floor, Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

**Panel: 'Editing Democracy'**—The newly launched Globe and Mail Foundation will bring leading news editors and experts from the United Kingdom, the United States, and Canada to discuss the issues, urgencies, and opportunities facing news media in our era of change, innovation, and artificial intelligence. They will discuss the fight to retain public trust in an age when misinformation and alternate facts threaten so many sources of information that we consume on a daily basis, and the risks and rewards posed by rapid advances in AI. Wednesday, March 11 at 7 p.m. ET at The Globe and Mail Centre, 351 King St. E., Toronto. Register: [globeandmailfoundation.com](http://globeandmailfoundation.com).

### THURSDAY, MARCH 12

**Bacon and Eggheads Breakfast**—The Partnership Group for Science and Engineering's first breakfast event of 2026 will take place today featuring the University of Alberta's Dr. David Wishart, the 2025 winner of the NSERC Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science and Engineering. Thursday, March 12. Register via Eventbrite.

**The Bill Graham Lecture on International Affairs**—The Canadian International Council hosts the third annual Bill Graham Lecture on International Affairs. This year's speaker is professor Geoffrey Hinton, one of the world's most influential voices in AI. He will explore the rapidly shifting technological landscape, and its implications for international security, governance, and society. Thursday, March 12, at 6 p.m. ET at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay St., Simpson Tower, 8<sup>th</sup> floor, Toronto. Register: [thecic.org](http://thecic.org).

### FRIDAY, MARCH 13

**Conversation on Leadership and Governance**—Part of its International Women's Day luncheon, Equal Voice hosts an "Inside-the-Room Conversation on Leadership and Governance." Senior leaders from government, Bay Street, and civil society will discuss

how economic and fiscal decisions are shaped, how trust is sustained across sectors, and why women's leadership at the highest levels strengthens institutional stability and market confidence. Friday, March 13, at 11 a.m. ET in Toronto. Register: [equalvoice.ca](http://equalvoice.ca).

**Press Gallery Annual General Meeting**—Members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery are encouraged to attend the annual general meeting, including the election of a new executive team. Refreshments will be provided. Friday, March 13, at 12:30 p.m. ET in Room 325, 180 Wellington St., Ottawa. Contact [stephanie.gagne@parl.gc.ca](mailto:stephanie.gagne@parl.gc.ca).

### TUESDAY, MARCH 17

**La Francophonie Sec Gen to Deliver Remarks**—Louise Mushikiwabo, secretary general of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie, will deliver remarks in French at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Tuesday, March 17, at 11:30 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Reine-Elizabeth, 900 René-Lévesque Blvd. O., Montreal. Register: [corim.qc.ca](http://corim.qc.ca).

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

**Bank of Canada Interest Rate Announcement**—The Bank of Canada will announce the new target for the overnight rate. Wednesday, March 18, at 9:45 a.m. ET. Details: [bankofcanada.ca](http://bankofcanada.ca).

### THURSDAY, MARCH 19

**Global Healthcare Innovation Summit**—The Global Healthcare Innovation Summit brings together senior global decision-makers responsible for health-care strategy, public policy, investment, and system transformation to address the most-urgent challenges and transformative opportunities shaping the future of health care. Thursday, March 19 at 8 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

### MONDAY, MARCH 23

**Saab CEO to Deliver Remarks**—President and CEO of Swedish defence and security company Saab AB Micael Johansson will take part in a conversation hosted by the Canadian Club of Ottawa. Swedish Ambassador to Canada Signe Burgstaller will give opening remarks. Monday, March 23, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register: [canadianclubottawa.ca](http://canadianclubottawa.ca).

### TUESDAY, MARCH 24

**'A Preventative Approach to Targeted Violence and Hate'**—Senator Kristopher Wells and the Organization for the Prevention of Violence host "A

Preventative Approach to Targeted Violence and Hate." Meet and network with professionals dedicated to addressing the crisis in youth violence and harm online, community safety, hate crime prevention, and countering violent extremism. Refreshments will be served. Tuesday, March 24, at 4:30 p.m. ET in the Senate Lounge, Senate of Canada Building, 2 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

**Canada's Anti-Fentanyl Commissioner to Deliver Remarks**—Kevin Brosseau, commissioner of Canada's Fight Against Fentanyl, Privy Council Office, will take part in a panel discussion on opioids hosted by The Walrus Talks. Tuesday, March 24, at 7 p.m. ET at Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St. W., Toronto. Register: [thewalrus.ca](http://thewalrus.ca).

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 25

**Lecture: 'Peace, Order, and Good Journalism (with a Side of Comedy)'**—Carleton University hosts the 2026 Kesterton Lecture featuring Stewart "Brittlestar" Reynolds who will speak on "Peace, Order, and Good Journalism (with a Side of Comedy)," exploring why journalism is needed more than ever, how algorithms shape what we see (and believe), and why getting your news from comedians on the internet (including him) is probably not the best idea. Wednesday, March 25, at 7 p.m. ET at Richcraft Hall, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: [events.carleton.ca](http://events.carleton.ca).

### THURSDAY, MARCH 26

**CRA Commissioner to Deliver Remarks**—Commissioner of the Canada Revenue Agency Bob Hamilton will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, March 26, at 12 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**Lecture with Environics Founder Michael Adams**—The Canadian International Council hosts the 2026 Macdonald Lecture featuring Michael Adams, president and founder of Environics Institute for Survey Research, who will explore the evolution and divergence of social values in Canada and the United States. Thursday, March 26, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Munk School of Global Affairs, 1 Devonshire Place, Toronto. Details: [thecic.org](http://thecic.org).

**Politics at the Pub**—The Canadian International Council's National Capital Branch hosts "Politics at the Pub: Diplomacy with Authoritarian and Adversarial Regimes," featuring Pamela Isfeld, president of PAFSO, and former Canadian diplomats Christopher Sharpardanov and James Trottier. Thursday, March 26, at 5:30 p.m. ET at The Bridge Public House, 1 Donald St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

### FRIDAY, MARCH 27

**Minister MacKinnon to Deliver Remarks**—Transport Minister Steven MacKinnon will deliver remarks on "Connecting Canada: The Trade Infrastructure Strategy to Power Canada's Economic Future" at a lunch event hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Friday, March 27, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Arcadian Court, 401 Bay St., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor, Toronto. Details: [empireclubofcanada.com](http://empireclubofcanada.com).

**David Suzuki at 90**—The Canadian Club Toronto hosts Dr. David Suzuki for a special luncheon celebrating his 90<sup>th</sup> birthday and presenting him, alongside his wife Dr. Tara Cullis, with the Canadian Club Toronto Lifetime Achievement Award. Friday, March 27, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W., Toronto. Details: [canadianclub.org](http://canadianclub.org).

### FRIDAY, MARCH 27—SUNDAY, MARCH 29

**NDP National Convention**—New Democrats will gather in Winnipeg, Man., from Friday, March 27 to Sunday, March 29 for their National Convention where they will debate ideas, celebrate shared values, and help shape the future of their movement. Details: [convention.ndp.ca](http://convention.ndp.ca).

### SUNDAY, MARCH 29

**Ministers LeBlanc and Fraser to Attend Fundraiser**—Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc and Justice Minister Sean Fraser will attend a party fundraiser hosted by the Central Nova Federal Liberal Association. Sunday, March 29, at 3 p.m. AT at Summer Street Industries, 72 Park St, New Glasgow, N.S.

**NDP Leadership Election Results**—The results of the election for the federal NDP's new leader will be announced today in Winnipeg.

### TUESDAY, MARCH 31

**CEO of TC Energy to Deliver Remarks**—François Poirier, CEO of TC Energy, will take part in a conversation hosted by the Canadian Club of Ottawa. Tuesday, March 31, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register: [canadianclubottawa.ca](http://canadianclubottawa.ca).

**Bob Rae to Deliver Remarks**—Canada's former envoy to the United Nations Bob Rae will deliver remarks on "How the Light Gets in: Breaking Through the Shadows of an Orwellian World," hosted by the Balsillie School of International Affairs. Tuesday, March 31, at 7 p.m. ET at CIGI Auditorium, 67 Erb St. W., Waterloo, Ont. Details: [balsillieschool.ca](http://balsillieschool.ca).

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 1

**Roundtable: 'What CUSMA Renegotiation Means for Canada'**—Deputy minister for international trade Rob Stewart, and Meredith Lilly with Carleton University's Norman Paterson School of International Affairs will take part in a roundtable lunch, "All Roads Lead to...? What CUSMA Renegotiation Means for Canada," hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, April 1, at 12 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

### THURSDAY, APRIL 9—SATURDAY, APRIL 11

**Liberal National Convention**—The 2026 Liberal National Convention will take place from Thursday, April 9, to Saturday, April 11, in Montreal, featuring policy discussions, guest speakers, training sessions, and the election of the next national board of directors. Details: [liberal.ca](http://liberal.ca).

### FRIDAY, APRIL 10

**Seminar: 'AI and Misinformation'**—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts a seminar on "AI and Misinformation," examining how misinformation, often driven by AI, affects parliamentarians and will explore how these tools may be used by foreign or malicious actors. on Friday, April 10, at 8:30 a.m. ET at 180 Wellington St., Room 425, Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.