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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2138

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

Liberal, NDP MPs look to PROC to address policy 'gap' when it comes to MP-on-MP harassment



Liberal MP Sherry Romanado, left, and NDP MPs Lindsay Mathyssen, Heather McPherson, and Matthew Green say they want to see the House codify a policy addressing MP-to-MP harassment. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The Procedure and House Affairs Committee is taking a fresh look at the workplace policies that govern Members of

Parliament, with the potential creation of a policy dealing with MP-to-MP harassment on the table. It's something the committee has previously shied away from pursuing, but which Liberal and NDP MPs

who spoke with *The Hill Times* say they want to see realized.

"The House of Commons workplace harassment and

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NEWS

First Nations, industry say feds' B.C. salmon farming transition timeline 'irresponsible, unrealistic, and unachievable'

BY STUART BENSON

The countdown has begun for British Columbian salmon farms to move to entirely land-based operations after the federal government announced a five-year transition to ban open-net farms in the province's coastal waters. However, industry stakeholders and the First Nations communities where the farms are located say the plan is "irresponsible, unrealistic, and unachievable," and undermines the Liberals' commitment to Indigenous reconciliation and economic self-determination in favour of "appeasing white, privileged activists, millionaires," and the party's Vancouver-centric B.C. caucus.

On June 19, the federal government announced that when federal salmon aquaculture licences for producers in B.C. expired at the end of the month,

only land-based or closed containment marine systems would be considered for licences, and the existing 63 licensed open-net farms would be given five years to transition. A draft transition plan will be produced by the end of July, following consultations with stakeholders, including the First Nations and coastal communities that rely on the industry.

In 2019, the government had said it would phase out the farms by 2025. Fisheries and Oceans Minister Diane Lebovillier (Gaspésie-Les Îles-de-la-Madeleine, Que.) said last month it was essential to provide a transition timeline that was "responsible, realistic, and achievable."

"It is important that aquaculture production continues to grow in a sustainable manner," Lebovillier told reporters during her press conference in Ottawa to

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NEWS

Despite divorce talk, New Democrat brand, history still has value for Alberta's Naheed Nenshi, say politicians

BY STUART BENSON

Naheed Nenshi's landslide victory in the Alberta NDP

leadership election came with a promise to pursue divorce proceedings with its federal counterpart, but political observers

and former staffers say there is still more to gain under a unified banner toward the shared goal of defeating Conservatives.

On June 22, the former mayor of Calgary claimed victory as the new leader of the provincial party with an overwhelming 86 per cent

of the vote, 10 times that of his closest competitor, Kathleen Gan-

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Publications Mail Agreement #40068926

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Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Daley returns to lead Wire Report, as Leadlay takes on new HT engagement editor gig



Welcome back and welcome aboard: *The Wire Report's* new editor Hannah Daley, left, is a familiar face, while Christina Leadlay takes on a new role within *The Hill Times*. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Hill Times Publishing has two staff updates to share.

The Wire Report welcomes former reporter **Hannah Daley** back as its new editor. Originally from New Brunswick, Daley studied journalism at King's College in Halifax, and worked for online business news publication allNovaScotia.com. She then helped launch the sister site allNewBrunswick.com out of Moncton.

Daley is no stranger to *The Wire Report*, having reported for Hill Times Publishing's telecom, broadcasting, and digital media news source from March to October 2021 before accepting an opportunity at *The Ottawa Citizen*, first as the paper's evening news editor and then—in fit of nominative determinism—as the daily breaking news editor.

But after three years there, and with an opening left by the March departure of editor **Jenna Cocullo**, Daley has returned to the HTP fold.

"I'm thrilled to be back at *The Wire Report*," Daley told **Heard on the Hill** last month. "I know the experience I gained in breaking local news with the *Ottawa Citizen's* newsroom, in addition to my previous work in business reporting, will make a difference in how I approach this beat. I'm excited to work with reporters **Phalen Tynes-MacDonald** and **Paul Park**," she said.

"I want to spend this summer working with our team to boost our coverage and connect with decision makers, advocates, workers, and more people who are making moves big and small in our coverage areas."

Daley is reachable at hdaley@thewirereport.ca.

Meanwhile, yours truly, **Christina Leadlay**, has a new title: engagement editor. In addition to my weekly HOH and copy editing

duties, I will be helping to connect *The Hill Times's* hardworking newsroom with our loyal readers more directly via marketing campaigns and other forms of outreach.

"*The Hill Times* is one of the rare communities in Canada to include both people from across the political spectrum, and those who are purposely non-partisan," HT's publisher **Anne Marie Creskey** explained about the creation of this role. "We value this unique community, and our new engagement editor will help facilitate the connections between our newsroom, our readers, and our readers with one another, encouraging more dynamic conversations on politics and policy in our country."

"Leadlay has a gift for recognizing and identifying *Hill Times* readers," continued Creskey. "She can spot a staffer from the opposite side of the Sir John A., or a diplomat from the back row of a wreath-laying ceremony. Her work as engagement editor will be to help bring their voices into the newsroom and bring *The Hill Times* into their offices."

House OKs pay-per-use EV charging

The House Board of Internal Economy officially approved implementation of a new pay-per-use system for MPs and staff who use the Hill's electric vehicle charging stations.

The new system, which will kick off at the end of July, will see users pay \$1.50 per hour for the first five hours of use, and a rate of \$4 per hour after that mark, paid through a third-party app.

The cost of using the House's 21 EV charging points for holders of special House parking passes used



A vehicle is plugged in to a charging point outside the West Block in May 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to be covered by Public Services and Procurement Canada.

Back in April, the BOIE approved a pilot project to test the new system, which was pitched partly as a way to incentivize users to unplug their vehicles once fully charged. That pilot took place this past May.

As part of the BOIE's June 13 decision to make the new system permanent, it also authorized the House administration to adjust rates in the future based on market changes.

—Laura Ryckewaert

Keeper, Napier, Poloz nab Order of Canada appointments

The pre-Canada Day list of the people who get the honour of a shiny lapel pin and some snazzy new initials after their name includes some familiar faces on the Hill.

The House of Commons' annual financial report for 2023-24 was tabled on June 13. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



On June 27, Governor General **Mary Simon** announced the latest batch of 83 Order of Canada appointments.

Barely a week after presenting her credentials in Vatican City as Canada's new ambassador to the Holy See, former CTV parliamentary bureau chief **Joyce Napier** was named as a member of the order for her "proficient bilingual reporting in both print and broadcast journalism." The Rideau Hall citation also highlighted Napier's work as "Radio-Canada's Middle East correspondent for five years, becoming a familiar figure in her blue flak jacket as she reported from and lived in a war zone."

Actress and one of the first Cree Members of Parliament, **Tina Keeper** is being honoured for her work championing bills "on Jordan's Principle, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women, Girls and Two Spirit" people. After a five-time Gemini-Award nominated run on *North of 60*, Keeper served as a Liberal MP for Churchill, Man., from 2006-2008.

Former Bank of Canada governor **Stephen Poloz** is also being added to the officer's list. During his tenure at the central bank from 2013-2020, Poloz "helped facilitate our country's international trade and promote its economic well-being," the Rideau Hall citation reads.

The trio join other names like **Leonard Edwards**, a longtime senior public servant, whose four-decade career included roles such as deputy minister of foreign affairs, agriculture, and international trade. "Lauded for his contributions to the advancement of foreign and domestic policy, and to the country's economic growth, he furthered Canada's positive international relationships as ambassador to both Korea and Japan." Other names on the list include



Actress and former Manitoba Liberal MP Tina Keeper is among those recently appointed to the Order of Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Brian Evans, Canada's first chief food safety officer and the country's second-longest-serving chief veterinary officer; singers **Avril Lavigne** and **Daniel Lavoie**; Métis artist **Christi Belcourt**; and refugee settlement negotiator **William Janzen**.

House spent \$751.8-million in 2023-24: annual report

The House of Commons spent a total of \$751.8-million through the 2023-24 fiscal year, leaving \$30.4-million of its approved \$782.2-million budget for the year unused, according to a recent annual financial report.

Presented to the House Board of Internal Economy on June 13, the report—audited by KPMG—gives an overview of spending for the fiscal year that ended on March 31. The total spent in 2023-24 marks a \$110.1-million increase from the year prior when the Chamber spent \$642.4-million of its \$672.8-million in allocated funding.

Of the \$751.8-million spent through the most recent fiscal year, \$364-million was expensed by MPs and House officers, while operating costs for House administration totalled \$271.6-million, and \$6.8-million for committees, parliamentary associations and exchanges.

The biggest change in year-over-year spending related to salaries and benefits, which totalled \$510.7-million in 2023-24 compared to \$418.4-million the year prior—a 22 per cent increase. Much of that is due to a \$32.8-million actuarial adjustment to MPs' retiring allowances and retirement compensation deals, and \$30.2-million tied to economic increases for House administrative staff salaries.

Meanwhile, in revenues, food services sales were up by 31 per cent at \$3.6-million compared to \$2.8-million in 2022-23 "mainly due to increased parliamentary activities on the Hill," the report says.

The BOIE also approved carrying over \$21.2-million out of the \$30.4-million in unused funds. House rules allow the Chamber to carry forward lapsed spending equal to up to five per cent of the main estimates annually. The \$21.2-million will be included in the next supplementary estimates for 2024-25. Of that, \$7.9-million will go to the office budgets of MPs and House officers, and \$13.3-million towards admin.

—Laura Ryckewaert
cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

The West staring down last-minute enormous changes

Three of the four biggest western countries are facing elections that may radically change their political orientations.

Gwynne
Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—By July 5, we will know the outcome of the United Kingdom election. On July 8, we will know the result of the French election. And by the middle of the month, it will be clear whether Joe Biden remains the Democratic presidential candidate in the United States. If he does, then Donald Trump will probably win the election in November.

Very little of this was planned. The U.K. election was expected this year, but in October or November, until Prime Minister Rishi Sunak surprised everybody—including his own Conservative Party—by calling it early. It was a gamble that will likely fail.

No national election was expected in France until 2027, but President Emmanuel Macron called the National Assembly elections three years early after his party took a severe beating in the European elections early last month. Another dramatic gamble that is also doomed to fail.

And the Democratic Party seemed certain to choose Biden as its candidate for the presidency again despite some muttered misgivings in the party about his age (81). That certainty imploded after Biden's poor performance in the first TV debate with Trump last week, and there is now a panicky debate within the party about replacing him.

Technically, it's not too late for the Democrats to change horses—their nominating convention is in late August—but in practical terms, it cannot be done at this late stage without Biden's full and willing co-operation.

We'll know within the next two or three weeks if there's any hope of easing Biden out without triggering a war within the Democratic Party. If an exit deal is not visible by then, we can conclude that Biden will go ahead and fight—and probably lose—the November election. His mind may still be sharp most of the time, but perceptions matter more.

So, there we suddenly are, with three of the four biggest western countries—containing about half of NATO's population—facing elections that may radically change their political orientations. In the American and French cases, their next governments may be hard right, with fascist undertones.

The U.K.'s election is the soonest and the least alarming, so let's start there. The

Tories have been in power for 14 years by now, so time would have eroded their popularity even if they had wonderful and successful policies. Their policies were neither of those things.

They left the European Union via Brexit in 2020, and lost free access to Britain's largest market by far. They imposed savage and needless austerity measures simply to serve their ideological goal of shrinking the state. British family incomes at the end of their 14 years in power, astoundingly, are actually lower than they were at the start.

Things went crazy in the last five of those years, during which the country had four different Tory prime ministers but only one election. Once Brexit was done, the party ran out of ideas, so the Conservative members of parliament broke up into vaguely ideological gangs and started fighting each other.

One prime minister—Boris Johnson—was forced to resign for serial lying, another—Liz Truss—for crashing the economy. The U.K. economy rotted, the National Health Service is near collapse, and Sunak's final obsession was to “get the flights going” to export asylum-seekers from Britain to Rwanda. (Cost: more than \$1-million per person.)

That will never happen now, and the only question for the Conservatives is whether this election will be merely a catastrophe—two terms in opposition and then maybe a comeback—or a full-scale extinction event from which there is no return.

The Conservatives have been in office for more than half the time since the “modern” party was founded 190 years ago, but apart from Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists in the years before the Second World War, they have never before had to face a challenge from the right.

Nigel Farage's Reform UK Party is nationalist, populist, and dog-whistle racist, but it is a far more sophisticated operation than Mosley's ridiculous blackshirts. Farage's goal is to supplant the traditional Conservative Party as the natural home for right-wing Britons, but he is not averse to achieving that goal by a hostile takeover of the Tories.

There are prominent figures in the Conservative Party, fearing near-annihilation in this week's election, who see this as their only plausible route back to power within the next decade. The populist wave that threatens to engulf the West is a long-term threat in the U.K., too—but for the next five years at least, the Labour Party is anticipated to govern with a massive majority.

It will take longer than that to repair all the economic and social damage that has been done, but at least it's a start. Elsewhere, the picture is darker.

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

The Hill Times

Bungling bureaucracy: CAF leadership dropping the ball on transparency

It is evident that Gen. Wayne Eyre and his advisers do not understand that the Access to Information Act is a federal law, not merely a suggestion.

Scott
Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—In a string of recent articles, *Ottawa Citizen* reporter David Pugliese has exposed the senior leadership of the Canadian Armed Forces to be a bungling behemoth of misguided bureaucracy.

In particular, Pugliese has focused on outgoing Chief of Defence Staff General Wayne Eyre.

Back on March 7, Eyre appeared before an Ottawa conference where he called for increased openness and transparency within the Department of National Defence and the Canadian Forces. Eyre said more information about the military had to be provided to Canadians.

This was a speech delivered in a public forum to retired and serving military officers, parliamentarians, diplomats, and defence analysts. It is something which would normally be posted to the DND website to ensure that media outlets reporting on Eyre's comments would be accurate.

However, when Pugliese asked Eyre's office for a copy of the “openness and transparency” speech, he was told to make a formal request under the Access to Information Act.

Obviously, Eyre and his advisers do not understand the word “irony.” It is now evident that Eyre and his advisers also do not understand that the Access to Information Act is a federal law, not merely a suggestion.

On April 8, Pugliese did file a formal request for Eyre's “openness and transparency” speech, along with the requisite \$5 fee. The act stipulates that those documents requested under the act are to be released within 30 days. That stipulation was ignored. Eyre's office has yet to release a copy of that “openness and transparency” speech, putting Canada's chief of defence staff at odds with the laws of the country he is entrusted to defend.

At this point, it appears that Eyre's refusal to release his speaking notes is both petty and petulant. His staffers would be wise to remind him that such actions reflect upon the office of the CDS, and not just Eyre personally.

Understandably, Eyre would have some animosity towards Pugliese, who is without a doubt the most-connected defence reporter in Canada. Those inside the CAF and DND know that if they want an embarrassing truth to see the light of day, then Pugliese is the conduit through which to make it public.

To wit, last month Pugliese asked Eyre's office for a copy of the video from a virtual townhall meeting hosted by the CDS and the Canadian Armed Forces Chief Warrant Officer Bob McCann. Again, the brain trust in Eyre's office told Pugliese to pound salt as that video was intended of “internal use only.”

But, as reported in the *Ottawa Citizen*, a copy was eventually leaked to Pugliese. That video came from military staff who have grown increasingly frustrated with attempts to clamp down on information that could be considered embarrassing to the senior leadership or the Liberal government.

The contents of that townhall provided material for no less than three revealing stories, not the least of which being the assessment by McCann that the reason for the current retention problem in the CAF is due to “toxic leadership.”

A prime example of that toxic leadership would be Eyre's failure to live up to his own “openness and transparency” speech, or to abide by the federal access to information laws.

On June 26, Pugliese wrote about another issue raised in the townhall video, with a story headlined “Too much bureaucracy at NDHQ, top general says, but no changes offered to status quo.”

Eyre noted to those in attendance that the CAF/DND currently has too many “Level 1s.” For those unfamiliar with this term, a “Level 1” executive reports directly to the chief of the defence staff or the deputy minister of the department. On the military side, this would be the commanders of the Royal Canadian Navy, the Army, and the Royal Canadian Air Force. For those old timers doing the math, it is a head scratcher to determine how that number is now at a staggering 23 people.

In terms of general officers and flag officers (GOFs), Canada currently has 140 of these GOFs for just 86,175 regular and reserve personnel. This must be one of the highest ratios of GOFs-to-personnel in the world.

While Eyre acknowledged this absurd overstaffing of National Defence HQ, he offered no specific direction forward other than to acknowledge changes had to be made. “I am of the personal view that we have too many military and civilian Level 1s,” he told the officers during the meeting in April. “So lots of work in that space.”

That is hardly a decisive way forward to deal with such a significant problem.

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

The Hill Times

News

Younger people in 'survival mode' as affordability crisis ticks on, say pundits, leaving little room for Liberals to make up lost ground to Conservatives

Unlike the embattled prime minister, 'no one has really any expectations' of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre before the election, says pollster Greg Lyle.

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

The affordability crisis will continue to loom large in Canadian politics in the coming months, say pollsters and pundits, with rising rent and home prices prompting young Canadians to increasingly wonder whether they will ever be homeowners.

Pollster Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, said affordability is going to be "the No. 1 issue" on the horizon.

"From a micro context, it's the struggle that people are going through on a daily basis," said Bricker. "What's happened is that their sense of the world has gotten quite small, and their sense of timelines has gotten very short."

Canada's unemployment rate ticked up to 6.2 per cent in May as the job market continued to show signs of weakness, with Statistics Canada showing that the Consumer Price Index rose



Pollster Greg Lyle says 'even if inflation comes down, it's [not going to solve] our housing problem.' Handout photograph



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberals may be past the point of no return, politicians agree. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

2.9 per cent on a year-over-year basis in May, up from a 2.7 per cent gain in April.

"Not the best news on the Canadian front this morning," said a June 25 Chamber of Commerce statement from senior economist Andrew DiCapua, summing up the outlook.

"[Bank of Canada] Governor Tiff Macklem may want to hold off on the soft-landing claim, at least for now, as the Bank will likely wait to see how the economy progresses and pause at their next meeting," according to DiCapua. "The increase in services inflation is not helpful, especially as wage growth is elevated."

The Conservatives continue to hammer away at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) on the economy. In a June 26 press release, the Conservatives noted that after nine years, "life is unaffordable for Canadians. Trudeau's inflationary spending and taxes have driven up the cost of everything, with food costing Canadians \$700 more this year than it did in 2023."

Bricker said "it's more of a survival mode type of environment at the moment, particularly for younger people, because they just don't have the assets."

"When they talk to us on polls, they're not talking about the inflation rate or the number of jobs being created, or any of the things that are playing out in the business press. What they're talking about is whether or not I can meet my mortgage this week,

whether or not I can find an apartment at a price I can afford, whether or not I have to make a choice between groceries and doing something else," said the pollster.

Invoking Trudeau's 2015 campaign slogan promising to help the middle class "and those who want to join it," Bricker said the latter part of that promise hasn't materialized.

"In particular, the 'want to join it' part is the problem," said Bricker. "So you've got a younger generation that believes that it has worked hard, it's done all the things that previous generations have done, and as a result, that they should be living the same kind of life as people who are at that age in the past. And they're not living that kind of life."

'Even if inflation comes down, it's not solving our housing problem'

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research Group, agreed that affordability will be the main issue going forward, but not just because of inflation. It will also be determined by the declining standard of living and the rise of housing costs.

"Even if inflation comes down, it's not [going to solve] our housing problem," said Lyle, noting that generation Z and millennials are going to be focused on affordability issues for the foreseeable future.

When asked what Trudeau and the Liberal Party can do to make up ground they've lost to the Conservatives over the next year and into the next election, Lyle said "not very much."

"If Trudeau goes and they have a leadership race, and they have some contenders that convince Canadians that they take these problems seriously, and I have a plan to deal with them, then perhaps they'd have an opportunity. But with Trudeau, I think he's done."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), who has helmed the party since 2022, doesn't face the same expectations, according to Lyle.

"No one has really any expectation of Poilievre before the election," said Lyle. "People might want to start to hear more from him. But they'd be looking for a different approach."

Cam Holmstrom, founder of Niipaawi Strategies and a former NDP staffer, said affordability issues are extremely important.

"At the end of the day, it's human nature to worry about the things that are most directly in front of us," he said. "The ability to be able to put a roof over your head, food on the table, those are things you're going to worry about more than anything else."

For the current government so far behind in the polls, "it's not so much what's happened, it's been the lack of response to what's happened," said Holmstrom.

"For a party that ran on delivery, they've been crap at delivery," said Holmstrom, adding that this is the moment when people are paying attention on that front, and needing that help.

Shakir Chambers, government relations principal at Earncliffe Strategies and a former Conservative staffer, told *The Hill Times* that Trudeau's problem is that "people have just tuned you out."

The status quo, if you're under 30 years old, is tough, said Chambers, regardless of which party is in power. Young people are looking for change, he said, and whatever that looks like, the feeling is, "let's go with that change and hopefully improve our situation."

The Liberals tried to present the capital gains tax as a policy that would benefit younger people, observed Chambers, who said they have not been very successful.

"It's been shocking to me and even other pundits that I've spoken to, that [the Liberals] don't advertise these policies or the tangibles to reach certain demographics," he said. "They just kind of roll them out."

Hangover from the pandemic

In a June 27 release, the Conservatives noted that "job opportunities for Canadians are declining," a shift confirmed by Statistics Canada, which revealed that payroll employment fell by nearly 23,000 jobs in April.

"While less Canadians found work, the number of job vacancies also dropped for the third consecutive month," according to the Conservatives. "In April, job vacancies fell by 32,000 as Trudeau's job-killing tax hikes continues to drive out investment in the Canadian economy. This is the fewest number of job openings since January 2021, when Canada was in the middle of a pandemic."

Geoff Norquay, a principal at Earncliffe Strategies, said there is "very, very little" that the Liberals can do to turn around their level of support, and that any government around the seven- to eight-year mark will "begin to reach their best-before date."

He said the government is still dealing with the "hangover from the pandemic," and the disruption to the economy and the social life of the country.

The Liberals handled the government's response to COVID-19 well compared to other countries, said Norquay, but the public health crisis and massive spending response left the government more vulnerable.

"They had to take charge, they had to respond, but overall the pandemic was very, very upsetting to the people of this country, and jobs were lost, businesses were ruined, and there were other obvious lasting scars," said Norquay. "That's one you can't blame on the government. It was on their watch, they had to respond, they responded fairly well."

"But it left some scars," said Norquay.

mlapointe@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Despite divorce talk, New Democrat brand, history still has value for Alberta's Naheed Nenshi, say politicians

Former staffers and political observers say Nenshi has more to gain from uniting progressives under the orange banner than attempting to start from scratch.

Continued from page 1

ley, the province's former justice minister.

Nenshi campaigned on what he described as a "pragmatic" progressive vision for Prairie politics, drawing in a record level of new members, ballooning the party's ranks from 16,000 people at the beginning of the race to more than 85,000 at the close.

Alongside Nenshi's promise of pragmatism was a commitment to address the disaffiliation conversation, which he said was "bubbling under the surface" every day when he spoke to members during the campaign.

While a potential split was a key theme throughout the leadership contest, with each candidate offering some version of a change to the federal-provincial party relationship, the week before the election, the party's outgoing leader and former Alberta premier Rachel Notley called the idea of "running away" from the NDP brand "silly, superficial, and shortsighted."

But given Nenshi has signalled his intention to put the question before party delegates as soon as possible, former Notley senior adviser Leah Ward said they're taking Nenshi "pretty seriously."

Ward, now a vice-president at Wellington Advocacy, said that, as a New Democrat and political observer, they hope whatever version of the relationship Nenshi pursues leaves room to maintain some level of "common cause" with the federal NDP wherever and whenever possible.

"I hope they handle the task with care," Ward said, adding that they expect some type of announcement on how Nenshi intends to proceed "in the near future," and that the first chance he would have to put the question to the provincial party would be at its next convention.



Newly elected Alberta NDP Leader Naheed Nenshi says he plans to proceed with divorce proceedings with his federal partners as soon as he can. Photograph courtesy of X



NDP strategist Leah Ward says organizers are increasingly calling for structural change to the federal-provincial relationship. Photograph courtesy of Leah Ward



While Nenshi may have his own view on the federal-provincial NDP relationship, it would be unwise and unnecessary for him to be the one to push the debate, says NDP strategist Jordan Lechnitz. Photograph courtesy of X



Niiapaawi Strategies founder Cameron Holmstrom says Nenshi has an opportunity to be an NDP standard bearer, alongside Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew. Photograph courtesy of Cameron Holmstrom

Any change to the federal-provincial relationship—in whatever form—would also require the support of two-thirds of the convention's delegates.

While demands for a split from the federal party have been a long-standing issue, Ward said there is a significant range of opinions from members on what that change should be.

Those opinions vary from something as minor as an explicit choice to opt-in to federal party membership when joining the provincial chapter to complete disaffiliation.

Unlike the federal Conservative or Liberal parties, membership in provincial NDP chapters also grants membership to the federal party, which Ward explained has become an increasingly contentious sticking point when attempting to sign new members.

Ward said the challenge the Alberta NDP faces is the perception that it takes directions from the federal party. While they said that has never been the case, "perception is reality" in politics.

"We're hearing organizers asking for a way to make the case definitively that the two entities are distinct, and that the Alberta NDP continues to focus on the priorities of Albertans," Ward said, noting that Notley took great lengths as party leader and premier to make it clear that Albertans were priority No. 1.

"Even when that put her at odds with the federal party, she was very clear about where she stood," Ward said, adding that provincial chapters—particularly in Western Canada—have historically been quite adept at "dancing around" areas of tension and disagreement.

Ward said that the federal party is best positioned when it focuses on those areas of alignment while reserving any divisive messages for the constituencies for which they are intended.

"If there's a message designed to shore up support in the 905, then deliver that in the 905," Ward explained, referring to the Greater Toronto Area. "And when you're talking to folks in the West, seek alignment with the parties on the ground doing really well."

NDP political strategist Jordan Lechnitz, former deputy chief of staff to then-leader Tom Mulcair, said that while there are genuine tensions between the federal and provincial branches of the New Democrats, discussions of a complete divorce tend to take on an outsized level of importance in the media than is reflected within the party.

"This conversation is one that the NDP's opponents are more interested in having, and I don't think it's a coincidence that it seems to pop up at a moment when the NDP is having success in Alberta," explained Lechnitz, now the Canada program manager for the Friedrich Ebert Foundation. "Nenshi may have his own view on this, but there's no advantage in him being seen as the one to push for it; it's unnecessary, and I don't think it would be wise, either."

If the desire for disaffiliation is genuine, members will have their say at the next convention, Lechnitz said. But she said she also believes the provincial NDP understands that doing so isn't a "magic wand" that can ward off attacks from Alberta's United Conservative Party (UCP).

The UCP has already signalled it would simply pivot to associating the Alberta NDP with the federal Liberals. On June 27, the UCP posted a video to its official social media account accusing Nenshi of being "Trudeau's choice for Alberta," featuring clips of the pair meeting in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) office and embracing at the Calgary Stampede during Nenshi's time as mayor.

Former NDP Hill staffer Cameron Holmstrom told *The Hill Times* that while he understands the frustration with the federal party, he believes there is far more opportunity for Nenshi under the orange banner than not.

Holmstrom, now a founder and principal at Niiapaawi Strategies, said he sees a growing appetite for a genuine progressive alternative. He pointed to the excitement around Nenshi's victory, and last year's provincial win for Manitoba NDP Leader Wab Kinew.

The provincial NDP either holds government or is the official opposition in every province west of Ontario.

While Singh has been unable to capitalize on that appetite as the federal Liberals fall further and further behind the Conservatives in the polls, Holmstrom said he believes there is an opportunity for Nenshi and Kinew to be the standard bearers for what a New Democrat is and could be.

Continued on page 13

News

Liberal, NDP MPs look to PROC to address policy 'gap' when it comes to MP-on-MP harassment

If we want to have a range of voices in the House, 'we need to make that a safe space, and right now, it's an increasingly dangerous' one, says NDP MP Heather McPherson.

Continued from page 1

violence prevention policy does not apply for harassment between Members of Parliament, so there's a gap there," explained Liberal MP and committee member Sherry Romanado (Longueuil-Charles-LeMoyne, Que.), who tabled the motion that brought about the study, in a recent phone interview.

"The conversation about Members of Parliament and the harassment and the intimidation that they are experiencing has been something that has been in the media quite a bit in the last couple of years, so obviously there's a lot of interest in closing the gap, but also having a larger conversation."

The study that began on May 28 is the first in-public discussion of MP-related workplace policies since the Procedure and House Affairs Committee's (PROC) 2015 in-camera study that resulted in the creation of the current code of conduct governing allegations of sexual harassment.

A 2018 review of that code, which led to amendments to the process, also saw relevant discussion take place entirely behind closed doors. However, the resulting report included



In May, Liberal MP Pam Damoff announced she would not be seeking re-election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

a recommendation that PROC consider dealing with "allegations of non-sexual harassment" between MPs in the future. The opportunity to do so was something PROC passed over when it first tackled the issue during the 41st Parliament; the motion that triggered the study had instructed it to "examine policy options for addressing complaints of harassment between members of the House of Commons" generally, but the committee ultimately opted to only address sexual harassment specifically.

Over its two meetings to date, PROC has heard from House officials—including the Chamber's clerk, law clerk, chief human resources officer, and Sergeant-at-Arms—as well as Liberal MPs Pam Damoff (Oakville North-Burlington, Ont.) and Iqra Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont.), who spoke about their own experiences of harassment, including

abuse from the public that they said was instigated by fellow MPs.

In May, Damoff announced she would not be seeking re-election, attributing her decision to the "threats and misogyny" she's experienced as an MP, which she said have made it so she "often fear[s] going out in public."

"The toxic drive for social media likes and clips among elected officials has hindered constructive conversations, exacerbated differences between us, and diminished our capacity to show empathy toward each other," Damoff told PROC on May 30.

"Members of Parliament must understand that they drive and exacerbate harassment, abuse, and threats received by other MPs when they spread misinformation and lies, and make personal attacks against other members," she said, noting, for example, that "[w]e often hear Conservative MPs carelessly and baselessly using terms like 'corrupt' and 'treason' in Parliament and in their social media posts."

Little more than a year into her first term as an MP, in 2017, Khalid faced a wave of backlash after she tabled an anti-Islamophobia motion, M-103. Addressing PROC, Khalid tied the inundation of hateful messages and threats she subsequently received to the fact the Conservative Party was then in the midst of a leadership race, candidates of which she said contributed to spinning the non-binding motion as an attempt to impose Shariah law.

"The politics of agitation is not helpful to how we conduct ourselves as Canadians, and as parliamentarians," said Khalid. "I've received—other than the verbal abuse—death threats, including from a gentleman inviting me to become acquainted with his rifle, and another who told me that I

would be hanged, another who released my address on a radio talk show to say, 'Go kill her. I would happily film it if you go kill her.'"

As noted by Romanado, the House already has a workplace harassment and violence prevention policy that applies to MPs as employers, and covers incidents involving employees, interns, and volunteers, but not situations between MPs.

Currently, House rules provide that MPs can rise on a point of order to complain about unparliamentary language—which is not explicitly defined—used during proceedings. If in agreement, the Speaker can ask the offending MP to apologize, and if they refuse, the MP can be named and asked to leave the Chamber.

Policies addressing harassment between parliamentarians exist in other legislatures, and the Senate of Canada's harassment and violence prevention policy applies to incidents between

Senators, as well as employees—though, as law clerk Michel Bédard noted to PROC, "it does not apply to all actions that take place during parliamentary proceedings," which are instead dealt with through "the procedural means that are already available." The United Kingdom's bullying and harassment policy, meanwhile, covers incidents between members of both its upper and lower Chambers, along with staff, and applies to any such acts, whether through social media, "on the Parliamentary estate or elsewhere in connection with" parliamentary activities.

NDP MP Lindsay Mathysen (London-Fanshawe, Ont.), now a member of PROC, was a staffer to then-NDP MP Jean Crowder during the committee's initial 2015 deliberations, during which Crowder subbed in for a colleague.

"I certainly—even as a staff person during that time—was disappointed [PROC did not pursue a policy on harassment generally] because I saw that as a missed opportunity" to be leaders and "set a standard" when it comes to workplace policies, Mathysen told *The Hill Times*.

Asked why PROC didn't pursue such a policy when it first had a chance, Mathysen—constrained by the fact deliberations were in-camera—suggested "you have to look at the time at who was government, the state of that government—you know, minority or majority—and a willingness to have a conversation on changing behaviours." At the time, the Conservatives formed a majority government.

"This is a place steeped in tradition. This is a place maybe that doesn't change as much. ... Ultimately, when you talk about harassment—whether it be harassment in general, or sexual harassment, or what have you—it's about power, and there's a lot of people who are unwilling to let go of that," she said.

Conservative MPs contacted or otherwise approached by *The Hill Times* declined to comment or did not respond to requests, including MPs Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) and Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough-Kawartha, Ont.), who both subbed in for colleagues during PROC's May 30 meeting.

Continued on page 13



Liberal MP Iqra Khalid spoke to PROC about her experience with harassment and threats on May 30. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner has stressed the need to treat MP-to-MP harassment as an all-party issue. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

L on wheels: liberals and centrists paving the runway for fascism to take hold

Political humiliation looms on both sides of the 49th parallel as strongholds are breached, and lies are allowed to run rampant.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Never trust centrists or liberals to get the job done. Last week, we saw liberalism brick some easy layups, taking ignominious Ls for their efforts.

On June 24, electors went to the polls to vote in the Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont., byelection. Once a seat former cabinet minister Carolyn Bennett held for 27 years from 1997–2024, it was considered a Liberal stronghold. Not anymore, since the riding elected Conservative Don Stewart. The previous election, the Liberals carried around half of the vote with the Conservatives taking around a quarter of the vote. Nearly three years later, the Conservatives hold on the riding stands at 42 per cent, while the Liberals held onto 40 per cent of the vote. That’s definitely a swing that swung—decisively—to a photo finish for the centre-right party.

Suffice it to say, the Liberals are pressed and stressed.

According to this paper, nine MPs have penned a letter to caucus chair Brenda Shanahan, demanding an in-person, national caucus meeting. The meeting would be to discuss the results of the upset. In other words, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau might be getting dumped (at least it isn’t over text)—first by the country, then by his party. As *The Hill Times* reported on June 28, some MPs said the quiet part out loud: “Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches–East York, Ont.) said that the decision about the party leadership going forward should be decided by the grassroots party members not by anonymous members.” Leadership going forward? With all the sneak dissing by his caucus colleagues, the prime minister had better sleep with one eye open.

Meanwhile across the 49th parallel, a bigger L loomed in the political humiliation of the century. This topped Richard Nixon sweating profusely on television opposite the calm, cool, John F. Kennedy in 1960. Joe Biden, 81, and Donald Trump, 78, engaged in what was to be a presidential debate, but ended up as *Weekend at Bernie’s*. These two could barely walk to the podium, much less give cogent, coherent answers (the memes, however, are priceless). Once Biden and Trump started arguing about “post-birth abortions,” I knew we were in the upside down. Trump’s malignant disease of liabetes metastasized into incredulity—even by his standards—as lie after lie rolled off his tongue. However, instead of debating how the media cover Trump, so as not to give him free publicity and platform his far-right beliefs, we are stunned by Biden’s periodic breaks from lucidity.

There was more elder abuse on that stage than in Ontario’s long-term care facilities.

Journalism should hang its head in shame after that display of platforming lies from a convicted felon. Does no one do fact-checking anymore? Trump was allowed to gaslight an entire world with his mendacity. CNN debate moderators Dana Bash and Jake Tapper made no attempt to correct him or challenge his responses in any way. There was even a point where Trump denied having sex with Stormy Daniels—then what were the hush payments for? It is unconscionable that Trump—a convicted felon—and Biden—who is barely hanging onto his faculties with one foot in the grave and another on a banana skin—are the two choices democracy has to offer.

While journalists in Gaza are dying en masse to bring accurate reporting of the Israeli onslaught, these two sat in CNN’s Atlanta air-conditioned studio with designer clothes and perfect coiffes impersonating people whose job it is to provide facts, challenge power, and mainly, investigate for the truth. Bash and Tapper allowed racism, misogyny, white supremacy, and economy with the truth go unchecked and unchallenged, thereby giving tacit approval to far-right talking points. As an op-ed in the *L.A. Times* explained: “The CNN broadcast revealed a sad truth about American politics in 2024: Xenophobic fear-mongering once relegated to the far-right fringe is now an acceptable starting point for mainstream dialogue about American poli-



U.S. President Joe Biden, left, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau are both under fire for poor political performances last week, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

tics and presidencies.” Unfortunately, many liberals are using similar euphemisms to the white nationalists they say they abhor.

And that’s how liberals and centrists provide the runway for fascism to take hold—they adopt and encourage the language, which is only a short distance from adopting their policies. It is an insidious process that starts with the ownership of language: the “woke” of it all. Then, using this language, they can communicate in euphemisms, dog whistles, and “othering.” During the debate, Trump called Biden a Palestinian as a form of derision wrapped in anti-Palestinian racism—and everyone

on that stage was cool with it. Trump characterized jobs that Black people work as “Black jobs,” and then doubled down with the analogous “Hispanic jobs.” Eight years ago, that would’ve raised the ire of any decent person, however in 2024, no one bats an eyelid. After that, policies are constructed which match the rhetoric. That is how pernicious this process is, and it brings us to a place where the far right are winning elections (ahem, France). Next thing you know it’s 1984.

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

The Hill Times

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Editorial

New defence chief should be set up to win

In two weeks, Canada will have a new leader of the Armed Forces.

After serving in the role since 2021, Chief of the Defence Staff Gen. Wayne Eyre is retiring, leaving the door open for the Liberals to appoint his successor. That person will take over following the already scheduled July 18 change-of-command ceremony, and the odds have been favouring a woman—such as Lt.-Gen. Jennie Carignan—to take on the gig for the first time.

Whoever takes over the top military job will inherit a long-standing problem: reforming the Armed Forces' culture in a bid to stamp out harassment and other misconduct.

Serious inroads have been made in recent years to get rid of the toxic environment that has been allowed to fester for far too long. And now that the institution is in a recruitment and retention crisis, it's become more important than ever—and it was pretty darn important before—to effect real change that will make the military an attractive workplace.

To that end, on June 27, Defence Minister Bill Blair provided an update on work to implement recommendations made by former Supreme Court justice Louise Arbour in May 2022.

Chief among those is a move to scrap the definition of "sexual misconduct" from CAF policies, and replace it with three new terms: "conduct deficiencies of a sexual nature," "harassment of a sexual

nature," and "crimes of a sexual nature." The military's interim policy guidance also provides for the inclusion of "sexual assault" as a standalone definition.

As Arbour outlined in her report: "In respect of sexual offences, the CAF should first bring its definitions in line with the wording of the Criminal Code, as interpreted by the Supreme Court of Canada. There is no value to including sexual assault as one part of 'sexual misconduct,' an umbrella term that has only caused enduring confusion."

Blair's update also included the news that the repeal of "duty to report" regulations would come into effect on June 30. This obligation had been previously flagged as something that could "cause further harm to victims and discourage reporting."

DND also rolled out a five-year roadmap—that started in 2023—for addressing the broad swath of recommendations from a variety of external reports on cleaning up the military.

These are all important tools for the next CDS to have in their arsenal, and suggests that they're not being set up to fail in this regard. But with the competing pushes for funding, transparency, and Eyre's lamentation that his successor is going to have a much-shorter-than-desired transition period, the new defence chief won't have an easy road ahead. Let's hope they're a steady hand on the wheel.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Action, not more time, needed to address climate catastrophe, says B.C. reader

Re: "This is your wakeup call to catastrophic climate change," (*The Hill Times*, June 13).

Bill Henderson summarizes our predicament very clearly. As a climate change researcher—now retired from Natural Resources Canada—I can confirm: my coworkers and I investigated, published in peer-reviewed journals, and reported our results to our government leaders, and information was assimilated and largely ignored. In the mid-1990s, a small group published an opinion piece on what we knew of climate change in the *Edmonton Journal*. But for the grace of then-natural resources minister Anne McClellan, we almost lost our jobs because our logical solution—cut emissions of fossil GHGs—was "crossing the line between science and policy." Thirty years later, things are unfolding broadly as we foretold.

Henderson offers no real solution. Despite progress in transitioning from fossil energy, atmospheric carbon dioxide continues to increase. Key climate scientist James Hansen argues if we stop burning fossil carbon tomorrow, temperatures will continue to rise, at least until 2100. Melting ice sheets will cause sea level rise of one to two metres; global costs of damages will be trillions of dollars; the

global economy will be wrecked; and hundreds of millions of people will die from effects of heat, drought, famine, and consequential violence. We cannot expect the natural biosphere to reduce CO2 concentration rapidly: it took a million years to get CO2 down to the roughly 280 ppm humans have enjoyed throughout our entire evolution until circa 1900.

We need time to reduce emissions. (Direct CO2 removal is critical but will require mind-boggling amounts of energy.) The only quick fix is "global cooling"—engineered increases in Earth's reflectivity of sunlight, also termed solar radiation modification (SRM). There are several possible approaches that could be economically feasible, and implemented relatively quickly. But most environmentalists and policymakers won't even support the research to assess costs and benefits. They are likely overestimating the risks of "manipulating our climate," whereas the consequences of inaction will certainly be disastrous. Thirty years ago, I would have said SRM was a crazy idea, but today I firmly believe humanity has no other option to avoid global catastrophe for our grandchildren.

David Price
 Sorrento, B.C.

We are the hope we have been waiting for: letter writer

The June 15 suicide of a young person in the Waverley Grand Mosque of Manitoba must not be met with pithy aspirational words and violent abdicating platitudes.

As the deluge of "Muslims and Palestinians, Jews and Israelis are inherently violent" propaganda and hateful takes compound and punctuate this gaping loss, the truth remains that we live in a country where our daily interactions are forsaking the substance of human life, and that we belong to a wider community that must take care of each other in order for every person on earth to survive and thrive.

Taking care of each other means health care, safe housing, enough money, food to eat, and a world beyond humil-

iation, surveillance, ridicule, and the brutality of killings on poor people, on oppressed ethnic and religious minorities, on souls who suffer in the vacant wordy, political silences.

If we want to prevent death, we must choose life. Every single time. But not singularly our own lives. Every stranger is a neighbour we haven't met yet. Our actions must begin here. Going out. Finding and checking in on others we don't know. Asking and fulfilling what they need to be truly alive. The raging fires must cease. How reassuring that each of us is—and we collectively are—all the hope we have been waiting for.

Devon Spier
 Kitchener, Ont.



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circulation@hilltimes.com
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THE HILL TIMES

Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

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

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The Bloc Québécois is no friend of Canada

While they claim to work for Quebec's interests in Ottawa, there are 1.25 million English-speaking Quebecers they refuse to recognize.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



WHITEHORSE, YUKON— In the Yukon, there are encouraging reminders we are in Canada, although far from the machinations of politicians in far-off Ottawa. In the streets of Whitehorse, Canada Day was celebrated in English, French, and Indigenous languages. With a population that's about 10 per cent francophone, and French immersion everywhere, Yukon is a reminder of how Canada can work, despite the incessant complaints of Quebec nationalists.

Among those Quebec nationalists are the Bloc Québécois and its leader, Yves-François Blanchet.

However, in a recent piece praising the Bloc to the skies, *La Presse* columnist Joël-Denis Bellavance provided a long list of ways the Bloc "has distinguished itself by showing the greatest respect for [Parliament] and its evolution in the past 35 years." This, by his account, in comparison to the puerile behaviour of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and equivalent rancour among the governing Liberals.

He begins with the Bloc's "leadership" on the immigration file, which was really a race to the bottom. According to Bellavance, "MP Alexis Brunelle-Duceppe took on the minister of immigration ... without falling into vulgar stereotypes. Today, the rest of Canada is rallying to the concerns of the Bloc." Except these concerns have been tainted with racism, as the Bloc consistently opposed the immigration of non-francophones to Quebec, seeing them as a threat to the French language.

Bellavance then disingenuously writes, "There is no doubt the defence of the French language, as much in Quebec as the rest of the country, wouldn't be as much of a priority as it has become if the Bloc was not so obsessed." This fails to mention the Bloc's harangues over the supposed decline of the French language in Quebec, and its vicious attacks on



Despite praise from some pundits, the Bloc Québécois and its leader Yves-François Blanchet are more worthy of censure, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Quebec's anglophone community. It was thanks to the Bloc that Quebec's Charter of the French Language—the mean-spirited Bill 96—was included in Bill C-13, which amended the Official Languages Act.

In the words of Liberal MP Anthony Housefather—who courageously voted against Bill C-13—it includes "a Quebec bill that uses the notwithstanding clause pre-emptively and which is almost universally opposed by a minority community that the Official Languages Act is designed to protect."

And finally, Bellavance notes the Bloc's insistence on getting to the bottom of the foreign interfer-

ence file, and Blanchet's declaration any member of his caucus implicated in foreign interference will "pay the price" for their actions. It is ironic to hear this from a leader who has openly aligned with France's "republican and secular doctrine," and which considers Canada a foreign country.

Not to be outdone, *Ottawa Citizen* columnist Brigitte Pellerin followed up with a "Canada Day Trophy" for the Bloc, "for its enduring respect for the institutions that make this country what it is," adding: "In this country... The same laws apply to everyone."

That may be true in principle, but under Bill 21 in Quebec, you can't be a teacher, a police officer, or a judge if you are a practising Muslim. And Bill 96 prevents receiving government services in English if you were not educated in English in Canada. That excludes more than half a million English speakers from receiving services for which they pay taxes. It is why dozens of organizations are taking the Quebec government to court over these two discriminatory laws—laws the Bloc Québécois endorses wholeheartedly.

Make no mistake about it: the Bloc—according to its website—"works around the clock for a new country... Quebec," and the dissolution of Canada as we know it. And while they claim

to work for Quebec's interests in Ottawa, there are 1.25 million English-speaking Quebecers they refuse to recognize, effectively disenfranchising them. Doubling down, in 2021, the Bloc pressed for a parliamentary motion recognizing Quebec's right to be recognized as "an exclusively French-speaking nation" in the Constitution.

Last month, the Office of the Commissioner of Official Languages issued a report on the alleged state of Quebec's anglophone community, titled *Building Bridges*, which proclaims individual relations between Quebecers of differing linguistic backgrounds are much better than perceived. It seems to imply the only problem is at the political level—those intemperate politicians and their bickering.

Except those people seeking public office in a democratic society are our putative leaders. And when they are narrow-minded, prejudiced, or deliberately marginalize their fellow citizens, they deserve censure, not gullible praise.

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

Opinion

Striking the balance between accuracy and ambition for climate change communications

Limits around promotional speech are valid, but the restrictions in Bill C-59 regarding greenwashing are not the path to get us there.

Megan Buttle

Opinion



Over the past decade of the Trudeau government, we have

seen the rise in climate change communications for the general public, thought leaders, academics, governments of all levels, and industry. Some good. Some bad.

Climate change communication is now more crucial than ever, and strongly encouraged by federal policymakers. Getting it right is essential, with high stakes and serious consequences if missed.

We've witnessed bad actors battling legal fights over greenwashing, and some being held rightfully accountable. The ability of individuals and groups to blast out messages—regardless of veracity—among a broad or targeted audience is increasingly becoming a problem.

Limits and guidance around promotional speech are valid, and strongly encouraged. However, the recent federal legislation in Bill C-59 regarding greenwashing is not the path to get us there.

This recent change to the Competition Act has gone too far, and will have significant unintended consequences. Though Canadians have been clear that they expect companies to do the hard work to address climate change, this amendment is equally clear: "don't tell anyone about it."

Why do organizations communicate to their stakeholders and the public about their plans, progress, and ambitions, and not just their business forecasts? Certainly for their own immediate reputation benefit, but also to show Canadians that they are "doing something," not just sitting here "doing nothing."

They want their shareholders to understand the investment required.

They want their communities to be supportive of the changes needed.

They want their workers to accept some of the trade-offs that will be required.

They want their suppliers and customers to buy in.

In other words, they are selling. They need to sell their ideas to take action and get buy-in to deliver on their ambition. And selling means communicating ideas that describe a hoped-for future, not just issuing a careful, conservative, and easily achieved business forecast. It's the difference between telling your daughter that she can grow up to be "anything she wants to be," and telling her that it is OK to be ambitious, but there will be many caveats and realities that will constrain those ambitions, and therefore, the message is she can grow up to be "a few of the things she wants to be." It is going to be harder to get your daughter to buy in to eating her vegetables, doing her homework and chores,

and being kind to others when the path appears to be quite limited.

It's the same for organizations that want to engage their suppliers, customers, communities, and employees in a vision of a lower-carbon future. If the rules say you can't talk about what you would like to do, limited to only what you can mathematically prove, and internationally validate given what you know today, then the likelihood of Canadian organizations being able to mobilize their stakeholders to make much of anything happen in terms of emissions progress shrinks meaningfully.

My question to those in Parliament: is the view worth the climb?

We are now at risk of constraining many organizations who are making a positive difference in order to exert an extreme level of control over very few who aren't.

The unintended consequence of C-59 is crushing for not only speech, but also for hope and ambition. Let organizations communicate an ambition and goal of a lower carbon future that has great potential to help Canadians and our environment.

Megan Buttle is the national digital practice lead and partner at *Earnscliffe Strategies*.

The Hill Times

Opinion

MPs unite against greedflation and monopoly power in Canada's food systems—but there's more to do

The House Agriculture Committee report unanimously recommends action on profiteering, concentration, and food insecurity, but risks undermining Canada's Healthy Eating Strategy.

Marissa Alexander & Wade Thorhaug

Opinion



As Canadians continue to struggle to pay their grocery bills, it is heartening to see cross-party consensus on the need to tackle excessive profits and curb monopoly power. The recommendations from the recent House Agriculture and Agri-

Food Committee report on food price volatility follow months of hearings.

The report recognizes that oligopolies and monopolies are extracting unreasonable profits at the expense of farmers and consumers, and asks for effective government action. Economist Jim Stanford gave expert testimony to the committee, one of the few voices outside of food corporations to testify. He emphasized the record profiteering by corporations that has fuelled food price inflation since the pandemic. In a recent Food Secure Canada (FSC) webinar on greedflation, he underlined that it is not farmers or workers who are getting rich from high prices, it's big business and their shareholders.

While welcome, the report's recommendation on tackling profiteering lacks specifics, and the devil will be in the details. The recommendation to curb monopoly power offers important paths to strengthen competition law, such as preventing or dissolving mergers and shifting the burden of proof onto corporations. This is a start. The National Farmers Union has laid out further, robust ways to tackle rampant concentration not only of the grocery sector, but also of farm inputs like seeds,

fertilizer, and farm machinery, as well as food manufacturing. All are dominated by a handful of companies.

The federal government has been emphasizing a Grocery Code of Conduct to advance transparency and fairness between food manufacturers and retailers, but it does not include provisions for fairness with consumers. Further, the current version of the "code" is voluntary, and would do little to curb excess corporate power. The big five retailers—Loblaw, Metro, Sobeys, Walmart, and Costco—enjoy an 80 per cent market share. The Agriculture Committee recommends that the federal government work with provinces and territories towards legislation that would make fairness provisions mandatory. However, Stanford described the code as "Godzilla versus King Kong," where a fight between manufacturers and retailers will only deliver marginal benefits for consumers.

It is encouraging that the committee's report recommends removing barriers to Canada's food retail market. But discussions prioritize attracting foreign and digital multinationals, not strengthening local businesses. FSC is instead advocating for

transformative and (w)holistic approaches to the way Canadians shop and eat, encompassing public markets, co-operatives and solidarity shops, agroecology, as well as Black and Indigenous foodways—all of which already exist, yet face systemic barriers such as lack of funding and access to corporate-dominated supply chains.

On food insecurity, the committee looked at affordability in remote areas. Like so many before it, the committee recommends that the government's Nutrition North retail-managed subsidy program be reviewed. A recent study shows that while more than two-thirds of households in the North experience food insecurity, only 67 cents of each dollar of subsidy is used to lower prices. Retailers are not passing the full benefit to shoppers as they are required to do. Most remote communities have only one or two grocery stores, effectively creating a natural monopoly. Half of all these public dollars are going to the North West Company, headquartered in Winnipeg, which dominates northern retail. While further review is welcome, we already know that locally hunted and harvested food programs need to

be better supported, as do Indigenous-run co-ops.

The committee's other recommendation on food insecurity also lacks detail, recommending that the Food Policy for Canada include a focus on food affordability. FSC and others go much further, advocating for a government-wide target to cut food insecurity by 50 per cent, and eliminate severe food insecurity by 2030.

Finally, the Agriculture Committee's recommendation on front-of-package labelling—to "balance" public health with company concerns, ostensibly because of price implications—is the latest corporate effort to push back against Canada's Healthy Eating Strategy. Labelling regulation was finally introduced in 2022, and will be mandatory by 2026. We can't let it falter. Prominent labelling of processed food high in salt, sugars, and saturated fat enables healthier eating, with enormous potential benefits for individuals and the public purse—for example, by lowering health costs for diet-related diseases. Eighty-one per cent of Canadians support this labelling.

The committee has called on the government to respond to its recommendations. We will be watching closely.

Marissa Alexander and Wade Thorhaug are co-executive directors of Food Secure Canada. Alexander has spent most of her career exploring the intersections of food security, equity, and social justice. Thorhaug has extensive experience advocating for affordability in northern Canadian communities, local Indigenous food systems, and a rehaul of Nutrition North Canada.

The Hill Times

Can DFO be trusted to implement the fish-farm ban?

Without being given legal force through legislation or regulations, the promised ban remains little more than another political promise vulnerable to ever-changing political winds.

Karen Wršten

Opinion



The majority of First Nations, commercial fishers, and

concerned British Columbians heaved a sigh of relief when Fisheries Minister Diane Leboutillier said Canada would "ban" open net-pen feedlots of Atlantic salmon in British Columbia. After fighting to protect wild salmon for 30 years, we may have finally achieved something here. It may not happen as quickly as we'd like to see given the perilous state of wild salmon, but we must applaud the politicians who have taken this brave step, and we must acknowledge the support that workers will need during this transition.

But this initial relief comes with urgent, pressing, questions. How will the ban be given the force of law? And—more importantly—until then, how will endangered wild Pacific salmon be protected from the plume of pollution, parasites, and pathogens spewing from the open net-pen feedlots staining coastal British Columbia?

Without being given legal force through legislation or regu-

lations, the promised ban remains little more than another political promise vulnerable to ever-changing political winds. Our praise for that promise is coupled with healthy skepticism: the same folks now promising a ban by 2029 previously promised a "transition from" open net-pen feedlots by 2025. With at least one federal election between now and 2029, it's possible those now promising a ban will not be around when the ban is supposed to take effect.

A bigger mystery is how the Department of Fisheries and Oceans will protect wild salmon from polluting open net-pen feedlots for the next five years. The minister also announced that licences will be issued for five years, and promised "stricter" licence conditions and regulations, but provided no details. Those licence conditions, and more importantly their enforcement, will fall to DFO.

It's no secret that the public, and successive ministers have very different views than DFO

bureaucrats on the harm open net-pen feedlots cause. DFO has consistently denied any connection between the pathogens and parasites flowing out of salmon farms, and wild salmon health. For years, DFO has refused to incorporate conditions of licence that measure or address sources of harm despite repeated and insistent calls from conservation groups and First Nations to do so. DFO still allows the stocking of open net-pen feedlots with fish infected with piscine orthoreovirus, and has not reviewed the efficacy of its sea lice management measures.

Now, despite DFO's denial, the minister has recognized the harm, exercised her discretion, and applied the precautionary principle by promising to remove this harmful industry from B.C. Her decision should be a fatal blow to DFO's decades-long mismanagement by suppression and denial. Instead, we have an unresolved contradiction: on one hand, open net-pen feedlots

must be removed to protect wild Pacific salmon; while on the other hand, those harmful feedlots can be governed by the ineffective regulatory regime and regulated by the same people whose objectivity and efficacy has been called into question by Justice Bruce Cohen, Canada's chief science adviser, the commissioner for the environment and sustainable development, and the House Standing Committee on Fisheries and Oceans.

Endangered wild Pacific salmon need decisive action such as the announced ban. They also need urgent change to how they are protected while we wait for that decision to take effect. Open net-pens in B.C. are being phased out because they threaten the survival of wild Pacific salmon. New licence conditions to address this threat should have already been collaboratively developed. Instead, they will be tacked on by DFO in five-year licences granted at the end of June. Rarely are conditions altered during the term of a licence, but that might be exactly what needs to happen to ensure we have any wild salmon left to protect when the promised ban takes effect.

Karen Wršten is executive director of the Living Oceans Society.

The Hill Times

Building a mental health-literate Canada now



Under the authority of Mental Health and Addictions Minister Ya'ara Saks, the federal government could support the research necessary to develop new mental health literacy applications to fill any gaps, write Sen. Stanley Kutcher and Dr. Yifeng Wei. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Recent federal actions to support mental health care are a welcome start, but will only lead to better outcomes if there is a parallel initiative to improve the mental health literacy of all Canadians.

ISG Senator Stanley Kutcher & Yifeng Wei

Opinion



A house must be built on a strong foundation.

This is also true for interventions designed to improve population mental health, ensuring timely access to best-in-class mental health care for all those who require it.

The foundation for better mental health outcomes is mental health literacy.

Recent actions by the federal government in supporting interventions addressing various aspects of mental health care are a welcome start, but these can only lead to better outcomes if there is a parallel initiative that can improve the mental health literacy of all Canadians.

Mental health literacy has four unique but related components: knowing how to obtain and maintain good mental health; understanding mental disorders and their treatments; decreasing stigma; and

enhancing help-seeking efficacy—knowing when and where to seek treatment, and having the necessary competencies to help enable effective impact of treatment. As a subset of health literacy, mental health literacy can be taught using developmentally and culturally appropriate methods applied through existing institutions—such as schools—and civil society organizations. It must be based on best-available scientific research that demonstrates significant, substantial, and sustainable impact on the mental health outcomes of citizens.

As the World Health Organization has noted, a mental health-literate nation will demonstrate improved outcomes in mental health promotion, prevention, and treatment. What is immediately needed in Canada is a national strategy led by the federal government, starting with the nationwide application of existing best-available-evidence-based mental health literacy interventions.

Existing best-available-evidence-based interventions are ready. These need to be rapidly and effectively scaled up nationwide so that all residents of Canada are able to benefit as soon as possible. An initial important step has been supported by the Public Health Agency of Canada in the development of a national repository of these interventions so that those responsible for applying mental health literacy applications can choose the ones that have already demonstrated effective impact, and avoid others that may be enthusiastically promoted but have not been scientifically validated.

As such, the federal government has a unique opportunity to use its responsible authority to help all provinces and territories move swiftly towards applying existing best-available-evidence-based mental health literacy interventions. Making funds available through provincial/territorial

funding agreements or directly to educational institutions and civil society organizations to apply these existing best-in-class interventions would help them scale up. That would immediately lead to improved mental health literacy nationwide.

Additionally, under the authority of the minister of mental health and addictions, gaps in existing best-available-evidence-based mental health literacy interventions could be identified, and the federal government could support the research necessary to develop and demonstrate the impact of novel mental health literacy applications designed to fill those gaps.

Finally, a survey that establishes a national mental health literacy baseline is needed. Conducted by bona fide independent experts in measurement of mental health literacy, it should be repeated at reasonable intervals so that the impact of interventions on improving mental health literacy can be established. This work can also help to fine tune implementation applications, and provide ongoing feedback on any improvements that might be needed

to the interventions as they are being applied.

To assist in this ambitious but necessary work, a national mental health literacy advisory group should be created, consisting of key experts with demonstrated competency in the field to provide ongoing advice pertaining to the development and implementation of a national mental health literacy strategy. An annual “scorecard” reporting to Parliament and the public can help provide the necessary transparency needed to help ensure the effective implementation of this work.

The federal government has begun good work on addressing mental health in Canada. Let’s make sure that the foundation needed for the effective and sustainable impact of these investments is in place.

Let’s move rapidly towards creating a mental health-literate Canada.

Dr. Stanley Kutcher is an Independent Senator for Nova Scotia. Dr. Yifeng Wei is an associate professor in the department of psychiatry at the University of Alberta.

The Hill Times



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News

First Nations, industry say feds' B.C. salmon farming transition timeline 'irresponsible, unrealistic, and unachievable'

Kitasoo Xai'xais Nation Deputy Chief Isaiah Robinson says the imposed five-year transition undermines reconciliation and economic self-determination for First Nations.



In an effort to safeguard wild Pacific salmon stocks and make good on a 2019 election promise, the Liberal government announced on June 19 that existing open-net salmon farms in B.C. will have five years to transition to land-based, closed containment systems. Photograph courtesy of Flickr

Continued from page 1

announce the decision, alongside B.C. Liberal MPs Taleeb Noor-mohamed (Vancouver Granville, B.C.), and Wilson Miao (Richmond Centre, B.C.).

However, the transition was swiftly condemned by both the industry and the First Nations that depend on it for jobs and economic opportunity, as well as at least one member of the Liberals' Atlantic caucus.

Minutes after Lebouthillier's press conference concluded, Liberal MP Wayne Long (Saint John-Rothsay, N.B.) said it was a "shameful decision and a sad day for the Canadian aquaculture industry."

In a statement posted to Facebook, Long said the decision confirms that his government has chosen the side of "well-funded environmental groups, and has chosen urban politics, vote pandering, and seats over rural and Indigenous communities whose future and livelihood depend on responsible aquaculture growth."

Hereditary chiefs and elected leaders from First Nations in which those salmon farms currently operate also held their own press conference following the announcement, accusing the Liberals of making a decision based on political motivations rather than science.

Dallas Smith, a spokesperson for the First Nations for Finfish Stewardship representing those coastal nations with a stake in the industry, opened the conference by reminding the federal government that "Vancouver is not [B.C.]," and that the industry currently employs roughly 5,000 residents of the province.

Kitasoo Xai'xais Deputy Chief Isaiah Robinson accused the Liberals of "appeasing white, privileged activists who fear monger with false data, and build anti-fish farm narratives."

"This decision is based on wealthy millionaires, politicians, and activists that are attempting to once again dictate our future as Indigenous people," Robinson said, adding that the decision undermines the federal government's efforts towards reconciliation and economic self-determination for First Nations.

"We won't be told what to do in our territories by governments, activists, or people who do not live in these territories, and have no claim on our waters," Robinson said. "Reconciliation is recognizing to choose what happens in our territories and determine our own future."

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Robinson said that the announcement itself hadn't wholly caught the industry and stakeholder nations like his off guard since they have been in discussions with the minister and the department since 2022. However, they had been under the impression that the transition would reflect those discussions.

Brian Kingzett, executive director of the B.C. Salmon Farmers Association, told *The Hill Times* that the proposed five-year transition plan is "unrealistic."

"The federal government knows full well that a transition to land at this time just doesn't make a good business case," Kingzett said, echoing the sentiments of Steven Rafferty, CEO of salmon farming company Cermaq, that a five-year deadline will mean "the death of the industry" in the province.

To justify that deadline, the federal government is relying on unproven technologies a decade away from viability, jeopardizing the industry, and the federal government's commitment to science-based decision-making, the restoration of wild salmon, fighting food insecurity, and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, Kingzett said.

He warned the loss of the industry would lead to the end of more than 47,000 jobs in B.C., and more than \$1-billion in lost annual economic activity.

Kingzett said that the industry is already trying to rebuild from a 40 per cent decline in production since 2016, and it would need "longer-term stability and certainty" than a five-year transition that has yet to be drafted or funded.

According to a study from the Canadian Aquaculture Industry Alliance, domestic salmon production has plummeted from 148,000 metric tons in 2016 to 90,000 in 2023, marking the lowest output since 2000.

The decreased domestic production has consequently led to increased salmon imports, which Kingzett noted need to be flown into Canada, leading to an increased carbon footprint for the industry.

A recent peer-reviewed study estimated that increased salmon imports in 2022 generated approximately 9.9 million tonnes of carbon dioxide, equivalent to the yearly emissions produced by 2.1-million cars.

"It's not to say that we aren't moving in that direction; we want to do it if we can, but we don't have the power grid to support it, the technology is unproven, and there's no business case to do it," Kingzett said. "We were promised something realistic, reasonable, and achievable, but what we got is unrealistic, unreasonable, and unachievable."

Kingzett said that he, other industry stakeholders, and First Nations had spent the past year presenting thousands of pages of studies and proposals. Still, the announcement's rollout just days before licences expired only created more uncertainty and confusion.

What was also particularly confusing to Kingzett and Robinson was the lack of invitation for any of those stakeholders to

participate in the government's announcements.

Robinson said it had also been troubling to note the subtle differences between Lebouthillier's announcement in Ottawa, which stressed the need for a "path forward for salmon aquaculture" in the province, and the announcement helmed by Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.), which focused on protecting "wild Pacific salmon."

At the announcement in Vancouver in June, Wilkinson, who was serving as fisheries minister when the policy was initially announced in 2019, was joined by Liberal MP Joyce Murray (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.), the previous minister on the file before Lebouthillier, and several other members of the Liberals' B.C. caucus, including Citizens Services Minister Terry Beech (Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.) and MP Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country, B.C.); as well as environmental, Indigenous, and wild salmon advocates like Kwikwasut'inuxw Haxwa'mis Chief Bob Chamberlain, chair of the First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance.

Robinson said that while Lebouthillier had been receptive in their discussions about the transition, his talks with the B.C. caucus had given him the impression they had never been "on side."

"Ending salmon farms is something the Vancouverites these MPs represent are willing to die on," Robinson said, noting that with the Liberals polling third in the province, "they had to come up with a win."

"I don't know what tactics they had to use to get to this point. We were sold a transition plan that was reasonable and responsible, but at this point, that has not come to fruition."

At a June 20 press conference in Ottawa, Wilkinson rejected the

implication the decision had been politically motivated.

"First and foremost, this decision is based on science," Wilkinson told reporters. "I was the fisheries minister for two years, so I'm very, very deeply aware of the scientific debate that rages about the impacts of aquaculture and open-net pens on wild salmon."

Wilkinson said that at a time when wild salmon stocks are crashing, to save that population, Canada has to address all of the impacts leading to their dwindling numbers, from climate change, rising river temperatures, to habitat destruction, overfishing, and salmon farms.

While the industry may disagree, Wilkinson said that "virtually every scientist in academia, the Pacific Salmon Foundation, and a range of others" agree salmon farming is a real problem contributing to those declines.

"In the midst of that debate, it behooves us to act with the precautionary principle," Wilkinson said, adding that he isn't interested in being "a minister that oversaw the extirpation of wild Pacific salmon."

Wilkinson also said "First Nation voices are not unanimous" on the issue, noting that Chamberlain represents 120 First Nations across B.C. who have demanded the closure of open-net salmon aquaculture.

For those First Nations who benefit from the economic and employment opportunities provided by the salmon farms on their territory, Wilkinson said the federal government would work with those communities on economic transition, and is excited to work on a transition to closed-containment operations.

"The industry will say that it is far enough away that that's a challenge in five years, but I come from the cleantech industry where when you set a goal, you can achieve that goal," Wilkinson said, adding the auto manufacturing and oil and gas industries made similar complaints when they were asked to transition away from harmful environmental practices.

"At the end of the day, we have to stop giving ourselves excuses to destroy the environment," Wilkinson said. "That's why we have climate change ... biodiversity loss in this country ... [and] plastics in the waters that we drink. At the end of the day, we need to set targets and then we need to work towards them in good faith."

Wilkinson's office did not respond to follow-up questions from *The Hill Times* regarding the decision, and directed questions regarding who was and was not invited to the announcement in Vancouver to the Department of Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO). Neither Lebouthillier's office nor DFO responded to *The Hill Times* by publication deadline about spending projections to support the transition nor how the decision respects the federal government's commitment to reconciliation and economic self-determination.

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Liberal, NDP MPs look to PROC to address policy ‘gap’ when it comes to MP-on-MP harassment

Continued from page 6

Comments made by Conservatives during PROC’s meetings to date suggest a reticence to the idea of creating a House policy.

“At what point do we encroach on parliamentary privilege and on freedom of rights, including freedom of expression, and why aren’t the other mechanisms that I talked about [earlier]—the criminal sanctions and the civil sanctions—enough to govern this space?” Conservative MP Blaine Calkins (Red Deer–Lacombe, Alta.) asked House officials on May 28, later raising “the public interest that’s also at stake” when it comes to MPs’ ability to “disseminate information.”

Calkins said the House “is designed to be adversarial.”

“We’re made to feel uncomfortable by our constituents ... and we shouldn’t feel comfortable in our jobs. This is the nature of our democracy,” he said.

Rempel Garner, who herself has been the target of threats and harassment through her work as an MP, similarly put a focus on criminal sanctions during the May 30 meeting, and stressed the need to treat this as an all-party issue when talking about solutions.

“I have to say, I have been on the receiving end of what you have described, but it’s what your [party] members have done,” she told Damoff and Khalid. “I would suggest that the solutions need to be oriented towards using what is in law for criminal harassment and hate speech, and where there are gaps that prevent, not just us, but any Canadian from accessing justice or de-escalating these types of behaviours, that we go there.”

But Liberal and NDP MPs who spoke with *The Hill Times* said they want to see a codified House policy addressing MP-to-MP harassment.

Mathysen said despite the adversarial nature of Parliament and existence of parliamentary privilege—which, for example, protects MPs from defamation action for things they say during proceedings—she thinks it’s possible for the House to establish a policy targeting MP harassment as other legislative assemblies, like Quebec’s, have done. She said the discussion should “focus on what [MPs] can do with that privilege, as opposed to just saying, ‘well, you can’t challenge my privilege.’”

“I think it’s possible. I think that it needs to happen in a non-partisan way, I think that that is where that hard work happens. I hope that we have partners that are willing to commit to that on all sides,” she said, adding that will take “relationship building ... and hopefully over the summer we can start to have those conversations.”

NDP MPs Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), Rachel Blaney (North Island–Powell River, B.C.), and Matthew Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.) voiced a similar desire.

“We’re seeing examples where—particularly—women are choosing not to remain

in politics because it has become so toxic,” said McPherson, highlighting the decisions of Damoff and Alberta NDP MLA Shannon Phillips, who announced her resignation last month, citing toxic politics and harassment. “If we want to have women, if we want to have folks from the BIPOC community, if we want to have people living with disabilities participating in our democracy ... we need to make that a safe space, and right now, it’s an increasingly dangerous space for parliamentarians.”

Blaney said she wants to see PROC’s study include consideration of MPs’ use of social media. “I think there should be some review of what that looks like,” she said.

House rules allow MPs to expense the cost of social media subscriptions to their Members’ office budgets so long as content relates to their parliamentary functions.

Green said the “levels of harassment and toxicity” MPs are subjected to “wouldn’t be acceptable in any other workplace,” and he wants to see PROC’s efforts progress.

“I’m unclear about what the enforceability would look like, but I would say that the positive privileges an MP carries ought not to impede or interfere with the privileges of another MP. So, people’s so-called claimed rights to impunity ought not to come at the expense of the rights to the feeling of safety,” he said.

Green highlighted the gendered aspect of the issue, in that “women are often subjected to higher levels of toxicity than men,” as are marginalized, Indigenous, and racialized individuals, “and men are often—from my viewpoint—the higher perpetrators of harassment and intimidation.”

“There needs to be something in the Standing Orders that explicitly states what the line is that cannot be crossed,” he said. “If it’s unparliamentary for me to stand up and say, ‘fart,’ it should be unparliamentary for me to incite public attacks on my colleagues.”

Romanado said the House’s existing workplace harassment policy already identifies “behaviours that would be considered harassment,” and she thinks “it could be very easy to implement” for MPs, too.

“What we say, and how we do the job that we do has impact,” she said.

Rather than leaving it up to the goodwill of MPs, she said expectations need to be set out explicitly in writing. “I think the whole reason why that is still happening is because there is a gap,” she said. “Without those explicit directives, I think this is going to continue.”

PROC’s study will pick back up in the fall, but, as Mathysen noted, the committee has a packed agenda, with a study on foreign interference also ongoing and legislation awaiting examination.

Mathysen said she wants to ensure “we don’t lose [this] thread.”

“That will take a willingness of all members of the committee to prioritize it,” she said.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Despite divorce talk, New Democrat brand, history still has value for Alberta’s Naheed Nenshi, say politicians

Continued from page 5

“Personally, that’s what I hope they do, rather than run away from the history and what it means to be New Democrats,” Holmstrom said, adding that Nenshi and Kinew are currently the more natural inheritors of Tommy Douglas’ legacy both in terms of their political approach, and, “most importantly, winning.”

“There is value in the [New Democrat] brand, and that history, so why give that up?” Holmstrom said. “Why pull a B.C. United and set aside everything that might have been good to try and go from scratch?”

The former British Columbia Liberal Party—which broke affiliation with the federal Liberals in the late 1980s, and skewed more to the right of the political spectrum—rebranded as B.C. United in April 2023. After years in either government or opposition, current polling has the party in danger of slipping into third place in the upcoming provincial election.

Where Holmstrom said the federal New Democrats have strayed from the Douglas brand is what he views as an increasing disconnect with its rural constituents, explaining that the party’s success has historically been found in its ability to represent and balance the interests of both urban and rural ridings.

However, Holmstrom said that the federal party has become increasingly attentive to urban ridings to the detriment of its rural constituents, and has ceded that valuable electoral ground to the Conservatives.

Holmstrom said he believes the best way to engineer a “reversal of fortunes” for the federal NDP is to end its supply-and-confidence agreement with the Liberals.

“If Singh wants to regain some ground, that’s what he has to do,” Holmstrom said. “It’s the only way to shake things up.”

Lechnitz agreed that one of the questions the federal NDP will have to answer before returning for the fall sitting of

Parliament is whether the agreement has accomplished as many tangible things as it’s going to.

The NDP’s challenge is balancing the agreement’s “undeniably significant” gains with the drawbacks of continuing to be associated with a “toxically unpopular prime minister,” she said.

“I would argue that—in the balance of things—the Liberals now need the NDP more than the NDP needs the Liberals,” Lechnitz said, noting that much of the achievements the Liberals have been touting since the end of the spring sitting, including pharmacare, dental care, and the anti-replacement worker legislation, Bill C-58, would not have happened without the agreement.

“The NDP supplied the Liberals with their governing agenda for this session, and it leaves you wondering what their agenda would have been in the absence of this agreement,” Lechnitz said.

While the deal isn’t set to expire until the end of next year’s spring sitting—with full implementation of the dental care program scheduled for 2025—that isn’t necessarily the expiry date for its political usefulness, Lechnitz said.

During his press conference on June 27, when asked whether it was time to end the supply-and-confidence agreement, Singh said the party isn’t currently focused on that decision.

“We’re focused on using our power to get people the help they need, and we’re going to continue to do that because there’s lots more work that needs to be done,” Singh told reporters, explaining that while he celebrated that day’s extension of the dental care rollout to children and people with disabilities, there are still “serious flaws” in the program.

“We’re going to force the government to fix those flaws,” Singh said. “We forced them to bring it in, so we have got to make sure they deliver it properly.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Then-Calgary mayor Naheed Nenshi, left, meets with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa on Nov. 21, 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Neil Moss

Diplomatic Circles



When he wraps up his Canadian posting in August, Ambassador Eamonn McKee will be heading back to Dublin to become Ireland's chief of protocol. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Uncovering Emerald Isle links a posting highlight for departing Irish envoy

In a wide-ranging interview, outgoing Irish Ambassador Eamonn McKee talks about his time in Ottawa, Irish history in Canada, and an energized bilateral relationship.

Irish history can be spotted on street signs throughout the national capital, and Ireland's outgoing ambassador has been helping dig up those chronicles in Canada.

Sparks and O'Connor streets bear the namesakes of pre-Confederation Irish immigrants to Ottawa **Nicholas Sparks** and **Daniel O'Connor**. Lumber tycoon **John Rudolphus Booth**—who has Booth Street named in his honour—was the son of Irish newcomers. Nearby Leamy Lake was named after Irish settler **Andrew Leamy**.



McKee, centre right, was joined by Liberal MP James Maloney, centre left, in 2022 to mark the 175th anniversary of the Irish famine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Sitting in his Rockcliffe Park residence, Irish Ambassador to Canada **Eamonn McKee** recounts just how much of Ottawa's daily life is surrounded by Irish influence.

"When I walk to work, I've got **Arthur Currie**, the great World War One hero [in the Valiants Memorial], and I've got the Famous Five women on the other side," said McKee, noting that Currie's grandparents came to Canada from Ireland in the 19th century, and three of the Famous Five had Irish links—**Nellie McClung**, **Louise McKinney**, and **Emily Murphy**.

After four years in Canada, McKee will be leaving his post at the end of August and returning to Dublin where he will serve as the Irish Foreign Ministry's chief of protocol.

McKee said back home in Ireland, his country's contribution to Canada is drowned out in comparison to the "behemoth of Irish America."

To bring awareness to the forgotten history, McKee launched a project dubbed *Fifty Irish Lives in Canada*, compiling short biographies of those who contributed to the development of Canada or lived a life that is typical of the Irish experience. He noted that

his goal is to have the full collection of biographies published in a book, some of which have already been posted online.

"All bilateral relations are always based on: what is our historical relationship?" McKee said. "And if it's not known, it can't be celebrated. You can't remember stories that are forgotten."

"That's been a really thrilling part of my time, piecing this together. What was the big story? What is the big narrative arc?" he asked. The story that emerges is that of a colonized country being part of a colonial process, McKee said, describing the Irish newcomers to Canada, not just as part of a period of emigration, but also of trans-Atlantic colonialism.

For Ireland, there was always a hesitancy in Dublin's bilateral relationship with Ottawa, according to McKee.

"Because Canada has the monarchy as the head of state, because of the complications of the Northern Ireland peace process, we weren't quite sure what to do in Canada," he said, noting that Dublin would always send "very experienced ambassa-

dors" to Canada so it "didn't get caught up in any complications around this or on the Quebec question."

In more recent times, McKee said there has been a transformation from hesitancy to embrace, noting that Ireland has tripled its diplomatic presence in Canada over the last six years, including opening a new consulate in Toronto in 2022.

In 2021, the House of Commons passed a motion tabled by Liberal MP **James Maloney** recognizing Irish Heritage Month in March.

Earlier this year, Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister **Micheál Martin** came to Canada and travelled throughout the country, meeting with Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** in Toronto where the pair—alongside McKee—pulled pints of Guinness at an Irish pub.

The Irish ambassador said the visit shows the "great sense of energy" in the Canada-Ireland relationship.

While Ireland remains one of a handful of European countries that have yet to ratify Canada's free trade pact with the European Union, McKee said it hasn't soured the relationship, as both sides want to see it fully come into force.

"We both share the same objective. We want it ratified, and so does Canada," he said. The process has been hampered due to Ireland's top court ruling in 2022 that Ireland's arbitration law would first have to be amended.

McKee said his time in Ottawa has been a tale of two postings. He first landed in Ottawa at an empty airport in September 2020 amid the COVID-19 pandemic, and had to perform the difficult task of doing diplomacy virtually. As Ottawa opened up, he said he was "playing a bit of catch up."

"I did come to the conclusion that you couldn't do in a normal two years what you could do in a normal four years," he said.

His arrival in Ottawa coincided with a time when some Canadians might have been feeling sour towards Dublin. Three months earlier, Ireland and Norway had prevailed over Canada for a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. But he said there were no ill feelings.

"Hand on heart, there was absolutely no blowback. I mean, I'm not sure—maybe Canadians are just very good losers, but I never experienced anything," he said. "The fact is that both Ireland and Canada on the Security Council would pretty much tack to the same issues. The overlap of our values and the contribution we would make to the UN would be very, very similar."

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, centre, and Irish Deputy Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister Micheál Martin, right, alongside McKee, left, pulled pints at a Toronto Irish pub last March. *PMO* photograph by Adam Scotti



Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

Policy director Schembri exits Energy Minister Wilkinson's team

Plus, there are staff departures to catch up on in the offices of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Heritage Minister Pascale St-Onge.

Energy and Natural Resources Minister **Jonathan Wilkinson** now has just one head of policy in his shop following the recent exit of director of policy for net-zero energy **Sandy Schembri**.

After a roughly two-and-a-half-year run working for Wilkinson, Schembri's last day with the minister's team was June 21.

Schembri started with Wilkinson's office as a senior policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser in January 2022, and was promoted to serve as one of two directors of policy to the minister—with his focus on net-zero energy policies—shortly after the July 2023 cabinet shuffle, which saw Wilkinson add “energy” to his portfolio name.



Sandy Schembri has left Minister Wilkinson's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former executive assistant to then-Nova Scotia business and municipal affairs minister **Mark Furey**, Schembri first started working on the Hill after the 2015 election as a legislative assistant to now-former Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Bernadette Jordan**. A few months later, in early 2016, he landed a job as a policy and Atlantic regional adviser to then-Treasury Board president **Scott Brison**. Schembri went on to cover Atlantic regional affairs for then-infrastructure minister **Amarjeet Sohi** before stepping away from the Hill over the summer of 2017 to become vice-president of strategic initiatives for Truro Cannabis. He returned to work for Wilkinson at the start of 2022.

Highlighting Schembri's work in the energy minister's office, press secretary **Carolyn Svonkin** noted his contributions included “being instrumental in landing a hydrogen offtake agreement with Germany,” “leading the electricity file with regards to growing and decarbonizing the grid,” “expertise on offshore wind,” “driving the nuclear file through a period of immense change and growth for the industry,” and “leading on many intergovernmental affairs files, especially in the Atlantic region and Ontario.”



Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson now has only one director of policy in his office, supported by a new deputy director. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

“On a more personal note,” Svonkin wrote that Schembri will be missed for “his wealth of knowledge (both on the file and European soccer leagues), his very funny and sarcastic sense of humour, his down-to-earth perspective, and his willingness to welcome each and every member of the team to the fold with open arms.”

“His ability to make friends and connections across the country—and even across partisan lines—is unique, and has been a huge asset to this team. He is an institution at Team Wilkinson, and will be missed by the NRCan team, colleagues across government, and Minister Wilkinson alike.”

With Schembri's exit, **Samir Kassam**, who joined Wilkinson's office as director of policy for sustainable resource development this past January, has been made director of policy outright.

Prior to joining Wilkinson's team, Kassam was a senior policy adviser to International Trade Minister **Mary Ng**. Kassam has been working for MPs since 2016, starting



Samir Kassam is now director of policy outright to Minister Wilkinson. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

in the constituency office of then-Ontario Liberal MP **Kyle Peterson**, for whom he later came to work on the Hill. Kassam first began working for the minister of natural resources at the end of 2018 when he was hired as an executive assistant to the chief of staff to then-minister Sohi. He stayed with the file after **Seamus O'Regan** was shuffled into the portfolio after the 2019 election, working his way up from legisla-

tive assistant and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to issues manager and policy adviser by the time he left to work for Ng following the 2021 federal election.

Kassam also has experience working as a program assistant with the Office of the Commissioner for Federal Judicial Affairs, as a researcher with the Senate's Genocide Prevention Group, and as a junior policy analyst with Citizenship and Immigration Canada (as it was then named).

Supporting Kassam is a new deputy director of policy, **Kaitlyn Cleary**, whose first day was June 24. Previously, no one held the title of deputy policy director in Wilkinson's office.



Kaitlyn Cleary is now deputy director of policy to Minister Wilkinson. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Cleary comes from the ranks of the public service, and has taken a leave of absence from her role as a policy adviser with Natural Resources Canada's (NRCan) nuclear energy division to work for Wilkinson. At the department, her work focused on domestic nuclear policy, including the development and deployment of small modular reactors.

Before she joined NRCan in 2022, Cleary spent almost six years as part of the Government of Alberta's public service. Starting as a policy analyst with the province's Ministry of Education in 2016, she went on to work as a policy analyst with the Department of Energy focused on the transition away from coal power, among other roles.

Originally from Dartmouth, N.S., Cleary holds a bachelor's degree in English language and literature, and a master's degree in public administration, both from Dalhousie University. Her CV also includes a past internship with the Nova Scotia Office of the Ombudsman.

Also currently covering policy in Wilkinson's shop are: **Jan Gorski**, senior policy and regional affairs adviser for Alberta and Saskatchewan; **Yasmine Atassi**, senior policy and Ontario regional adviser; **Kaylie Stathopoulos**, senior policy and regional affairs adviser for Manitoba and the Territories; **Brenna Walsh**, policy and Atlantic regional adviser; and **Gary Xie**, policy and British Columbia regional adviser.

Kyle Harrietha is chief of staff to Wilkinson.

Staff exits from PMO, Minister St-Onge's office

Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office is down one member of its communications team following strategic communications adviser **Nikki Johal**'s departure in mid-June.



Nikki Johal has left the PMO. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Johal had been with the PMO since February 2022, and joined the top office straight from the Liberal research bureau (LRB) where she'd worked as part of that office's communications team since the fall of 2020, beginning as a communications planner and ending as a senior adviser for communications and strategic planning. Johal was a writer for the 2021 national Liberal campaign, and worked on a local Ontario campaign during the 2019 writ. Before joining the LRB, Johal was a communications adviser for the City of Vaughan, Ont.

Max Valiquette is executive director of communications to Trudeau, supported by director of communications **Vanessa Hage-Moussa**, director of media relations **Ann-Clara Vaillancourt**, director of digital communications **Jane Deeks**, and acting deputy director of communications **Laurie Bouchard**.

Katie Telford is chief of staff to the prime minister.

In a more belated update for Heritage Minister **Pascale St-Onge**'s team, **Zack Slawich**, assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, made his exit back in mid-April.

Slawich had been in the role since January of this year, and was previously an assistant to Liberal MP **Taleeb Noormohamed** as the MP for Vancouver Granville, B.C. Noormohamed has been parliamentary secretary to St-Onge since September 2023.

Jude Welch is chief of staff to the heritage minister.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Feature

Parliamentary Calendar

Politicos converge on Calgary as Stampede kicks off on July 5



Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, left, greets Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at a Calgary Stampede event on July 8, 2023. This year's festivities kick off on July 5. *Government of Alberta photograph by Chris Schwarz*

WEDNESDAY, JULY 3

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 to Dec. 17.

Book Review: Managing in Complexity—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada hosts a virtual book review of Sara Filbee's *Managing in Complexity: How Our Fears of Uncertainty Can Hurt Us and What To Do About It*. Gina Wilson, deputy minister of Indigenous Services Canada, will moderate the discussion exploring how private and public sectors have had to adapt to working in a virtual environment. Wednesday, July 3, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: ipac.ca.

THURSDAY, JULY 4

Webinar: 'Lobby Like a Pro'—Learn how to plan and execute a successful lobby day at this virtual session hosted by the Beacon North Mentorship Academy. Gain practical insights into planning and executing successful advocacy days. Thursday,

July 4, 12-1:30 p.m. ET, or via video replay. Enrol online at beaconmentorshipacademy.com.

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 from Friday, July 5, to Sunday, July 14.

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. 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: stjohnsregatta.ca.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 12

Privy Council Clerk Hannaford to Deliver Remarks—John Hannaford, Clerk of the Privy Council and Secretary to the Cabinet, will deliver remarks at a roundtable lunch hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, Sept. 12 at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details online: cdhowe.org.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

Next Frontier in Canada's Digital Divide—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a virtual event, "The Next Frontier in Canada's Digital Divide." Participants include Ian Scott, former CRTC chair; Bill Murdoch, executive director of Clear Sky Connections; and Elisha Ram, senior assistant deputy minister at Employment and Social Development Canada's Income Security and Social Development Branch. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at a time to be confirmed. Details online: irpp.org.

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, from Sunday, Oct. 6, to Friday, Oct. 11.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9

Annual Bill Graham Lecture and Dinner—Louise Blais will moderate a discussion featuring former Liberal prime minister Jean Chrétien and former Mexican president Ernesto Zedillo during the second annual Bill Graham Lecture on International Affairs. Wednesday, Oct. 9 at 6 p.m. at Arcadian Court, 400 Bay St., Toronto. Details online: thebc.org.

THURSDAY, OCT. 10

Frank McKenna Awards 2024—The Public Policy Forum hosts the "Frank McKenna Awards 2024: An evening celebrating outstanding public policy leadership in Atlantic Canada." Honourees to be announced. Thursday, Oct. 10, at 5 p.m. AT at Pier 21, 1055 Marginal Rd., Halifax. Details online: ppforum.ca.

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 Tuesday, Oct. 29 to Thursday, Oct. 31. Registration is open. Details online: caeh.ca.

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.

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.