

Sen. Jaffer's
retirement reflections

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NEWS

MPs sound alarm over threat of losing 'invaluable' tool for fiscal oversight

The Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation is seeking \$4.5-million over three years to continue training elected officials on how to scrutinize the annual Public Accounts.

BY NEIL MOSS

As billions of dollars of government spending went without committee scrutiny, some MPs are raising concern that they might soon lose a helpful tool for the House Public Accounts Committee to perform fiscal oversight on federal expenditures.

MPs on the committee have been receiving annual in-camera briefings put on by the Canadian Audit and Accountability Founda-

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Treasury Board President Anita Anand hasn't indicated whether her department will choose to fund training sessions for MPs on the Public Accounts Committee. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

CSG pushes for security clearance for Senate leaders to parse NSICOP report

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

Senate leaders are "in the dark" on an explosive national security report that directly implicates parliamentarians, leaving the Red Chamber with "no roadmap on what to do," says Canadian Senators Group Leader Scott Tannas.

For more than a week, Tannas' group has been pressing the government to grant Senate leaders

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NEWS

Sweating summer polling deficit, Liberals hope to dine out on 'impressive list' of spring bills

BY STUART BENSON

Liberal and NDP MPs are putting on optimistic faces as they prepare to face voters over the summer at community events

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Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Jean Chrétien marks 25 years since Kosovo conflict with lunch, old friends, and a basketball



Lunch club: Retired Maj.-Gen. Michael J. Ward, left, Kosovo diaspora representative Dani Brajshori, former prime minister Jean Chrétien, Kosovo Ambassador Adriatik Kryeziu, and retired Lt.-Col. Billie Flynn. Photograph courtesy of Erin O'Toole

A basketball became a token of friendship between a past prime minister and a former Kosovar refugee as they lunched together at the Rideau Club last week.

Former Conservative leader **Erin O'Toole** hosted the June 20 lunch featuring ex-Liberal prime minister **Jean Chrétien**, former Kosovar refugee **Dani Brajshori**, and Kosovo's Ambassador to Canada **Adriatik Kryeziu**.

O'Toole—who's now president and managing director of ADIT North America—explained to **Heard on the Hill** last week that he's been working with Kryeziu on events to commemorate Canada's military involvement in the 1998-1999 Kosovo campaign.

Also in attendance were **Billie Flynn**, who was the commanding officer of the air campaign, and **Mike Ward**, who commanded the land campaign 25 years ago.

The men shared stories over a light lunch. O'Toole explained the choice of venue was for Chrétien's convenience: "His office is in the same building as the Rideau Club, which is why the lunch was held there."

But what's up with the basketball? That's a reference to a pick-up game that Chrétien took part in during his visit to CFB Borden in Simcoe County, Ont., with the refugees who were staying there.

"The basketball game with the prime minister at the military base in 1999 is quite legendary amongst the Kosovar refugee community in Canada," explained O'Toole.

Brajshori's father, who had brought his family to Canada to seek refuge during the 15-month

Kosovo war, was watching the game when Chrétien took a tumble.

"Chrétien fell, my father rushed to assist him, using his hat to brush the dust off the PM's clothes," Brajshori recalls. "After the game, the PM met with my father and, with the help of a translator, they interacted. Chrétien extended an invitation to visit him at Parliament. This invitation was a significant factor in my father's decision to choose Ottawa as his place of residence."

Before Brajshori senior died a few years ago, he had not only followed through on Chrétien's invitation to visit him while he was still in office, but Brajshori also gave the PM a book on the resettlement of the Kosovar refugees. Last week's lunch was a chance for Dani to reconnect with the elder statesman who signed a basketball for him, as well as for Kryeziu.

Meanwhile, HOH couldn't help but wonder what O'Toole was doing in Ottawa hosting a lunch, given he stepped down as a Conservative MP one year ago. "I still live in Ottawa, but I am moving back to Toronto this summer," he confirmed.

Summer shock: long-haul Toronto-St. Paul's byelection delivers Tory win

Don Stewart will join the House of Commons this fall as the new Conservative MP for Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., after successfully winning the extremely drawn-out June 24 race.

In a major upset of what's been a safe Liberal seat for more than 30 years, Stewart was able to claim victory over Liberal **Leslie Church** by a margin of 590 ballots, or 1.6 per cent of the vote.

The race to replace longtime MP and cabinet minister turned Ambassador to Denmark **Carolyn Bennett** didn't wrap up until nearly 5 a.m., when Elections Canada was finally able to report all of the lengthy ballots in the tight race. A record total of 84 names—most of whom were protest candidates against the country's first-past-the-post electoral system—choked the vote-counting procedure, leading to delays that only the most stalwart of political watchers saw through to the end.

First-time candidate Stewart—a financial executive and father of two who works for the Canadian Investment Regulatory Organization—earned 15,555 votes, besting former Liberal cabinet staffer Church's 14,965.



Conservative Don Stewart brought it home for his party in a nail-biter byelection in Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., on June 24. Screenshot courtesy of CBC News

New Democrat **Amrit Parhar** was a distant third with 4,044 votes, while Green candidate **Christian Cullis** rounded out the top four with 1,059 votes.

John McKay to step back from politics



Nine-term Liberal MP John McKay. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

As one rookie gets going, a veteran is prepping to say goodbye. Nine-term Toronto Liberal MP **John McKay** will not be reoffering in the next federal election, the *Toronto Star* reported on June 20.

McKay said he's reached the "age and stage" to step aside, saying he told Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** of his plans more than a year ago, but withheld the news until it was confirmed that Don Valley East, Ont., Liberal MP **Michael Coteau** would be running in McKay's seat.

Due to this year's riding redistribution, Coteau's riding is being absorbed into three adjacent constituencies, so he will be running for the Liberals in the newly named Scarborough—Woburn, Ont., riding McKay has held since 1997.

Denis Coderre joins Quebec Liberal leadership race

Did you know 1997 was the same year **Denis Coderre** was first elected as a Liberal MP? The former Liberal cabinet minister made headlines last week when he confirmed he will run to lead the Quebec Liberal Party.

Coderre represented the riding of Bourassa, Que., for 16 years, and was immigration minister from 2002-2003. He stepped down in 2013 to successfully run for mayor of Montreal. He lost in 2017 to current mayor **Valérie Plante**, and again in 2021.

The Quebec Liberal Party has been leaderless since **Dominique Anglade** quit in late 2022 after two years in the role. The party has been in opposition in the National Assembly since 2018.

Rugby Canada puts the fun in fundraiser

Sports fans are invited to the Heart and Crown pub in the

ByWard Market on July 5 for a fundraiser in support of the Rugby Canada U20 Women's team as they prepare for international competitions this summer against teams from Wales, England, and the United States.

The basic \$50 tickets gets you lunch and a beer, while for an additional \$25, ticketholders get access to a Q&A with head coach **Dean Murten** and members of the squad, a Canadian Women's National Team alumni guest speaker, a live auction and raffle, and (drumroll) a silver ticket to watch the Canada Men's Rugby vs. Scotland match at TD place on July 6.

Get your tickets at auctria.events/u20women.

Joanne Minns becomes ambassador to South Sudan

Joanne Minns will take over as Canada's ambassador to South Sudan, Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** announced on June 20.

Prior to joining the foreign service in 2008, Minns worked for the Privy Council Office and other federal government departments. At headquarters, she's worked in the Peace and Stabilization Operations Bureau, special immigration measures for Afghans, and as deputy director of North America policy and relations. She has served on postings to Canada's missions in Nairobi and Islamabad.

Minns will succeed **Aly-Khan Rajani**.

New Health Canada DM departs Queen's Park

Coming over from the Ontario government, **Greg Orenszak**—currently the province's deputy minister of Finance—will become Health Canada's new DM.

"Greg has been a valuable advisor to me, and his work has been crucial in developing six successful budgets. Best wishes in your new role!" Ontario Finance Minister **Peter Bethenfalvy** posted on X on June 18.

Orenszak has many years of provincial government experience, but none federally. He first joined the Ontario public service in 1999, and has held many senior roles at Finance, Government Services, Treasury Board Secretariat, and Advanced Education and Skills Development. In 2016, he left the civil service for Ernst & Young, but returned to Queen's Park a year later.

Effective Aug. 19, Orenszak's appointment follows **Stephen Lucas'** retirement as Health DM last month.

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‘Everything has a time’: Senator Jaffer marks an end to 23 years on the Hill

A trailblazer in the Upper Chamber who has juggled chairing committees and working towards peace in Sudan in the early 2000s, Mobina Jaffer reflects on her career as a Senator.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Starting a new job is rarely easy. Starting a new job as Canada’s first-ever Muslim Senator the week after 9/11 is a whole other level of challenging.

British Columbia ISG Senator Mobina Jaffer, who reaches the Senate’s mandatory retirement age of 75 this August, was appointed to the Red Chamber by then-prime minister Jean Chrétien in June 2001, but her swearing-in didn’t happen until September.

With Senators taking their seats to start the fall sitting exactly one week after the Sept. 11, 2001, attacks, it made for a tough start and “much harder” introduction to Parliament for Jaffer. Mere weeks into the job, she was appointed to the Special Committee on Bill C-36, legislation tabled in response to 9/11 that proposed a number of measures—including amendments to the Criminal Code, Official Secrets Act, and Canada Evidence Act—aimed at combatting terrorism.

“That [committee] was a very tough experience, because ... at that time, people were very upset. And I understand that now; I didn’t then. And so people would say, like, ‘oh, as a Muslim, what do you expect?’ And I’d get so angry, I would say, ‘how dare you say that? You know, all Muslims are not terrorists.’ But it became a mindset at that time for a short time, not anymore,” recalled Jaffer during a June 19 interview with *The Hill Times* in her corner office overlooking Parliament Hill. “One person who did support me at that time was Mr. Chrétien. He was telling everybody that, ‘remember, just for a few bad actors, don’t paint every Muslim that way.’ He really stood by me, gave me a lot of strength.”

“It really hardened me,” said Jaffer, who went on to serve on the Senate’s special committees on Terrorism and Public Safety,



British Columbia ISG Mobina Jaffer—the second-longest currently serving Senator—sat down with *The Hill Times* in her top-floor Victoria Building office in downtown Ottawa on June 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and on the Anti-terrorism Act the following year. “It was a sheer shock for me, because, you know, I’d come with rose-coloured glasses.”

Jaffer’s appointment to the Red Chamber marked not just the naming of Canada’s first-ever Muslim Senator, but she was also the first Senator of South Asian descent, and the first African-born Canadian Senator, having come to the country as a refugee displaced by Ugandan dictator Idi Amin’s brutal regime.

Despite that rough start, Jaffer said it didn’t take long before she’d settled in with the help of “wonderful people,” including then-leader of the government in the Senate Sharon Carstairs, and other Liberal Senators whom she’d come to know through her years working with the party, including as party vice-president from 1994 to 1998 and president of the National Women’s Liberal Commission from 1998 to 2003.

“In that way it was very welcoming, it was just the discussions were difficult,” she said.

Born in Kampala, Uganda, Jaffer was fresh out of law school at the United Kingdom’s University of London when, in August 1972, Amin ordered the expulsion of the country’s South Asian population, forcing Jaffer’s family—including her husband of one year—to leave their homes.

“I went home, and immediately got thrown out,” she said. “My

husband, to protect me from not being taken by the army, they did a real job on him.”

Arriving in Vancouver in August 1975, it didn’t take long for Jaffer to join the Liberal fold.

Her father had been a politician in Uganda, and she said it was a “family joke” that she would take over her father’s riding when he retired. At first, as a refugee, Jaffer had thought that dream of working in politics had come to an end.

“When I came here, I just thought, ‘how can I even run here?’ But then I met someone in the [grocery store in December 1975] who asked me to join the Liberal Party—the women’s section—and from there I went to all kinds of positions,” she said.

Jaffer, who began practicing law in B.C. in 1978, went on to run twice as a Liberal candidate

in the 1993 and 1997 federal elections.

Her appointment to the Senate in 2001 didn’t come out of the blue, but it was nonetheless a surprise.

Jaffer had to undergo a security check while being considered for appointment, and she said “when they did it, they kept telling me, ‘don’t expect anything, that’s just a *pro forma*.’” But then came the call from Chrétien. Jaffer said when she phoned her father to tell him the news, he “didn’t believe it.” Coming a few years after the now-infamous prank phone call to Chrétien by a Montreal broadcaster pretending to be Queen Elizabeth II, Jaffer said her father “thought that some comedian had called me, because how could I—a refugee—become Senator?” But it was no joke, and when it came time for her swear-

ing in, 60 members of Jaffer’s family came to Ottawa to watch it happen.

As a lawyer, Jaffer’s focus—up until her appointment to the Senate—was on immigration and criminal law. That changed when she joined the Chamber, and her practice today—where she’s continued to log some hours working alongside her son—is focused on family and personal injury law.

Jaffer’s challenging start in the Senate was perhaps good preparation for what was to come.

In 2002, thanks to her connections to the continent, she was named Canada’s Special Envoy for Peace in Sudan. That same year, she was made chair of the Canadian Committee on Women, Peace, and Security, and in 2005, she was appointed by then-prime minister Paul Martin to the government’s special Darfur advisory team alongside then-Quebec Senator Roméo Dallaire and then-ambassador Robert Fowler.

As special envoy, on top of her regular work as a Senator, Jaffer said she would travel to Sudan every other month. She said she was eager to visit as many places as possible, and “really listen to what the Sudanese wanted to say.”

“At that time, I was able to go to more of Sudan than the rebels were or the president was,” said Jaffer, who made use of the UN’s planes. “When I saw President [Omar Hassan Ahmad al-] Bashir, I would always say to him, ‘OK, I went to a part that you can’t go, ask me what you want to know.’” She said she did the same during her meetings with former Sudan People’s Liberation Movement leader John Garang, who briefly served as first vice-president of Sudan and then president of Southern Sudan before his death in 2005.

Jaffer had stepped into her special envoy role when that peace process was already underway, but as a member of the Darfur advisory team, she said she was able to help shape the process to come, and as such, put a focus on ensuring women from the region were included. “It really changed the process,” she said. The importance of involving women in peace negotiations and conflict resolution is something Jaffer has championed throughout her years as a Senator through multiple forums.

Both processes led to fragile agreements, but today, Sudan is once again engulfed in civil war and facing a famine, with Darfur on the brink of another genocide. But unlike the 2000s, Jaffer said Sudan now has been “forgotten.”

“Looking back, you know, Sudan was on every diplomats’ lips at that time. Everybody was worried about Sudan, and now we’ve all forgotten Sudan, and it just breaks my heart,” she said. “We’ve just dumped it. We’ve even taken away the ambassador from North Sudan ... now it must be for security reasons—I’m not putting another angle—but still, we don’t even have an ambassador.”

Over her decades in the Senate, Jaffer has served on a long



Senator Jaffer, left, speaks with then-justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould ahead of a Senate Legal Affairs Committee meeting on assisted-dying legislation in May 2016. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

News

Canada at risk of both freshwater and brain drain as thirst for tech grows: AquaAction president

A U.S. threat assessment identified global water security as a growing risk to its national security interests, and Canada needs to catch up, says AquaAction's Soula Chronopoulos.

BY STUART BENSON

When it comes to protecting the country's freshwater, Canada seems to be "asleep at the wheel," and without a greater focus on water tech and matching policies and regulations with the United States to better protect Canada's "blue gold," the future could "hit us like a ton of bricks," according to the head of a water tech accelerator.

"The reality is that we're running out of water, and we use it flagrantly," said Soula Chronopoulos, president of AquaAction, a registered charity supporting entrepreneurs addressing water scarcity and pollution issues. "It's a crisis in the making."

A 2023 report by the Global Commission on the Economics of Water predicted that global freshwater demand would exceed supply by 40 per cent by 2030. Another report by Bank of America Global Research also indicated that the worldwide freshwater supply could run dry at the current consumption rate by 2040.

Chronopoulos said Canada will need a whole-of-government approach that recognizes water security not only as an environmental and economic issue, but also a national security matter.

When they return from the summer recess, members of the House Environment and Sustainable Development Committee will get to work on drafting a report based on their study of the federal government's role in protecting Canada's freshwater resources. The study began last October, and heard from nearly 180 witnesses.

Chronopoulos testified before the committee on Feb. 8, calling for Canada to treat the water-tech sector as a "core component" of Canada's freshwater protection strategy. However, due to a lack of focus on the sector from Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada's (ISED) clean tech funding or other specific federal envelopes, "Canada's water innovators are being lured south and abroad by more enticing jurisdictions, along with their



Due to extensive permafrost melt, many Arctic lakes are breached and drained, as pictured in Southwestern Baffin Island. Larger swaths of Canada are regularly dealing with more severe drought conditions, putting water security as a top priority, say stakeholders. Photograph courtesy of Reinhard Pienitz/imaggeo.egu.eu

startups, [intellectual property], and jobs."

While the U.S. and other countries offer significant investments to lure Canadian entrepreneurs, the federal funding has "dried up right at the moment we need it most," Chronopoulos told *The Hill Times*.

"They threw the baby out with the bathwater," she said, referring to the dismantling of Sustainable Development Technology Canada's \$1-billion green fund last October following a whistleblower complaint related to the distribution of COVID-19 emergency relief payments in 2020 and 2021. The money has since been transferred to the National Research Council of Canada (NRC).

Chronopoulos suggests the federal government establish targeted, performance-based grant programs to be distributed by organizations like AquaAction to compensate for that loss of funding, and compete with the wooing of international competitors. She said the federal government should also expand measures like the Green Municipal Fund to include water tech pilot projects and the Clean Manufacturing Tax Credit to include investment in the sector specifically.

"Right now, Canada should be leading in water management, regulation and protection, but we're not," Chronopoulos said. "It's time to treat Canada's freshwater protection as not just an economic and environmental issue, but it has to be treated as a national security issue just like the U.S. does."

Canadians are increasingly being "wooed to the U.S.," she said. U.S. Ambassador to Canada

David Cohen recently accompanied AquaAction and eight other Canadian water tech companies to the U.S. Department of Commerce's SelectUSA Investment Summit on June 22-23.

In the works since November 2023, the mission included meetings with several state economic development organizations during the summit, and invitation-only events in the evening at the Canadian Embassy and Quebec government office in Washington, D.C.

"Basically, every department wants to meet to woo us down to the U.S.," Chronopoulos said.

Chronopoulos said 20 Canadian entrepreneurs and water tech companies will again be courted by American and international players offering global expansion opportunities at the International Water Association's World Water Congress and Exhibition in Toronto during the second week of August.

The outreach by foreign interests has increased significantly this year after the U.S. Office of the Director of National Intelligence released its 2024 Annual Threat Assessment, which recognized water scarcity as a national security threat.

The report cited the intersection between the physical effects of climate change and geopolitical tensions and vulnerabilities related to water, food, and other resource scarcity as an increasing risk to U.S. national security interests, and the need for humanitarian and financial assistance to low-income countries hit by climate-related disasters.

Chronopoulos said she doesn't expect any significant cross-border

conflicts over water between the U.S. and Canada any time soon, but there may have already been a minor "shot across the bow," with a 100-year, \$1-billion deal the city of Chicago signed to sell Lake Michigan water to Joliet, Ill., in early May.

While Lake Michigan is the only Great Lake entirely within American territory, Chronopoulos said it would only be a matter of time before other American cities on the coast of binational Great Lakes begin eyeing those waters, particularly as demands increase in southern states like California, Texas, and Arizona.

Chronopoulos also noted that almost every major hydro producer in Canada reported financial losses in the 2023-24 fiscal year, citing low water levels from droughts and reduced snowmelt, leading to decreased energy production. In February of this year, the U.S. sent more electricity to Canada than it received, and in March, those exports reached their highest levels since 2010.

Chronopoulos said that despite welcoming the federal government's net-zero investments, Canada's focus on moving to a low-emissions economy is neglecting to sufficiently prepare the country for success in a low-water economy.

"Canada needs to go beyond the emissions and carbon tunnel syndrome to see the forest instead of the trees," Chronopoulos said. "We must adapt to water scarcity and treat it as the security threat it poses before it's too late."

Liberal MP Sophie Chatel (Pontiac, Que.), a member of the House Environment Committee, told *The Hill Times* the freshwa-

ter study report would be tabled early this fall, and agreed that Canada would need a wider-ranging strategy to address all of the impacts of water scarcity and its downstream effects.

"Everything relates to water," Chatel said, noting that water security is simultaneously a food security issue, pointing to the increasing demand for water in Western Canada and the southwestern U.S.

According to the most recent federal drought assessment for May 2024, 45 per cent of the country was classified as either abnormally dry or in moderate to exceptional drought conditions, including 59 per cent of Canada's agricultural land.

Although the creation of the Canada Water Agency (CWA) in 2023 was "a big win and a great step forward for Canada," Chronopoulos said she hopes the committee will recommend providing the agency with greater tools and increased interdepartmental co-operation between ISED and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

During her committee appearance, she suggested that the NRC and CWA increase collaboration on research and innovation in the sector, as well as that the NRC develop and upgrade facilities specifically for water technology.

Chronopoulos explained that the CWA currently needs more resources to fulfill its mandate, which instead falls under the remit of ISED, including programs like the Clean Growth Hub and the Supercluster Initiative.

"It's crucial to align the CWA's science and data strategy on fresh water with ISED's tech programs," Chronopoulos told MPs, adding that it would be useful if the associated ministers "issued that direction to their officials."

In an emailed response to *The Hill Times*' request for comment, the office of Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champagne, Que.) thanked the Environment Committee for its work, and said that it looked forward to reviewing its recommendations.

"ISED continues to work collaboratively to establish the Canada Water Agency, and will continue to work across government departments to protect Canada's freshwater resources," wrote Audrey Champoux, Champagne's director of communications.

Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that the "essence" of the CWA is to foster better interdepartmental co-operation, as well as with other levels of government and First Nations, but agreed Canada would need to "start looking at water in a different way than we've had for many decades."

"Even in a very water-rich nation like ours, we are already seeing this becoming an issue across the country," Guilbeault said before heading into caucus on June 19. "This is something we'll need to pay much closer attention to."

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I know what political parties should do this summer

The Liberals need to show proof of life, the Conservatives need to stay vigilant, and the NDP have to show they matter.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh still have lots to do now that the House has risen for the summer, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—Parliament has recessed and summer finally is upon us. However, with a little more than a year away from an election, the main political parties still have lots to do, with goals to set and a need to methodically lay out the pathway to the next vote.

The challenge ahead for the governing Liberals is the starkest. It could get even more difficult—if that is possible—after losing the Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont., byelection on June 24. The Liberals need to demonstrate proof of life over the summer, and show that their once-best messenger, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, can still connect positively with Canadians.

In real terms for the governing party, they need to make no unforced errors in the months ahead, and start to move the spotlight off them and onto the Conservatives. They must score some points against their opponents—not the other way around—and hope they catch a break. One of those breaks could be seeing further declines in interest rates, and people feeling less like they are feeling an economic pinch.

Ultimately, if Trudeau—despite his pledge to fight the next election—decides his time is up

over the summer, that disruption would be significant enough to rattle the playing field in the short to medium terms. That would be the political story of the summer.

For Pierre Poilievre and the Conservatives, they are the antithesis of the Liberals. Effectively, they should keep doing more of the same with the exception of reconsidering how they position their leader on foreign interference. Otherwise, keep touring the country, keep raking in the money, keep finding candidates who can win ridings, keep the spotlight on the government’s

weaknesses, and hammer on about the personal pain caused by Liberal tax initiatives.

The Conservatives should also develop contingency plans for if Trudeau does resign, and—as they are no doubt doing—look at a plan to roll out little bits of policy as the 2025 election approaches. They also need to remain vigilant and push back hubris about a certain election victory next year. That is fatal.

The NDP—do you remember them? They’re partners with the Liberals in a supply-and-confidence agreement that goes until

next spring. While they can claim they have gotten achievements like dental care and pharmacare—of sorts—out of their deal, they, too, are struggling for relevance. With many key long-serving NDP MPs not reoffering, and a two-way battle shaping up between the Conservatives and the Liberals, they need to find ways to show they matter.

A read of all the federal polls would indicate that, to date, the Liberals have bled all their support to the Conservatives, and nothing to the NDP. The Conservatives are working hard to cut into traditional Dipper enclaves like labour unions. At a public level, the NDP don’t appear to have an answer for that. Leader Jagmeet Singh may be cool, hip, and a good communicator, but if only his immediate family and his office staff are listening to him, then that is a losing proposition.

If the NDP only achieve one thing this summer, it should be planning how to effectively break up with the Liberals. Put that plan in motion—if it isn’t already—and carve a niche that allows them to step out of the Liberals’ shadow. If the Liberals are in position to fare worse than they did in 2011, the NDP have yet to show us how they will capitalize on it.

It will be fascinating to see if anything really changes between now and the return of Parliament in mid-September. If the status quo prevails, that is a win for the Conservatives.

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

The Hill Times

Gains change a capital idea

The macro result of these preferential tax policies is that wealth inequality has ballooned, and contributed to our political instability and revolts.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—I have never seen monied (white) people lose their collective minds like this over paying more in taxes. Let’s remember this is the group that has been allowed beneficial tax incentives to support their wealth growth for decades.

It’s delectable to watch.

Budget 2024 announced an increase in the capital gains

inclusion rate from 50 per cent to 66.7 per cent. This rate, when multiplied by the capital increase, gives the taxable portion of your capital gain. This only applies if your increases in capital value are more than \$250,000 for individuals. The policy went into effect on June 25. This will affect the sale of cottages, investment properties, securities (stocks, bonds, and mutual funds), and land, buildings, and equipment used in a business or a rental scheme. Please note, capital losses, “may be carried back three years and forward indefinitely to offset capital gains of other years,” as the Department of Finance backgrounder explains. Please also note that in 1998, the capital gains inclusion rate was 75 per cent.

I don’t see the problem.

Major increases in stock market performance over the years have rewarded these investors exponentially. A 2014 *Maclean’s* article notes: “Canada’s stock market has had two jetpacks strapped to its back over the last decade that have given it lift: financial services and oil and gas, which together account for about half of the market value of Toronto Stock Exchange-listed companies.” Over

this time, technology stock values rose to add to that mix of securities. In addition, years of quantitative easing have inflated asset prices while attempting to meet an inflation target of two per cent. Quantitative easing buys government bonds to increase their prices, and decrease long-term interest rates. In other words, government policies over the years have buoyed investor returns for at least 20 years.

This shift in capital gains policy will mainly affect higher-income people who have concentrated wealth. Wealth concentration is a major issue that threatens the political and economic stability of those whose main source of income is labour. Let’s remember that, before these changes, half of the income realized from capital gains was tax free. In contrast, all labour income is taxable, or has a 100 per cent inclusion rate. The difference in the inclusion rate between capital and labour has rewarded shareholders, real estate investors, and people who hold trusts at the expense of working people. A 2018 Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives report echoes that conclusion:

“Canada’s tax system heavily incentivizes income derived from wealth compared to income earned through labour... The result is that a dollar of income from employment is worth less than a dollar of income from capital.” The macro result of these preferential tax policies is that wealth inequality has ballooned, and contributed to our political instability and revolts.

For ordinary Canadians, the largest asset they will own is their home. Capital gains tax does not include a primary residence. It does, however, include investment properties. Homeowners who bought a condo or house to rent out will have to pay the increased tax rate for those properties, only if those gains are more than \$250,000. The policy distinguishes between real estate companies buying blocks of housing to flip, and the ordinary working person who is making a little money on the side. This makes taxes fairer since these owners have received mortgage deductions on a property they have had renters pay for. At some point, one must pay the piper.

This tax change should bring down wealth inequality to have

the wealthier pay more in taxes, as described by CTV News: “The federal government says the move will improve tax fairness and increase federal revenues by \$19.4-billion over five years.” To be fair, this broad initiative of tax fairness was one first championed by the NDP, but through the wrong mechanism: the NDP wanted to tax wealth outcomes, not the policies that led to higher wealth outcomes for a smaller and smaller part of the population.

Ostensibly, the Liberals are trying to ease the supply side of the tight housing market. This, theoretically, will lead to fewer homes being bought under speculative purposes, and lower demand for secondary housing investments. Speculators—who have been identified as some of the culprits of the housing crisis—who want to flip houses and increase the market price of homes will have to pay a higher tax rate for the sale of those houses. The tax change—in addition to high interest rates—may affect housing demand, which may affect house prices. At least the Liberals hope that is the scenario that will materialize before next year’s election. Again, I don’t see the problem.

Erica Ifill is a co-host of the Bad+Bitchy podcast.

The Hill Times

Opinion

Abandoned comrades: it's our moral obligation to support the language and cultural advisers

After playing a crucial role in Canada's mission in Afghanistan, cultural advisers face disparity in recognition and care.

Gregory Lick

Opinion



When duty called, an extraordinary group of Canadian citizens answered with courage and skill. They stepped up to play a crucial role in Canada's mission in Afghanistan: the language and cultural advisers (LCAs). Hand-picked by the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) for their fluency in Afghan languages and deep understanding of Afghan culture, these brave individuals were essential to CAF operations.

The LCAs provided invaluable advice, significantly bolstering the CAF's efforts in the war. This not only endangered their lives, but also those of their families

in Afghanistan and Canada who could still face retribution from the Taliban or those who support them.

Many LCAs served in Afghanistan without pause or relief for more than five years. There was a policy limiting the frequency and duration of deployments for CAF members, typically from six to nine months. However, a similar policy for civilians was abandoned, and only finalized in 2021, long after Canada's mission in Afghanistan ended.

Initially, the LCAs were informed that they would work within the relatively safe confines of the Kandahar Airfield. However, they quickly found themselves outside the wire, shoulder to shoulder with CAF members on operations to forward operating bases, villages, convoys, and various battlegrounds.

Deep scars remain; disparity in recognition and care continue

Canada's military mission in Afghanistan ended after 13 years of conflict, leaving deep scars on everyone involved, including the LCAs. These scars—physical, emotional, and mental—testify to the intense and often harrowing experiences faced by those on the front lines.

Fortunately for CAF members, they had access to medical care and mental health support to help them cope with the challenges they faced after experiencing the combat and trauma in Afghanistan. However, despite their significant contributions and shared hardships, the LCAs were not afforded comparable benefits. As they were engaged as term employees of the Department of National Defence, they were—and continue to be—severely challenged in gaining access to the medical and financial supports they need, including benefits under the Public Service Health Care Plan (PSHCP). This highlights a stark disparity in recognition and care for those who played such a vital role in the mission.

Once their employment ended, the LCAs were no longer eligible for medical coverage under the PSHCP. Given that many of their injuries manifested later, they applied for benefits through the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB)—a group not accustomed to determining injuries sustained in theatres of war.

While some LCAs received payments from the WSIB, it was often only after years of waiting and appealing the WSIB's original decision. However, the payments they received are not nearly enough. Many found

themselves requiring treatment, unable to work, or underemployed due to their injuries. There remains an inadequate level of care and compensation for LCAs who experienced the same risks and suffered many of the same hardships as the CAF members they served alongside.

Left behind and forgotten, to this day they continue to go without the resources and support they need and rightfully deserve. They feel that the Government of Canada has turned its back on them after they risked their lives for their country.

Solutions exist to address the resource gaps

As I have said many times to the minister of national defence (current and predecessors): solutions exist. The minister can and should use his authority to address any support gaps facing the LCAs—particularly when the WSIB scheme has proved inadequate.

There is precedent for action. Previous ministers have created coverage for individuals who did not have access to the benefits and services they needed because of injuries sustained alongside CAF members.

The 1974 explosion at a cadet camp at CFB Valcartier is one example. Following my predecessor's report and recommendations, the CAF established an equitable program for the cadets who were affected, injured, and killed in this incident. Justifiably, the Government of Canada provided the required medical supports to both groups.

The minister should establish a similar program for the LCAs who served alongside CAF members, and quickly. They have waited long enough.

It's our moral obligation

I have written numerous letters, and have had countless conversations with senior officials to propose a path forward for the LCAs. In a letter to the deputy minister of National Defence in 2019, I stated, "While the moral obligation to care for and support military members is prominent in contemporary Canadian consciousness, there is less consideration evident of similar obligations for civilian employees who can suffer injuries or illnesses similar to those suffered by [Canadian Armed Forces] members, as a result of their contributions to the same international operations."

This is my final call—in my official capacity as the Ombudsman—for the minister to support the LCAs. However, my office will continue fighting for their fair treatment after my term ends on July 1. As I have said time and time again, it's not only a matter of fairness, but also a moral obligation that the Government of Canada must fulfill.

Gregory Lick is the National Defence and Canadian Armed Forces Ombudsman. His term ends July 1.

The Hill Times

Comment

Rethinking the NATO commitment

With a 75-year track record of 1-for-5, maybe NATO should have simply disbanded after they won the Cold War.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On June 19, NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was hosted in Ottawa by

the NATO Association of Canada at a private dinner.

In addition to Stoltenberg using the occasion to browbeat the Canadian government into spending more on national defence, the attendees gathered to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the military alliance. The original Charter of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization was signed on April 4, 1949, by the original 12 members, of which Canada was proud to be among.

Those were the early days of the Cold War, and the threat of the Soviet Union spreading communism throughout Western Europe was a clear and present danger. The key component of the NATO charter remains Article 5, which outlines a commitment to collective defence.

While it was fear of Soviet expansion that prompted NATO members to form the alliance, it was fear of NATO aggression that prompted the Soviet Union to form the Warsaw Pact in May 1955. This communist bloc alliance included Poland, East Germany, Czechoslovakia, Albania, Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary. With the exception of Albania withdrawing from the Warsaw Pact in 1968, and four more countries joining NATO, those were pretty much the opposing line-ups on either side of the "Iron Curtain" that divided Europe until the collapse of the Soviet Union between 1989 and 1992.

Thankfully for all involved, at no time during those tense years was Article 5 of the NATO Charter ever invoked. However, with the threat of the Soviet

Union removed, the question now was what to do with this untested massive military alliance known as NATO?

For those hawks in high places, the answer was to expand the membership. The thaw of the Cold War changed the map of Europe with East Germany reunifying with West Germany. Former Warsaw Pact members eagerly got in line to join NATO. Hungary, Poland, Romania, Bulgaria, Albania, and both of the now-separate republics of Czechia and Slovakia have become NATO members.

The breakup of Yugoslavia from 1990 until 1995 created the new states of Slovenia, Croatia, North Macedonia, and Montenegro, all of whom are now NATO members.

The three former Soviet Baltic states—Estonia, Lithuania,

and Latvia—have also joined the ranks of the alliance. Since Russia invaded Ukraine in February 2022, both Sweden and Finland have added their not-inconsiderable military might to the alliance. This brings the total membership to 32 developed nations, fielding the most sophisticated weaponry in the world.

So, for Stoltenberg and the NATO groupies making merry at the 75th anniversary celebration last week, just what milestones exactly would they be heralding? Well, in 1999, NATO violated international law by bombing Serbia for 78 days. After an unexpected stubborn resistance by the Serbs, that tiny country finally submitted to the NATO alliance.

Although it was not until 2008 that the disputed province of Kosovo declared itself an independent state, the desired result of NATO redrawing the map of Europe through military force

Continued on page 9

The power of non-partisanship in business advocacy

Associations, businesses, and lobbyists are far less effective if they limit themselves to talking to only one party.

Dan Kelly

Opinion



Over the past month, I've been asked several times by reporters and fellow association leaders about a recent *National Post* op-ed by Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre. In his column, Poilievre takes aim at many business groups and lobbyists, including the one I run: the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB).

While some of his messages were a surprise, he's shared several of these observations and criticisms with me directly in the many meetings I've had with him over the years. His column also makes many constructive points, and provides insights on how a government led by him would work for those of us who lead lobby groups focused on changing policy in Ottawa.

Poilievre makes clear that if a business group wants a government led by him to take a particular position, it needs to convince the public to echo the call. He says he will be listening to average Canadians—not business lobbyists in nice suits in Ottawa. And, of course, this makes good sense. For 53 years, my organization has worked to share with the general public why supporting small business is in their interests. It is hard to imagine a more grassroots organization than the CFIB as we have 97,000 small and medium-sized business owner members spread across every community in Canada. Our most successful campaigns have been those where our members reach out to their MPs—and they have even greater clout when small business owners get their employees and customers to do the same.

Each January for the past 15 years, CFIB's Red Tape Awareness Week gets business owners and the public to share their most ridiculous examples of red tape, bad government customer service, or unnecessary paperwork. While Poilievre takes a shot at us for giving the current government an award for a small positive change at the Canada Revenue Agency years ago, he and his MPs have regularly cited the CFIB's many examples of the current government's red tape horror stories.

Poilievre has asked me many times why the CFIB won't give up on our principle of non-partisanship, and endorse a leader or political party in the same way that unions do. He's correct in the assessment that unions will routinely help the Liberals and NDP get elected, but then try to work with whomever is in power after an election. He also correctly notes that some business groups in the United States are tightly

wound with the Republican Party, but this just isn't the case in Canada.

I've always responded that even if I thought it was a good idea for the CFIB to use a more partisan approach—which I don't—we guarantee our members that we will be strictly non-partisan, and speak out in favour of any policy that helps small firms, and strongly oppose any policy that harms them, regardless of which party introduces them.

This does not mean that we cannot be aggressive or fight hard. There was no voice fighting harder and more publicly than the CFIB during the 2017 small business tax fight with the federal government. Our work was the first major battle with the Trudeau government and it cost them dearly. Not only did the government scale back more than half of its proposed changes, it also changed gears and cut the small business tax rate to nine per cent. In fact, it was the NDP that first supported the CFIB's call for a nine per cent small business rate, with then-leader Jack Layton crediting the CFIB for the idea in the leaders' debate. If the CFIB were viewed as a partisan organization, we would have had little credibility to make this case.

In recent days, the CFIB hammered the federal Liberals on their inaction on the carbon tax rebate for small businesses. Poilievre and many of his MPs raised the CFIB's findings in the House of Commons, thanking us for blowing the whistle on the government. Our lobbying caused a change in approach and a \$2.5-billion rebate for SMEs in the April budget.

We are currently criticizing all parties—including the federal Conservatives—for endorsing a bill to ban replacement workers in unionized workplaces. This legislation will deeply harm small businesses and the economy, and is a blatant attempt by political parties to curry favour with union leaders in advance of the election.

On the flip side, we will always support good ideas, regardless of which party they come from. I stood at many podiums with then-prime minister Stephen Harper over his years in office, commending his government when it made good decisions. In the last few years, I've been at those same podiums with Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland—such as when her government announced a cut in Visa and Mastercard fees for small merchants.

In fact, this period feels strangely similar to the year before the 2015 federal election. Many Liberals felt the CFIB was working too closely with the previous government. I recall a phone call from a former Liberal cabinet minister warning me that standing next to Harper at an announcement would not be forgotten should they take office. And it wasn't. I did not have a single meeting with then-Liberal finance minister Bill Morneau while he was in office.

Having lobbied politicians and governments for the past 30 years—it was my anniversary just a few months ago—I've learned why some conservative parties are unhappy with business leaders. Sometimes, business leaders ask conservatives to take politically unpopular positions on tough issues like minimum wage rules, union legislation or environmental policies, while they work



Despite the Conservative leader's pronouncements, the CFIB guarantees our members that we will be strictly non-partisan, and speak out in favour of any policy that helps small firms, and strongly oppose any policy that harms them, regardless of which party introduces them, writes Dan Kelly. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to fly under the radar themselves. But this has never been the CFIB. We don't ask for anything privately for which won't put our necks on the line publicly.

While there are many approaches to lobbying politicians and governments, I want to defend the principle of non-partisanship. I believe that associations, businesses, and lobbyists are far less effective

if they limit themselves to talking to only one party.

The CFIB's non-partisan approach has stood the test of time. We will do the same if there is a change in government in the next election.

Dan Kelly is the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business. The Hill Times



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Editorial

Fiscal oversight shouldn't be treated as chump change

It's nice to see that at least some MPs are taking their jobs seriously.

As *The Hill Times*' Neil Moss reports this week, members of the House Public Accounts Committee have flagged the potential for a lapse in federal funding for a training program that helps them navigate the annual Public Accounts report.

Released at what seems to be varying times in the latter half of the year, the Public Accounts detail actual spending and revenues, as well as liabilities, assets, and net debt as of the end of each fiscal year.

The Conservative-chaired, 11-member Public Accounts Committee is—thankfully—not one of the myriad House committees that shrug off the key fiscal oversight duty MPs have.

Committee members have been able to avail themselves of specific training to parse the Public Accounts documents provided by the Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation (CAAF).

As Moss reports, the CAAF is now asking for \$4.5-million in funding over three years from the Treasury Board. To date, money for such training has been allocated through the Office of the Auditor General. The CAAF is still waiting for a response to its request.

In the meantime, current and former Public Accounts Committee members said they've found the training they received "invaluable."

The committee's mandate of studying the Public Accounts documents is right

there in the name, so of course it makes sense that this would be the group most concerned about making sure they provide that necessary oversight of federal spending. But those 11 MPs aren't the only ones who bear that burden out of the 338-member Chamber.

This year, nine House committees and one joint House and Senate committee let \$25.4-billion in planned governmental spending outlined in the 2024-25 main estimates go unscrutinized before those plans were deemed adopted and reported back to the House by a May 31 deadline. That's up from the six parliamentary committees that eschewed the spending review in 2023—though it represents less money unexamined.

Liberal MP Sean Casey, who chairs the Health Committee, outlined the issue best when he told Moss that, although the power resides with the committee to perform a review of spending estimates, it is a power that is not understood or exercised, and comes secondary to political gamesmanship.

"I would hazard that there are very few Members of Parliament that actually understand the details in estimates," he said.

Yes, there are well-documented problems with the estimates and budget process, and that makes it difficult for MPs to properly follow the money and hold the government to account. But that's a poor excuse for not even trying.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

The elephant missing from the foreign interference room

The elephant missing from the room is the rule of law, says letter writer Allan Bowman.
Pexels
 photograph by Magda Ehlers



It is tiresome listening to and watching the media blather on about foreign interference. Talking empty heads bloviating about Elizabeth May, bloviating about Jagmeet Singh, bloviating about what this or that person thinks.

What is missing from the political and pundit speculation is this: what information has or is the Canadian Security Intelligence Service passing to

the RCMP, and what is the RCMP doing about the allegations? Either investigate and charge, or just shut up. If no criminal charges are laid, then the whole discussion is meaningless. The elephant missing from the room is the rule of law—a law that is supposed to be independent of the government.

Allan Bowman
 East Gwillimbury, Ont.

Strip aggressors of UN Security Council veto, says McElroy

Re: "Stop the Munich analogies," (*The Hill Times*, June 17, p. 7).

"To argue that a 'Great War is coming,' the doom-mongers have to pretend that such a war will be necessary to stop the Russians," writes Gwynne Dyer.

Dyer also states we need to "keep working on building the international rule of law, no matter how frustrating and futile that often seems." He feels the strategy behind the Munich agreement that helped start the Second World War is not relevant to the current situation in Ukraine. Where do we go from here?

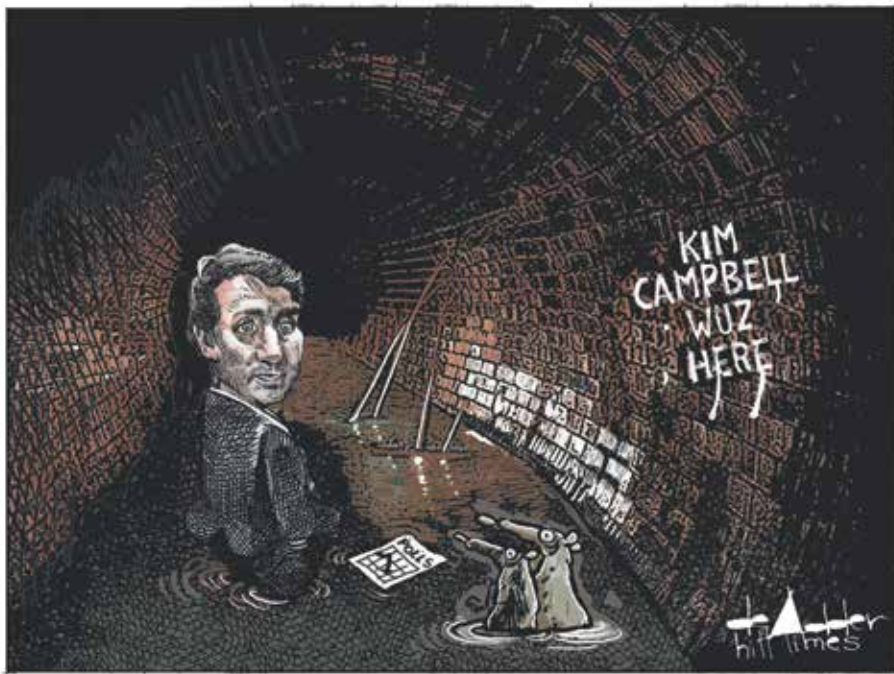
The Soviet Union signed on to the United Nations charter at the end of the Second World War, agreeing to the principle of national sovereignty: that one country should not annex another simply because they have the power to do so. Unfortunately, no matter what the law says nor what agreements are signed, inevitably—just as in the case of domestic criminals—there will be players who abandon their commitment to rule of law for national or personal gain.

Russian President Vladimir Putin invented lies to support annexing parts of Ukraine, and the West appeased him. So it hasn't stopped. The Munich analogy applies. The action in Ukraine, with support from the West, is essentially a police action without which Russia will annex what it can.

Reducing aggression benefits the country that is invaded, but also the aggressor. The Russian people benefited greatly in the post-Gorbachev years with economic and cultural ties to the west. But Putin appears to want to resurrect the Russian empire in spite of the fact Russia was never safer than it was when it enjoyed good relations with the West. Furthermore, hundreds of thousands of people on both sides of the current conflict have died or been maimed, billions of dollars in assets have been squandered, and irreparable harm has been done to the environment.

An international means to address aggression is required, just as we need domestic law enforcement. This is why the UN Security Council exists. But allowing aggressor states to veto enforcement efforts destroys the Council's effectiveness. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy saw this when he appealed to the Council after his country was invaded, and Russia vetoed any response. To make the Security Council truly effective, aggressor states must lose their right to veto, and temporarily recuse themselves from the final deliberations of the Council.

Tom McElroy
 Toronto, Ont.



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Being a proud Quebecer doesn't mean being a nationalist

Quebec remains a distinct and important contributor to Canada, whose success I will also celebrate next Monday.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



Quebec's new inward, parochial nationalism does nothing for the growth of the province or the vitality of the French language, writes Andrew Caddell. *Unsplash photograph by Ahmed Neji*



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—It was a rainy *Fête nationale*/Saint-Jean-Baptiste Day this year in Kamouraska, so our celebrations were a bit muted. Nonetheless, there were blue-and-white fleur-de-lis flags everywhere. At my house, I fly the Quebec flag with the Canadian Maple Leaf to show my loyalty to both. While I am the grandchild of an Irish immigrant, my mother's roots date back to the arrival of the Gagnons in Quebec City in 1640.

The presence of the Quebec Fleur-de-lis has a special connection here: it was the initiative of the former member of the legislature for Kamouraska, René Chaloult. He convinced then-premier Maurice Duplessis to adopt the flag in January 1948. There is a monument near our church to Chaloult, who was one of the first *indépendantistes*.

Chaloult's cottage was down the road from here, and I passed it regularly as a child, noticing his prominent Quebec flag. On July 1—Dominion Day back then—it was flying at half-mast. It came as a shock to me when my mother explained, "Monsieur Chaloult believes Quebec should be its own country."

To mark the holiday this year, former Parti Québécois leader Jean-François Lisée penned a panegyric to Quebec in *Le Devoir* titled "Putting Quebec in its place." He extolled the strengths of Quebec, beginning with Céline Dion, and her valiant struggle with disease. He ran off a list of extraordinary Quebecers, including *Dune* director Denis Villeneuve, Montreal Symphony conductor Yannick Nézet-Séguin, film producer Monia Chokri, and artificial intelligence whiz Yoshua Bengio.

He then moved to the economy, lauding the attractiveness to multinationals of Quebec's hydro power, and its education system—although one-third of francophone males drop out of high school. He suggested the half a million refugees who crossed into Quebec in the past few years came because they appreciate "our quality of life, our social safety net, our freedoms." Never mind many came from New York, a few hours' drive away, or that most soon leave for other provinces.

In a nutshell, the article is a summary of Lisée's prejudices, which align with those of Quebec's nationalist elite. And it refused to acknowledge how Quebec benefits from being part of Canada.

Lisée celebrates Quebec's role in banning slavery "long before

the rest of Canada," and its transformation from a poorly educated province in the 1950s to an economic colossus. But he doesn't know his Canadian history: it was in Upper Canada that John Graves Simcoe banned the slave trade at the end of the 18th century, and the greatest impact of education in 20th century Canada was in Newfoundland and Labrador after Confederation in 1949.

He didn't mention the role of the Catholic Church in failing to provide better educations for the masses, and its deliberate efforts to discourage French Quebecers from working in business. In contrast, the upward mobility of anglophones came from the community's investments in public education from the late 19th century onwards.

Lisée ignored the contributions of French-Canadians

like Jean Lesage, Pierre Elliott Trudeau, Marc Lalonde, Jean Chrétien, Thérèse Casgrain, Louis St. Laurent, Wilfrid Laurier, Jean de Grandpré, and Laurent Beaudoin. Why? Because they were federalists. Also missing were anglophones like Mordecai Richler, Donald Sutherland, Wilder Penfield, Frank Scott, Charles Bronfman, Brian Mulroney, and Leonard Cohen.

My take on Quebec differs radically from his: I chose to move back to Quebec because I revel in the openness of Quebec society, the way Quebecers of different backgrounds have worked together throughout history, how incredibly bilingual and multilingual we are, and how French Canadians have succeeded as leaders in every field in modern Canada. Compared to other countries, few minorities have accomplished as much or been as prominent.

But Quebec's new inward, parochial nationalism—with its mean-spirited linguistic and secular laws—does nothing for the growth of the province, or the vitality of the French language. It drives discrimination against the English-speaking community and anyone arriving from elsewhere, a fact Lisée failed to acknowledge.

So, I celebrated *la Saint-Jean* and Quebec's history this week with my friends and neighbours. Not for the reasons cited by Lisée, but because we remain a distinct and important contributor to Canada, whose success I will celebrate next Monday. Happy Canada Day.

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

The Hill Times

Rethinking the NATO commitment

Continued from page 6

remains a political mess. Kosovo still does not have full status at the United Nations, as 89 of 193 member nations still recognize Kosovo as the sovereign territory of Serbia.

Within the European Union, there are five member states blocking Kosovo from membership for the same reason. In a recent article on Kosovo, Matthew Karnitschnig of *Politico* wrote, "Put simply, even after decades of American aid and support, the country remains an economic and political basket case."

The article also outlined that Kosovo has one of the lowest per-capita GDPs in Europe, a poverty rate of more than 20 per cent, and is plagued by corruption and political turmoil.

So, not much to celebrate there. In September 2001, in the wake of 9/11, all NATO members heeded then-United States pres-



NATO Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg was in Ottawa on June 19 to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the military alliance, but Scott Taylor asks if its history is worth celebrating. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

ident George Bush's invocation of Article 5 of the NATO Charter. While possibly reassuring to the American public, almost every UN member also agreed to be an ally in the "war on terror." So, no biggie.

Then there was the Afghanistan fiasco. NATO troops—including Canadians—fought for more than a decade in that country. The end result was a failure in 2021 when the Taliban took over. Better to forget that one.

In 2011, NATO took the lead role in fulfilling UN Security Council Resolution 1973, which called for a no-fly zone over the skies of Libya. The NATO generals promptly empowered themselves to bomb the be-

jeezus out of then-president Moammar Gadhafi's loyalist forces. After 10 months of aerial bombardment, the various rebel factions succeeded in murdering Gadhafi.

However, the fractious rebel forces immediately began fighting each other, and Libya was plunged into a bloody anarchy that continues to this day. So, not really worthy of a victory parade, but nonetheless, Canada staged a full ceremony with flypast on Parliament Hill to celebrate NATO's defeat of Libya.

In 2018, NATO agreed to assist the U.S. coalition in Iraq. While the NATO flag may still fly over some heavily guarded Green Zone buildings in Baghdad, the alliance has no more chance of a successful exit from Iraq than we did with Afghanistan.

With a 75-year track record of 1-for-5, maybe NATO should have simply disbanded after they won the Cold War.

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

The Hill Times

News

Sweating summer polling deficit, Liberals hope to dine out on ‘impressive list’ of spring bills

Plus, the NDP thwart most Tory efforts to hold summer committee meetings as MP Matthew Green says parliamentary resources are not meant for ‘chasing every Conservative ambulance.’

Continued from page 1

and barbecues, despite a last-minute effort by the Conservatives to keep committees working over the next three months.

In the final weeks of the spring sitting, both the Liberals and New Democrats were grappling with a significant polling deficit. Nanos Research, Ipsos, Abacus Data, and Angus Reid all indicate a 14- to 21-point lead for the Conservatives.

In hopes of closing that gap, the Liberals are banking on receiving a positive reception this summer to what Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) called an “impressive list” of 15 pieces of legislation that received royal assent in the 14 weeks Parliament sat this spring.

On June 19, flanked by Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), International Trade and Economic Development Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), and several other members of cabinet, MacKinnon provided a “quick recap” of the Liberals’ legislative highlights, including the passage of the 2024 budget with Bill C-69; the 2023 fall economic statement implementation bill C-59; Bill C-29, the National Council for



Despite ‘continual partisan obstruction from the Conservatives,’ Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon says the Liberals shepherded an ‘impressive list’ of 15 pieces of legislation to royal assent over the 14-week spring session. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Minister of Labour and Seniors Seamus O'Regan speaks with reporters before the Liberal party caucus meeting from West Block on June 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



New Democrat House Leader MP Peter Julian says the impact of measures like anti-scab legislation, dental care, and pharmacare represent a ‘sea change’ in improving the lives of Canadians. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Reconciliation Act; Bill C-50, the Sustainable Jobs Act; Bill C-35, the Early Learning and Childcare Act; Bill C-62, the medical assistance in dying legislation; and Bill S-9, which amends the Chemical Weapons Convention Implementation Act.

Of the 15 pieces of legislation touted at the press conference, eight received royal assent a day

later, after the House had risen for the summer.

MacKinnon also highlighted several of the other pieces of active legislation the Liberals have before the House and Senate, or their respective committees, including Bill C-20, the Public Complaints and Review Commission Act; Bill C-40, the Miscarriage of Justice Review Commission Act; Bill C-26, the Liberals’ cybersecurity legislation; and the Atlantic Accord’s Bill C-49, which were all referred to Senate committees in the final weeks of the sitting.

“We succeeded here despite continual partisan obstruction from the Conservatives because we are determined to work hard for the people of this country, putting Canadians first,” MacKinnon told reporters. “We did that throughout the spring sitting of this year, and we will continue to do that when the House returns in the fall.”

Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.) also partially blamed Conservative delay

tactics for stalling her Bill C-61, the First Nations Clean Water Act, having “finally” reached second reading and study by the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee on June 5 after initially being tabled last December.

While the committee has only held three meetings to study the bill since then, Hajdu said it was nonetheless “exciting to see,” and described the spring sitting as a whole as “super productive” despite the delays.

Hajdu said that during the summer, in addition to spending time in her constituency and with family, she will endeavour to visit many of the more than 600 First Nations her department supports.

“I’ll be travelling ... and celebrating some of their accomplishments. We’ve got a ton of new schools, new infrastructure, and all kinds of different programs that are running across the country that First Nations are leading,” Hajdu said. “And obviously, the Inuit are doing some fantastic things, too. So I hope I’ll get up North.”

Heading into the final caucus meeting before the summer, Labour and Seniors Minister Seamus O'Regan (St. John's South-Mount Pearl, N.S.) told reporters he was feeling “pretty happy,” with several major initiatives related to his file getting through the House, including C-50 and C-58, the Liberals’ anti-replacement worker legislation.

“A ban on replacement workers through unanimous consent is massive for the labour industry in this country,” O'Regan said. “That’s on the shoulders of labour leaders, advocates, and workers going back many, many, many decades, and I’m just happy that I happened to be the minister-on-watch to help get it through.”

As for what he and other Liberals will need to do on the barbecue circuit to try and flip the numbers in their favour come September, O'Regan said “there’s no magic formula,” and all they can do is “just work harder.”

“Just be present in the riding and be where people are, and talk about what they’re talking about,” O'Regan said, adding that he was feeling “pretty solid” heading back to face his constituents.

“I think it’s been an extremely productive session, and one of the most productive I’ve had in nine years,” O'Regan said.

According to the Library of Parliament, this year’s spring sitting is the third most productive under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) minority Liberal government. Spring 2023 holds the record with 19 pieces of government legislation receiving royal assent in 15 weeks, followed by the spring of 2021 with 16 bills passed in 16 weeks. Including Trudeau’s majority governments, the 2019 spring sitting holds the overall record at 28 bills passed in 14 weeks, followed by the spring of 2017 with 21 in 14 weeks—bumping this year’s sitting to sixth place behind the spring sittings of 2023 (19 bills), 2018 (18 bills), and 2021 (16 bills passed).

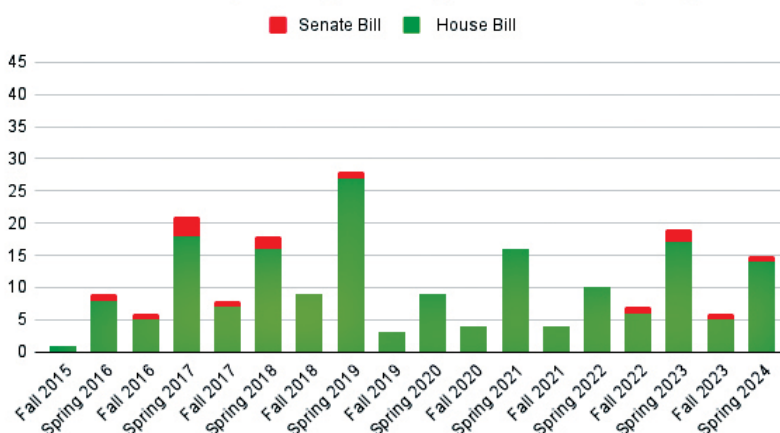
Regardless of the record, NDP House Leader MP Peter Julian (New Westminster-Burnaby, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* “it’s not the number of bills that counts; it’s the impact on people.”

Julian said measures like the new federal dental program, which will expand to Canadians living with disabilities and families with kids under 18 years old on June 27, the pharmacare legislation, the replacement worker legislation, the proposed school food program, and the Sustainable Jobs Act represent a “sea change” in improving Canadians’ lives.

“Thanks to the NDP pushing for those things, we actually have a legislative session with profoundly positive impacts on people,” Julian said. “The Conservatives and Liberals haven’t wanted to do these things for 20 years. The NDP has forced them all to fruition, and it will make a big difference in people’s lives.”

While the House of Commons voted to rise just after Question Period on June 19, Conservatives spent the final days of the sitting

Government bills passed per sitting, Fall 2015 to Spring 2024



Data courtesy of the Library of Parliament

Continued on page 13

MPs sound alarm over threat of losing ‘invaluable’ tool for fiscal oversight

The Canadian Audit and Accountability Foundation is seeking \$4.5-million over three years to continue training elected officials on how to scrutinize the annual Public Accounts.

Continued from page 1

tion (CAAF) to train them on best practices for reviewing the Public Accounts, which detail actual spending and revenues, as well as liabilities, assets, and net debt as of the end of each fiscal year. But now, the company supplying the briefings says they are in limbo.

CAAF president Paul Forgues said, in the past, the funding for the training sessions came from the auditor general’s office, but now it is looking at the Treasury Board to fund the service. The auditor general’s office spent \$375,000 with the CAAF, according to the 2023 Public Accounts, compared to \$453,500 in 2022 and 2021, and \$463,415 in 2020.

The CAAF is now asking for \$4.5-million in funding over three years—\$1.5-million annually—to continue its work with elected officials.

At other House committees, the lax nature of fiscal oversight has been a mounting concern. As *The Hill Times* reported, 10 parliamentary committees did not scrutinize the 2024-25 main estimates before they had to be reported back to the House and deemed adopted by May 31, leaving more than 13 per cent of the spending estimates that needed parliamentary approval without committee examination.

Forgues said fiscal documents need to be “properly channeled and properly scrutinized” so there isn’t a case of “turning a blind eye to \$25-billion in spending estimates.”

“We want to make sure that our tax dollars are used properly,” he said. “This is what the Public Accounts Committee has to do to give that accountability and trust to citizens.”

He said that the firm’s funding will come to an end by March 2025, and in the meantime, the CAAF hasn’t received any indications it will be continued by the federal government.



The House Public Accounts Committee is chaired by Conservative MP John Williamson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NDP MP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.) raised the topic during a recent appearance by Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.) at the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee.

“The modest funding request from the CAAF would go a long way to improving government for years to come,” Green said on June 19, remarking that he was trained by the group when he was a member of the Public Accounts Committee. “I found it invaluable.”

Green asked Anand if she would commit to provide federal funding to ensure that the CAAF can continue its work.

Anand said she believes in the “usefulness of their work,” and tasked officials to investigate the CAAF’s funding request.

Treasury Board secretary Bill Matthews told the committee that the department has had “preliminary discussions” with the CAAF, noting that the foundation receives funding from Global Affairs Canada to help bolster fiscal oversight abroad, and remarking that there could be funding opportunities from other federal departments and programs.

“At present ... [the] Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat does not fund this organization, so we are working with other departments and other programs where there may be a better fit to potentially get funding,” he said.

Bloc Québécois MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, Que.), vice-chair of the Public Accounts Committee, told *The Hill Times* that committee members serve as the “safeguards” of a well-run and well-functioning state.

“The people that are best positioned to inform us on our role and train us are the people at the foundation,” she said, remarking that the CAAF’s role is especially important for new members of the committee.

“Some members that join Public Accounts aren’t used to reading numbers, so they explain what these numbers mean,” she said.

Since the Office of the Auditor General is increasingly tasked with more work, it makes sense that the office cannot continue to fund the CAAF, Sinclair-Desgagné said.

“The foundation should be funded—and that’s the committee’s opinion because we sent a letter supporting the foundation—by the Treasury Board,” she said. The Public Accounts Committee passed a motion on Dec. 14, 2023, for the government—and “specifically the President of the Treasury Board”—to review the work of the CAAF, and to “take steps to provide adequate and stable funding for the capacity-building program as part of legislative oversight bodies.”

Sinclair-Desgagné said she is perplexed about why a decision hasn’t been made to continue to fund the training sessions.

“I don’t understand why they are not proceeding. Is it just this organization? Is it incompetence? Or is it actually bad intentions? Where the less members know, the better position [they] are [in]? I hope that is not the case. I still hope the Treasury Board will change their mind and actually proceed to fund the foundation,” she said.

“You look at how the government spends dozens of millions of dollars, and then they get picky on \$4.5-million over three years, it doesn’t make sense,” she said. “In Public Accounts, we see how poorly money is managed by the current government. We witness it at every committee meeting. But on the other hand, we see that the foundation who enables members to do their job to see that the government spends better doesn’t

get their funding, which is only a small portion of what the government doesn’t spend well. It’s ironic.”

Liberal MP Jean Yip (Scarborough-Agincourt, Ont.), who also serves as a vice-chair on the Public Accounts Committee, said the work of the CAAF is valued.

“I believe the CAAF training for elected officials is particularly important now because it encourages cross-party collaboration,” she said in an email. “As the work of our committee has become increasingly politicized, CAAF’s lessons remind us to focus on ensuring Canadians are getting value for money and to remember that the mandate of Public Accounts is to examine program implementation and effectiveness—not policy.”

Forgues said it’s his understanding that the AG’s office doesn’t disagree with the principle of providing training to MPs to better study the Public Accounts documents, but feels that someone else should be picking up the cheque. He said he doubts that the auditor general would mind the money being channeled through their office if the funding was earmarked and properly defined.

Kiran Rhines, a spokesperson for the auditor general’s office, said no decision has yet been made about whether to provide a future contract to the CAAF to train MPs, noting that the foundation was paid to provide a briefing to the Public Accounts Committee on Nov. 9, 2023.

The in-camera meeting with two individuals from the CAAF lasted for a little more than two hours, and also included committee business, according to the meeting’s minutes.

“Consistent with previous years, these services were rendered under a specific contract for this particular purpose,” Rhines said, adding that the AG’s office is supportive of the training taking place, and will continue to help provide briefings to support the work of the Public Accounts Committee.

The CAAF wants to spread the funding for fiscal scrutiny across all levels of government, from the federal Public Accounts Committee to provincial and municipal bodies, as well as Indigenous governments, and to centralize it as one expenditure within the Treasury Board.

“The reason why we’re only asking for three years is in three years we believe that we can show tangible outcomes and tangible value that the govern-

ment will receive in return for the funding,” Forgues said.

He said the briefing sessions allow MPs to overcome the fear of understanding how to read the annual Public Accounts report, and what to look for.

“[It] gives them all a sense—collectively—of what they can actually accomplish as a committee to really make some meaningful recommendations, and really truly be what they are supposed to be doing in representing the interests of Canadian citizens,” he said.

He said there has been some movement, as the CAAF has had meetings with Matthews and the Comptroller General of Canada.

“I’m really hoping that it’s not just more conversation, but that there is actually an answer coming to us in a not-too-distant future. Because of this funding that has been declining, I’m going to have to find myself in a situation where I’m going to have to make a decision on whether or not I continue to offer that service. If I don’t offer that service, nobody else will,” he said.

Treasury Board Secretariat spokesperson Martin Potvin noted that the department is aware of the CAAF’s funding request.

“Departmental officials have met with the organization to explore potential opportunities for federal support,” he said in an email. “We’ve also provided suggestions for funding support beyond the federal government.”

Outside of third-party briefing sessions, MPs have a handful of resources that can be deployed to provide greater oversight on the government’s spending.

Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) spokesperson Sylvain Fleury said their office offers briefings on the estimates process—which include briefings on the fiscal documents and the PBO’s reports—when MPs or Senators express interest.

“We tend to get more requests for briefings on the estimates process following an election for new MPs,” Fleury noted, remarking that the Public Accounts Committee is also supported by two Library of Parliament analysts who specialize in the subject matter.

House of Commons spokesperson Mathieu Gravel said that as part of the orientation for new MPs, they receive “general information about their role as legislators and parliamentarians.”

“Subsequent sessions about Members’ work in the Chamber and in committees include additional information about the concepts and principles of how Members can participate in the parliamentary process of holding the government to account,” he said. As part of the sessions, MPs can access “self-paced learning modules” that are provided by the House administration on the financial cycle, estimates, and the budget.

Gravel also noted the Library of Parliament analysts can provide briefings and resources for committee members related to spending estimates and the Public Accounts.

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News

CSG pushes for security clearance for Senate leaders to parse NSICOP report

Only the Canadian Senators Group has pushed to read the full NSICOP report, with the government saying access to ‘information of this nature is serious and extremely complex,’ and deciding to expand the audience ‘should not be taken lightly.’

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access to the unredacted National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) report, mirroring the approach in the House of Commons where party leaders could gain the necessary security clearance. The NSICOP report says MPs and Senators have been “semi-witting or witting” participants in foreign states’ efforts to interfere in Canadian politics.

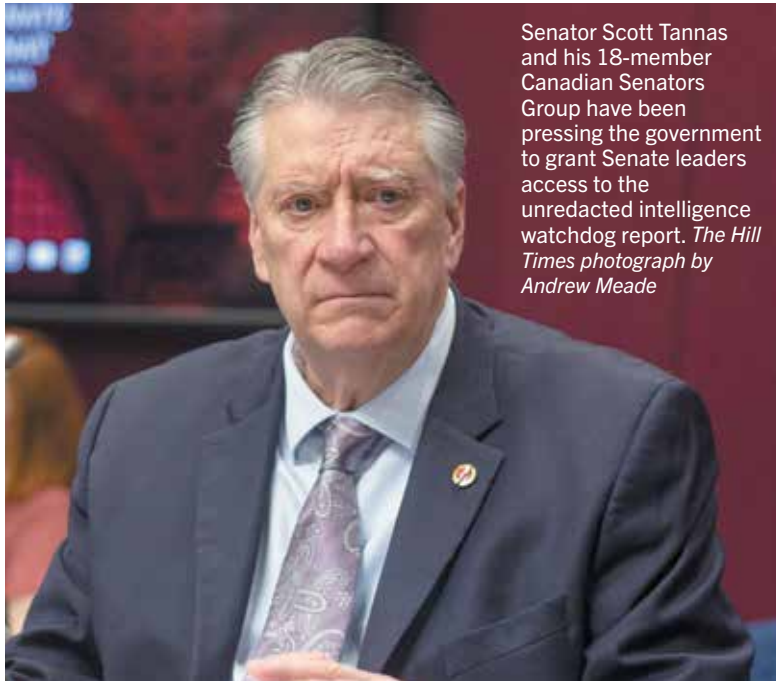
“While we’re in the dark, there is a cloud of doubt over each member in this Chamber,” Tannas (Alberta) told the Senate during Question Period on June 19.

In an interview with *The Hill Times* the same day, Tannas said it appears “nothing is going to happen imminently,” and expressed frustration with the slow government decision-making when party leaders looking to read the report had their answer within weeks of its June 3 release. Two Senators and eight MPs sit on the parliamentary committee.

“Nobody knows who’s in the report, or if to what extent any Senator is involved in anything. And as leaders, I think we’ve got an obligation to our groups to inform ourselves,” and address any action that should be taken by the Senate, whose reputation is being “corroded,” Tannas said.

“This is not sustainable to just leave this out there—having half revealed it to the public—and leave this Chamber with no roadmap on what to do,” said Tannas, who leads the 18-member CSG, which is now the second-largest group in the 95-member Red Chamber. “To me, the answer has got to come from leaders. Us knowing the facts is going to be the first step.”

So far, none of the other three Senate group leaders has echoed



Senator Scott Tannas and his 18-member Canadian Senators Group have been pressing the government to grant Senate leaders access to the unredacted intelligence watchdog report. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

that direct call for security clearance, and Tannas said there haven’t been discussions behind the scenes.

Before parliamentarians left for the summer break, CSG Senator Percy Downe (Charlottetown, P.E.I.) repeatedly asked about the “double standard” granted to party leaders and for the same treatment for Senate leaders.

Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain (De la Vallière, Que.), facilitator of the 43-member Independent Senators Group (ISG), said Downe’s approach was “not the right way.”

“It’s my decision only,” Saint-Germain said, adding she is “considering” whether to make the request. “But I don’t feel that, as the leader of the ISG, I’m in an emergency to do it. I know that ISG Senators have behaviour that is consistent with our charter, and in compliance with the ethics and conflict of interest code.”

Progressive Senate Group Leader Pierre Dalphond (De Lorimier, Que.) said he sees the “pros and the cons” with Senate access to the unredacted report, noting it’s different from party leaders who have a say on who sits in their caucus, and on their ballot.

“I have mixed feelings about that. I’m not opposed, but I’m not asking for it, although I have to give further consideration to it,” he said.

He said he is waiting to see what the government says on the matter, and should reading the full report be an option, the former judge said he would try to get the proper security clearance, mainly to “make sure that there’s not something about the Senate that needs to be fixed.”

mal range of party disciplinary accountability,” said Macfarlane. “I don’t really see an obvious way forward for the Senate. Short of some type of changes being implemented along those lines, the Senate is kind of left in the dark about whether any Senators are implicated here.”

Dalphond said the PSG charter doesn’t have a mechanism for removing members, in contrast to the ISG—with whom he sat from June 2018 to May 2020—which Dalphond said has a process for expulsion. And, as an appointed Chamber, he noted Senators don’t have many ways to force someone to retire, which is mandatory once a person turns 75 years old.

Macfarlane said that likely leaves cabinet with “a valid quandary.”

“If the leaders actually don’t have any authority to do anything about it, then—in that context—what’s the point of reading them in?”

Dalphond said he briefly raised the issue with his 13 PSG colleagues, and there was some discussion over whether the Senate ethics officer (SEO) was the better body to address some of the concerns about parliamentarians’ behaviour raised in the report. The NSICOP report does flag the SEO as an option to empower to provide “direction and advice on how to avoid exposure to foreign interference, and to investigate allegations linked to foreign interference.”

Saint-Germain said the matter calls for “a balanced” approach.

“I’m not in a panic mode or in a hurry. I appreciate that the door is open” to eventually get that access, she said.

Tannas said he doesn’t see the door as open, with nothing from

the government to indicate it is willing to share information at this point.

The government’s representative in the Senate, Marc Gold (Stadacona, Que.), has repeatedly responded in the Chamber that Liberals are “carefully reviewing” the issue, and said the same in response to questions from *The Hill Times*.

“The question of access to unredacted classified information of this nature is serious and extremely complex, and any decision to expand access should not be taken lightly,” said Gold by email, noting leaders have been offered access “as they have stewardship and accountability for the oversight of a range of democratic national party affairs, including nominations across the country.”

Both NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) have read the report, while Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil-Chambly, Que.) said he plans to, but is in no rush. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) has opted not to request security clearance.

Conservative Senate Leader Don Plett (Landmark, Man.) was not available for an interview.

Asked whether he agreed with Poilievre’s decision not to read the classified document, and the rationale that it would limit opposition efforts to hold Liberals accountable—in Plett’s case, in the Senate—Plett’s spokesperson said he couldn’t comment.

Noting the report hasn’t been made available, “the questions are based on a hypothetical question,” and so the office wouldn’t be able to “accommodate comments,” Karine Leroux said by email.

Tannas said it’s unfair that May in particular, with her two-member caucus, had access to the unredacted report when Senate leaders can’t.

“It is untenable and absurd that we have a situation like this where secrets about Senators are known to party leaders in the House of Commons, [but] not known to Senate leaders.”

As for whether May thinks Senate leaders should get access to the report, she told *The Hill Times* the question is “too hypothetical,” and she didn’t want to comment having not “turned my mind” to the question.

“The Senate groups are shifting and changing, and don’t have the same significance, nor do they nominate. They don’t have rules. They’re not parties,” May said, noting the report applies “almost uniquely to political party leaders” because they hold the processes that have been the targets of foreign interference.

May told *The Hill Times* the redacted report has no reference to sitting parliamentarians—MP or Senator—who have actively betrayed Canada in the interests of a foreign government.

Tannas said the matter is not closed.

“Maybe everybody thinks that it’ll go away over the summer, but it won’t for us.”

—with files from Jesse Cnockaert swallen@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



PSG Senate Leader Pierre Dalphond, left, says he has ‘mixed feelings’ about whether he needs to see the redacted report. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Sweating summer polling deficit, Liberals hope to dine out on ‘impressive list’ of spring bills

Continued from page 10

bringing forward motions at several committees to get at least five more meetings on the calendar during the summer rather than waiting until Parliament returns in September.

The Conservatives' efforts were mostly thwarted, with the Liberals, NDP, and Bloc Québécois members of the various committees voting down the motions. The exception is the House Access to Information, Privacy, and Ethics Committee, which agreed to invite two former business associates of Employment Minister Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Alta.) during the week of July 15.

On June 18, the committee unanimously voted to invite Stephen Anderson, who co-founded Global Health Imports alongside Boissonnault; and Kirsten Poon, a former Navis Group lobbyist with business ties to the minister.

An April 30 Global News report that revealed that Boissonnault had a connection to Poon, who helped raise \$110-million in federal grants for her client, the Edmonton Regional Airports Authority, through lobbying activity between 2021 and 2022 while Boissonnault served as minister of tourism and associate finance minister. After he was re-elected in 2021, Boissonnault turned control of his small consulting firm over to Poon.

During a June 4 Ethics Committee meeting, NDP Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), his party's ethics critic, pressed Boissonnault to disclose when was the last time he received any payments from Poon. Boissonnault responded that "there's a process for that, and that information is with the Commissioner of Ethics," and "no monies were received by any company that I'm responsible for from Ms. Poon in 2024."

Speaking with reporters later that day, Conservative MP Michael Barrett (Leeds-Grenville-Thousand Islands and Rideau Lakes, Ont.), his party's ethics critic, said it would be important to hear from Poon as well as Anderson, who heads the firm Boissonnault co-founded after losing his seat in the 2019 election. After reclaiming his seat and being appointed to cabinet in 2021, Boissonnault remained listed as a director of GHI, which would later be awarded \$8.2-million in federal COVID-19 pandemic contracts.

Barrett has been leading the charge for his party on the issue, hot on the case to uncover the identity of an unknown "other Randy" mentioned in a September 2022 text message between Anderson and Malvina Ghaoui, the principal of The Ghaoui Group, LLC, a California-based personal protective equipment procurement company.

During the text conversation, Anderson discussed a deposit of approximately \$500,000 that Ghaoui Group was to send to

GHI to secure a large shipment of nitrile gloves. Anderson told Ghaoui that "Randy" had told them to "be available in 15 for a partner call."

Barrett said that while the motion was amended to simply invite rather than summon Poon and Anderson before the committee, should they fail to appear for what would be the second time during this study, the summons would be back on the table. The Ethics Committee is also awaiting the fulfillment of its request for phone records—including phone calls, texts, and instant messages—from Boissonnault and Anderson.

Green told *The Hill Times* he voted in favour of Barrett's motion because "sometimes when there is smoke, there's fire." But he also raised the ire of the Conservatives after putting forward duplicate motions at the Ethics Committee and the House Government Operations and Estimates Committee to ensure those groups would not sit during the summer recess.

He said no Member of Parliament needs to waste committee resources on "every ambulance [the Conservatives] want to chase."

Green said that whether they're being used to "speed up, slow down, or blow things up," it would astound the average Canadian how much time gets wasted on procedural tricks in federal politics.

Green said while the Liberals drag their heels during the rest of the parliamentary calendar, leading to an eventual mad dash in the last few weeks before summer to get everything done, the tactics he sees from the Conservatives are only encouraging their "authoritarian instincts."

"They simply want to do whatever they want, whenever they want," Green said, explaining that the planning of committee work is usually done by all-party subcommittees, but the Conservatives have been using committees they chair to call meetings at their discretion during previous constituency weeks.

While the Conservatives have accused the "Liberal-NDP coalition with the support of the Bloc Québécois" of "award[ing] themselves a three-month summer vacation" by voting against the motions to continue committee meetings, Green said that "any honest MP knows that constituency weeks are vital."

Despite crying foul over their defeated motions, Green suspected that much of the Conservative caucus' heart wasn't really committed to leaving their own constituencies to return to Ottawa this summer while their leader tours the country in a campaign bus.

"Poilievre isn't prime minister, and committees don't work at his convenience," Green said. "We work for the good and welfare of the public."

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'Everything has a time': Senator Jaffer marks an end to 23 years on the Hill



Senator Jaffer sits among attendees for the unveiling of former prime minister Jean Chrétien's official portrait on the Hill in May 2010. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Continued from page 3

list of committees, most recently as chair of the Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee, and as a member of the Agriculture and Forestry Committee, and the Human Rights Committee, which she previously chaired for a decade. Jaffer pointed to her roles chairing the legal affairs and the human rights committees, as well as the women, peace, and security committee, as among her proudest achievements.

"It makes me feel that, in Canada, anybody can grow and achieve any position," she said.

Today, as the second-longest-serving member of the Senate, Jaffer has seen plenty of changes over her 23 years, including the introduction of cameras to the Chamber in 2015, and—most notably—then-third-party Liberal leader Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) 2014 decision to remove Senators from the national Liberal caucus.

"It was gut wrenching for all of us," said Jaffer of the experience.

"I think we sat in that room for three hours. [Now-]Prime Minister Trudeau came for five minutes or 10 minutes ... and told us we were out. We didn't understand it until he said, 'I don't want you in the caucus anymore.' It was something that we didn't fathom," she said. "Not to damage the party, when we came out, we said, you know, this was a good thing."

In some ways, Jaffer said she does see the Senate's transformation since 2014 as a good thing.

In removing Senators from the Liberal caucus, Trudeau vowed to only appoint independent Senators if he became prime minister, and when he did, launched a new open nomination process whereby any Canadian can apply for, or nominate someone for, appointment. That open process is a positive thing, said Jaffer. "The Senate would never have been as diverse as it is now" without it.

But on the other hand, she said she feels Senators' legislative work—while more independent—has suffered in ways as a result of the disconnect from the governing caucus.

Immediately after their expulsion, ex-Liberal Senators formed the Senate Liberal Caucus, which officially disbanded in 2019, though many of its members—including Jaffer—had already left to form new groups or sit as non-affiliated Senators. Jaffer left the Senate Liberals in late 2018, and joined the Independent Senators Group in mid-2019.

"When I was part of the [Liberal] caucus, any issue—for example, foreign interference—we would have discussed it in caucus, there would have been a subcommittee set up within the caucus to discuss this issue, and so when a bill came to the Senate we would completely be aware of it," she explained. "Now when the bill comes, it's like starting from nowhere. We don't have that knowledge base."

"[Before] while the bill was being crafted, we would have our suggestions and things would change ... now, we make changes—and we do make good changes—but most of them are not accepted," she said. "Sometimes they are, but it's not as good as when you are there [in the caucus] ... and I really miss that."

Ahead of her 75th birthday on Aug. 20—with the Senate now having risen for the summer recess—Jaffer's two children have taken her and her husband, their grandchildren, and Jaffer's four sisters on a five-week trip to East Africa to visit Tanzania, Uganda, and Kenya. She's left the packing up of her 23 years worth of books, binders, pictures, and other memorabilia for when she returns.

With the official end of her time in the Red Chamber fast approaching, Jaffer said she's feeling "good" about it. "Everything has a time," she said. "Twenty-three years is a long time in a job, and, you know, I'll be happy not to have to fly every week."

While she's retiring from the Senate, Jaffer isn't retiring altogether. She said she'll continue clocking more hours practicing law, and spending more time helping her daughter with the family's chicken farm in B.C.

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Neil Moss

Diplomatic Circles

Long-serving German envoy leaving post cheering ‘much stronger’ links with Canada amid global upheavals

‘I’ve had the pleasure to represent the country that I love in another country that I love,’ Sabine Sparwasser says ahead of her departure as Germany’s ambassador to Canada.

After nearly seven years as Germany’s top diplomat in Ottawa, **Sabine Sparwasser** is leaving her post touting the growth in bilateral ties with Canada spurred on by shifting geopolitical tides.

One of the most seasoned ambassadors in Ottawa, and the dean of the Europe ambassadors group, Sparwasser started her post in the early years of the Trudeau government, presenting her letter of credence to then-governor general **David Johnston** on Aug. 31, 2017. She had already built up deep links in Canada before taking the job, having served as chargé d’affaires and deputy head of mission from 2003 to 2006 before becoming Germany’s consul general in Toronto from 2009 to 2013.

When she took up the post in Germany’s Waverley Street embassy, Sparwasser said there was an appreciation for the mutual admiration between the two countries, but there was a feeling that Ottawa and Berlin weren’t actually doing enough together.

“What struck me for many years is: we love each other, we think of each other as the best countries,” she said, remarking that if Germans are thinking of moving abroad, Canada is always near the top of preferred destinations. “But we didn’t do so much about it. We didn’t translate it into

German Ambassador to Canada Sabine Sparwasser previously served as consul general in Toronto from 2009 to 2013, and chargé d’affaires and deputy head of mission in Ottawa from 2003 to 2006. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

action. That was basically the mandate I had when I came in 2017, and a mandate that I really gave myself.”

That closer relationship did emerge between Canada and Germany, but Sparwasser said it wasn’t solely due to good fortune.

“[It’s] partly due to terrible circumstances surrounding us from COVID, to the war of aggression against Ukraine, to the world competition between China and the U.S., partly because of that we have been able to ... create a much stronger relationship,” she said.

Canada and Germany “realized it’s not enough to love each other, we really need each other, and we need to work with each other,” she said, remarking that there is “plenty of room to grow” the relationship, especially with greater co-operation on

critical minerals and energy.

Sparwasser trumpeted teamwork on trade—the German ratification of Canada’s free trade pact with the European Union entered into force last year—as well as on addressing climate change.

“Without the EU, and in particular the co-operation that has been established between Canada and Germany on setting ambitious climate goals, we

wouldn’t have the progress we’ve seen. We still don’t have enough progress, but the progress we made was very much driven by Europe and countries like Canada,” she said. Both countries have set net-zero emissions targets by 2050.

She said one of the highest points of her posting came with the finalization of an agreement to boost Canada’s hydrogen exports to Germany, which was announced during German Chancellor **Olaf Scholz**’s August 2022 visit to Canada. Sparwasser also shepherded a visit from German President **Frank-Walter Steinmeier** in 2023.

She said the idea for a hydrogen bridge across the Atlantic was born from her team in the embassy, which pressed for its adoption in Berlin.

The push for greater energy links was precipitated by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine six months earlier on Feb. 24, 2022.

“That date stands in memory. You have those moments in history where you remember the date on where you were and what you did. But also, they do change everything you do. The attack on Ukraine for us was a—we call it *Zeitenwende*—an epochal shift. And it changed our foreign policy, it changed our

energy policy, and it changed our defence policy 180 degrees.”

In what has been dubbed the *Zeitenwende* speech—which literally translates as “times-turn,” meaning a turning point—three days after the start of the invasion, Scholz delivered an address to the German Bundestag setting forth a new international posture for Berlin.

As geopolitical shifts abound after the onset of the Russian invasion, Canada has increasingly been put under the microscope for its defence policy.

Facing domestic and international pressure to boost its military coffers, Canada’s April defence policy update forecasted a \$73-billion increase in defence spending over 20 years. By 2029-30, the plan sets out Canada’s expenditures on defence to reach 1.76 per cent of GDP, short of the NATO requirement of two per cent. Last year at the NATO summit in Vilnius, Lithuania, Canada signed on to a pledge to make an “enduring commitment” to reach the target.

Sparwasser said all countries will need to boost their focus on defence.

“Even though you don’t feel it as much in Canada as you feel it in Germany because we’re such closer to where the fighting happens, you are direct neighbours of Russia in the Arctic,” she said. “I think we will all need to come together, and go faster and go bigger on the kind of investment we make into deterrence of any kind of aggression against any of us.”

She said Canada has a role to play in the North Atlantic and the Arctic, boosted by the entry of Sweden and Finland into NATO, which she said is an area at which Germany and Canada should be looking.

When she leaves her post at the end of June, Sparwasser said she and her Canadian husband will keep “one leg in Canada”

“I’ve had the pleasure to represent the country that I love in another country that I love,” she said.

Her Canadian bonafides were enshrined when she took to the ice to ride a Zamboni after a February 2023 Ottawa 67’s practice.

“It was the most fun, and I had a very Canadian experience,” she said, remarking that it was “very high on my bucket list.”

Sparwasser, who previously headed Germany’s foreign service academy, said that on her return to her home country, she will also be leading the Mercator Fellowship on International Affairs’ training people for global leadership positions.

Taking over the Golden Triangle embassy will be the husband-and-wife team of **Matthias Lüttenberg** and **Tjorven Bellmann**, who will rotate wearing the ambassadorial hat during their time in Ottawa.

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Sparwasser took part in a Ukrainian solidarity rally in February 2023, a year after the Russian offensive began. *The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*



Sparwasser presented her letter of credence to then-governor general David Johnston in 2017. *Rideau Hall photograph by Sgt. Johanie Maheu*



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

New chief of staff incoming for Minister LeBlanc as Jamie Innes exits

Plus, Women and Gender Equality Minister Marci Ien is in need of a new press secretary.

Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** will soon have a new chief of staff in charge of his latter portfolio, with longtime staffer **Jamie Innes** set to make his exit at the end of June.

Innes noted his decision to leave the helm of LeBlanc's office—and Parliament Hill—as of June 28 in a recent LinkedIn post, bringing an end to his almost three decades of work in the federal political trenches.



Veteran staffer **Jamie Innes** bids farewell to the Hill on June 28. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

"It has been an incredible journey," said Innes of his 26 years on the Hill. "I arrived here at 23 [years] old and have spent most of my life in this career. I've made lifelong friends. I've had the chance to work on some incredible files. I've had the great honour of working for incredible leaders and ministers like **Bill Graham**, **Stéphane Dion**, **Ralph Goodale**, **François-Philippe Champagne** & **Jim Carr** along the way. But the pinnacle of my time here has been the tremendous privilege of being Chief of Staff to **Dominic LeBlanc** over the past several years."

"I hope over the years that I've been able to make my own contribution to making this country better," wrote Innes.

"I won't share today what's next, beyond a summer spending more time with my kids than usual. While moving on from life as a political staffer is a difficult choice, I'm excited to pursue what's next," he concluded.

A former national director of the Young Liberals of Canada, Innes got his start on the Hill in 2001, beginning in the Liberal research bureau where he focused on policy research and digging up dirt on the opposition.

Innes stepped away to join Liberal Party headquarters as director of operations in early 2003, but returned after the subsequent 2004 election—which saw the Liberals once again form government under then-leader **Paul Martin**—to start the 38th



Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** speaks with reporters outside the House Chamber on June 19. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Parliament as director of parliamentary affairs to then-defence minister **Graham**.

After the Liberals lost the 2006 election, Innes joined the leader's office as director of parliamentary affairs, starting under **Graham** as interim leader, and continuing under **Dion**. Innes next worked for the Liberal House leader from 2009 to 2015, beginning as a senior policy adviser to then-House leader **Goodale**. He was promoted to chief of staff to then-House leader **Marc Garneau** in 2011, a role he continued in after LeBlanc stepped into the role in 2012.

Innes went on to work for **Dion** for a second time as director of parliamentary affairs and issues management in **Dion's** office as then-foreign affairs minister. He subsequently did the same for then-trade minister **Carr**, who later promoted him to deputy chief of staff.

Innes' most recent run as chief of staff to LeBlanc began after the 2019 federal election when he was tapped to lead LeBlanc's office as then-president of the Privy Council. Since then, LeBlanc has also been minister of intergovernmental affairs, infrastructure, and communities; he was named to his current cabinet role in July 2023.

A minister of three files, LeBlanc has two chiefs of staff. While Innes has been in charge of the democratic institutions and intergovernmental affairs side of things, **Cory Pike** is chief of staff to LeBlanc as the minister for public safety.

With Innes set to leave near the end of the month, LeBlanc has already lined up his successor, and will be promoting deputy chief of staff **Brandan Rowe**, who will mark his first day on the job as chief of staff on July 2.

Rowe first came to the Hill in 2015 when he landed a job in now-Justice Minister **Arif Virani's** Hill office after helping the Toronto-area MP get elected to the House for the first time.

A few months later, in early 2016, Rowe moved over to then-immigration minister **John McCallum's** office to serve as assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary—a role at the time filled by **Virani**. Rowe was later made a special



Brandan Rowe is set to replace Innes as one of two chiefs of staff to Minister LeBlanc. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

assistant for Atlantic regional affairs under then-immigration minister **Ahmed Hussen**. In November 2018, he began working for LeBlanc for the first time when he was hired as a policy adviser to LeBlanc as then-Privy Council president and minister of intergovernmental and northern affairs and internal trade (good riddance to that clunky cabinet portfolio name).

Rowe continued with LeBlanc after the 2019 election—which Rowe spent working on Ontario Liberal MP **Tim Louis's** campaign—becoming a senior policy adviser, and then senior adviser for policy and communications. Following the 2021 election, LeBlanc promoted Rowe to director of policy; originally just covering policy related to LeBlanc's intergovernmental affairs file, Rowe was given the added responsibility of overseeing infrastructure policy in 2023. After the July 2023 shuffle, Rowe was named deputy chief of staff—his most recent role.

Ahead of Innes' exit, his executive assistant, **Shawna Dittburner**, bade farewell to LeBlanc's office in April.

Dittburner was previously executive assistant to Innes and office manager to LeBlanc as then-infrastructure and intergovernmental affairs minister. Through her years on the Hill, she's also worked for Ontario Liberal MP **Ryan Turnbull**, and for **Goodale**, both as a Member of Parliament for Saskatchewan, and during his time as public safety minister.

WAGE Minister Ien down a press secretary



Women and Gender Equality Minister **Marci Ien** speaks about the introduction of Bill C-64, the Pharmacare Act, at the Centretown Community Health Centre in Ottawa on Feb. 29. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

Women, Gender Equality, and Youth Minister **Marci Ien** has another opening in her office following the recent exit of press secretary **Nanki Singh**.

Singh left Ien's office near the end of May after roughly eight months on the job, beginning in September 2023.

An ex-constituency assistant to now-former Toronto Liberal MP **Carolyn Bennett** between 2018 and 2020, Singh got her first job in Ottawa one month into the COVID-19 pandemic when she was hired as executive assistant to then-public services and procurement minister **Anita Anand**. She worked for Anand through to the 2021 election, and went with the minister to the national defence portfolio to continue as her executive assistant after the shuffle that followed the writ. In October 2022, Singh returned to the public services shop when she landed a job as social media manager to then-minister **Helena Jaczek**, who she worked for until the widespread staff upheaval that followed the July 2023 cabinet shuffle.



Nanki Singh is no longer press secretary to Minister Ien. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

With Singh's exit, Ien is now in need of both a press secretary and a director of communications, with **Riyadh Nazerali** having exited the latter role this past March, as reported by **Hill Climbers**.

In the meantime, **Hannaan Hassan** remains in the office, now as a senior communications adviser. Hassan has been working for Ien since early 2022, previously under the title of digital communications and social media manager. **Angie Rutura** continues as a communications assistant and executive assistant to Ien's chief of staff, **Dunerci Caceres**.

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Feature

Parliamentary Calendar

Red-and-white wave to descend on downtown Ottawa for Canada Day celebrations July 1



Ottawa's downtown core and LeBreton Flats will be the focal point on July 1 as revellers celebrate Canada's 157th birthday. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

WEDNESDAY, JUNE 26

House Not Sitting—The House is on its summer break. It resumes sitting on Sept. 16, and will sit for four weeks from Sept. 16-Oct. 11, but will take Monday, Sept. 30, off. It breaks Oct. 14-18, and resumes sitting on Oct. 21. It sits Oct. 21-Nov. 9, and breaks on Nov. 11 for Remembrance Day week until Nov. 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18-Dec. 17.

Sports Diplomacy and the Paris Olympics—French Ambassador to Canada Michel Miraillet will take part in "Sports Diplomacy and the Paris Olympics" hosted by the Canadian International Council. Lois Betteridge, Canadian athlete heading to Paris 2024 Olympics, will join Miraillet to discuss global sports, climate change, and security at the Summer Olympics. Wednesday, June 26, at 5:30 p.m. at KPMG Headquarters, Suite 1800, 150 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details online via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, JUNE 27

Minister Blair to Deliver Remarks—National Defence Minister Bill Blair will deliver remarks on "Defence Policy Update-2024," a breakfast event hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Thursday, June 27 at 8 a.m. AT at a downtown Halifax hotel. Details online: business.halifaxchamber.com.

Welcome Reception for China's New Ambassador—Wang Di, China's

new ambassador to Canada, will host a welcoming reception on Thursday, June 27, from 6-8 p.m. at the Embassy of China, 515 St. Patrick St., Ottawa. Dress: business or national attire. By invitation only.

MONDAY, JULY 1

Canada Day Celebrations—Downtown Ottawa is the place to be to celebrate Canada Day. This year marks the 157th anniversary of Confederation. Official celebrations will take place on the main stage at LeBreton Flats Park from 9 a.m. to 10:15 p.m. ET. In addition to musical and dance performances celebrating Canada's diversity, there will be an RCAF Centennial flypast around noon, and fireworks in the evening. Details: canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage.

THURSDAY, JULY 4

U.S. Ambassador's Independence Day Celebration—U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen and his wife Rhonda Cohen will host their Independence Day celebration on Thursday, July 4, 4:30-8 p.m., at their official residence, Lornado, 1500 Lisgar Rd., Ottawa. Invitation only, and the attire is smart casual.

FRIDAY, JULY 5—SUNDAY, JULY 14

Calgary Stampede 2024—Politicians from all political stripes will likely be attending the 2023 Calgary Stampede.

SATURDAY, JULY 6

Conservatives Host Stampede Barbecue—Conservatives will celebrate the Calgary Stampede with a barbecue. Saturday, July 6 at 5:30 p.m. MT at Heritage Park, 1900 Heritage Dr. SW., Calgary, Alta. Contact bbq@conservative.ca. Details online: conservative.ca/events.

TUESDAY, JULY 9—THURSDAY, JULY 11

NATO Summit—Heads of state and government of NATO member countries will gather to discuss key issues facing the Alliance, and provide strategic direction for its activities. Tuesday, July 9, to Thursday, July 11, in Washington, D.C. Details: nato.int.

AFN's Annual General Assembly—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its 45th Annual General Assembly on the traditional territory of the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation. This year's theme is "Strengthening Our Relations." Tuesday, July 9, to Thursday, July 11, at the Palais des Congrès, 159 rue Saint-Antoine O., Montreal, Que. Details online: afn.ca.

MONDAY, JULY 15—WEDNESDAY, JULY 17

Council of the Federation's Summer Meeting—Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston, chair of the Council of the Federation, will host the 2024 Summer Meeting of Canada's Premiers from Monday, July 15, to Wednesday, July 17, at the Westin Nova Scotian in Halifax, N.S.

THURSDAY, JULY 18—SATURDAY, JULY 20

The Chef's Table with Global Affairs' Executive Chef—Chef Pascal Ménard, the executive chef for Global Affairs Canada and Rideau Gate, will take part in The Chef's Table, a farm-to-table feast with menus curated by Canadian chefs and musical entertainment, presented by the Ontario Festival of Small Halls, and the National Arts Centre's Resident Chefs Program. Thursday, July 18, to Saturday, July 20, at 1 Elgin Restaurant, National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details online: ontariosmallhalls.com.

FRIDAY, JULY 26—SUNDAY, AUG. 11

Summer Olympics—Cheer for Team Canada as they take part in the XXXIII Olympic Summer Games. Friday, July 26, to Sunday, Aug. 11, in Paris, France. Details: olympics.com.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 7

Royal St. John's Regatta—Keep an eye out for federal politicians at the annual Royal St. John's Regatta. Wednesday, Aug. 7, in St. John's, N.L. Details: stjohsregatta.ca.

MONDAY, SEPT. 30

National Day for Truth and Reconciliation—The fourth annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, is today, honouring the children who never

returned home and Survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities.

FRIDAY, OCT. 4—SATURDAY, OCT. 5

The Francophonie Summit—The Francophonie Summit will take place on Friday, Oct. 4, to Saturday, Oct. 5, in Villers-Cotterêts and Paris, France. Details: francophonie.org.

SUNDAY, OCT. 6—FRIDAY, OCT. 11

ASEAN Summit—The ASEAN Summit will take place in Vientiane, Laos, Oct. 6-Oct. 11.

MONDAY, OCT. 21—FRIDAY, NOV. 1

COP16 Conference on Biodiversity—The COP16 Conference on Biodiversity will take place in Colombia.

TUESDAY, OCT. 29—THURSDAY, OCT. 31

CAEH24: The National Conference on Ending Homelessness—The Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness will host its 11th annual Conference on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa from Oct. 29-31. Registration is now open. Learn more about the conference here.

TUESDAY, NOV. 5

U.S. Presidential Election—The U.S. presidential election happens on Tuesday, Nov. 5. U.S. President Joe Biden and Republican candidate Donald Trump, who lost the last election, will likely face off against each other in the election happening Tuesday, Nov. 5, 2024. It will be the first rematch in a U.S. presidential election in 70 years.

TUESDAY, DEC. 31

Foreign Interference Commission Reports—The Foreign Interference Commission's final report will be released on Tuesday, Dec. 31. For more information, check out foreigninterferencecommission.ca.

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

