



What about the **PUBLIC SERVICE** under a Conservative government?

▶ PAGE 7

Feds confuse funding for evidence on **UNMARKED GRAVES**

▶ PAGE 11



STRAHL WAS 'SMART, SHARP, FUNNY, AND BROUGHT A SMILE EVERYWHERE HE WENT' ▶ PAGE 2

Exclusive news: inside



THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-FIFTH YEAR, NO. 2151

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, AUGUST 19, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

Halifax Liberal MP Fillmore not resigning seat until end of month, but NDP candidate Roberts campaigning for months

BY ABBAS RANA

A closely contested byelection is expected in the swing riding of Halifax, N.S., when the seat becomes vacant this month

following the departure of three-term Liberal MP Andy Fillmore to municipal politics.

The NDP is the only party so far that has officially nominated a candidate, and has been actively

campaigning for several months. "I've been out canvassing," said Lisa Roberts, the party's nominee. The former CBC journalist and a former Nova Scotia MLA told *The Hill Times* in a phone interview

that "I left my full-time job in the spring so that I would have more time to canvass."

Fillmore gave his farewell speech in the House in June, prior to Parliament's adjournment

for the summer recess, but he is expected to officially resign from his seat at the end of August. He's already been campaigning for

Continued on page 21

NEWS

Outreach to diaspora groups 'critical' as Canada and Australia look to each other in foreign interference fight

On both sides of the Pacific, foreign interference in elections remains a hot topic. While Canada reels from an explosive NSICOP report and awaits the next stage of the Foreign Interference Commission, Australia's spy chief has warned of 'at least three or four countries' engaged in the practice in his country. One Australian lawmaker says he wishes his country showed 'more overt solidarity with Canada' as the two nations face similar challenges. Read the news story by Stephen Jeffery on **page 18**



The Australian Parliament House, pictured recently. Australian Security Intelligence Organisation director general Mike Burgess told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation this month that he could think of at least 'three or four [countries] that we've actually actively found involved in foreign interference in Australian diaspora communities.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Stephen Jeffery

NEWS

Witness says she'll return if invited after fracas at House Status of Women Committee, it's more important than 'petty politics'

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A witness who stormed out of a parliamentary committee meeting late last month after a discussion intended to be about violence against women turned into a political debacle said she would be willing to return to speak again if invited to do so because the issue is more important than "petty politics."

"I'm really tired of politicians hijacking anything for their political gain when I'm losing a friend," said Cait Alexander, who heads up the advocacy group End Violence Everywhere in an interview with *The Hill Times* on Aug. 14. "If [MP] Anita [Vandenbeld] or whoever wants to play those games, I'll take the hit in order to make sure that this conversation is front and centre. That's what matters. I'm here for survivors,

Continued on page 20

Publications Mail Agreement #40068926

0 94922 81130 1



Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Chuck Strahl was ‘smart, sharp, funny, and he brought a smile everywhere he went’: politicians



Chuck Strahl, right, pictured May 2007, with former top bureaucrat Yaprak Baltacioglu, died on Aug. 13, aged 67. ‘Chuck was a special man with vision, determination, humour, and an unwavering moral compass,’ wrote Baltacioglu last week on social media. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

Chuck Strahl, a popular cabinet minister in the Conservative government of **Stephen Harper**, was remembered last week as “smart, sharp, funny,” and someone who “brought a smile everywhere he went.” Strahl died of lung cancer on Aug. 13 at the age 67.

Mark Strahl, his son and the current Conservative MP for Chilliwack-Hope, B.C., posted the news on X (formerly Twitter) that his father died in Chilliwack “after a courageous and exemplary battle with mesothelioma.”

The elder Strahl first entered Parliament in 1993 as a Reform Party MP for Fraser Valley East, B.C. He led the Democratic Representative Caucus after leaving the Canadian Alliance to protest **Stockwell Day**’s leadership. Upon the Conservatives 2006 election win, Strahl held a series of cabinet positions, including in agriculture, Indigenous affairs, and transport.

In 2005, Strahl announced to his constituents that he had lung cancer due to asbestos exposure

from operating asbestos brakes on machinery used to move logs at his family’s logging company in the late 1970s and early 1980s.

“Cancer is a serious disease,” Chuck Strahl stated in August 2005, “but those of us diagnosed with cancer don’t want to be rushed off the playing field and sidelined any too soon.”

He went on to contest his seat and won re-election in 2006 and 2008, before retiring in 2011. He was appointed to serve a five-year term as head of the Security

Intelligence Review Committee in 2012, but resigned because he was a registered lobbyist for Enbridge.

“While he was a very successful politician with many accomplishments during his time in office, he didn’t let his job define who he was. He never lost sight of what was truly important: his faith, his family and his friends,” Mark Strahl wrote. “Our loss is deep and profound. Our Dad was our best friend, our greatest defender, our biggest promoter and our rock.”

Former Hill staffer **Yaroslav Baran** said Strahl was his first boss on the Hill when he was the opposition whip. “He was always kind and wise. A gentle soul. He will always remain an important influence in my life as in the lives of so many others. Rest In Peace,” Baran tweeted.

Monte Solberg, who served in the Harper cabinet with Strahl, posted: “Such a good man and the goodness always came through, even when he was in full flight pushing back against the opposition. To aspiring politicians, fathers, husbands, community members, if you’re looking for someone to model yourself after, look no further than Chuck. RIP, friend.”

Former *Toronto Star* columnist **Tim Harper** posted: “Chuck was always a delight to deal with in the years we intersected in Ottawa. Smart, sharp, and funny, he brought a smile everywhere he went.”

Former Conservative MP **Dean Del Mastro** declared: “Chuck was a legend in Parliament, a leader in caucus and a friend to everyone. He was a special guy whose booming voice filled the room. He had a great sense of humour and often lightened the room when it was needed. Chuck was a special guy, so sorry for your loss.”

Condolences followed from across the political spectrum on

X. Past Conservative MP and now Brampton mayor **Patrick Brown** recalled “when he spent a day in my riding when I was an MP and everyone loved him. He held a senior position in the government of Canada but he never lost his small town charm/kindness.”

NDP MP **Peter Julian** said “Chuck gave a great deal to our country and was always affable and engaging—even to political opponents,” while Liberal MP **Randeep Sarai** said he “will always be remembered for his straightforwardness and love for BC.”

And former top bureaucrat **Yaprak Baltacioglu** addressed her condolences to Mark Strahl: “Your dad was my minister at both AAFC and TC and was my dear friend. This news breaks my heart. Thinking of **Deb** and your whole family. Chuck was a special man with vision, determination, humour, and an unwavering moral compass. I am so sorry.”

First female government whip and former Ottawa politician Marlene Catterall has died



Former Ottawa city councillor turned federal MP **Marlene Catterall** died on Aug. 12, aged 85. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Former Ottawa-area MP **Marlene Catterall** died on Aug. 12. She was 85 years old.

“Just learned of the passing of Marlene Catterall, the first woman whip in Canada’s history, a joyful partner, mother and friend, Marlene was always there for those in need,” posted former Liberal cabinet minister and *Hill Times* columnist **Sheila Copps** on Aug. 13.

“Marlene Catterall was a trailblazer for women. Her tireless work as a social activist, politician, and Canada’s first female Chief Government Whip opened countless doors for future generations. I’m sending my deepest condolences to her loved ones,” Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** posted on Twitter on Aug. 13.

Catterall sat as a Liberal MP for 17 years. She was first elected in what was then-known as Ottawa West in 1988 until 1997 when the riding was re-named

Continued on page 22



Monday’s photo

**I want to ride my bicycle,
I want to ride my bike,
I want to ride my bicycle,
I want to ride it where I like.**

A cyclist, pictured whizzing past the Victoria Building on Wellington Street in Ottawa on Aug. 14, 2024.

The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Feds paid \$19.4-million for public opinion research last year, with Public Health Agency and PCO spending the most

Advanis, Ipsos, and Léger were the top three recipients of Ottawa's research spending last year. These studies have a 'significant impact' on government decisions, says former Conservative policy adviser David Murray.

BY IREM KOCA

Ottawa spent \$19.4-million on public opinion research contracts in the last fiscal year, purchasing 155 studies for 36 departments, according to data released this month.

The *23rd Annual Report on Government of Canada Public Opinion Research Activities*, released on Aug. 7, provides a breakdown of which departments were the biggest spenders when it comes to public opinion research, and which firms were some of the top recipients of contracts. The overall spend is managed by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), led by Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que).

The Public Health Agency of Canada was the biggest spender on public opinion research, and commissioned the largest number of studies—procuring 21 custom research contracts at a cost of over \$3.5-million. The next top purchaser of research was the Privy Council Office, spending over \$2.2-million to commission just four studies, while Health Canada was the third biggest spending over \$2-million to procure 20 research contracts.

The majority—roughly \$18.5-million—was used to purchase 147 custom studies from 21 suppliers. Another roughly \$1-million was used to procure subscriptions to eight syndicated studies such as the Canadian Millennials Report from Abacus Data and Atlantic Quarterly from Narrative Research.

A significant portion of the budget for custom studies was concentrated amongst a few firms.

Advanis Inc. secured the highest total contract value with \$2.47-million across 17 studies,

while Léger Marketing received the greatest number of contracts, conducting 20 studies for a total contract value of \$1.8-million.

Rounding out the top five were Ipsos which received \$2.05-million for 14 studies, Environics Research Group which was paid \$1.65 million for 15 studies, and Ekos Research which received \$1.61-million for 15 studies.

The report said the primary procurement method is to collect standing offers for contracts valued between \$40,000 and \$300,000. Under this process, PSPC periodically holds an open competitive process to acquire standing offers from pre-qualified suppliers, which allows it to provide departments with ready options at pre-determined pricing.

A small number of research contracts under \$40,000 are sole sourced, while contracts over \$300,000 require a public tender whereby the government posts a request for proposals and evaluates those bids.

What issues did Ottawa research last year?

National Defence commissioned research on Canadian Armed Forces recruitment. Health Canada focused on areas such as public opinion on dental care, cannabis use, and smoking. The only research procured by PSPC for its own department—which has been dealing with Phoenix pay system debacle that has plagued the public service since 2016—was a survey regarding pension services. Public Safety focused on awareness campaigns for subjects such as child sexual abuse, human trafficking, guns, and gangs.

The report said that “notable efforts were made” to focus the research on supporting ongoing work on the economy, health, safety, and environmental concerns, which included subjects such as affordable living, the state of the economy, national security, public health, and climate change.

Sunil Johal, professor in Public Policy and Society at the University of Toronto, said there are few surprises on the list of topics that departments explored.

“Affordability and economic issues are top of mind for Canadians, and departments would certainly look for more granular, nuanced information about particular concerns and priorities so that they can shape effective responses,” he told *The Hill Times*.

He added that it also makes sense for the government to focus research on subjects like dental care and zero-emission vehicles to inform those efforts, and to ensure they're hitting the mark.

Does public opinion research inform government policy?

Several experts consulted by *The Hill Times* said this research is crucial for shaping policy and understanding public priorities, and noted that although the expenditure may seem significant, it is relatively small compared to the overall government spending. But some observers also questioned its value to the policy-making process.

David Murray, senior vice-president of the strategy firm One Persuasion, said this research has “a significant impact on how the government decides to brand and communicate its actions.”

“Policy is all about what the government chooses to do or not do, which the research can absolutely inform,” said Murray.

Murray recently transitioned to his role at One Persuasion after serving as director of policy to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.). Murray previously worked as a senior adviser in the House of Commons, and designed and executed public opinion research programs for the Conservative Research Group.

“You can have a fantastic policy that makes meaningful positive changes for Canadians, but if public opinion does not support it, you start asking different questions about potential political trade offs,” he said.

Eugene Lang, an assistant professor at Queen's University, said public opinion research can have a significant impact on policy decisions—or none at all—depending on the context and the issue.

One notable example is Canada's 2003 decision not to participate in the second Iraq War, said Lang, who was in government at the time and who served as chief of staff to two defence ministers under previous Liberal governments.

There is “no doubt” Ottawa was doing polling on Canada's potential involvement, he said.

“It was a deeply unpopular enterprise from the public standpoint, particularly in Quebec, and sensitivities around Quebec were

particularly sensitive in those days,” said Lang.

A more recent instance of public opinion influencing government direction was during the pandemic when it came to decisions around mandates and the COVID-19 vaccination program, according to Lang. He suggested that during the pandemic, public opinion polling—especially regarding those hesitant to get vaccinated—likely had a big impact on how the federal government conducted itself.

Lang said that government communication can be a substitute for policy, or part of the policy when trying to change the population's behaviour.

“Sometimes you change behaviour through incentives, programs, legislation, coercion, and sometimes you do it through exhortation,” he said.

'A political antenna': Paul Samson

In contrast, Paul Samson, president of Centre for International Governance Innovation, expressed his skepticism about the value of public opinion research, particularly in the broader context of government decision-making.

Samson previously served as an assistant deputy minister at Finance Canada, and as an associate deputy minister at Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada.

“It's used actively by politicians and their staff and communications people in the government who are the bridge between the civil service and the political side, and the policy people generally don't take much value out of it,” he said. “This is more of a political antenna.”

However, he made an exception for research that targets specific groups within certain sectors, such as fisheries and agriculture. “That can be quite, quite revealing and accurate,” he said.

Federal spending on opinion research on the rise

Data shows that government spending on public opinion research contracts has generally increased over the last five years, rising from \$11.3-million spent in 2019-2020 for 121 studies to \$19.4-million for the 155 studies purchased in 2023-2024. The highest spending and largest number of surveys procured came in 2022-

2023 when \$20.3-million was used to purchase 164 studies.

Experts agree that conducting public opinion research is neither easy nor cheap, and the money spent by Ottawa is tiny compared to overall spending. Additional factors such as the soaring inflation worldwide and the COVID-19 pandemic have also come into play in driving up costs, according to experts.

Lang said that it “sounds like a lot,” but isn't “a lot of money in the grand scheme of things.”

He compared the \$19.4-million spent on public opinion research contracts to Ottawa's \$449.2-billion in budgetary spending outlined in 2024-25 Main Estimates.

He added there is value in using public opinion research for purposes such as helping the Armed Forces address its recruitment issues—something the department commissioned a study on last fiscal year—given the current shortfall of 16,500 personnel.

“That has been an absolute policy failure for many years, and they need to understand why they cannot recruit and retain from a diverse society,” he said.

Murray said that “statistically-sound research that's representative of the population is inherently expensive.”

“If you spend more, the research will be able to better inform your decisions,” he said, adding that sample size, collection methodology, and survey length all impact the hard costs of running a poll.

While there are cheaper alternatives to public opinion research for gauging what Canadians want and think, according to Murray, these options often come with shortcomings such as self-selection bias, which can undermine the data's reliability.

Johal said insights gained from these studies can “help determine how best to allocate scarce resources” by informing the development of new programs and services, and modifying existing ones.

Johal said that much of this work is done by public servants through consultations and other public engagement activities, but there are circumstances where it makes sense to bring in external consultants to identify broader trends or connect with stakeholders who might be harder for government officials to reach.

The bigger question, according to Johal, is whether alternatives such as online searches and social media activity can be “mined to get more granular, real-time information” than public opinion research that may be more cost effective and help to better represent the voices that most need to be heard.

“Departments should be thinking about ways to diversify the ways in which they connect with Canadians to ensure they're hearing from the right people, at the right time, and in the most cost-effective manner,” he said.

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

News

Byelections loom large as parties enter final summer stretch

Liberals are laying low and seem lacking in urgency after their Toronto byelection defeat back in June, say pollsters.

BY SOPHALL DUCH

The political cross-country barbecue circuit has been the calm before the storm as federal party leaders gear up for two byelections on Sept. 16—the same day parliamentarians return to Ottawa for the fall sitting.

Party leaders are keeping things “low key” while working the summer tour, said pollster Andrew Enns, Léger’s executive vice-president for Central Canada.

“Summer isn’t the easiest time to push hard and to try to drive a message,” said Enns.

But with the summer season more than halfway over, there is little time left for the leaders to set their parties up for success before a pre-election parliamentary session kicks off.

A summer book-ended with byelections

The season started with the surprise Toronto-St. Paul’s, Ont., byelection defeat for the Liberals to the Conservatives on June 24.

The loss put Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) on the back foot early, revealing cracks in the Liberal fortress of highly coveted Toronto ridings, and raising caucus concerns that seemingly safe red seats were now open game.

Trudeau “was doing quite a bit of media prior to the St. Paul’s byelection. He has not really made himself available since,” said Kate Harrison, vice-chair at Summa Strategies and a Conservative strategist.

Harrison said the choice to “fly under the radar” is a way for Trudeau to demonstrate to caucus that he’s prepared to do the “the ground game of meeting with real voters.”

“It does play to Trudeau’s strength. He is good when he is on that circuit, when he’s meeting with people, one to one or small groups,” said Harrison.

Trudeau’s summer media availability was recently called out by journalist Paul Wells on his Substack.

Wells reported that Trudeau’s team has been cagey in revealing the prime minister’s

whereabouts when posting the leader’s public itinerary to the media.

For Trudeau, this ‘laying low’ strategy “kind of goes against what people might have thought

he might have done over the summer,” said polling analyst Éric Grenier of *The Writ*.

“It could be hoping that if they avoid the problem, it’ll go away. Which sometimes it does. Sometimes people’s feelings will calm down after,” said Grenier. “So I guess I’m kind of surprised in that sense, that there doesn’t seem to have been much of a reaction, any sign of urgency from the party after their defeat.”

Nik Nanos, CEO of Nanos Research, said he sees the situation as “damage control” after leadership questions were raised following the June byelection defeat.

“He’s more internally focused right now on trying to keep the

Continued on page 5

Party leaders’ summer travel

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau

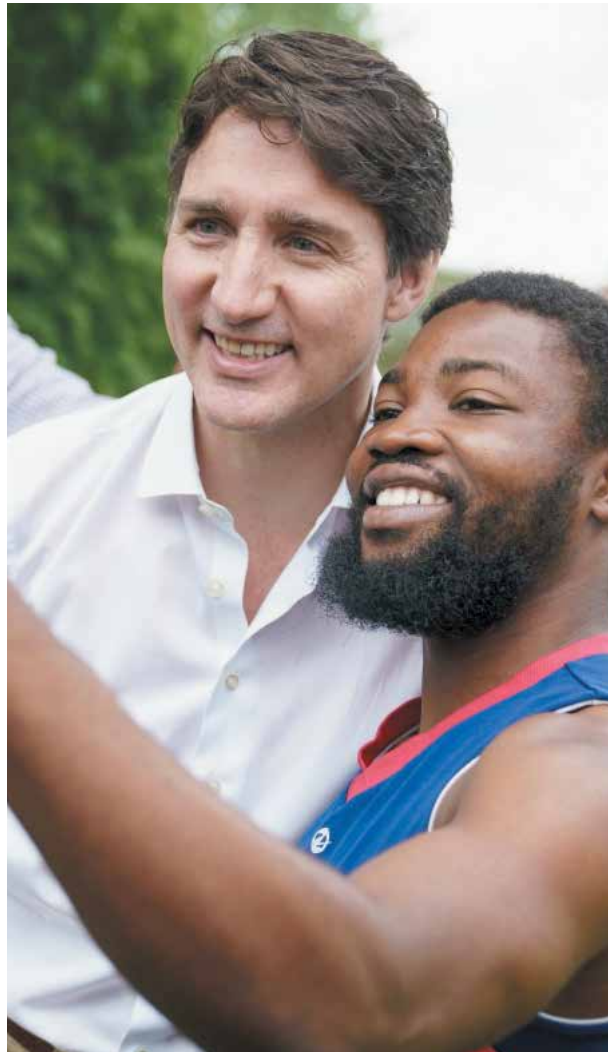
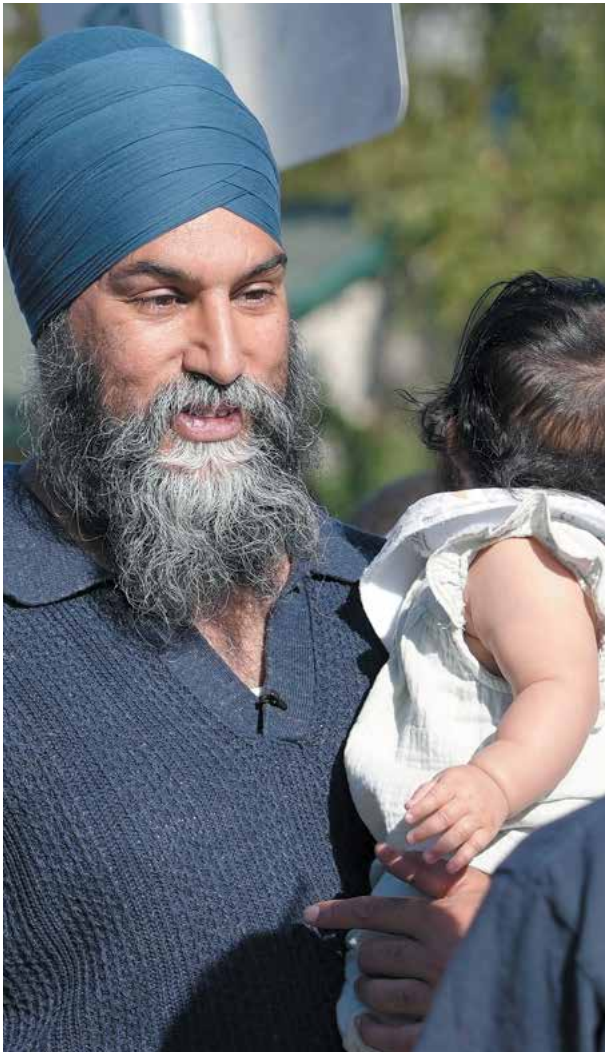
Place	Province/Territory/Country	Days Visited	Dates Visited
Ottawa/Gatineau/National Capital Region	Ontario/Quebec	16	June 22, 30, July 2, 4, 6, 7, 12, 14, 15, 18, 19, 20, Aug. 2, 3, 8, 9, 13
Toronto/Greater Toronto Area	Ontario	7	June 27, 28, 29, July 5, 13, 17, Aug. 10
Washington, D.C.	United States	4	July 8, 9, 10, 11
Montreal	Quebec	3	June 23, July 3, Aug. 11
St. John’s	Newfoundland and Labrador	2	July 1, Aug. 7
Vancouver	British Columbia	2	June 25, Aug. 4
Westville	Nova Scotia	1	June 20
Cape Breton	Nova Scotia	1	June 21
Mauricie	Quebec	1	June 24
Nemaiah Valley	British Columbia	1	June 26
Kitchener	Ontario	1	July 16
Hinton	Alberta	1	Aug. 5
Winnipeg	Manitoba	1	Aug. 6
Brampton	Ontario	1	Aug. 10
Lennox and Addington County	Ontario	1	Aug. 12

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh

Place	Province/Territory	Days Visited	Dates Visited
Toronto	Ontario	5	June 27, 30, July 15, 25, Aug. 3
Montreal	Quebec	5	June 24, 25, July 10, 11, 29
Edmonton	Alberta	3	June 21, July 18, 19
Burnaby	British Columbia	2	July 4, 16
Timmins	Ontario	2	July 22, 23
Winnipeg	Manitoba	2	July 12, Aug. 9
Yellowknife	Northwest Territories	2	Aug. 7 and 8
Coquitlam	British Columbia	1	July 8
Mississauga	Ontario	1	July 9
Vancouver	British Columbia	1	July 17
Cochrane	Ontario	1	July 23
Kirkland Lake	Ontario	1	July 24
London	Ontario	1	Aug. 1

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre

Place	Province/Territory	Days Visited	Dates Visited
Toronto	Ontario	7	June 30, July 14, 23, 24, 27, Aug. 4, 6
Brampton	Ontario	4	June 29, 30, July 15, Aug. 4
Calgary	Alberta	4	July 5, 6, 7, 8
Montreal	Quebec	3	June 20, July 11, 12
Mississauga	Ontario	3	July 15, Aug. 3, 4
Victoriaville	Quebec	2	June 20, 25
Markham	Ontario	2	June 30, Aug. 4
Trois-Rivières	Quebec	1	June 21
Rivière-du-Loup	Quebec	1	June 22
Charlevoix	Quebec	1	June 22
La Baie	Quebec	1	June 23
Quebec City	Quebec	1	June 24
Ottawa	Ontario	1	July 1
Vancouver	British Columbia	1	July 9
Burnaby	British Columbia	1	July 9
Richmond	British Columbia	1	July 10
Stouffville	Ontario	1	July 15
MacTier	Ontario	1	July 22
Newmarket	Ontario	1	July 22
Windsor	Ontario	1	July 24
Tecumseh	Ontario	1	July 24
London	Ontario	1	July 25
Kitchener	Ontario	1	July 26
Winnipeg	Manitoba	1	July 29
Fort Frances	Ontario	1	July 29
Wawa	Ontario	1	July 30
Cochrane	Ontario	1	July 31
Kirkland Lake	Ontario	1	July 31
Sudbury	Ontario	1	Aug. 1
West Nipissing	Ontario	1	Aug. 1
Elliot Lake	Ontario	1	Aug. 2
Burlington	Ontario	1	Aug. 6
Niagara Falls	Ontario	1	Aug. 8
Hamilton	Ontario	1	Aug. 9
Halifax	Nova Scotia	1	Aug. 14
Saint John	New Brunswick	1	Aug. 16



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, left, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre have been travelling the country meeting Canadians this summer. Photographs courtesy of Instagram

Continued from page 4

Liberal Party united, and united behind his leadership," said Nanos, adding that continued leadership grumblings within the party will undermine Trudeau's "ability to wage war against Pierre Poilievre."

Riding the wave

It's a different story for Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), who started the summer buoyed by Don Stewart's byelection victory in Toronto-St. Paul's.

"If I were a Conservative MP right now, I would be on transit mode. I would be asking for the leader to come to my community. I would be going to events that the leader was at," said former Conservative deputy leader Lisa Raitt.

The Conservatives are opting for a "steady as it goes approach" this season, said Enns.

Poilievre has had time to build his war chest this summer despite already out-fundraising the other parties last quarter. The Tories raked in \$9.8-million in the second quarter, compared to the Liberals' \$3.7-million and NDP's \$1.2-million, according to Elections Canada's latest fundraising report.

"When you're ahead with a double-digit lead for a year, it's easier to recruit star candidates, it's easier to raise money," said Nanos.

Enns said Poilievre also has the opportunity to visit spots "off the beaten path" not typical in a federal election.

Meanwhile the Liberals will spend "time in core Liberal strongholds like Atlantic Canada, the Lower Mainland [of British Columbia] and the Greater Toronto Area," said Carlene Variyan, associate vice-president at Summa Strategies and a former Liberal staffer.

Byelection battles

New Democrats, for their part, will need "to make sure that their message is actually getting to people," said Mélanie Richer, principal at Earncliffe Strategies and former NDP staffer.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh's (Burnaby South, B.C.) homework this summer will be to convince Canadians to give his party the credit for advancing federal-provincial childcare and dental care deals, said Richer.

Despite trailing in federal polling, the NDP are looking for some good news come summer's end in the two upcoming byelections in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., and Elmwood-Transcona, Man., previously held by former Liberal cabinet minister David Lametti and former NDP MP Daniel Blaikie, respectively.

Holding on to the Winnipeg riding and taking the Montreal riding "could put the wind in the sails of Jagmeet Singh and the New Democrats," said Nanos.

"The Liberals have a threat of losing a seemingly very safe Montreal riding," said Richer, who added that a loss there could be a "Toronto-St. Paul's 2.0" for Trudeau.

According to Grenier, "the byelections are going to set a lot of the tone," and that the outcomes could "shake things up enough" to change the entire political landscape by October.

Variyan disagreed: "I don't necessarily think they are 'do or die' for the Liberal Party."

While Variyan admitted that the Montreal seat will be challenging for the Liberals to hold, she said "I don't think that the results of those byelections are going to dramatically shift any existing political narratives."

Summer's endgame

While the summer has been relatively chill so far, Nanos said he wouldn't underestimate the "chances for the polling environment to change," especially if there's a misstep from one of the leaders.

"Remember, lots of stuff can happen in between now and Sept. 16 when they go back into the House of Commons. You never know," said Raitt.

Enns said he expects things to heat up following Labour Day when Canadians return to their normal routine and start paying more attention.

The Hill Times

Sezlik.com
OTTAWA LUXURY PROPERTIES

Check out the new Sezlik.com.
Your **first** stop for Ottawa Real Estate.



Royal LePage Team Realty, Brokerage

Charles Sezlik, Dominique Laframboise, Sara Adam, Michelle Wilson, Sebastien Sezlik REALTORS®, Trystan Andrews, Broker



613.744.6697



108 Stanley Avenue

New Edinburgh
5 Beds / 3 Baths

\$7,750/ **Month**

News

Citizens' services minister 'unsexiest' title, but 'lack of spotlight' on Beech not bad news politically, say observers

Former Liberal staffer Olivier Cullen says that Terry Beech has quietly taken passports out of the opposition's 'arsenal,' but former NDP staffer Cam Holmstrom says 'the sad irony is' the government needed more delivery-focused ministers from the start.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

A year into Terry Beech's tenure as Canada's first ever citizens' services minister, his relatively low profile is a sign he's brought some politically hot issues under control, say observers, but some cautioned this only brings the government a bit of relief, not a big win.

"When it comes to political credit, all it did was put out a fire," said former NDP staffer Cam Holmstrom in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "But it was a fire that never should have been blazed to begin with had they had their eye on the ball."

In the July 26, 2023, cabinet shuffle which saw Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) undertake a major shakeup of his government—with seven ministers leaving the front bench and most remaining ones taking on new roles—Beech (Burnaby North-Seymour, B.C.) was added to cabinet in the newly created portfolio of citizens' services.

The appointment raised questions at that time about what such a ministerial role would entail—especially since a mandate letter did not follow until Nov. 10 that year—and the move was widely seen as an effort to address the political heat the government had been taking from Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) on issues such as wait-times for passport applications.

Poilievre had connected growing complaints about delays on these services to his larger narrative that "Canada is broken," and released a video in which he



Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech has been in his newly created role for just over a year. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

spoke with Canadians who said they had been waiting in line for hours at a passport office.

Just over a year into his appointment, Beech has been a relatively low-profile member of cabinet. But issues like passports have also largely disappeared from the news, and are no longer taking a central role in Conservative attacks on the government. Observers say that's a sign Beech has neutralized some of these politically sensitive issues, and that's as much of a win as the government could hope for from his role.

"It's a job [the Liberal government was] never going to get credit for because that's what you're supposed to be doing," said Holmstrom, who is now the founder at Niipaawi Strategies. "Part of the reason why it's not a story is because things have corrected. The things that should have always been happening are now back to happening. So in theory, he's done his job."

Holmstrom said "the lack of spotlight" is not bad in this case, but "the sad irony is, for this government, they probably could have used more of that from start."

"People who are more concerned about delivering [results] than about the comms, or the sound bite, or how it's going to look," said Holmstrom. "Maybe if this government had focused more on delivering at the very beginning, they would have never needed a Terry Beech to come in and do this."

Former Liberal ministerial staffer Olivier Cullen, who is now a senior adviser at Summa Strategies, said taking passports out of the news is a positive for Beech.

"It's a win because it's something that the Liberal Party was able to take out of the arsenal of the opposition," said Cullen. "Nobody's talking about passports anymore."

Cullen said neither Beech nor his portfolio are likely to be a "spotlight minister," but one that is "behind the scenes" and "making change." "I haven't seen Terry Beech on much, and I think that's okay," said Cullen, describing him as "soft spoken," but someone who has brought helpful qualities to the role like his background as an entrepreneur.

Cullen said the nature of a portfolio like citizens' services—one that requires interaction with multiple departments and other ministers—poses some particular challenges. Cullen likened it to a role created during his time as a staffer for then-Public Safety minister Ralph Goodale, when the role of minister of border security and organized crime reduction was created for Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) to hive off a segment of responsibilities that required greater attention.

Cullen said for these types of ministerial roles the challenge is to find a way to work across a variety of departments with different structures and leadership, and to learn how to "get all these different entities on board in the same way."

Beech says his 'mission' is 'dental, digital, and customer service'

The Hill Times reached out to Beech's office with a series of general questions about his first year in cabinet, and also

requested an updated on each of the specific tasks outlined in his mandate letter. Passports are one of those items noted in the mandate letter, along with a variety of tasks related to the delivery of benefits and modernizing digital tools used across government.

In an email reply, Beech said that the way he sees it, his office's "mission" boils down to "dental, digital, and customer service." The dental portion is "really just 'code' for benefits," he explained, calling the Canadian Dental Care Plan "the largest new benefit rollout in our history." He said that focus on benefits will now be moving from dental care over to delivery of the Canada Disability Benefit.

He described the digital aspect of his mission as "putting access to government services directly in the hands of Canadians," while keeping options available for Canadians who prefer to access services in person.

The third leg in the stool—the customer service aspect—is about "client-centric service," said Beech, with the goal to "eliminate the need for people to wait in lines."

He said that governments "around the world have struggled with service delivery and have never kept up with services offered in other parts of our lives."

"If someone doesn't like how their cable company delivers service, they can change providers to a competitor," said Beech. "But there aren't other governments that Canadians can choose to file taxes for or request passports, so we are working across departments to make the necessary changes."

However, the Liberals do face stiff competition in the form of a

Conservative Party surging in the polls.

The Hill Times reached out to Poilievre's office to ask for his views on Beech's performance over the past year, and his take on whether service delivery has improved.

In response, the office sent a statement from Conservative MP Kelly Block (Carlton Trail—Eagle Creek, Sask.), her party's public services and procurement critic.

"Trudeau's answer to everything is more bureaucracy, gatekeeping, and higher costs, and as a result Canadians are paying more, only to get less service," said Block. "A new appointment isn't going to solve the problem because the problem is Justin Trudeau and his flailing government."

Block criticized the growth in the size of the public service that has taken place under the Trudeau government, as well as the practice of using outside consultants, saying that despite these expenses Ottawa is "delivering worse service."

"You can't get anyone on the phone at [the Canada Revenue Agency], Canadians couldn't get a passport for months, and there is chaos and disorder in our immigration system and at our borders," said Block.

She said a Conservative government would "fix Trudeau's broken systems," and "cut back on Trudeau's high-priced consultants to bring the work in-house ... to deliver better services at a lower cost."

"It's time for a government that delivers more for less, and provides taxpayers value for money," she said.

'Unsexiest' title ever for a politician: Nanos

Pollster Nik Nanos said the Liberals are vulnerable on some of these attacks because Canadians may not see value for the growth that has taken place in the size of the public service.

"I think one of the challenges that the Liberals have is that there's been a significant increase in the size of the civil service, but I'm not sure Canadians feel that there's been a significant increase in the service that they receive," he said.

Nanos said that Beech had been handed one of the "unsexiest" ministerial titles "that could ever have been created for any politician," but his best strategy going forward would be to try to have a few specific items to highlight where he has delivered results.

"I think his most realistic strategy is to pick two or three things where he can show that he actually made a difference and diminished the customer service friction between Canadians and the government," said Nanos. "Although it might be the unsexiest portfolio to have, it could have a materially positive impact on the day-to-day lives of Canadians, if they can just make a few things just a little better."

icampbell@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



The Prime Minister's Office on Wellington Street in Ottawa. Top public servants will need to show quickly and concretely that they understand the new context, and can steer departments and agencies in a nimble and responsive manner. If they can't, they may find others waiting in the wings to do so in their place. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

What about the public service under a Conservative government?

If there's a change in government, the ball will be in the court of the senior public service to show that they deserve the positions they've occupied by delivering on a new agenda.

Lori
Turnbull

Opinion



OTTAWA—Unless the pollsters are all dead wrong, we are headed for a change in government in 2025. There is much speculation about how “different” things could be under Conservative rule. Pierre Poilievre has defined himself in stark contrast to Justin Trudeau. Tapping into the worries of Canadians across age ranges, income brackets, and geographical regions, Poilievre vows to fix wicked problems like the affordability crisis and the lack of housing. In his own words, he will: “Axe the tax. Build the homes. Fix the budget. Stop the crime.”

But what about the public service? Would a new government consider repopulating the leadership of the public service with people who share its ideology and values to ensure the effective and timely delivery of its agenda? If so, would this break the traditional “bargain” between the public service and the elected government.

one that protects the independence of the former so that it can tell the latter—their political bosses—what they don't want to hear?

To be clear, a change of government is always accompanied by some form of adjustment in the senior ranks of the public service. Some people simply opt to retire. A very small number may be quietly shown the door for being deemed too cosy with the old government. For the most part, however, the deputy minister community remains intact, shifts gears, and serves the new political masters. This is the case in most Westminster jurisdictions, like ours, where convention dictates that the political side refrain from dabbling in civil-service staffing to preserve the impartiality and integrity of the institution. Concerns around the politicization of public service appointments apply, in truth, only at the highest executive level, as the requirement

for merit-based appointments protects the rest of the public service from partisan hiring practices. That said, the leaders are the ones steering the ship.

There have been occasional egregious examples of political interference in the public service (an Australian prime minister, for example, appointing his political chief of staff as head of the civil service). But this has largely not been the Canadian reality in recent decades. Many predicted that then-prime minister Stephen Harper would parachute loyal operatives into key position. Ultimately, he did not—opting instead (sometimes grudgingly) to work with the professional civil service to implement his agenda. If anything, the currently Liberal government was more brazen in this regard when it appointed the architect of the Liberal 2015 election platform into a deputy minister position at the Privy Council Office, a move then-Conservative MP Jason Kenney decried at the time as a “clear, unprecedented, and blunt” politicization of the public service.

But times change. The approach taken by a future Poilievre government will depend on whether the political leadership sees value in preserving the Westminster model. The idea of maintaining separate spheres and functions for the political and administrative arms of government, with healthy tension and creative fusion at the executive level, has perhaps been more myth than reality for some time now. There is more than one way to do things. The Westminster model is often criticized for its slowness

and all-around curmudgeonly attitude towards change. Could we envision a public service that was more explicitly responsive to political masters?

The obvious exemplar of this style is the American model, where a transition to a new government sees the decapitation of the top several layers of executives, and their replacement with experts who are more ideologically sympathetic to the new regime. This allows for an immediate bond of trust between the elected and those entrusted to implement. Yet, any potential benefit seems to be inevitably outweighed by the risks it creates in terms of loss of experience, expertise, and familiarity with how to get things done. There is much to recommend the Westminster convention of maintaining a professional and experienced leadership cadre. It provides continuity which is often critical in times of political change.

But conventions evolve and, unless they are seen to make sense and add value, they go by the wayside. If there is a change in government, the ball will be in the court of the senior public service to show that they deserve the trusted and privileged positions they have occupied by delivering on a new and different agenda. They will need to show quickly and concretely that they understand the new context, and can steer departments and agencies in a nimble and responsive manner. If they can't, they may find that there are others waiting in the wings to try and do so in their place.

Lori Turnbull is a senior adviser at the Institute on Governance. *The Hill Times*

Editorial

Editor Kate Malloy
 Managing Editor Charelle Evelyn
 Digital Editor Samantha Wright Allen
 Executive Editor Peter Mazereeuw
 Deputy Editors Stephen Jeffery, Laura Ryckewaert
 Deputy Digital Editor Ian Campbell
 Assistant Deputy Editor Abbas Rana

Publishers Anne Marie Creskey,
 Jim Creskey, Leslie Dickson, Ross Dickson
 General Manager, CFO Andrew Morrow

Editorial

Trudeau should be honest about his daily agenda

A curious thing happened on Aug. 14. Without so much as an announcement, the Prime Minister's Office appeared to unilaterally extend the range of the National Capital Region more than 400 kilometres westward.

How else can one explain the pronouncement in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's itinerary that he would remain in the NCR, only to show up hours later to the Ontario Liberal caucus meeting in Sudbury, Ont.?

True, the itinerary was "updated" to reflect this new location sometime that afternoon, but are we to believe the prime minister decided on a whim to travel to northern Ontario that day?

This particular event continued a pattern Paul Wells called out on his Substack on Aug. 6.

So far this summer, day after day, the prime minister's itinerary has been distributed daily to the press gallery, often noting that no public events have been scheduled, only for Trudeau to emerge at carnivals, festivals, and parades. In other words, he's attending public events. The itineraries are then updated well after they are of any use to reporters tracking the PM's comings and goings.

Let's be honest, the press gallery is not owed these itineraries. While navel gazing is among the media's favourite pastimes, the press is not guaranteed access to the prime minister at every single event. Trudeau is well within his

rights to criss-cross the country, meeting constituents, and hearing their concerns.

But what is the point, then, of issuing a daily itinerary that is missing key details, or that is flat out wrong? NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, and Green Party Leader Elizabeth May regularly send out their itineraries. These rundowns often state that events are "closed to media," but they at least acknowledge they exist.

The official opposition has made hay off Wells' revelations, with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre criticizing the prime minister.

But that's also rich coming from the Conservatives who don't even bother with a leader's itinerary unless there's a press conference, leaving reporters to scour either social media or a list of rallies and fundraisers to find out where Poilievre will be.

There are, of course, safety concerns in revealing too much of a leader's itinerary over time. There have been arrests this summer for people who have threatened Trudeau online, and it wasn't that long ago that the prime minister was mobbed and had gravel thrown at him.

But for a political class facing a serious trust deficit with the public, accuracy is also important. Either send out an accurate itinerary the first time, or don't bother at all.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor



Canada should hold Hamas accountable for neglect of Palestinians: letter writer

Re: "Polio in Gaza adds a deadly layer to conflict, says letter writer," (*The Hill Times*, Aug. 7). Letter-writer Denise MacDonald laments the rise of polio in Gaza, and says that a ceasefire is needed to address it because "health infrastructure is in tatters."

The root of this issue is not that health and water infrastructure has been destroyed. This infrastructure—left to the Gazan people by Israel upon its complete withdrawal from the territory in 2005—is meant to be innately civilian, but has been taken over by Hamas, which complicates its protection under international humanitarian law.

When a hospital plays a significant role in how a terrorist group operates—functioning as a military base or storage, or being used to hold hostages—it becomes a valid military target. Water structures have also not been immune to Hamas' terrorism: video evidence has repeatedly shown Hamas dismantling water infrastructure in order to use the piping for explosive devices to use against Israel.

Advocating for a ceasefire so that a "vaccination campaign" can be facilitated

in the Gaza Strip does nothing to change the reality that led to the "tattered" infrastructure. So long as Hamas is in power in the Gaza Strip, civilian infrastructure will continuously be used for terrorism against Israel and its civilians, and not for caring for Gazans themselves.

The call should be for the Canadian government, within the international realm, to hold Hamas accountable for its negligence of Palestinians under its rule, and for a ceasefire that dismantles Hamas, and sees the hostages returned.

Considering Hamas' history of stealing aid meant for its own citizens and even attacking aid workers, a pause in fighting for a vaccine campaign would do nothing to address the root of the problem, or create long-term solutions.

Most importantly, it may further empower Hamas, endangering Israelis and Palestinians alike with a forever conflict, and emboldening the 'Globalize the Intifada' movement, endangering everyone around the world.

Gillian Dolansky Presner,
 MD FRCP (Pediatrics)
 Ottawa, Ont.



Fraser Institute analysts stop short of offering better climate mitigation plan: Bill Henderson

Re: "Fossil fuel consumption rising despite net-zero plans worldwide," (*The Hill Times*, Aug. 8). In their op-ed on fossil fuel consumption, Julio Mejia and Elmira Aliakbari—who are analysts with the Fraser Institute—explain how climate mitigation in Canada and globally has been largely ineffectual. But they stop there; they don't recommend a more effective mitigation plan or policies.

But the lesson for those who are responsible, who do care, and who do want effective mitigation is to press all Canadian governments to stop fossil fuel production expansion and begin a regulated wind down of existing production. This is now the only mitigation path that can be effective at protecting our future.

Bill Henderson
 Gibsons, B.C.

EDITORIAL

NEWS REPORTERS Stuart Benson, Jesse Cnockaert, Riddhi Kachhela, Irem Koca, and Neil Moss
 ENGAGEMENT EDITOR Christina Leadlay
 PHOTOGRAPHERS Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster
 EDITORIAL CARTOONIST Michael de Adder
 COLUMNISTS Andrew Caddell, John Chenier, Sheila Copps, David Crane, Jim Creskey, Gwynne Dyer, Michael Harris, Erica Ifill, Joe Jordan, Rose LeMay, Alex Marland, Arthur Milnes, Tim Powers, Susan Riley, Ken Rubin, Bhagwant Sandhu, Evan Sotiropoulos, Scott Taylor, Nelson Wiseman, and Les Whittington.

ADVERTISING

VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND MULTIMEDIA SALES Steve MacDonald
 DIRECTORS OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT Craig Caldbick, Erveina Gosalc, Martin Reaume, Ulle Baum

DIGITAL AND DESIGN

CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER David Little
 SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER Nick Vakulenko
 DIGITAL AND PRODUCTION MANAGER Joey Sabourin
 SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER Neena Singhal
 GRAPHIC DESIGNER Naomi Wildeboer

ADMINISTRATION

HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER Tracey Wale

SUBSCRIPTIONS

MARKETING DIRECTOR Chris Rivoire
 SENIOR SUBSCRIPTION SALES CONSULTANT Ryan O'Neill
 LOYALTY AND SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER Melanie Grant
 OFFICE AND CIRCULATION MANAGER Irma Guameros
 SALES CONSULTANT Brendan MacKay

DELIVERY INQUIRIES

circulation@hilltimes.com
 613-688-8821

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

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

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



If they get any traction, from who will the Canadian Future Party skim votes?

The centre is where the majority of Canadians would like to be. But there's a big question as to whether Dominic Cardy's party can become more than just a one-man show.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Dominic Cardy registered a new party with Elections Canada this month, planning to field candidates in all upcoming federal byelections.

In an interview with *The Toronto Star*, the interim leader of the Canadian Future Party says

he considers the current federal Conservative leader “terrifying.”

He says he plans to offer a centrist option to voters tired of electoral polarization, telling *The Star*: “Our tag line is saying we’re not left, not right, (we’re) going forward.”

Ironically, that was the same tag line that led the Liberals to form a minority government in 2021, with their slogan being, “Forward, for everyone.”

The former minister in the New Brunswick's Progressive Conservative government is no stranger to new parties.

He served as the leader of that province's New Democratic Party from 2011 until 2017.

He ran unsuccessfully for a seat in the legislature as a New Democrat, but won the same seat as a Progressive Conservative in 2018.

He endorsed Maxime Bernier for the federal Conservative leadership, so if Cardy needs advice on how to make a new party work, he can always reach out to Mad Max.

Both men must realize that in the current political system, building and sustaining a new party is almost impossible.

Just ask the Green Party that has been in existence since 1983.

In the 2004 election, the Green Party, under the leadership of Jim Harris, secured candidates in all ridings and received 4.3 per cent of the popular vote.

When Elizabeth May took the helm in 2006, she again moved the dial for the Greens, taking them to 6.8 per cent of the national popular vote in the 2008 election.

That was the party's apex, followed by multiple elections which eventually saw the election of three Members of Parliament. May has held her seat in Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C., since 2011, and is the longest serving woman leader of a political party in Canadian history.

But despite a national showing in multiple elections, the Green Party has never been able to make a real breakthrough.

So how does the Canadian Future Party think it can do things differently?

It is targeting the centre, and claims a membership of former Conservatives, Liberals, and New Democrats, although Cardy has been coy on who those supporters are.

The party hopes to appeal to former Tories who are not happy with the shift to the right that has happened since the party dropped its progressive wing in order to merge with the former Reform Party.

Canadian Future also hope to attract Liberals who think their party has moved too far to the left in its alliance with the New Democratic Party.

The centre is certainly where the majority of Canadians would like to be. But there is a big question as to whether the Cardy party can become more than simply a one-man show.

The party's standing in the upcoming byelections in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., and Winnipeg-Transcona, Man., will be a bellwether of its possibilities.

The party has not managed to secure well-known candidates in either riding, which may be some indication of how uphill the climb will be.

The Liberals are unlikely to give up the coveted centre as it has spelled success for them in the majority of elections since the beginning of Canada.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has moved the party to the left with programs like pharma care, childcare, and dental care. During the pandemic, that move has worked well for Canadians, especially those who were thrown out of work through no fault of their own.

But the chance of another party making any headway when the Conservatives, Liberals, and New Democrats are fighting for votes is unlikely.

The bigger question is: if they get any traction, from whom will the Canadian Future Party skim votes?

Most progressives have already left the Conservative Party, and Poilievre appears to be shaping his campaign far from the centre.

His promise to shut down the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation is sure to scare off centrists, especially those in Atlantic Canada who depend on the public broadcaster for their only local coverage.

Poilievre's new campaign attacking NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh is also not attracting the centre. Instead, he is going hard after the left in order to encourage NDP voters to vault over the Liberals and join the Conservatives.

It is ironic but true that some blue-collar voters are more likely to switch from NDP to Conservative than to ever vote Liberal.

But the centre is still where political victory lies.

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

The Hill Times

How to parry an attack

Playing defence doesn't mean you have to be defensive. If anything, you should use your opponent's attack as a chance to counterattack.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—One of the most important skills in political communication is, I believe, also one of the least appreciated.

I'm talking about knowing how to respond to an attack.

And, yes, this is an under-appreciated skill.

After all, attacking is always seen as sexier than defending.

Indeed, a lot of communication strategists earn their

reputations basically because they're seen as attack dogs, as hired guns who can concoct devastatingly killer ads which drive down an opponent's poll numbers, and generate tons of attention.

In fact, I once worked with one such consultant who was so renowned for his aggressive tactics the media dubbed him, “The Merchant of Venom.”

So, basically, knowing how to attack can make you a star.

Yet, knowing how to defend is equally important, even if it isn't as glamorous or as flashy.

As a matter of fact, a properly conducted defence can not only blunt an opponent's attack, but it can also use that attack to strengthen your position.

To see what I mean, let's go over a real-life example of a skilled communicator responding to a political attack.

Recently, Mélanie Richer, formerly a communications director for the NDP and now working for Earncliffe Strategies, was asked by *The Hill Times* to give her opinion of an attack ad the Conservative Party launched against the New Democrats.

The ad in question is pretty tough as it labels NDP leader

Jagmeet Singh as “sell-out Singh,” and suggests he only wants to get his hands on the rich MP pension.

Richer's response offers a masterclass in how to play defence.

To begin with she notes, “When a party that says it's going after the prime minister and his government spends time and money attacking you personally, that just means that you're on their radar, and that's where the party wants to be. For the party, this says the Conservatives know the choice in the next election will be between themselves and the NDP, and we welcome that.”

So, rather than whining or complaining about “negativity in politics,” Richer employs a little communications jiu-jitsu to turn the Conservative attack into a positive for the NDP.

She does this essentially by saying the Conservatives would not be attacking Singh if they didn't view him as a threat, as a rising force in politics.

In short, Richer's point is that the attack is good news for Singh.

This is a message the NDP should definitely employ when communicating to its base.

For example, when sending out a fundraising appeal, the NDP should say something along the



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, has been going after NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh. Mélanie Richer, a former communications director for the NDP, said the Conservatives see the New Democrats as a threat. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade



lines of, “The Conservatives are attacking our leader because they know his message is resonating with Canadians, they know our party is on the rise. They're getting desperate. Send us money so we can get the job done!”

The second tactic Richer uses to respond to the Conservative ad is to pivot and go on the attack herself.

She says, “They can't attack his record because they know people actually quite like the things [Singh] has gotten done, and the Conservatives have nothing to show for themselves. They may think their ad is super cutting-edge, but I think it just validates what Singh is doing.”

In other words, unlike the NDP, the Conservatives are an empty vessel.

What Richer is showing us with this response is that playing defence doesn't mean you have to be defensive.

If anything, you should use your opponent's attack as an opportunity to launch a counterattack.

So, Richer shows us how a good defence can help negate a vicious attack.

That's a skill that should be appreciated.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

Comment



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, pictured left with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa on Sept. 22, 2023, is still holding off the Russian invaders three years on, and his government is still in place, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

New phase of Russia-Ukraine war amounts to a big gamble

Now that Ukrainian forces are occupying territory inside Russia, what will Putin do?

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—It is easy to see why Volodymyr Zelenskyy has become an international political superstar.

When Russia invaded his country, observers in the West gave the embattled president of Ukraine virtually no chance of stopping the aggressors. The conventional wisdom at the time was that Russia would overrun the country in a matter of weeks.

Nearly three years later, Zelenskyy is still holding off the invaders, and his government is still in place. He has become a kind of “Jack the Giant Killer” in the process, a heroic symbol fighting for freedom against a despotic and predatory enemy.

The country that was supposed to fall in a matter of weeks has instead inflicted massive casualties on the invaders.

On average, Russia is losing 899 soldiers a day in its bid to

seize and hold Ukrainian territory. Russian President Vladimir Putin’s forces have suffered an estimated 500,000 casualties, including 180,000 troops killed.

Ukraine has managed to defeat the Russian Black Sea fleet without having a navy of its own. In total, Zelenskyy’s military has sunk or damaged 26 Russian ships. That included the flagship of the Black Sea fleet, the Moskva. The vessel was hit by two R-360 Neptune anti-ship missiles, and sank.

Russia’s answer to Ukraine’s stubborn resistance has been to conduct a grinding war of attrition in which it has made slow but incremental gains. Putin has been forced to resort to troop mobilizations at home to replace the huge losses on the 960-kilometre frontline in Ukraine.

In what has to be one of the gravest miscalculations of his tenure as Russian leader, Putin obviously believed that the West would not intervene to oppose his illegal aggression, just as it didn’t when he annexed Crimea in 2014.

He was dead wrong. Once Ukraine showed its incredible will to resist, despite the odds, the United States and Europe gave Zelenskyy some of the tools to repel the Russians. So far, 45 sovereign countries, including Canada, have sent aid to Ukraine. The U.S. alone has contributed \$75-billion, and NATO another \$50-billion.

As the war dragged on, and Ukraine’s own casualties mounted, Zelenskyy was forced to play a delicate role with respect to his

supporters in the West. He had to both exhibit gratitude for the massive support already given, and to deliver the message that he needed even greater aid on a more timely basis. His troops were short on ammunition, fighting a battle that was worse than hell.

One of Zelenskyy’s biggest asks was for better air defence systems to stop the Russian onslaught against Ukraine’s cities, infrastructure, and civilians. He also asked for fighter jets that could contest the skies with Russian forces, as well as longer-range missiles.

The West was still with him, but there were some who were beginning to wonder again whether Ukraine really had a chance to defeat the Russians. Despite all the aid Zelenskyy received, Ukraine’s promised counter-attack to drive out the Russians in a swift and decisive way failed to materialize. As some politicians began to rethink support for Ukraine—including leading Republicans in the U.S.—the momentum shifted back to the Russians.

At least it did until Zelenskyy pulled another rabbit out of the hat. To everyone’s surprise—including Putin’s—the Ukrainians took the bold step of invading Russian territory.

Flipping the script on Putin, units of the Ukrainian military crossed into Kursk Oblast in Russia territory on Aug. 6. They captured scores of villages and towns, captured Russian soldiers,

and threw the inhabitants of neighbouring areas into panic.

No one knows the long-term plans of Zelenskyy’s military. It could be, as Putin alleges, an attempt to improve Ukraine’s position at the inevitable negotiations that will end this war. By capturing Russian troops, Zelenskyy will now have something to trade for the more than 8,000 Ukrainian soldiers being held by Russia.

There is another possible advantage. Although Putin has ordered his forces to “kick out the enemy,” he may not be able to do that without re-deploying troops currently involved in the invasion of Ukraine.

That would ease the pressure on Ukrainian forces in the south and east of the country who have had a tough year of slow but steady losses to the Russians.

The invasion of Russia—the first since the Second World War—as apparently been in the works for months. So far there has been a shroud of secrecy over the mission, but one thing is unmistakable. Up until recently, taking military action on Russian soil was a taboo for several of Ukraine’s supporters in the West. It was all about fear of escalating hostilities based on Putin’s threat to meet force with more force.

But in recent times, the West has gradually lifted the restraints on Ukraine’s battle with Russia. The Europeans provided Zelenskyy with the longer-range missiles he had asked for,

enabling Zelenskyy to attack locations inside Russia that were launching missile, drone, and artillery assaults on Ukraine.

The Americans have sent the first batch of F-16 fighter jets to Ukraine, which says it needs 100 of the planes to counter superior Russian air power. Several European countries have pledged some of their F-16s, as well.

Coupled with an actual land invasion of Russia by Ukrainian forces, Zelenskyy has clearly won the battle with his supporters that will allow him the means and the green light to take the battle to Russia. The Ukrainians will no longer be asked to wage war with one hand tied behind their back.

This new phase of the war amounts to a big gamble. Putin once warned of a serious escalation in the war if fighter jets were provided to Zelenskyy, or if he received longer range offensive missiles capable of striking targets inside Russia.

Both of those things have happened without a Russian response. But now that Ukrainian forces are occupying territory inside Russia, what will Putin do?

In the past, he has rattled the nuclear sabre and spoken about a possible Third World War if the West continued to supply Zelenskyy with ever more lethal military aid. Would he go so far as to use tactical nuclear weapons against Ukrainian forces?

The West is betting that there are, in fact, no red lines with Putin, that it is all a bluff. But there is no telling what a humiliated dictator who rules by force would do.

As the saying goes: a bear is most dangerous when wounded.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Feds confuse the funding for unmarked graves evidence search

This September and on this National Day of Reconciliation, take the time to consider the amount of expertise in Indigenous communities, the strength to survive, the strength to come back.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—In the weeks leading up to the National Day of Reconciliation on Sept. 30, Crown-Indigenous Relations unilaterally cut the funding available to communities to search for unmarked graves at residential schools.

More than 100 communities are currently collecting evidence at sites with unmarked graves. This is not cheap work. It requires

the experts and kinds of processes that you would expect at any crime scene with potential victims. The federal government decided to arbitrarily cap the funding that a community would receive at \$500,000 per year.

This arbitrary cap is some magic number pulled out of thin air. An accountable and moral decision would cover the need, not some number that adds up nicely in somebody's spreadsheet. The communication from the department was that it wanted to fund more communities, and then late last week, the department realized its mistake and reversed the decision.

How about this instead—cover the costs at searches at all sites with unmarked graves potentially holding the bodies of Indigenous children. Why cap this funding? Every department could instead add some of the yearly fiscal surplus into the country's debt of the search for unmarked graves.

What country would cap the funding to search for unmarked graves at residential schools, especially a country that says it's doing reconciliation? What department would dare restrict the emotional closure of hundreds and hundreds of families looking for their lost children?

This is the federal department which created the residential schools in the first place. Indian Affairs—as it was then known—

created the policy and the schools, underfunded them, and then refused to help the children they knew were dying from malnutrition and lack of health care or legal protection, decade after decade.

By the way, nobody at Indian Affairs has ever been held accountable for their actions to contribute to thousands of deaths. Capping the funding is a decision that Indian Affairs made on the behalf of taxpayers. It did this for you as a voter.

The United States is moving towards reconciliation following residential schools and unmarked graves, and the Department of the Interior just released a report two weeks ago about this. It recommends that the U.S. strengthen information sharing with Canada, Australia, and New Zealand on reconciliation, and learn from countries which are further ahead. Sure, we have numerous lessons here, but please don't talk to Crown-Indigenous Relations about this.

Instead, talk to Kimberly Murray, the Independent Special Interlocutor for Missing Children and Unmarked Graves and Burial Sites associated with Indian Residential Schools. Murray has taken her very short two-year term and made the best of it by uplifting the voices of families looking for their children. Her small team shared the best pos-



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree. The government should cover the costs at searches at all sites with unmarked graves potentially holding the bodies of Indigenous children, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

sible knowledge they could find on how to do evidence gathering on decades-old crime sites to every community who wanted to know. She personally has stood up against residential school denialism.

Crown-Indigenous Affairs tried undercutting her work by hiring an international non-Indigenous firm to advise communities on evidence gathering, which met with refusal by communities. Crown-Indigenous Affairs taken zero stance against denialism, but it's in good company with every other department doing nothing on this offence of denialism. Murray is an expert in Canada.

We do unfortunately now in this country have experts in searching for decades-old unmarked graves. We do regrettably have expertise in recovering from

the unthinkable, surviving it all. We are a country in healing. This September and on this National Day of Reconciliation, take the time to consider the amount of expertise in Indigenous communities, the strength to survive, the strength to come back. This is the story of the century. Don't let denialists take away the potential pride that all Canadians could have in Indigenous peoples.

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

The Hill Times



Officials and schoolchildren outside Providence Mission Indian Residential School, Fort Providence, N.W.T., circa 1920. Photograph courtesy of Library and Archives Canada



Study period at Roman Catholic Indian Residential School, in Fort Resolution, N.W.T. Image courtesy of Department of Mines and Technical Surveys/Library and Archives Canada



Two Métis children with an Inuit child, pictured in 1930 at this All Saints Residential School, Shingle Point, Yukon. Image courtesy of Library and Archives Canada/J.F. Moran

Comment



Justin Trudeau, left, Pierre Poilievre, Yves-François Blanchet, Jagmeet Singh, and Elizabeth May. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

It won't be easy when the election rolls in

Political parties will exploit our hopes and fears by prepping candidates to ensure our choice is driven by reactionary emotions, not critical analysis. Luckily, we can sift through the noise, and to make an informed decision instead.

Bhagwant Sandhu

Opinion



OTTAWA—We don't like Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. We do like the Conservatives, but not Pierre Poilievre, their leader. The NDP and Jagmeet Singh seem okay, but there's also Elizabeth May of the

Greens, and Maxime Bernier of the People's Party.

It won't be easy when the election rolls in. Our motivations will vary from old voting habits to gut reactions. The political parties will exploit our hopes and fears by prepping their candidates to ensure our decisions are driven by reactionary emotions, not critical analysis. Luckily, we have some tools to sift through the noise, and to make an informed decision instead.

We could consider the party's ideology. Leaders are tied to it. May, as such, will never lobby for the tar sands. Her party won't allow it. We could check who is driving their agenda. Poilievre's base, for example, will not consent to, say, an equity and diversity program.

Then there are the leaders' personalities. They always manifest themselves.

No amount of media training will stop Trudeau, for instance, from lecturing on liberal doctrine or the "rules-based order." That's who he is.

A practical frame to evaluate a politician's behaviour encompasses three key elements: their party's political dogma, their payback obligations, and their personality. It can help predict their conduct should they get elected. It

can also help us decide where to park our vote, with which party leader.

Consider Maxime Bernier. His policy platform is in full view. His backers are free-market believers with traditional values. The payback they expect is for him to implement the platform to the fullest. For personality, Bernier is a libertarian populist. You vote for him, that's what you'll get.

Similarly, we can approximate where May and Singh will land. They lead second-tier parties. Their payback plans are also inherent in their respective party platforms. This is because, like Bernier, they, too, are beholden to and attract voters who are drawn foremost to their parties' credo. This is not to say that personalities don't come into play. They very much do.

The previous leader of the Green Party, Annamie Paul, lost not because of any misgivings of her party's policy agenda, but due to her personal approach to leadership. Likewise, Tom Mulcair, who led the NDP before Singh, collapsed with the same platform that his predecessor Jack Layton had used to great success, albeit with a uniquely authentic and trustworthy personality.

Unlike the NDP, the Liberals and the Conservatives are playing

for bigger stakes: forming government. Their sponsors are hard to track. They have rank-and-file partisans, but their financial backing often comes from special interest groups and corporate lobbyists. Even their policies don't provide any clues. They are mostly non-specific slogans and recycled clichés.

If their policy platforms and paybacks schemes are hard to decipher, perhaps we can try our luck with the personalities of their leaders. Not the ones crafted by political consultants to have us talking about trivialities, but the ones that are revealed in repeated patterns of behaviour and unscripted moments.

Trudeau, to illustrate, emotes progressive change. He just doesn't do much about it. Arguably, his policies—like pharmacare or the war in Ukraine—got actioned only in response to pressures by the NDP and NATO.

Meanwhile, Poilievre's outlook and instincts seem to be anchored in the neocon creed of evangelical theology and oilsands economics. He pushes puritanical ethics, saying 'no' to Pride parades and climate change. We get the picture.

Where does this leave us? Exactly where we currently are. As the Angus Reid poll notes, for the first time since 1974, Cana-

dian political leaders score at least -12 in their approval rating. Their credibility ranges from 3.7 to 3.9 out of 10. Our disdain is due in part because they have reduced policy debate to non-sensical theatre of zero-sum gains; and replaced nuance, subtlety, and comparative analysis with top-down dictates and name-calling.

This cycle, however, will not last long. As recent elections in the United Kingdom and elsewhere have shown, right-wing populism is on its last legs. Likewise, non-stop wars, worsening climate change, and widening income inequalities have exposed both neoliberalism and democratic socialism as nothing more than fronts for finance capital. The world is quietly catching up.

When it comes to our next federal election, we can bypass the pre-packaged dreariness of the likes of Trudeau, Poilievre, and Singh. We can pick from the other parties—or none of the above—and thereby send a message that we want our political parties to find genuine leaders, with the integrity of a Layton; or, even the straightforwardness of a Bernier—at least we know who he is and what he will do, should he ever get elected.

Bhagwant Sandhu is a retired director general from the federal government. Between 2002-21, he held senior roles in several departments, including Fisheries and Ocean Canada, Infrastructure Canada, Treasury Board Secretariat, and Public Works Canada. He has also held executive positions in the governments of Ontario and British Columbia.

The Hill Times

Harnessing Canada's entrepreneurial spirit to remove carbon dioxide from the atmosphere

We need to both reduce current emissions and invest into removing past emissions.

CSG Senator
Colin Deacon

Opinion



If a room is increasingly filling with smoke, it's important to slow how quickly that's happening. But remember: things are still getting worse, just more slowly. At some point, you've got to start to clear the air.

The same is true for greenhouse gases. Yes, we absolutely must prioritize the reduction of our collective emissions, but if humanity is to protect itself from increasingly devastating and destructive climate events, we must also prioritize the removal of carbon dioxide (CO₂) from the atmosphere.

The reason is that, as CO₂ continues to accumulate, it remains in the atmosphere for centuries. Moreover, a study from Norway suggests that accumulated atmospheric CO₂ can take up to 50 years before it fully impacts our climate. That means that the extreme climate events that we are currently experiencing might only reflect CO₂ emissions from the 1970s. Even if we were to hit net zero today, we still face decades of increasingly devastating climate events—that is until we bring CO₂ levels in our atmosphere back to pre-industrial levels.

The good news is that carbon dioxide removal (CDR) processes are scientifically possible, and have been proven effective by global innovators. If we accelerate the rate at which these innovations are scaled into our biological and industrial systems, we might just be able to mitigate the worst effects of climate change.

This will require strong political leadership, directing our regulators to safely enable the deployment of emerging technologies and creating credible



A study from Norway suggests that accumulated atmospheric CO₂ can take up to 50 years before it fully impacts our climate. That means that the extreme climate events that we are currently experiencing might only reflect CO₂ emissions from the 1970s, writes ISG Senator Colin Deacon. *The Hill Times* photographs by Jake Wright

carbon market frameworks that will attract the much-needed investment. Everything points to the fact that Canada has the elements needed to become a global leader in developing and scaling innovative CDR methods into economically viable global solutions.

How do we begin to make progress?

To be successful, a highly entrepreneurial, COVID-type approach will be needed, involving political leaders, government officials, regulators, and academia working together to enable the success of private-sector innovators. Academia and the private sector are already on board. CDR innovators with proven technologies, globally, are working with researchers and are searching for a political, regulatory and investment home that is committed to scaling existing and future CDR technologies. Equally importantly, many of the biggest companies in the world are looking to invest in regulated carbon markets that will provide them with increasing levels of certainty.

So how does Canada deliver market certainty? Regulators need to be investment-centric,

listening carefully to the buyers of carbon credits—and not let perfection be the enemy of progress. Well-regulated markets manage uncertainty by providing transparency, and transparency will allow markets to decide the different value associated with credits from different CDR methods. Currently, the two biggest variables that will determine value relate to the measurement of:

- **Permanence:** how long carbon removed from the atmosphere will stay out of the atmosphere; and
- **Additionality:** would the emissions reductions or removals have occurred without revenue from the sale of carbon credits?

What are examples of different CDR methods?

A wide variety of CDR methods exist, and each offers different levels of permanence and additionality. But the scale of the climate crisis is such that we need to back all of the horses in this race, resulting in credits being priced differently for different CDR methods. Currently, the most valuable carbon credits are associated with direct air capture (DAC) technologies that remove CO₂ from the atmosphere

and store it permanently underground. DAC facilities already exist in Iceland, and others are currently being built in Quebec, Alberta and British Columbia.

DAC carbon credits are the most valuable because they provide buyers with the greatest certainty as it relates to both additionality and permanence. Consequently, some buyers are motivated to pay up to 10 times more for DAC carbon credits as compared to the federal government's current \$80 per tonne benchmark price on carbon. Our political leaders and regulators should be listening very closely to these global investors because Canada has the opportunity to become a leading destination for their investment capital.

DAC differs from Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) because CCS only reduces the CO₂ emissions from ongoing industrial activity. To go back to our original analogy, CCS reduces the rate at which smoke is filling the room, but does not clear the air. It is an important "point-source" carbon capture method (e.g., at the smokestack) but has a different purpose and a much less substantial impact on climate change mitigation than DAC.

Nature-based CDR methods apply technologies to optimize and accelerate the natural processes of photosynthesis and ocean alkalinity to sequester carbon. Carbon sequestration in agricultural soils and forestry are designed to increase the amount of photosynthesis in a given area, and at scale these can remove vast amounts of carbon from the atmosphere. In terms of our oceans, decades of research has shown that they have been acidified by rapid increases in atmospheric CO₂. Equally, evidence has demonstrated that this acidification can be reversed locally by scaling approaches that purposefully increase alkalinity, causing the health of our oceans to improve while permanently removing CO₂ from the atmosphere and storing it as salt dissolved in seawater.

Current technologies can help to harness and accelerate these natural processes. Unfortunately, they have been ignored, with an example being that Canada's forests are no longer carbon sinks, they are carbon sources. This situation can be reversed, but only evidence and experience will enable markets to steadily increase confidence in the associated levels of permanence and additionality associated with each CDR method.

So where to from here?

First, if we are to craft programs that will catalyze the investment needed to scale a wide breadth of existing and emerging technologies, policy makers and politicians need to internalize the differences between CDR methods, in particular between DAC and "point-source" carbon capture.

Second, political consensus, social license, regulatory agility and investment-friendly market frameworks are essential if these approaches are to play a crucial role in saving our planet for future generations.

It's abundantly clear that we will never stabilize our climate by only reducing our CO₂ emissions. Global leaders like Margaret Thatcher and Brian Mulroney sounded the alarm on climate change more than 30 years ago. We did not listen. Since then, annual global CO₂ emissions have increased by more than 50 per cent. Their warnings of the resulting ecological, environmental, social and economic effects are no longer a prediction, but our reality.

Today's political leaders and regulators must now look to investors, innovators, and entrepreneurs if we are to be successful. No big challenge has ever been solved without innovators and entrepreneurs, and no challenge is bigger than the current climate crisis.

Colin Deacon is an Independent Senator for Nova Scotia. Prior to his appointment, Deacon was a technology entrepreneur. He is an advocate for innovation in Canada's Upper Chamber and serves as the chair of the Senate's Advisory Working Group on Environment and Sustainability.

The Hill Times

Opinion



Destroyed vehicles in Bucha, Ukraine, in 2022. The increase in world hunger also reflects disruptions in the fertilizer trade after the outbreak of war in Eastern Europe. Conflicts disrupt critical farming and food-systems supply chains extending suffering beyond impacted borders, write Rattan Lal and Manuel Otero. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

The cornerstone for peace is food, but armed conflicts wipe out livelihoods and agri-food systems

The time is now. Words on paper are insufficient. To make progress, we need global leaders to turn away from armed conflict.

Rattan Lal & Manuel Otero

Opinion



Grim statistics are indicative of the magnitude of the global problem: some 820 million people suffer from severe malnutrition.

Another two billion suffer from hunger. Some 700 million people live in extreme poverty, on less than US\$2.15 a day, while nearly half of the world's eight billion inhabitants suffer in poverty on less than what the rest spend on a trip to Starbucks each morning.

This is happening on the same planet that in six decades has been able to increase the availability of calories and protein by 40 per cent, despite an alarming increase in global population, a global pandemic, and climate challenges. The knowledge and ability exist—if we are willing—to face these issues head on.

While there are multiple causes of food insecurity on the planet, one is predominant: armed conflict. This year, with 20 countries or territories plunged into violence or war, nearly 140 million people are made vulnerable to food crisis. Hunger is

a weapon of mass destruction that threatens global political instability.

Nearly 300 million people in 60 countries—most of them suffering from armed conflict—suffered acute hunger last year. This, as the world's governments together spent more than US\$2.4-trillion on weapons, equipment, and military personnel.

The increase in hunger also reflects disruptions in the fertilizer trade following the outbreak of war in Eastern Europe, which accelerated cost increases to both farmers and consumers almost everywhere. Conflicts disrupted critical farming and food-systems supply chains extending suffering beyond directly impacted borders.

In addition to families and lives, armed conflicts wipe out livelihoods and agri-food systems, driving people from their homes and into situations of

increased vulnerability. Wars and armed conflicts turn nations into failures. They erase progress in protecting biodiversity and the climate.

Along with the weakening or collapse of government, they destroy agriculture, trust and social co-operation; make rural areas more insecure; trigger the cultivation of illicit crops; promote extortion, violence, forced migration, and unbridled competition for natural resources.

They also wipe out farming communities with the consequent loss of knowledge and know-how, generating dependence on international aid.

Two decades ago, the multilateral system called on the world to move decisively to replace the culture of imposition, domination, and violence with a culture of encounter, dialogue, conciliation, partnership, and peace.

With conflicts raging, this call must be renewed again, with fresh recognition of the role of agri-food systems as essential for social and political stability, as well as human development, within a framework of sustainability and global co-operation.

Agriculture is the cornerstone of this system whose performance is strategic for rural and territorial development and the well-being of both urban and rural populations.

Achievement of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals adopted by world leaders to eradicate poverty, protect the planet, and ensure prosperity is being challenged. The SDGs can only be achieved by placing agriculture at the top of public agendas and strengthening its weakest link—small farmers—by increasing their incomes, and facilitating their production and commerce through access to knowledge and technology.

Eighty per cent of the poor live in rural areas, and depend largely on agriculture for their livelihoods. Most produce food on small farms, many with degraded soils. Their role is crucial to world agriculture, and especially relevant to the livelihoods of millions of people in developing countries.

It is these smallholder farmers—men and women—who produce 65 per cent of the world's rice, as well as most of the world's cocoa, coffee, tea, rubber, and palm. Despite their importance, their economic viability is in the balance. They have little selling power, and low social mobility.

This vulnerability feeds back into conflict and instability. For this reason, efforts to eradicate poverty and hunger require strategies to maintain and strengthen the adaptive capacity of small farmers to extreme weather events, and to work resolutely to recover and maintain peace.

It is time to look at rural territories as areas of opportunity and social progress. This requires appropriate institutional designs, a new generation of public policies for family farming, and the facilitation of access to digital technologies and other advancements so farmers have better yields and incomes.

The time is now. Words on paper are insufficient.

To make progress, we need global leaders to turn away from armed conflict. We need instead to provide resources and solutions through global cooperative efforts to the problems associated with small-scale agriculture, such as low yields, infrastructure deficits, and poor links to the market and financing.

Agriculture holds the key to building a prosperous and peaceful world.

Dr. Rattan Lal is director of the Rattan Lal Carbon Management and Sequestration Center (Lal Carbon Center) at Ohio State University, and the 2020 World Food Prize Laureate. Dr. Manuel Otero is the director general of the Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture.

The Hill Times

Canada needs a new growth agenda



Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, pictured in a scrum on the Hill. Dynamic growth should be our national priority. We know we have much talent and potential in the Canadian population for remarkable innovation, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

More Canadian talent will be motivated to move south unless we can do much better on innovation and productivity.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—It is a sign of our misplaced priorities for the future, and it should worry us. As a hoped-for cut in interest rates approaches, there is much talk about how this may rejuvenate real-estate values and boost the potential sale price of our homes, but much less talk of how to increase productive investment, and create the competitive country we need for the future.

Yet our much more important need is to revive business investment, and expand the productivity and productive capacity of the economy. Innovation and higher productivity growth in our business sector—not rising values for our homes—is what will deliver a better future.

As a nation, we are over-invested in real estate, and under-invested in innovation and productive capacity. We need to rethink our future if we want to sustain and improve our standard of living with better-paying jobs, and generate the wealth we need to pay for improved health care, education, environmental protection, infrastructure, and national security. We need less focus on real estate, and much more focus on business investment.

But in our major cities, thousands of apartment buildings sit half-empty as Canadians buy real estate with their savings and with debt in the hope of carrying the costs through short-term rentals via Airbnb until they sell out at a profit. They see this as a more attractive option than investing in businesses and financing the growth to promote innovation and productivity in the

business sector. Likewise, our well-established and often oligopolistic businesses too often feel comfortable enough to neglect investment in innovation, often until it's too late.

A study earlier this year by Wulong Gu at Statistics Canada—*Investment Slowdown In Canada After the Mid-2000s: The Role of Competition and Intangibles*—noted that Canada's weakness in investment is not new, but that it has been weak since the mid-2000s, reinforced by the global financial crisis of 2007-08, and more especially after 2014. As a result, productivity growth declined as well.

Annual productivity growth in the business sector fell from an average annual growth rate of 1.7 per cent from 1990 to 2006 to 0.9 per cent in the period from 2006 to 2021. Over the entire period, from 1990 to 2021, investment in productive capacity has been the most important source of productivity growth. But it has not been high enough to finance the future we need. Investment per worker in Canadian business was 20 per cent lower in 2021 than it was in 2006. Capital investment in Canada is much lower than investment in other advanced countries, Gu found.

A more recent study from Statistics Canada, by Gu and Michael Willox titled *The Post-2001 Productivity Growth Divergence Between Canada and the United States: The Role of the Information and Cultural Services Industry*, found that business productivity between Canada and the United States—in what they called “an unprecedented break with the four previous decades”—began to widen significantly after 2001, and the gap has continued to widen ever since.

From 2001 to 2021, American productivity grew at an annual average of 2.0 per cent while in Canada it fell to 0.9 per cent a year. At two per cent a year, U.S. productivity would double in 35 years. At 0.9 per cent a year in Canada, it would take more than 70 years to double. The prosperity gap between Canada and the U.S. will widen in a big way, and more Canadian talent will be motivated to move south unless we do much better on innovation and productivity.

“A general lack of innovation and technical change and weak investment may be a more pervasive issue across the Canadi-

an economy in general that is most serious in the information and cultural services industry” the two authors argue. They are right. This is an economy-wide issue.

Today's difficulties have their roots in earlier decades when the political and business establishments embraced a *laissez-faire* approach to economic policy, focusing on low taxes, light regulation, and unrestricted free trade, believing the efficient-markets theory that finance, left to its own devices, could be counted on to make investments in the most productive and innovative areas, and exit the least efficient.

That all collapsed with the global financial crisis in 2007-08. Financial markets were not shown to be efficient. Instead we got the U.S. sub-prime crisis, a toxic array of financial products that no one understood, and a global crisis requiring massive government bail-out.

Rather than a world that strives to return to “normal,” we live in a Schumpeterian world of creative destruction and endless disruption. That is the world we now need to recognize as “normal.” In that world, the economic agenda has to be an

innovation agenda. The challenge is to encourage, foster, and grow through innovation. Entrepreneurship and risk-taking are core assets.

The challenge is to raise the level of investment in both physical or tangible assets such as machinery and equipment, but also in intangible investments such as software, innovation, research, development, business organization, skills upgrading, marketing and branding. We need a new growth agenda, one that puts innovation and productivity as the key focus. Today, we have an alphabet soup of programs, which are opportunistic and transactional, but we lack both a coherent strategy and a related agenda.

To be sure, the issue of distribution is also critical. The gains from innovation and productivity must be widely shared. This didn't happen in the era of Margaret Thatcher and Ronald Reagan, and it didn't happen to their followers in Canada and elsewhere. Likewise, environmental sustainability is essential, especially at a time when climate change is delivering record temperature highs around the world. So there are necessary trade-offs between growth and necessities, such as fairness and a livable environment.

But within those trade-offs, dynamic growth should be our national priority. We know we have much talent and potential in the Canadian population for remarkable innovation. Our challenge is to put much energy into helping them make the investments they need for their own and the country's future growth and success.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.

The Hill Times



From animal shelters to art classes and disability services, nonprofits touch your life whether you realize it or not.

FOR COMMUNITIES TO THRIVE, THE CHARITABLE SECTOR NEEDS A STRONG POLICY ENVIRONMENT. LET'S WORK TOGETHER.

IMAGINE
CANADA

Opinion

Shielding shadows: Canada's opacity in deporting Iran's regime officials

It is crucial that the Canadian government take action by publicly naming these senior regime officials, regardless of the ultimate decision surrounding their deportation.

M. Mehdi Moradi

Opinion



Immigration Minister Marc Miller. Immigration authorities have identified suspected 'senior' members of Iran's Islamic regime in Canada who are now facing deportation who may be using legal loopholes to complicate deportation processes, writes M. Mehdi Moradi. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada's recent handling of deportation proceedings against individuals linked to Iran's Islamic regime is intensifying demands for greater government transparency and accountability.

Over 40 days have passed since Canada launched deportation proceedings against five suspected members of Iran's Islamic regime who were in Canada. The process was instigated under sanctions adopted in 2022 that ban tens of thousands of top Iranian officials from this country, but little data has surfaced regarding the identities of these individuals or the status of these proceedings. The decision to conduct court hearings behind closed doors has

heightened unease within the Iranian-Canadian community who view such secrecy as an affront to integrity and justice.

There appears to be a growing perception that individuals identified by immigration authorities as holding "senior positions" might be using legal loopholes—such as asylum claims—to obscure their identities and complicate deportation processes. This situation is particularly troubling compared to previous cases, like those of Majid Iranmanesh, the former director general of Iran's Vice-Presidency for Science and Technology, and Salman Samani, Iran's former deputy minister of state. In those instances, proceedings were conducted openly.

The current lack of clarity regarding the identities of these senior officials represents a significant shift from past practices. Under the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, particularly Section 101, individuals are ineligible for refugee status not only for "violating human or international rights," but also for security and serious criminality concerns. It is essential for policymakers and civil society to collaborate and reform these procedures to safeguard the integrity of the system if, indeed, it is being misused in this case.

Canada must uphold the principles of justice and transparency, particularly when dealing with individuals linked to regimes

notorious for human rights violations. The Iranian regime cannot have its high-profile officials dismissed as mere foot soldiers given its track record over the past five years alone. This includes the tragic events of Bloody November in 2019 that claimed over 1,500 lives in just three days, the 2020 incident in which flight PS752 was shot down, and the severe crackdown on dissent seen in the 2022 Woman, Life, Freedom movement which was recently deemed a "crime against humanity" in a UN fact-finding mission report. When such figures exploit legal ambiguities to conceal their identities, it sets a troubling precedent of judicial appeasement. Canada must reject the obscurity of anonymity for these individuals, especially considering that in two previous cases, one regime official sought to ban the press from deportation hearings, while another blatantly claimed in public court that he "was unaware of regime abuses."

The potential normalization of such clandestine governmental actions threatens to erode the foundational principles of human rights and anti-terrorism efforts that Canada purports to protect. Laws and measures related to the prosecution and deportation of the Islamic regime officials in this country were initially intended to amplify the voices of Iranians, and empower the sizable Iranian-Canadian community. These are now at risk of becoming mere instruments of obfuscation, shielding those who

seek to escape justice. Even when such secretive procedures lead to deportation, these affluent senior officials—bloating by ill-gotten gains—remain unfazed, having long mastered the art of evading legal repercussions. Publicly naming these officials would provide some accountability, ensuring the Iranian-Canadian community can identify them and that their atrocities do not go unexposed.

Especially since June 19 of this year—when Canada designated the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps (IRGC) as a terrorist organization—maintaining transparency in the justice system has become increasingly critical. In nations that uphold the values of freedom and openness, such opacity effectively silences the Iranian-Canadian community, depriving them of the ability to question and scrutinize governmental actions. As the threat from IRGC members potentially escalates following this designation, posing greater risks to Canada's national security, this issue could become even more pronounced.

For these reasons, it is crucial that the Canadian government take demonstrative action by publicly naming these senior regime officials, regardless of the ultimate decision surrounding their deportation. This transparency would not only affirm the ethical stance of our immigration and judicial frameworks, but also reassure citizens that justice is neither secretive nor selective. Failing to do so risks painting Canada's position as hypocritical—fragile or, worse, as evidence of administrative impotence.

M. Mehdi Moradi is a seasoned Iranian-Canadian social activist and freelance journalist. *The Hill Times*

Competitive air travel in Canada starts with public investment

In peer countries, air infrastructure is viewed as a national economic asset worthy of major investment from government or public-private partnerships. Why shouldn't Canadians benefit from the same approach?

Jeff Morrison

Opinion



travel, they don't need to look far. Government has an important role to play.

For years, Canada's aviation sector has been seeking policy changes to increase competitiveness, which also happens to be key to making air travel more affordable, sustainable, and enjoyable.

Let's start by examining why the current system doesn't work. Canada employs a so-called "user-pay" model that is, by and large, unique to this country. It places the burden of infrastruc-



Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez. Canadians have too long paid the cost of outdated government policy when it comes to investment in air travel infrastructure, and it's time we started to change things, writes Jeff Morrison. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Let's talk about competitiveness. After a global pandemic and years of slow economic growth, Canadian policymakers of all stripes are looking for solutions to kickstart competitiveness in our country's major economic sectors. When it comes to air

ture and service costs directly on individual passengers. In addition to these costs imposed on users, all levels of government collect revenues from air travel

that are not reinvested in the system.

This is not the global norm. It has produced an uncompetitive tax and regulatory environment

that drives up ticket prices for Canadians compared to their fellow travellers around the world.

The pandemic exacerbated this imbalance. Without "users," our infrastructure partners—such as airports and NavCanada, which owns and operates Canada's civil air navigation system—had to increase their indebtedness. This has increased their costs.

In peer countries, air infrastructure is viewed as a national strategic economic asset worthy of major investment via either general government revenue, or through a healthier mix of public-private partnerships.

Why shouldn't Canadian travellers benefit from the same approach?

After all, the fundamentals are the same here at home. Aviation is a vital strategic asset that drives our economic growth and prosperity, particularly due to our country's size. It facilitates business, trade, and tourism; supports immigration; serves as a major source of employment, investment opportunity, and tax revenue; and is foundational to

Continued on page 17

Marlene Catterall was a high-energy, superbly skilled politician

As the first woman chief government whip, she ensured that caucus ran smoothly and legislation got passed. She didn't take up much space, but knew when to make noise. Her ability to get things done is legendary.

Isabel Metcalfe

Opinion



Last week, Canada lost a successful female politician with the death of Marlene Catterall. Five times elected to Ottawa City Council; four times elected to the House of Commons. Undefeated in her riding and her ward. A high-energy, superbly skilled politician, she set an example for women's leadership, bringing people together to get things done.

As the first woman chief government whip, appointed by then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, she ensured that caucus ran smoothly and legislation got passed. She did not take up much space, but knew when to make



Liberal MPs Anne McLellan, left, and Marlene Catterall, second left, at an Ottawa daycare centre in 2005. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

noise. Her ability to get things done is legendary.

Catterall's skills at getting things done were learned early as she juggled being a teacher, parent, and city councillor. She was eager to get resources in her community that would help families and people. The Marlene Catterall Park is a fitting tribute to a woman who developed and established the Pinecrest Queensway Community Health Centre in Ottawa's west end. She fought for more housing, and was a leader in ensuring the Nelson House got established in Ottawa.

Many Ottawa residents will remember Maher Arar who was wrongly deported in 2002 and tortured in a Syrian prison. Catterall worked behind the scenes to secure his freedom, travelling

to Syria in April 2003 to advocate for Arar's release, bringing with her photos of his family and a note from his wife.

One of her most significant and lasting legacies was as parliamentary secretary to then-Treasury Board president Lucienne Robillard. Nycole Turmel, the first woman president of the Public Service Alliance of Canada and later interim leader of the NDP, remembers how Catterall used those skills to resolve decades of court battles with the federal government on pay equity.

"She was honest and frank. She worked from the inside to stop the court challenges and get the pay equity settlement done."

Working with Robillard and Turmel as PSAC president,

Catterall knew the impact that settlement would have on the women in her riding and across Canada. "Everybody loved her, so she could get things done. I enjoyed my breakfasts with her at the Newport Restaurant" is how the former national union leader remembers her.

I remember sitting in the lobby of the House during my work with Famous 5 Ottawa, watching Catterall work to get the required votes to place our monument on Parliament Hill. The Famous 5 had the money and a model of the monument, but we needed unanimous parliamentary approval for placement within the parliamentary precinct. As a founding member of Famous 5 Ottawa, Catterall had the strategic capacity to get that done.

It was Dec. 11, 1997, the end of the parliamentary session, and MPs were eager to get home. Liberal Women's Caucus Chair Jean Augustine kept moving the motion for placement of the monument, but was consistently blocked by several MPs. Catterall was calm and unruffled. "Wait until they [the opponents] go to the airport," she advised. At 5:35 p.m., after four unsuccessful attempts, Augustine moved the motion once again. Then-Liberal MP Mac Harb from Ottawa Centre jumped to second. With the lone dissenter away from the Chamber, the Speaker moved fast to declare unanimity. Catterall's superb skills with people and knowledge of parliamentary procedure blazed the way for women to be recognized as nation builders on Parliament Hill alongside prime ministers and monarchs. The *Women Are Persons!* monument is one of the most popular attractions in Ottawa. In recognition of her work on this and other projects, Catterall was recently awarded the Governor General's Persons Case Award, Canada's highest award to women.

Catterall's family always took first place. Her husband Ron and their children, Cheryl, Chris, Karen and all of her grandchildren were her biggest fans. Just two weeks ago, Catterall and her family were together in Thunder Bay at the Women's Baseball World Cup cheering on granddaughter Sena Catterall.

Catterall never stopped working, helping, or loving others. She was fun to be with, joyful in her love of people and politics and generous with her time and support. She will be missed by many.

Isabel Metcalfe, Public Affairs Counsel, worked for former prime minister Pierre Trudeau for a decade. She is the former chair of Famous 5 Ottawa.

The Hill Times

Competitive air travel in Canada starts with public investment

Continued from page 16

the success of many other industries across Canada.

And yet, we choose to be a country where excessive third-party fees and charges upon travellers and airlines place our entire air travel system at a competitive disadvantage.

For instance, the excise tax on aviation fuel is 158 per cent higher in Canada than in the United States. Canada's Air Travellers Security Charge is significantly higher than the equivalent fee in Canadian dollars the U.S.—up to \$34.42 at home compared to approximately \$7.65 south of the border. Then there are Airport Improvement Fees which can

reach up to \$46.00 per passenger in Canada versus approximately \$6.14 per passenger in the U.S. It's not hard to see why Canada's airlines and passengers are at a disadvantage.

Our airports currently pay over \$400-million more to the federal government in rent payments for Crown land than they receive in infrastructure support. That is rent not paid in countries like the United States. On average, Canada's airports spend 12 per cent of their revenues on federal rent payments. That's funding that could otherwise be used to invest in airport infrastructure for accessibility, sustainability, safety, and security—or to increase capacity.

Additionally, the proposed framework for Canada's Air Passenger Protection Regulations released in July 2023 stands to add additional costs to air travel in this country. If these regulations are adopted without significant amendments, they will threaten regional connectivity and further isolate our nation as one of the most uncompetitive jurisdictions in the world.

Canadians have too long paid the cost of outdated government policy. And it's time we started to change things.

We had hoped and proposed that in its recently announced study of air travel, Canada's Competition Bureau would focus on the competitiveness of the

overall system, address these issues, and provide more affordable and convenient options for the public. Although the bureau has not done this, our airlines will continue to propose meaningful solutions.

For a start, the federal government should begin by freezing all federal fees and taxes, while simultaneously conducting a review of all third-party fees and charges with an eye to lowering overall costs, and making them more transparent.

It should also fully re-invest the rents it receives from airports directly back into airport infrastructure. There is no reason why passengers should be expected to fill federal coffers at a time when

Canadians need airports to be more efficient, modern, sustainable, and fully accessible to passengers with disabilities.

Beyond this, full-scale regulatory modernization is urgently needed to support a healthy aviation ecosystem that makes travel better for passengers. And, if Canada is to remain a competitive place to do business, the government—in partnership with industry—must have a stronger plan to incentivize domestic Sustainable Aviation Fuel production in the very short term.

Canadian travellers are directly seized by the impacts to affordability and competitiveness, which is why our airlines and stakeholders have been calling for these changes for years.

The path forward is clear, and the time for change is now.

Jeff Morrison is president and CEO of the National Airlines Council of Canada.

The Hill Times

News

Outreach to diaspora groups 'critical' as Canada and Australia look to one another in foreign interference fight

Australian Senator David Shoebridge says his nation's experience shows foreign interference laws won't work without trust between vulnerable communities and law enforcement.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA—As Canada prepares to put in place foreign interference laws passed during the spring sitting of Parliament, an Australian lawmaker who has seen similar policies in action warns that they could be meaningless if trust is not better established between diaspora groups and law enforcement in either country.

"Passing the laws is one thing, but the laws are not going to work unless there's that relationship of trust," said Australian Senator David Shoebridge, the justice, defence, and home affairs spokesperson for the left-wing Australian Greens. "What's critical in my mind is diaspora communities having the confidence that the government agencies tasked with protecting them and stopping foreign interference are going to be fair and just, and are going to listen to them."

Australia passed laws establishing a foreign influence transparency scheme in 2018 that required individuals and groups to register any work done on behalf of a foreign principal to influence political or governmental processes.

Canada has created a similar registry though Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, which received royal assent on June 20 after its passage through Parliament was fast-tracked. The bill followed a period of public consultation on

what a registry should look like, which used Australia's registry scheme as one of several models to examine.

A parliamentary joint committee that reviewed the effectiveness of Australia's legislation found in March 2024 that "substantial reform is required if it is to meet its original intent and justify the compliance burden and resources required to administer it."

"Enforcement activity has focused almost exclusively on

China with little success, while neglecting any material focus on other countries of significant concern (where there are no or very limited registrations)," said the committee, which also noted a low number of registrations during the scheme's first six years. "These include authoritarian nations like Russia and Iran which engage in malevolent foreign influence, as well as nations with which Australia has friendly and positive relations, such as

India, which engage in foreign influence operations that should be transparently declared."

In its June 2024 response to the committee report, the Australian government said it had allocated \$2.1 million Australian (C\$1.9-million) to ensure the scheme could "achieve its original purpose."

Looking to Kenny Chiu's experience

Both the committee reviewing the scheme and a Senate committee set up to investigate foreign interference through social media highlighted the vulnerability of diaspora communities to the practice.

Shoebridge, who sat on the latter committee, told *The Hill Times* that building trust between those diaspora communities and the law-enforcement agencies tasked with protecting them is critical to combatting foreign interference. But he said that trust would be hard to establish.

"If you come from a country where you don't trust the police, you don't trust the security agencies, and you see them having been used in a partisan political way against you because of your politics, your religion, your belief, your identity. You've got a high bar before they're going to trust authorities in either Canada or Australia," he said. "So investing in that relationship is critical."

The allegations of foreign interference in Canadian political systems have been closely followed in Australia, which has faced similar concerns in recent years.

The committee investigating foreign interference through social media heard from former Canadian Conservative MP Kenny Chiu who has alleged that he was subject to a Chinese government disinformation campaign against him during his failed re-election bid in the riding of Steveston-Richmond East, B.C., in the 2021 federal election.

Chiu told the committee in April 2023 that he was the target of campaigns through WeChat that claimed a foreign influence registry private member's bill he



Former Conservative MP Kenny Chiu spoke to an Australian parliamentary committee last year about alleged foreign interference during the 2021 federal election campaign. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Australian Senator David Shoebridge says trust between diaspora communities and law enforcement is critical. *Photograph* courtesy of X/@DavidShoebridge

Australian Parliament House. The country passed foreign interference laws, including the creation of a foreign influence registry, in 2018. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stephen Jeffery

introduced was anti-Chinese and anti-Asian.

A similar series of WeChat messages were reported during a byelection for the Australian House of Representatives seat of Bennelong in 2017. The *Sydney Morning Herald* reported that an open letter was distributed through the Chinese-speaking community that called the centre-right Liberal Party "privately against China, against Chinese, against ethnic-Chinese migrants and against Chinese international students." Liberal candidate John Alexander ultimately won the Sydney seat with a reduced margin.

Chiu said that had he known about the Australian byelection issues during the 2021 Canadian election campaign, he may have been more prepared to confront the threats against him. He said part of the issue was due to recent Chinese immigrants to Canada or Australia having no reliable fact-checking apparatus in the language with which they were most comfortable.

"One of the proposals that I'm going to put forward is that, to the extent that you can, Australia should perhaps provide a seal of approval to certain non-government organizations that provide fact-checking services to the constituents in their own language, be it Persian, Russian or even



Chinese and other languages that are commonly exploited," he said.

Australian Sikhs 'genuinely fearful' after Nijjar killing

More recently, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) allegation in the House of Commons in September 2023 of Indian government involvement in the fatal shooting of Canadian citizen Hardeep Singh Nijjar has also concerned Australians.

Nijjar, an activist for an independent Sikh homeland of Khalistan whom the Indian government had described as a "terrorist," was shot outside a Sikh temple in Surrey, B.C., in June 2023. Four Indian nationals were charged with his murder in May 2024. The case is next scheduled to be heard in October.

Shoebridge said Trudeau's allegation "immediately triggered a series of contacts with my office from the Sikh community who were genuinely fearful." The senator represents the state of New South Wales, which includes a little under a quarter of the 210,000 Australian Sikh population recorded in the last national census.

"This seemed like an incredibly dangerous fresh step from the Indian government that they were willing to so flout any kind of

international norms and assassinate a resident and a citizen of a friendly country," he said.

In June, the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *Four Corners* program reported a series of threats against Australian Sikh activists and critics of the Indian government. The *Washington Post* reported in April that Australia expelled two Indian intelligence officers in 2020 after foreign officials were caught "monitoring their country's diaspora community; trying to penetrate local police departments and stealing information about sensitive security systems at Australian airports."

Shoebridge said constituents had reached out to him even before Nijjar's assassination, alleging an intimidation campaign during the Indian farmers' protests in 2020 and 2021, and during an unofficial referendum on the creation of Khalistan.

"When it came to Sydney, there was huge resistance to it, and a series of bookings they had for venues for the referendum were being cancelled one after the other," he said. "There were alleged security concerns raised by the New South Wales Police about the referendum being held, and there were about three or four venues that got cancelled before it was ultimately held at quite short notice in an industrial estate, in a warehouse owned by

a member of the Sikh community. That level of political interference had not been witnessed before by the Sikh community within Australia."

Following Nijjar's assassination and the Canadian government's allegations against India, Shoebridge said he would have liked Australia to have shown "more overt solidarity with Canada."

"What was missing, from my perspective, from the Five Eyes community was acts of solidarity with Canada at the time," he said. "I haven't followed intently the nuances of Canada's domestic response to that, but I can imagine it's been quite challenging dealing with the pushback from the Indian government, and I think it was a missed opportunity of solidarity."

Following Trudeau's allegations last year, a spokesperson for Australia's Foreign Affairs Minister Penny Wong told multiple media outlets the country was "deeply concerned" and "conveyed our concerns at senior levels to India."

That same day, Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese, of the centre-left Labor Party, told a reporter to "chill out" after he was asked whether he regretted calling Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi "the boss" in Sydney earlier that year.

"I firmly believe that Australia and India should have an incredibly positive relationship, I think we share many cultural values," Shoebridge said. "We should see each other as friends, but at the end of the day, friendship is based upon a degree of frankness and honesty, and we haven't seen that from the Australian perspective in the last four or five years."

India and China are not the only countries that have received attention from Australia and Canada. Mike Burgess, the director general of the Australian Security Intelligence Organisation (ASIO), told the ABC's *Insiders* program on Aug. 10 that he could think of "at least three or four [countries] that we've actually actively found involved in foreign interference in Australian diaspora communities."

The country's then-home affairs minister Clare O'Neil announced in February 2023 that ASIO disrupted foreign surveillance of an Iranian-Australian sometime in late 2022. "We have someone living here, in our country, who has been followed, watched and photographed. Their home was invaded by people at the direction of a foreign power," she said at the time.

O'Neil said other acts of foreign interference in Australia included the monitoring of perceived dissidents who attend protests, counter-protests intended to provoke violence, and harassment

of academics and staff at media outlets and think tanks.

Burgess also mentioned Iran as a perpetrator of foreign interference, but would not be drawn on the identities of other countries involved in the practice. He said he could name Iran since the minister had already done so.

"Some of them would surprise you. Some of them are also our friends," Burgess said.

Scrutiny of party nominations

Back in Canada, the Foreign Interference Commission will hold public hearings in September and October focused on the capacity of federal departments, agencies, and governance processes to detect and counter the practice.

The commission has focused on the nomination process of political parties. In June, the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians tabled a report stating that it was "disturbed to learn how easily foreign actors take advantage of loopholes and vulnerabilities in political party governance," and called for the government to determine whether party nomination and leadership election processes should be included within the Canada Elections Act.

Leadership contests are not as vulnerable to foreign interference in Australia as—with the exception of Labor—party leaders are chosen by the parliamentary caucus rather than with rank-and-file members. For Labor leaders, there is an equal split in the weight of rank-and-file membership and the parliamentary caucus votes.

However, the party nomination process for seats in Australia—known locally as preselection—has been under scrutiny for its potential vulnerability to foreign interference.

Ahead of the 2022 Australian federal election, ASIO foiled a Chinese government plot to bankroll federal Labor candidates in New South Wales. Albanese told ABC that none of the candidates were not successful in their preselection contests.

In December 2023, the Australian Associated Press reported that Melbourne businessman and former Victorian state Liberal Party candidate Di Sanh Duong was found guilty of preparing or planning an act of foreign interference over a hospital donation.

Shoebridge said that, whether in Canada or Australia, it was important to ensure that foreign interference fears did not dissuade communities from becoming engaged in politics.

"What you don't want is barriers for those diaspora communities getting engaged in mainstream politics and ensuring that our political parties fairly reflect the makeup of multicultural Australia and multicultural Canada," he said. "I do think that's something any democracy should be mindful of when they're putting these laws in place. They can't be a barrier between politics and any part of the community."

sjeffery@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

News

Witness says she'll return if invited after fracas at House Status of Women Committee, it's more important than 'petty politics'

Conservatives are calling on the Liberals to allow witnesses to return to speak after a House committee meeting on July 31.

Continued from page 1

and I'm here for the women who are trapped in houses right now and whoever's going to die today. That's what I'm going back for."

An emergency meeting of the House Status of Women Committee, which was called by Conservative MP and committee chair Shelby Kramp-Neuman (Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Ont.), descended into chaos on July 31 after Liberal MP Anita Vandenberg (Ottawa West-Nepean, Ont.) moved a motion which shifted the meeting's focus from violence against women to abortion rights.

In an op-ed published by National Newswatch on Aug. 7, Vandenberg said that the committee chair called the meeting on intimate partner violence unilaterally with only a few days notice, and also only invited witnesses proposed by Conservative Party members. She argued that rules were broken at the meeting, such as allowing props by witnesses (specifically photographs), and that there was a failure to overrule points of order that were unrelated to procedural issues, which placed the Liberals in the position of "either allowing the rules to be broken, or calling it out and being vilified and gaslit through a very effective Conservative communications war."

"The Conservatives knew that we would have no choice but to do something to not allow such a meeting to go ahead. And yet, they invited witnesses who had been victimized and traumatized to testify, using their pain and trauma to put us into a corner," Vandenberg wrote in the op-ed. "In my focus on trying to save our committee from the same dysfunction and partisanship that has plagued other committees, I played a role in adding to their trauma and for that I am very sorry."

Conservative MP Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough-Kawartha, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement that her party would continue to call on the Liberals to let the witnesses return to committee to speak.



Liberal MP Anita Vandenberg wrote in an Aug. 7 op-ed that the chair of the House Status of Women committee called a meeting with only a few days notice, and only with witnesses proposed by Conservative party members. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"It is disgusting that this so-called feminist Liberal government completely shut down a committee study into violence against women just as witnesses and victims of intimate partner violence were ready to present their testimony," said Ferreri in the emailed statement. "The same Liberal MP who was responsible for abruptly silencing their voices, causing witnesses to leave in tears, then published a tone-deaf rant making it all about herself."

Alexander said she agreed that meetings should be held with certain rules and accountability, but "this is an emergency, and maybe we can set aside our need for perfect conduct at all times in order to address the actual issue, which is that a woman is being murdered every single day."

Other witnesses at the meeting were Megan Walker, an advocate for ending male violence against women, who previously served as executive director of the London Abused Women's Centre for almost 25 years, and Nick Milinovich, deputy chief for Peel Regional Police, who attended remotely. Alexander appeared before the committee to share her own story of intimate partner violence. She told the committee that three years ago her then-boyfriend beat her for four hours with his fists and a rolling pin, and left her for dead.

Alexander's boyfriend was charged with eight offences—three federal and five provincial—but the charges were stayed, she told the committee.

On Aug. 8, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) sent a letter to Alexander and Walker, saying that Conservatives would write to other federal parties demanding that the committee be recalled to listen to their stories.

Alexander told *The Hill Times* that she'd be willing to do so.

"I don't want it to appear as if we're aligning with any particular party. We're aligning with what's right for Canadians," said Alexander. "I don't really care what Anita's problem is, or what the Conservatives' problem is, or what the NDP's problem is. I care that survivors are not being listened to and not being respected, and we're dying because of it."

In her op-ed, Vandenberg argued that the Conservatives intended to put forward an "ambush motion" at the meeting, and so Liberal and NDP members "were left with no choice but to put forward our own motion first."

Kathy Brock, a professor in the School of Policy Studies who is also cross-appointed to the Department of Political Studies at Queen's University in Kingston, Ont., told *The Hill Times* that, while House committees are supposed to establish their own rules, there are also procedural norms. She said it is the committee chair's prerogative to call a meeting if they desire, although usually individual members may submit topics, and the committee decides which topics it will move forward on. Parties typically provide input on which witnesses they want to call, she said.

Brock said that Vandenberg's concern about the Conservatives putting forward an ambush motion is fair, but she doesn't agree that there was no choice but for the Liberals to put forward their own motion first. In politics, timing is everything, Brock said.

"In this case, when it's such a sensitive issue, and when you have a witness testify on what is clearly a very personal, sensitive matter, then that's when the committee members could attend, could listen, could even not ask questions afterwards. They could have just let it go and then raise a point of order at the next meeting," said Brock.

"What [Vandenberg] could have done was waited for the Conservatives to bring forward this motion, and then if she and the other members of the Liberal Party on the committee, the Bloc members and the NDP members were all offended by the motion brought forward by the chair, they could have stood up, walked out, and effectively quorum is denied."

Brock also said that committee members could have tried asking for a point of order at the beginning of the meeting, saying they want it on the record that "although we are very sympathetic on this issue, we didn't like the way this was called."

Steven Chaplin, a fellow at the University of Ottawa Public Law Center and a former senior parliamentary counsel for the House of Commons, told *The Hill Times* that MPs trying to find ways to get around the rules for political purposes can happen on both sides of the House. He said the Conservatives bypassed the normal committee process by calling an emergency meeting.

"In the normal process you would have... these steering committees where all the parties and co-chairs and whatever, they decide what they're going to study, what witnesses are going to be called," he said. "I think this abuse of, or this misuse, or the expansion of rules outside of the normal course and trying to turn this into an urgent debate is something I think people have to look at, and the House may have to look at. Are there ways that that power should be, if not constrained, at least defined?"

Chaplin described the Liberal response of putting forward a motion to move towards the topic of abortion rights as a way of "trying to blunt whatever approach the Conservatives were using."

"[The Liberals] didn't know who the witnesses were, how they were to prepare, what was coming, who these people were," he said. "This is what the steering committees, under normal circumstances, are designed to work out. If this had been a normal process, the Liberals would have been informed."

Chaplin said that because of the way the meeting was put together, the discussion became "a fly-by-the-seat-of-your-pants approach," with all the MPs "winging it politically."

"It's really, really unfortunate that these witnesses—who have legitimate concerns on legitimate matters that they thought they were going to be discussing before committee—got tangled up in it," he said. "That's the real shame in all of this is that numbers of witnesses find themselves being sidetracked by what amounts to being almost a political circus on both sides."

Alex Marland, a professor in the Department of Politics at Acadia University in Nova Scotia, told *The Hill Times* that, regardless of the party, MPs will strategize before a committee meeting, and discuss tactics and the message they will try to convey.

"There was a time where parliamentary committees could operate relatively at arm's length from the leader's office, but now with smartphones it means that everything is going back and forth," he said. "There's a lot more ability for the leader's office, even though... they're not even necessarily in Ottawa, they can be finding out what's going on, and so they're relaying things back and forth so that there's more co-ordination."

Marland argued that, because of the use of smartphones, "everything is much more immediate," which creates more need for "partisan symmetry" at committee meetings. He recalled that the former Conservative government under Stephen Harper was accused of a plot to wreak parliamentary havoc when a 200-page handbook that provided details for how to obstruct and manipulate committees was leaked to the press in 2007.

"I think it's a bit rich for anybody in any party to try to suggest that the other parties are to blame. Because the reality is they all do it, and none of them are out there providing magnificent solutions," he said.

"If the Liberals—any Liberal—were to suggest that the Conservatives are up to these things, the reality is, the Liberals are, of course, trying to manage their own MPs because they're trying to align their messages," he said. "It happens regardless of what party is in power. When you're in power, you're always trying to make sure that the messaging coming out of the committee is not going to cause problems for the government if you're on the same side of the House."

The Hill Times reached out to every MP on the House Status of Women Committee. Ferreri was the only member who provided a comment on the matter, which she provided by email jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Halifax Liberal MP Fillmore not resigning seat until end of month, but NDP candidate Roberts campaigning for months

The NDP came within three points of winning the Halifax riding in 2021, and the left-of-centre party will carry this riding in the yet-to-be-scheduled byelection, says NDP candidate Lisa Roberts.

Continued from page 1

the Oct. 19 municipal election in Nova Scotia in which he is vying to become mayor of Halifax.

After a riding opens up, a prime minister has 180 days to call a byelection and the writ period has to be between 36 to 50 days. This means Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) will have until March 2025 to call the byelection in Halifax and, depending on the writ period and when it's called, the election date would be at some point in April or May.

In recent history, the riding of Halifax has alternated between the Liberals and the New Democrats. The Liberals picked up this riding in the 2015 election after NDP stalwarts Megan Leslie and Alexa McDonough had held it for 18 consecutive years. Leslie served as the MP from 2008 to 2015, and McDonough from 1997 to 2008. Fillmore won the riding by a 15-point margin, which was reduced to 12 points in the 2019 election. In 2021, he held onto the seat by just a three-point lead.

Before 1997, the riding was represented by either the now-defunct Progressive Conservatives



Former NDP MLA Lisa Roberts, left, lost the last election to Liberal MP Andy Fillmore by a three percentage point margin. Now, Fillmore is stepping down to run for the mayor of Halifax, and Roberts has been campaigning since spring to win this seat. Photographs courtesy of Lisa Roberts and andyfillmore.ca

or the Liberals. This riding has the distinction of electing two national party leaders, including McDonough and then-Progressive Conservative leader Robert Stanfield. Additionally, former Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney attended the Dalhousie law school that's located in the riding.

The last time this riding had a conservative MP was in the 1984 election, when Stewart McInnes represented it for one term.

As press time, of the three major national parties only the NDP had nominated their candidate for Halifax.

According to an Abacus Data poll released last week, the Conservatives were leading the Liberals by a 20 per cent margin nationally. This poll suggested that Pierre Poilievre's (Carleton, Ont.) Conservatives were leading in all regions of the country, including Atlantic Canada. In the four Atlantic provinces, the Conservatives were at 41 per cent,

the Liberals 34 per cent, the NDP 19 per cent and the Greens four per cent.

Roberts told *The Hill Times* that her campaign will focus on the NDP's achievements, such as dental care and pharmacare, made possible by their role in the supply-and-confidence agreement between their party and the governing Liberals. She noted that she previously represented part of the riding as a provincial MLA, and a number of constituents were already familiar with her. So far, she said, the response at the doorstep has been mostly positive.

"People have a relatively positive impression of the NDP and recognize that with a small caucus, the NDP has really fought for Canadians, and been able to push forward some very, very important initiatives, including pharmacare and dental care, and those folks who appreciate that kind of work recognize that it would be a positive to have an East Coast voice, a Halifax voice in the NDP caucus," Roberts said.

She said that people in the riding want a change in government, and the key reason is affordability.

"People are expressing concerns about their lives and cost of living, housing, both for people who are struggling to pay their own rent, and concerns about housing for people who are securely housed but are distressed that our community is experiencing such a housing crisis," said Roberts.

A senior Conservative in an interview with *The Hill Times* said that, although Poilievre and the party are leading all regions of the country in the polls, based

on the 2021 election results, they would need a 30-point swing to win Halifax. But they argued that if the blue wave kept its current momentum, there could be a chance of winning. The source said that if the June Toronto-St. Paul's byelection is any guide, it's possible.

"Nobody thought Megan Leslie would lose to the Liberals in 2015, and if the anti-Trudeau wave continues in Atlantic Canada, there could be more seats in play than per usual," the source said. "And certainly as you can see from social media, Pierre Poilievre is spending a lot of time in Nova Scotia this week, and a lot of time in the Halifax area. So, the party is approaching every seat as being in play, including in Halifax, but it's a very tough seat."

The source also argued that the NDP will face the same challenge here that they will elsewhere of their record propping up the Liberal government as part of their supply-and-confidence

agreement. They said the Conservatives would appeal to voters seeking change by warning that a vote for the NDP would effectively mean "getting Justin Trudeau again."

The Trudeau government is holding its cabinet retreat in Halifax from Aug. 25-27. Prior to that, Trudeau could shuffle his cabinet this week to replace ministers who not seeking re-election.

At these meetings, guest speakers who are experts in their respective fields such as the economy, the environment, foreign affairs, and other domestic social and economic issues provide presentations on a variety of subjects. Also, the PMO, the Liberal Party office, and Liberal Research Bureau staffers provide detailed data about the state of the public opinion on the government's policies, performance and politics. At the same time, senior officials will get an update on the party's election readiness.

In most of the meetings, top cabinet staffers in different portfolios accompany their ministers. Also, ministerial chiefs of staff hold separate meetings with the PMO chief of staff and deputy chiefs of staff.

Fillmore was not available for an interview last week, but former Liberal MP Mary Clancy, who held the riding from 1988 to 1997, said that she was confident that the party would win it in the next byelection. She said that she is not worried about the national polls suggesting the Liberals are well behind the Conservatives, arguing public opinion can change quickly. Clancy also dismissed the significance of the last election result, when the NDP came within a whisker of unseating the Liberals from this seat.

"[The next election is] a year away," said Clancy. "A week is a year in politics. So a year is the equivalent of 52 years. Things can change in a heartbeat, and Atlantic Canadians are not going to be, shall we say, seduced in any way by Mr. Poilievre and his Trumpian agenda."

When the Trudeau Liberals won a landslide majority in 2015, they won all 32 seats in the four Atlantic provinces. In 2019, the Liberals were reduced to 26 seats; the Conservatives garnered four, the NDP and the Greens one each. In the 2021 election, the Liberals were able to win 24 while the Conservatives carried the remaining eight seats.

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Former NDP MP Megan Leslie represented the riding of Halifax, N.S., from 2008 to 2015. *The Hill Times* file photograph



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his cabinet are holding their annual summer retreat in Halifax from Aug. 25-27. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Heard on the Hill

First female government whip and former Ottawa politician Marlene Catterall has died

Continued from page 2

Ottawa West-Nepean. She held roles including Chief Government Whip from 2001-2003, and as Parliamentary Secretary to the Treasury Board President. She was re-elected three times until 2005 when she chose not to re-appear in the January 2006 election. **John Baird** went to claim the seat for the Conservatives.

Catterall was born in Ottawa and worked as a consultant and teacher prior to her career in politics. Before being elected federally, Catterall was an alderman in the Ottawa city council from 1976 to 1985. She ran for mayor of Ottawa in 1985, but lost to **Jim Durrell**.



Bloc Leader Yves-François Blanchet, left, and former Liberal cabinet minister David Lametti in Montreal on Aug. 4. Photograph courtesy of X/Yves-François Blanchet

Conservative MP Genuis welcomes sixth child



Tory MP Garnett Genuis, top right, his wife Rebecca, left, and their six children. Photograph courtesy of X/Garnett Genuis

Conservative MP **Garnett Genuis** and his wife **Rebecca** announced the birth of their sixth child.

"We are very excited to officially announce the birth of **Isidore Carlo Richard Genuis**, born on Sunday, August 11th in the evening," the Alberta MP posted on Twitter the next day, along with a photo of his growing family.

Bloc Leader Blanchet jokes with ex-Lib Lametti in Montreal

Here's proof that politics can be civil and friendly, despite differences of opinion.

That's what Bloc Québécois Leader **Yves-François Blanchet** posted on Twitter Aug. 4 along with a lovely photo of him and former Liberal cabinet minister **David Lametti** in Montreal, fittingly on Wellington Street.

"The campaign in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun is in full swing. A bit of proof that it can be pleasant and cordial," Blanchet wrote in French. "I also met the outgoing Liberal MP, David Lametti, for a photo and a few jokes, always on Wellington Street."

Blanchet was out campaigning with the Bloc's candidate **Louis-Philippe Sauvé**.

Wellington Street is located in Montreal's Verdun neighbourhood, part of the eponymous riding of LaSalle-Émard-Verdun where a federal byelection is in full swing to replace Lametti, who stepped down on Feb. 1 from the seat he'd held for nearly nine years. Voters will choose their next MP on Sept. 16, the day Parliament returns from summer break.

New heads of mission to Argentina, Nigeria, and Tanzania

Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** announced four changes to Canada's heads of mission abroad on Aug. 13.

Stewart Wheeler will replace **Reid Sirrs** as Canada's



Stewart Wheeler has been appointed ambassador to Argentina. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

ambassador to Argentina. Wheeler served as chief of protocol at Global Affairs Canada (GAC) from 2019 to 2023, and has served in postings to Washington, D.C., Bogotá, London, Kabul, and most recently as deputy head of mission to India, according to his government biography.

Emily Burns becomes high commissioner to Tanzania, replacing **Kyle Nunas**. Burns joined GAC in 2008, and has been posted to Kabul and, most

recently, as head of cooperation in Dakar.

Pasquale Salvaggio succeeds **James Christoff** as high commissioner to Nigeria and permanent representative to the Economic Community of West African States. Erstwhile director of the West and Central Africa Bilateral Relations Division, Salvaggio previously served in Canada's missions in Ghana and in Côte d'Ivoire.

And **Véronique Pepin-Hallé** becomes ambassador and Can-

ada's permanent representative to the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe based in Vienna, Austria, taking over from **Jocelyn Kinnear**. Pepin-Hallé is no stranger to the OSCE, having previously served here, as well as postings to Jordan, Iraq, Afghanistan, and Canada's mission to the UN in New York City. Most recently, she was deputy director for the NATO and OSCE section at headquarters.

United States envoy David Cohen hosts CAF brass



U.S. Ambassador David Cohen, centre, with Stephen Kelsey, far left, Frances Allen, second right, Wayne Eyre, far right, and Jennie Carignan, top right, on Aug. 6. Photograph courtesy of U.S. Embassy Ottawa.

American Ambassador to Canada **David Cohen** hosted a dinner at his Rockcliffe Park residence earlier this month for the both outgoing and incoming Canadian Armed Forces' top brass and their partners.

"What a privilege it has been to work with exceptional Canadian military leader, General **Wayne Eyre**, who has also become a good friend," Cohen posted on Aug. 7 on X, formerly Twitter.

"Yesterday, we celebrated his retirement and honored his enduring impact on Canada's military and Canada's place

in the world order—including strengthening the U.S.-Canada partnership."

A U.S. Embassy Official confirmed to **Heard on the Hill** last week that Cohen has "had the pleasure to work with [Eyre] many times over his tenure," and that the "social gathering was indicative of the important relationship between the U.S. Military and Canadian Armed Forces, as well as the close ties between the armed forces and our diplomatic mission."

"We also celebrated two trailblazing Canadians: Canada's

20th Chief of the Defence Staff General **Jennie Carignan**, and former Vice Chief of the Defence Staff Lieutenant-General **Frances Allen**—both the first women to serve in those roles," Cohen tweeted.

Carignan officially took over as chief of defence staff on July 18 following Eyre's retirement after three years in the role.

Allen recently retired from the second in command role after three years, as well. Her successor, Lieutenant-General **Stephen Kelsey**, started his new job on Aug. 1.

McGuinty goes to Kingston, plants tree in Art Milnes' backyard

Former Ontario premier Dalton McGuinty dropped by the Kingston home of veteran *Hill Times* contributor **Arthur Milnes** last week to perform a ceremonial tree-planting. McGuinty, former Ontario premier from 2003 to 2013, now joins seven prime ministers—**Kim Campbell**, **Jean Chrétien**, **Joe Clark**, **Stephen Harper**, **Paul Martin**, **Brian Mulroney**, and **John Turner**—in visiting Milnes at his modest house to demonstrate their tree-planting skills.

McGuinty's colleague former premiers, **Bob Rae** and Quebec's **Jean Charest**, have also helped make the backyard in the Limestone City a permanent memorial to Canada's leaders.

The garden also has an international flavour as former American president **Jimmy Carter** and **Rosalynn Carter** who stayed with Milnes and his wife during a visit to Queen's University in 2012, each planting their own tree before heading back to Plains, Georgia.

"Former premier McGuinty showed great skill and form in handling the

shovel," Milnes, who began writing for *The Hill Times* in 1993, reports, adding that **Beverley McLachlin**, **Marc Garneau**, and **Peter Milliken** have also visited for plantings.

"Our only frustration is the fact that, to date, Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** hasn't come by," Milnes said. "He has told me he will and we are awaiting his trip here. His spot in our backyard has been ready for a long time now and it is frustrating knowing that only one living prime minister hasn't had his own tree to join the ones planted by seven of his predecessors."

Milnes and his wife **Alison Bogle** started to create their unique tree garden in 2006 with a visit from Turner. "It is wonderful to live in a country where our leaders, past and present, would come to the home of an ordinary Canadian couple like Alison and myself to help us pay permanent tribute to public service," Milnes told **HOH**.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Folks, Dalton McGuinty is in the yard: Dalton McGuinty, left, and Arthur Milnes. Photograph courtesy of Edwin White Chacon

U.S. Democratic convention shakes down this week in Chicago



U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris will officially be nominated the Democratic Party's presidential candidate this week in Chicago. Image courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

MONDAY, AUG. 19—THURSDAY, AUG. 22

U.S. Democratic National Convention—The U.S. Democratic National Convention will take place in Chicago, Ill., Monday, Aug. 19 to Thursday, Aug. 22. Details: chicago2024.com.

SATURDAY, AUG. 17—SUNDAY, AUG. 18

Capital Pride—Ottawa's annual Pride festival kicks off on Saturday, Aug. 17, with a theme of "Listen. Learn. Act." The two weeks of festivities include the Capital Pride Pageant (Aug. 17), family picnic (Aug. 18), flag raising at City Hall (Aug. 19), panels, showcases, stage shows, and will conclude with the Pride Parade that will wend its way through downtown streets on Sunday, Aug. 25. Details: capitalpride.ca.

TUESDAY, AUG. 20

Senator Jaffer's Retirement—Today is British Columbia ISG Senator Mobina Jaffer's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

THURSDAY, AUG. 22

Info Sessions on FNCFS Draft Settlement Deal—The third in a four-part series of online info sessions on the Draft Settlement Agreement on Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services hosted by the Assembly of First Nations. Today's session is on "Chapter #3: Prevention in the Draft Agreement." Thursday, Aug. 22 at 11 a.m. ET happening online: afn.ca.

SATURDAY, AUG. 24

Minister Ng's Summer Barbecue—Trade Minister Mary Ng hosts her annual community barbecue featuring food, entertainment, henna tattoos, face painting and balloon animals. Saturday, Aug. 24, at the Aaniin Community

Centre, 5665 14th Ave, Markham, Ont. Details: event.liberal.ca.

SUNDAY, AUG. 25

Sundaes on Sunday Liberal MP Badawey—Liberal MP Vance Badawey hosts "Sundaes on Sunday". Sunday, Aug. 25, at 2 p.m. at Club Richelieu, 565 River Rd., Welland, Ont. Details: event.liberal.ca.

SUNDAY, AUG. 25—TUESDAY, AUG. 27

Victoria Forum—The 2024 Victoria Forum will take place from Aug. 25 to 27 under the theme "Building Trust for a Shared Future." Co-hosted by the University of Victoria and the Senate of Canada, the Victoria Forum 2024 will be held on the traditional territory of the *ləkʷəθən* peoples, and set against the beautiful backdrop of Victoria, B.C. Details: victoriaforum.ca/victoria-forum-2024/

Liberal Cabinet Retreat—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will hold a cabinet meeting from Sunday, Aug. 25, to Tuesday, Aug. 27, in Halifax, N.S.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 28

Means & Ways to Host Online Panel—Means & Ways publisher and ex-Bloomberg Ottawa bureau chief Theo Argitis will moderate an online panel, "Tipping Point: Public revenue at what expense?" Set to explore recent federal tax measures and developments, the panel will feature former Conservative cabinet minister and current CIBC vice-chair of global investment banking Lisa Raitt, economist Jack Mintz, the U.S. Eurasia Group's Jon Lieber, and pollster Nik Nanos. It will take place online on Aug. 28 from 12-1 p.m. Register online.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 4

Bank of Canada to Announce Overnight Rate—The Bank of Canada will

announce its decision on the target for the overnight rate. Wednesday, Sept. 4, at 10 a.m. Details online: bankofcanada.ca.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 5

Info Sessions on FNCFS Draft Settlement Deal—The last in a four-part series of online info sessions on the Draft Settlement Agreement on Long-Term Reform of First Nations Child and Family Services hosted by the Assembly of First Nations. Today's session is on "Chapter #4: Governance and Accountability." Thursday, Sept. 5 at 11 a.m. ET happening online: afn.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 10

Breakfast with Conservative MP Barrett—Grenville Futures, the North Grenville Chamber of Commerce and the South Grenville Chamber of Commerce host a breakfast with Conservative MP Michael Barrett and Ontario Progressive Conservative MPP Steve Clark. Tuesday, Sept. 10, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Prescott Golf Club, 900 Boundary St., Prescott, Ont. Details via Eventbrite.

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem will deliver remarks to the Canada-United Kingdom Chamber of Commerce. Tuesday, Sept. 10, at 8:25 a.m. ET, in London, U.K. Details online: bankofcanada.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 10—WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 11

Canada Fintech Forum—Finance Montréal hosts the 11th edition of the Canada Fintech Forum, the largest fintech event in Canada. Quebec's Finance Minister Eric Girard is among the speakers. The latest edition of the Quebec Fintech Report will also be unveiled. Tuesday, Sept. 10, to Wednesday, Sept. 11 at the Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth, Montreal. Details online: forumfintechcanada.com.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 10—TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

UN General Assembly—The 79th session of the United Nations General Assembly opens today in New York City with a high-level General Debate. Tuesday, Sept. 10, to Tuesday, Sept. 24.

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.

MONDAY, SEPT. 16

House Resumes Sitting—The House will resume sitting on Monday, Sept. 16.

Two Federal Byelections—Federal byelections will be held on Monday, Sept. 16, in the electoral districts of Elmer—Transcona, Man., and LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Que., to fill vacancies in the House of Commons.

Webinar: 'Geopolitics of Trade in an Era of Security'—The Institute for Research in Public Policy hosts a webinar on "The Geopolitics of Trade in an Era of Security," expanding on the ideas raised in the corresponding *Policy Options* editorial series about how major international players including Canada are navigating this rapidly evolving geopolitical environment. Monday, Sept. 16, at 12 p.m. ET happening online. Details: irpp.org.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 17

Mining Association President to Deliver Remarks—Pierre Gratton, president and CEO of the Mining Association of Canada, will deliver his annual address to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Tuesday, Sept. 17, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Pacific Rim, 1038 Canada Pl., Vancouver. Details online: boardoftrade.com.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 18

Panel: 'Three Years Since the Taliban Takeover'—The NATO Association of Canada and the Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History host "Three Years Since the Taliban Takeover: Security Threats, Humanitarian Crisis, and the Fight for Freedom" featuring panelists who will take part in two sessions. Wednesday, Sept. 18, at 2 p.m. ET at the Munk School, University of Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

SATURDAY, SEPT. 21

Canada Strong and Free Regional Networking Conference—Conservative MP John Barlow is among the speakers at the Canada Strong and Free Regional Networking Conference. This year's theme is "Alberta Leading the Way". Saturday, Sept. 21, at the Red Deer Resort and Casino, 3310 50 Ave., Red Deer, Alta. Details: canadastrongand-free.network.

MONDAY, SEPT. 23

Space Canada's Annual Parliamentary Reception—Brian Gallant hosts Space Canada's third Annual Parliamentary Reception featuring networking with leaders of Canada's emerging space ecosystem, food and drinks, several space-related interactive displays, and a special guest speaker. Monday, Sept. 23, 5-7 p.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building. Details and RSVP to: RSVP@space-canada.ca.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

Panel: 'Canada as Natural Resource Powerhouse'—The Ottawa Board of Trade host a panel discussion on "Charting the Path: Canada's Potential as a Natural Resource Powerhouse and the Impact to Canadians" featuring speakers from the Indigenous Resource Network, Cenovus Energy, and Fertilizer Canada. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at 11 a.m. at

the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: business.ottawabot.ca.

Next Frontier in Canada's Digital Divide—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a hybrid 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 12 p.m. ET. Impact Hub Ottawa, 123 Slater St., 7th floor, and online. Details: irpp.org.

The Regent Debate—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts the sixth Regent Debate on the topic "Be It Resolved: Canada can turn a Trump Presidency from a threat into an opportunity." Arguing in favour are author and businessman Conrad Black, and former New Jersey governor Chris Christie. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at 5:15 p.m. at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Details: cdhoweregntdebate.org.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 25

CUTA 2024 Policy Forum—The Canadian Urban Transit Association hosts its 2024 Policy Forum in Ottawa. Some of North America's leading transit and urban mobility experts will discuss the industry's future and the role of federal public transit policy. This year's event will focus on affordability, regional co-ordination and integration, and transit's role in addressing Canada's productivity gap. Wednesday, Sept. 25, at the Hilton Garden Inn Ottawa Downtown, 361 Queen St. Details via Eventbrite.

VIA Rail President to Deliver Remarks—Mario Pélouquin, president and CEO of VIA Rail, will deliver remarks titled "At the Heart of Canada's Passenger Journey: VIA Rail's 2030 Vision" hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Wednesday, Sept. 25, at 7:30 a.m. PT at the Vancouver Club, 915 W. Hastings St., Vancouver, B.C. Details online: boardoftrade.com.

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.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 2—FRIDAY, OCT. 4

IPAC Annual Conference—The Institute of Public Administration of Canada will hold its annual conference on the themes of climate change, AI, housing, and Indigenous topics, addressing the essential role of public administration amid changing realities. Wednesday, Oct. 2, to Friday, Oct. 4 in Winnipeg, Man. Details: ipac.ca.

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.

SATURDAY, OCT. 5

Camp Parliament for Girls—It's all fun and civics at Camp Parliament for Girls Ottawa 2024. Girls aged 8-17 years will study Canada's parliamentary system of government, form political parties, create a campaign platform to stand for office, vote in an election, and form a government to pass a law. Each student will serve as an MP. Saturday, Oct. 5, at 8 a.m. at 350 Dalhousie St. Details via Eventbrite.

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.

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.

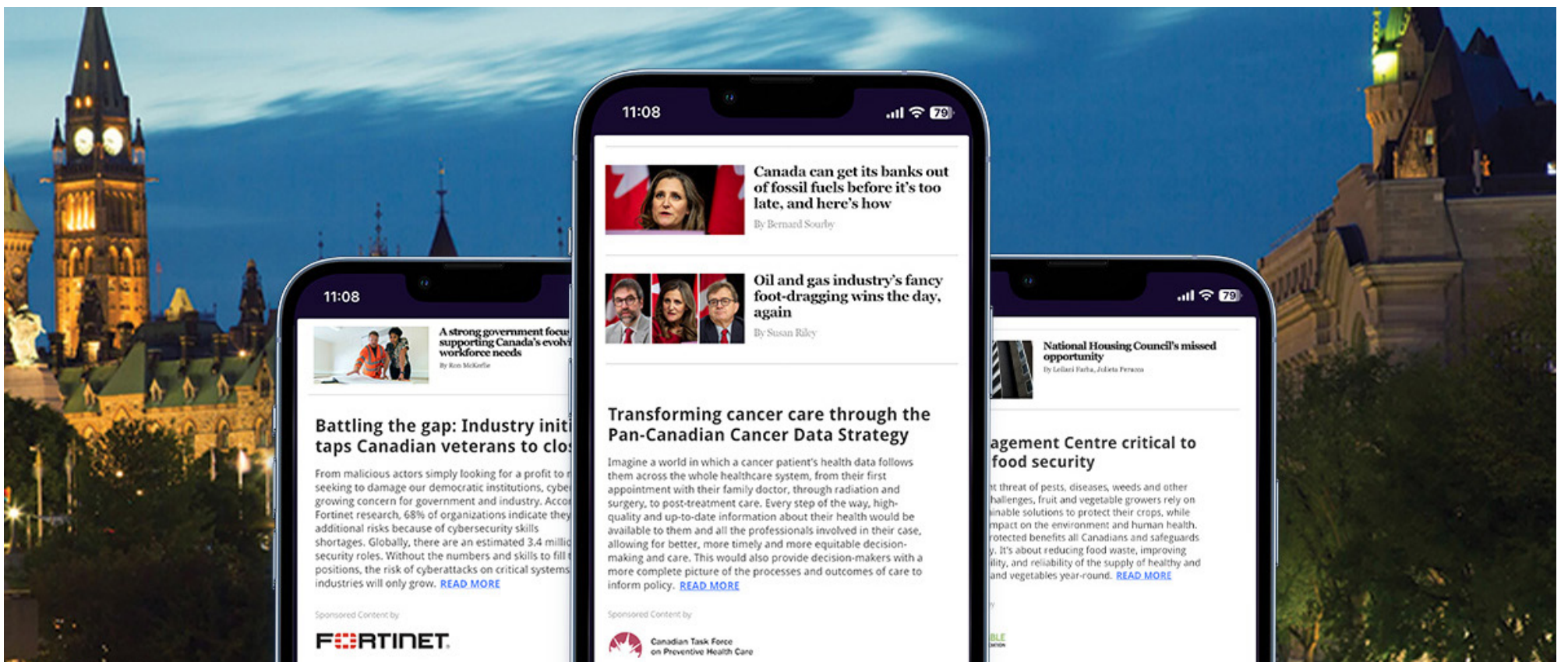
DO YOU HAVE A NUANCED MESSAGE TO COMMUNICATE TO DECISION-MAKERS?

Multi-layered communication strategies must speak to all parties and reach deep within the public service and political staff.

The Hill Times is now offering a sponsored content newsletter placement. This exclusive spot allows you to continue your conversation with Hill Times readers throughout the week.

SPONSORED CONTENT NEWSLETTER INCLUDES:

- ✓ Five mailings of your headline with up to 350 characters in the Afternoon Insider newsletter
- ✓ Your logo is included at the top of the newsletter and with the headline link
- ✓ A link to your full message on **hilltimes.com**



Contact us today to discuss your goals for working with the Federal Government and the challenges you're facing.

sales@hilltimes.com | 613-688-8841

