



**All signs point to a stampede towards Poilievre:** Michael Harris

▶ p. 10

**CANADA NEEDS**

a serious growth plan, like the EU’s: David Crane

▶ p. 13



**POLITICOS PACK THE MET FOR BOUDRIA’S 75<sup>TH</sup> BIRTHDAY BASH**

▶ PARTY CENTRAL p. 20

**Exclusive News: INSIDE**



# THE HILL TIMES

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CANADA’S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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**NEWS**

## Growing Conservative lead in Ontario creates challenge for Grits, chances for NDP: pollsters

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

The Conservative Party is enjoying a strong lead in seat-rich Ontario—with one opinion poll even showing slim majority

support for the party—propelled in part by cutting into traditional Liberal and NDP bases, according to some pollsters.

“They’re building this coalition that includes suburban [voters],

some urban, and the smaller cities,” said Abacus Data CEO David Coletto. “They have the advantage of being on the offence right across the province and have the resources to fight ... where the

Liberals and the New Democrats are very much trying to defend two different types of seats. The way you defend an urban, downtown Toronto or suburban Toronto seat is different than how you

might defend a seat in Nickel Belt or in northern Ontario.”

An Abacus poll released on Sept. 15 showed 43 per cent of respondents nationally would vote for the Conservatives, ahead of 22 per cent for the Liberals, and 18 per cent for the NDP.

In Ontario, the Conservatives had the support of 46 per cent of respondents, with the Liberals

Continued on page 19

**NEWS**

## Bloc Québécois gains at Liberals’ expense could ease path for Conservative majority in 2025, say political players

While Quebec is not typically Conservative-friendly territory, as long as the Bloc prevents the Liberals from maintaining their base, it will help the Conservatives, says pollster Darrell Bricker.

BY ABBAS RANA

The growing support for the Bloc Québécois poses a challenge for Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberals as it will pave the way for an easier path to a Conservative majority in the 2025 election.

“It’s not that the Bloc Québécois needs to win a national election. They only need



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberals should be worried about losing their core support ridings, say pollsters. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

**COMMENT**

## All the troubles Liberals are facing are self-inflicted

BY SHEILA COPPS

OTTAWA—As prime minister Justin Trudeau struggles to defend his future plans, he should step back and reflect on one thing.

All the troubles the Liberals are currently facing are self-inflicted.

The first huge error was to believe that replacing two highly-respected senior cabinet ministers with newbies would enhance the party’s election chances.

When Trudeau chose to demote then-Justice Minister David Lametti and send Carolyn Bennett to the diplomatic corps, he was counting on the belief that both occupied so-called “safe” Liberal seats.

The result of last week’s by-election in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., proves one thing.

There is no such thing as a safe seat in politics.

Liberal organizers also committed a classic error in both ridings, pushing aside viable local candidates for hand-picked head-office replacements.

Continued on page 9

Continued on page 18





Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# ‘Our voices have been heard!’ sings Liberal MP Coteau as Juno Awards changes tune



**Happy Coteau:** Liberal MP Michael Coteau welcomed the Juno Awards’ decision last week to reinstate three musical categories which it had put on ‘hiatus’ earlier this month. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Musicians and audiences know the discomfort of audio feedback, but it was in response to some feedback from listeners themselves that made those in charge of the country’s music awards change their tune.

Liberal MP **Michael Coteau** was one such feedback-giver, issuing a statement on the Canadian Academy of Recording Arts and Sciences’ decision earlier this month to put “on hiatus” the music award categories of Christian/gospel, reggae, and children’s album recordings at the next Junos Awards.

“Removing these categories sends a troubling message to the artists who work in these genres and to the communities that hold this music close to their hearts,” Coteau said in a statement on Sept. 17.

“As the former minister of culture in Ontario, I’ve seen first-hand how important it is to support all genres of music, particularly those that represent the diverse voices and experiences of Canadians. The Juno Awards have always been a platform for recognizing and celebrating this diversity.”

Coteau’s disappointment was clearly just one example of the negative feedback that CARAS was getting on the subject, which caused the Juno organizer to reverse its decision on Sept. 17.

A few hours after Coteau published his statement, **Allan Reid**, the head of the Junos, posted on Instagram saying that “given the feedback,” the organization would

be reinstating the categories for the 2025 gala.

“Our voices have been heard!” Coteau posted on Twitter on Sept. 18.

The 54<sup>th</sup> Juno Awards ceremony is scheduled to take place in Vancouver on March 30, 2025.

## Mila Mulroneu new chancellor at St. FX



Mila Mulroneu is the new chancellor at her late husband’s alma mater. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

**Mila Mulroneu**, the widow of former prime minister **Brian Mulroneu**, is new chancellor at St. Francis Xavier University, the Nova Scotia-based institution announced on Sept. 17.

“I am humbled and honoured to become the 11<sup>th</sup> Chancellor of StFX and to continue the work of advancing this one-of-a-kind institution” she is quoted as saying in a press release.

Mulroneu takes over from outgoing chancellor **John Peacock** effective immediately, though the official installation ceremony won’t take place until December.

“StFX is where my husband Brian was first inspired to get involved in politics and public service, introducing him to a strong set of values that guided him along his journey to becoming Canada’s 18<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister,” she added. “Over the past 50 years, I have spent a lot of time on campus,” including attending the grand opening of the Brian Mulroneu Institute of Government in 2019, which is home to two research chairs named in her honour.

The past denizen of 24 Sussex Drive received an honorary degree doctor of laws from the university in 2004, and another from St. Thomas University in Fredericton, N.B., in 2018. She sits on the board of Cystic Fibrosis Canada, and volunteers at Montreal’s only women’s shelter, and her CV is features a long list of past board member roles including at Astral Media, Le Cercle Entreprendre, the Foundation for Toronto’s Hospital for Sick Children, McGill Music school, United for Literacy, and Les Grands Ballets Canadiens, and chairing Montreal’s Taste of the Nations Gala fundraiser for 16 years.

Born in Sarajevo, Mulroneu emigrated as a young child to Canada with her family, and married the future prime minister in 1973. They have four children: **Caroline, Ben, Mark and Nicolas.**

## Dominic LeBlanc marks five years cancer free



**Grateful LeBlanc:** Dominic LeBlanc, left, with Prime minister Justin Trudeau at Rideau Hall on Nov. 20, 2019. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Public Safety Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** celebrated five years of being cancer free last week.

“As we mark the beginning of the parliamentary session, I’m also marking a more personal milestone—this week, it’s been 5 years since I underwent a stem cell transplant that saved my life. Every day, I am grateful for my health and for the privilege to serve Canadians,” the seven-term MP for Beauséjour, N.B., posted on X on Sept. 16.

In December 2017—the same week he turned 50 years old—LeBlanc announced his leukemia diagnosis. “The chronic lymphocytic leukemia was detected during his annual physical exam last spring when his family

doctor noticed an anomaly in his white blood cell count,” *The Hill Times* then reported. LeBlanc was fisheries minister at the time.

The son of former governor general **Roméo LeBlanc** and close friend of Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** was able to complete his cancer treatments without having to step down from cabinet or from the House. LeBlanc underwent a stem cell transplant from donor, **Jonathan Kehl** of Germany, who gave him a “new lease on life—and a new immune system, identical to his.” LeBlanc famously attended the swearing in of cabinet in 2019 showing off his lack of hair, a side effect from his therapy.

## The Canadian Press’ Robertson on the mend after appendix ruptured, and Gallagher off to work for Ontario legislature



**This just in:** Dylan Robertson, left, and Kevin Gallagher. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

There are two bits of Ottawa media news to share.

Canadian Press’ **Dylan Robertson** is back in Ottawa, and recovered following a recent health issue. “Back at work after two surgeries. Shortly after I got back from Africa, my appendix ruptured and it caused a few secondary issues. Very thankful to the heroes at the Ottawa Civic Hospital and to my CP colleagues for filling my spot for weeks,” he posted on X on Sept. 16 from his hospital bed.

Robertson’s travels abroad were part of a multi-platform project proposal that won him this year’s \$25,000 R. James Travers Foreign Corresponding Fellowship back in March. The reporter’s winning pitch was to visit Ghana, Cameroon and Kenya whose human rights are supported by Canada, but whose

laws and regulations around 2SLGBTQI+ rights are rapidly shifting.

Meanwhile, former CTV National News parliamentary correspondent **Kevin Gallagher** announced he’s found a new job in Toronto: “I’m happy to share that I’m starting a new position as on-camera presenter/writer/producer at [the] Legislative Assembly of Ontario!” he announced on LinkedIn on Sept. 14. “I’m creating educational, promotional and nonpartisan video content about how the Ontario government works, with the Legislative Assembly of Ontario’s Broadcast and Recording Service,” he wrote. Gallagher had been with CTV from 2016 until February of this year when the broadcaster undertook a round of layoffs.

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*The Hill Times*



# Celebrating Canadian Excellence in Biotechnology at BIONATION 2024



BIOTECanada's Gold Leaf Awards recognize the remarkable individuals and companies whose leadership and innovations have contributed to the growth, competitiveness, and success of the Canadian biotechnology sector. The 2024 award winners will be recognized for their remarkable contributions to innovation and their commitment to delivering impactful solutions for our planet, society, and economy.

## Congratulations to the 2024 Gold Leaf Award Winners:



**Promising Biotech Company**  
Ventus Therapeutics



**Biotech Company of the Year**  
Aspect Biosystems



**Industry Leadership (Ecosystem Builder)**  
Clarissa Desjardins



**Community Leadership (Research & Innovation)**  
Peter Zandstra



BIONATION details



Meet the Gold Leaf Award winners



## News

# Steel industry urges Ottawa to put ‘pedal to the floor’ regarding tariffs imposed on China imports

A 25 per cent surtax on imports of steel and aluminum products from China is set to take effect Oct. 15.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A recently announced major tariff hike on imports of Chinese steel and aluminum contributed to a surge in lobbying from Canada’s steel industry in August including calls of support urging the federal government to not back down.

“We really recommend to the government to move forward with what they announced at the end of August,” said François Desmarais, director of trade and industry affairs with the Canadian Steel Producers Association (CSPA). “We’re saying, don’t miss the deadline. Pedal to the floor.”

On Aug. 26, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University—Rosedale, Ont.) announced a 25 per cent surtax on imports of steel and aluminum products from China, effective on Oct. 15, 2024, along with a 100 per cent surtax on all Chinese-made electric vehicles (EVs), effective Oct. 1. In a press release from Finance, it was explained that the intention behind the tariffs is to level the playing field for Canadian workers in the EV and steel and aluminum industries against “unfair competition from Chinese producers.”

The CSPA was the most active lobbying organization in August, in terms of overall communication reports filed. Out of 18 communication reports filed by the CSPA for lobbying activity last month, 17 pertained to international trade.

Desmarais told *The Hill Times* that his organization has definitely increased in lobbying activity in recent weeks in response to the import of Chinese steel and the announced tariffs. He described the tariffs as being welcomed by his organization because of the threat posed by a significant increase from China in steel imports to Canada in recent years.

China has increased its steel-making capacity by 18.6 million metric tonnes—greater than Canada’s total production capacity—since 2018, making it the world’s largest steelmaker with more than one billion metric tonnes produced in 2023, according to the Finance press release.

The United States is set to impose its own 25 per cent tariff



Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay said he is ‘deeply concerned’ about China’s anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola seed exports, in a press release on Sept. 9. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

against the import of Chinese steel and aluminum, effective on Sept. 27.

Ottawa released an initial list of the steel and aluminum goods that would be subject to the 25 per cent surtax on Aug. 26, with a final list to be announced on Oct. 1.

Desmarais argued it will be important for Canada’s list to match the list of goods from the U.S. pertaining to steel and aluminum imports from China.

“It is important for us in Canada to follow suit with our allies and partners because that excess steel will be exacerbated by measures taken by allies,” he said. “We don’t want Canada to receive that excess steel from China because it’s already a problem in Canada.”

The Finance Canada press release argued that China’s “intentional, state-directed policy of overcapacity and lack of rigorous labour and environmental standards” threaten Canada’s workers and businesses in the EV industry.

After the tariffs were announced, Clean Energy Canada raised concerns in a press release that the 100 per cent tariff against EVs from China could result in a “chilling” effect on EV sales, and could drive up EV prices while also slowing adoption of EVs in the near-term.

On Sept. 3, China struck back against Canada’s tariffs by announcing plans to start an anti-dumping investigation into canola imports from Canada.

Agriculture Minister Lawrence MacAulay (Cardigan, P.E.I.) said he is “deeply concerned” about China’s anti-dumping investigation into Canadian canola seed

in August, all of which list “economic development” as a subject for discussion.

*The Hill Times* reached out to ArcelorMittal Dofasco to ask about federal lobbying in August, but did not receive a response by deadline.

Economic development was the top overall subject matter listed in communication reports for federal lobbying in August appearing in 253 reports. The subject of “environment” followed with 213 communication reports, and then industry, which appeared in 212 reports in August based on a search of the federal lobbyists’ registry on Sept. 18.

In terms of economic development lobbying, the second-most active organization was the Centre for Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine (CCRM), which filed 14 communication reports on the subject last month.

Michael May, the CCRM’s president and CEO, told *The Hill Times* that his organization’s communications in August pertained in part to a Strategic Innovation Fund application related to OmniaBio, a biomanufacturing facility located in Hamilton, which will open in phases between 2024 and 2026.

“I think the increase in activity is just about trying to align that process with a desire to have the federal government as a partner to help build the most advanced biomanufacturing facility of its kind in the world, alongside the province of Ontario,” said May. “It’s kind of the last piece of the puzzle in a co-ordinated manufacturing capability in the country to serve not only Canada, but global markets.”

OmniaBio is a subsidiary of CCRM. The Ontario provincial government, through Invest Ontario, announced \$40-million in funding, subject to a definitive agreement, to support construction of the facility in March 2022.

“We’re building an anchor company in the bio manufacturing and cell and gene therapy space in Canada. A lot of that communication to the government is pitching not only the importance of anchor companies ... but also the fact that OmniaBio is a homegrown anchor company,” said May. “The launch of OmniaBio, and our plans for OmniaBio have attracted the attention of ... large potential partners, pharma, technology companies, and so part of our communication in August was letting the government know that. The government plays a role in helping shore up our pitch to those companies to bring them to Canada.”

The CCRM is represented on the registry in-house by Bill Mantel, the organization’s director of strategic projects, and by consul-

tant Brad Duguid of Brad Duguid Consulting.

Last month, lobbying activity by the CCRM included a communication with Laurel Chester, a policy adviser in the office of Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) on Aug. 15.

Following behind CCRM in terms of economic development lobbying was the Canadian Nuclear Association, which filed 12 communication reports on the subject.

George Christidis, the association’s vice-president for government relations and international affairs, told *The Hill Times* that lobbying in August included discussions about the inclusion of nuclear energy in several “key federal policies.”

On July 30, 2024, the CNA submitted a letter to the members of the House Finance Committee with recommendations in advance of the 2025 federal budget. Among the organization’s requests is for the federal government to adjust the qualifying criteria for investment tax credits, in order for small modular reactor projects of up to 1,400 megawatts thermal energy per reactor core to take advantage.

“The investment tax credit is kind of key to us. It’s a very big initiative that was announced in the last couple budgets, and so the implementation of those investment tax credits and the clarification on some of the definitions around those pieces are pretty important,” he said. “Some of the operational definitions around a variety of different pieces ... needed further refinement and some of clarification. It’s tax policy, so there’s always going to be a lot of questions from the industry.”

Representatives of the CNA communicated with Andrew Bezan, chief of staff with Finance Canada, and Hannah Wilson, a senior policy adviser for Finance, on Aug. 6. The organization is represented on the registry in-house by John Gorman, its president and CEO, as well as by consultant Steve Coupland of SGC Research. [jcnockaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:jcnockaert@hilltimes.com)

*The Hill Times*

## Most Active Lobbying Organizations in August

| Organization  | Communication reports |
|---|-----------------------|
| Canadian Steel Producers Association                      | 18                    |
| ArcelorMittal Dofasco                                     | 17                    |
| Canadian Nuclear Association                              | 17                    |
| Canola Council of Canada                                  | 17                    |
| National Association of Women and the Law                 | 16                    |
| Centre for the Commercialization of Regenerative Medicine | 14                    |
| National Council of Canadian Muslims                      | 13                    |
| Aerospace Industries Association of Canada                | 12                    |

The above table shows the organizations that filed the most communication reports for lobbying activity in August based on a search of the federal lobbyists’ registry on Sept. 18, 2024



# BIONATION 2024 : une célébration de l'excellence canadienne en biotechnologie



Les Feuilles d'or de BIOTECanada soulignent l'apport de professionnels et d'entreprises remarquables à la croissance, à la compétitivité et au succès du secteur canadien des biotechnologies. Les lauréats 2024 seront récompensés pour leur précieuse contribution à l'innovation, leur leadership et leur engagement à développer des solutions prometteuses pour la planète, la société et l'économie.

## Félicitations aux lauréats des Feuilles d'or 2024 :



**Nouvel espoir**  
Ventus Therapeutics



**Entreprise de biotechnologie de l'année**  
Aspect Biosystems



**Leadership au sein de l'industrie (bâisseur d'écosystème)**  
Clarissa Desjardins



**Leadership au sein de la communauté (recherche et innovation)**  
Peter Zandstra



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Rencontrez les lauréats des Feuilles d'or



## News

# ‘Stop pointing fingers at each other’: insurers call for more unity between governments on climate adaptation

Canada’s insurance agencies addressed 228,000 claims in July and August, a 20-year high, after natural disasters and extreme weather tore through parts of the country.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

As emergency management professionals converge in Ottawa for a three-day summit this week, Canada’s insurance industry is pushing for greater federal-provincial-municipal co-operation on climate resilience and adaptation measures.

“Our industry is asking governments to stop pointing fingers at each other when it comes to climate change, and to start working together to protect Canadians,” said Craig Stewart, the Insurance Bureau of Canada’s (IBC) vice-president for climate change and federal issues.

IBC figures published earlier this month found that the insurance industry addressed 228,000 claims in July and August, the greatest number in at least 20 years. By way of comparison, Stewart said insurers typically receive 160,000 claims in a single year.

“We only have so many adjusters to go out and inspect damage; we only have so many claims handling staff as an industry,” he said. “What it also means is that this is an economic hit. The amount of funding that went out the door is about approximate to a third of a point of GDP, which is essentially similar to what the



This year’s wildfire season is the second-worst since 1995 in terms of area burned. Only last year’s season recorded a greater number of burnt hectares. Photograph courtesy of Department of National Defence/Cpl. Marc-André Leclerc

banks were projecting in terms of growth for the entire quarter.”

Those claims related to severe weather events and natural disasters such as flooding in Toronto, other parts of southern Ontario and parts of Quebec, a hailstorm that struck Calgary, Alta., on Aug. 5, and the wildfire that swept through Jasper, Alta., in late July.

While this year’s wildfire season has not been as destructive as 2023’s record, it remains the second-worst since 1995. According to the Canadian Interagency Forest Fire Centre, more than 500 wildfires were active last week, of which 95 were out of control. Approximately 5.4 million hectares have burned across Canada so far this season from about 5,311 individual fires.

The wildfires forced evacuations in Northwest Territories, British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Newfoundland and Labrador. On July 24, a wildfire entered the

town limits of Jasper and destroyed approximately a third of the buildings. Firefighter Morgan Kitchen died while fighting the blaze.

Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) introduced Bill C-76, An Act to amend the Canada National Parks Act, on Sept. 18. The bill proposes to transfer land use planning and development powers from Parks Canada to the town of Jasper in what the minister described as a way to help the town more quickly rebuild.

“This puts those important decisions of the rebuilding of Jasper squarely back into the hands where it belongs in the community, with close support and collaboration from Parks Canada,” Guilbeault said at a press conference that day.

Guilbeault said he was seeking unanimous consent to fast-track the bill. “It is for the betterment of Jasperites that we’re doing this,” he said.

Amid the wildfires and other extreme weather events over the summer, a growing number of Canadians are supportive of changes to the nation’s emergency management procedures.

A Nanos survey conducted between Aug. 30 and Sept. 2 found 51 per cent of respondents felt Canada was not prepared to some extent to respond to future emergencies, while three-quarters believed there would be more natural disasters and extreme weather events in the future.

With regard to a national disaster response agency, similar to the United States Federal Emergency Management Agency, 82

per cent of respondents supported or somewhat supported the idea, while 44 per cent backed greater investment in emergency preparedness.

The hybrid telephone and online random survey polled 1,093 respondents, and has an accuracy rate of plus or minus three percentage points, 19 times out of 20.

The survey was commissioned by DMG Events, which is holding the Canadian Emergency Preparedness and Climate Adaptation Convention in Ottawa from Sept. 24-26.

“As natural disasters rise, the need for a unified approach has never been greater. This event, led by experts in emergency preparedness and climate adaptation, aims to foster collaboration, break down silos, and create resilient infrastructure and communities,” the event’s website states. “Attendees will explore innovative climate technologies, enhance emergency response

efforts, and engage in knowledge exchange across provinces. By prioritizing Indigenous traditions, we will ensure sustainable solutions to the climate crisis.”

Speakers at the event will include Trevor Jones, Ontario’s associate minister for emergency preparedness and response; Nahuel Arenas Garcia, the UN Office for Disaster Risk Reduction’s Americas and Caribbean office chief; and representatives from the British Columbia cities of Merritt and Kelowna.

Also on Sept. 26, federal Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) will speak about “Canadian wildfires and the urgent need for resilient communities” at the Canadian Club of Ottawa alongside IBC president and CEO Celyeste Power.

Stewart said his organization will continue to push for co-operation between governments. The IBC has recommended that the government commit the necessary resources to implement the National Flood Insurance Program, which will provide access to insurance for approximately 1.5 million homes at high risk of flooding.

The IBC is also recommending that governments avoid approving new housing in areas that are subject to high flooding risks. Stewart said that while emergency preparedness is primarily a provincial and territorial responsibility, there were still measures the federal government can implement.

“Federal money, infrastructure funding should not go to building new communities, new homes in high-risk flood areas. In Canada’s new housing plan there should be criteria to put disincentives in place from building bad homes in bad places,” Stewart said. “It’s looking at the tools that each level of government has, and putting them to effect in a co-ordinated way to make sure that we’re building resilience instead of increasing our exposure to these risks.”

In the meantime, Stewart urged governments to move above political considerations to work together on this file.

“Governments are not serving Canadians in a healthy way,” he said. “Rather, the provinces sit back and wait for the federal government to make changes that they perceive they’ll be the victims of, rather than saying proactively, ‘look, let’s work together collaboratively.’”

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The Hill Times



Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan will speak at the Canadian Club of Ottawa about wildfires and resilient communities on Sept. 26. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault introduced a bill last week to transfer land use planning and development powers from Parks Canada to the town of Jasper after wildfires devastated the community in July. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



# Holding the Kremlin's Canadian influencers to account

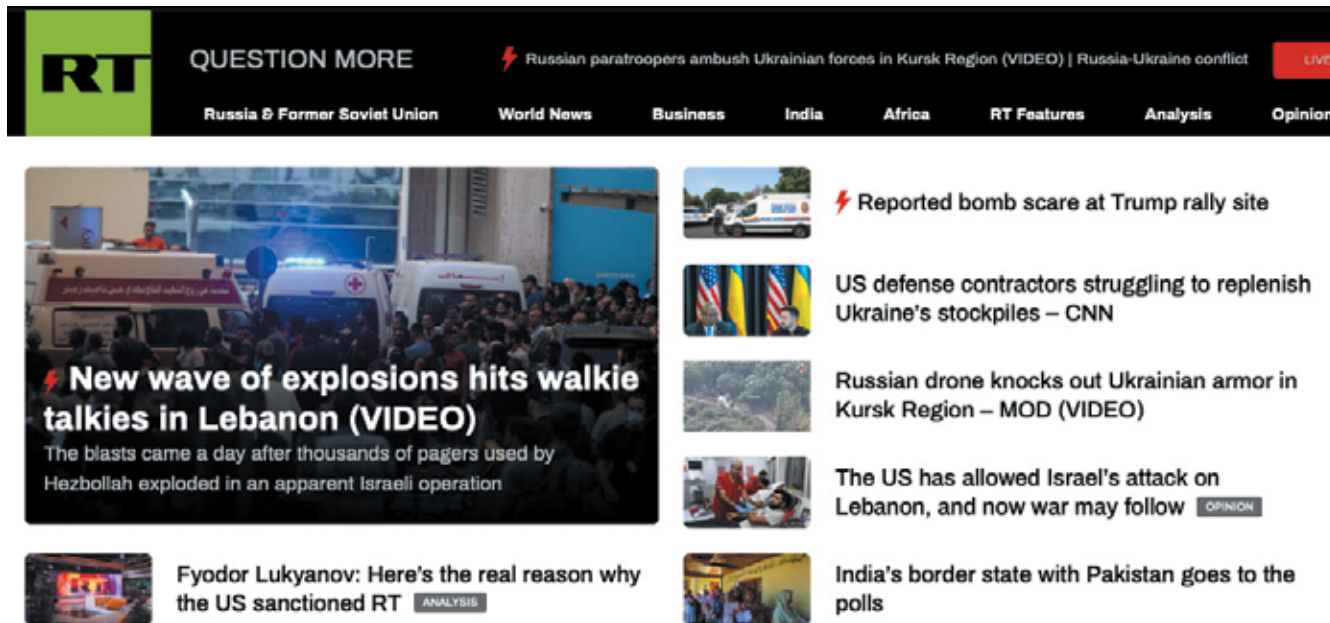
malignant actors who knowingly weaponize data, and promote the interests of Russian autocracy to the detriment of our social contract and its safeguarding institutions.

Additionally, Canadians who have consumed content from these toxic platforms should be vigilant about how their views may have been manipulated by foreign authoritarians and their Canadian collaborators. To assist us in that, all Canadians must be fully informed about the nature, type, and extent of this malignant Russian influence.

We have started to acknowledge and address the serious threat of Chinese influence operations targeting Canadians. By failing to address Kremlin data and influence operations, our information environment will remain vulnerable to manipulation by hostile actors, jeopardizing the cohesion of our society. To safeguard our democracy, we must hold to account and deter those who seek to undermine it and prevent them—along with their collaborators—from violating the sovereignty of our information space. And we need to support all Canadians in helping them better understand the sources and intent behind the pro-Kremlin information that they may believe and inadvertently share.

It's ever more difficult for consumers of news to separate facts from fiction, never mind deliberate disinformation. It means we have a lot more work to do.

*Nova Scotia Senator Stanley Kutcher is with the Independent Senators Group. Saskatchewan Senator Pamela Wallin is with the Canadian Senators Group. Marcus Kolga is a senior fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute and founder of DisinfoWatch.*  
The Hill Times



Two staff from Russia's state propaganda platform RT were indicted in the United States for paying \$10-million to a Canadian-owned firm to create and amplify Kremlin-aligned content in Canada and the U.S.  
Image courtesy of RT

Canadian authorities must fully investigate these activities, and the broader web of academics, activists, and columnists who engage with Russian state media and think tanks on behalf of Russia.

ISG Senator Stanley Kutcher, Marcus Kolga & CSG Senator Pamela Wallin

Opinion



Last week, the U.S. Department of Justice indicted two employees of Russia's state propaganda platform RT for paying \$10-million to a company owned by two Canadians to create and amplify Kremlin-aligned content in Canada and the United States. Among the collaborators were prominent Canadian far-right influencers with substantial followings.

The purpose of these Kremlin-directed activities is to sow division in our society, influence political processes, and weaken our democratic institutions. This indictment reveals the alarming extent of Kremlin influence operations within our borders facilitated by Canadians who should face scrutiny and accountability.

It's no surprise that Canadian far-right and far-left extremists are involved in Kremlin information operations—after all, far-left activists and academics from this country have routinely appeared on RT and collaborate with Russian think tanks. However, the central role played by Canadians in this operation underscores a dangerous vulnerability: our failure to deter such activities has exposed our democracy to well-orchestrated and well-funded ongoing manipulation. The \$10-million uncovered likely represents just a small fraction of a much larger Kremlin operation. Canadian authorities must swiftly and fully investi-

gate these activities, as well as the broader web of academics, activists, and columnists who engage with Russian state media and think tanks on behalf of Russia.

In 2022, the federal government banned Russian-state media from public airwaves, and sanctioned entities like RT and Russian President Vladimir Putin's Valdai Club. These organizations play a key role in Russia's information warfare carried out by senior Kremlin advisers. Official Kremlin documents obtained by the FBI demonstrate that Russia's goal is to incite international conflict, and destabilize societies allied with the U.S. through propaganda that manipulates public opinion and erodes support for Ukraine.

This strategy involves exploiting social media, aligned influencers, and falsehoods to escalate internal tensions in allied nations. Russian narratives target Western audiences by blaming NATO and the U.S. for the war in Ukraine, and urging governments to focus on domestic issues rather than support Ukraine. Disturbingly, the Russian government has identified 2,800 potential international influencers to spread its narratives, while it simultaneously monitors critics of its policies.

These operations are politically agnostic: they target extremes on any issue, exploiting and manipulating various ideological perspectives and political biases. Their objective is clear: divide societies, subvert democracies, and advance Russia's interests by using domestic influencers and third-party actors to mask the Kremlin's involvement.

The FBI's revelations confirm what some of us have warned about for years: Canada is not immune to Russian influence operations. The presence of Canadians at the heart of an RT-funded platform proves that our naive belief otherwise leaves us dangerously exposed to Kremlin influence operations. Those Canadians who knowingly collaborate with authoritarian regimes like Russia, China, and Iran to undermine our democracy and the international rule of law, and must be held accountable.

The Canadian government must urgently investigate those named in the U.S. indictment, and determine whether their services to Russia violated our laws. Canadian law enforcement and intelligence agencies should also probe Canadians who know-

ingly collaborate with sanctioned Russian media and think tanks to promote Russian propaganda. Allowing these individuals to operate with impunity risks compromising our democracy.

This is not to stifle valid and essential differences of opinion. This is to address

The advertisement features a background image of a busy university hallway with students. Overlaid on this is a large red and white wavy banner at the top. The text reads: 'SCHOOL OF PUBLIC POLICY AND ADMINISTRATION' in a serif font, followed by 'MPPA' in very large, bold, red letters, and 'Apply Now!' in a large, bold, sans-serif font. Below this, it says 'APPLICATION DEADLINE FEBRUARY 1ST' and 'CONTACT [SPPA@CARLETON.CA](mailto:SPPA@CARLETON.CA) FOR INQUIRES'. At the bottom left is the Carleton University logo and name, with 'School of Public Policy and Administration' written below it.



# Editorial

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## Editorial

### Improving public accounts reporting is a no-brainer

Canada's budget and estimates process has long been the bugbear of any of those unfortunate enough to deal with it.

MPs, civil servants, researchers, and reporters alike have found the process opaque, the timelines frustrating, and the process of scrutiny rushed. Reforms have been proposed, but then seem to end up on the back burner. But this is extremely important, especially since the public accounts look at how the federal government spends more than \$500-billion annually.

It's also the job of our MPs to scrutinize how government money is spent every year. This is not a game.

*The Hill Times'* Ian Campbell has followed the issues with tracking government spending in a series of articles. Former MPs, ministers, and bureaucrats lamented the current system for scrutinizing estimates and public accounts, including the timeline under which such figures need to be examined.

On Sept. 13, Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux outlined the problems and some proposed solutions in a report. He noted that the current system "falls short of the standard" set out by the International Monetary Fund, which recommends that governments publish their financial statements within six months of the end of the fiscal year.

In Canada, that would mean the publication of all statements by Sept. 30, but the current system has a deadline of Dec. 31. Furthermore, governments

cannot release the public accounts details without first tabling them in the House, further chaining the system to the parliamentary cycle.

The PBO made four suggestions to improve this: move the required release date from Dec. 31 to Sept. 30; allow the government to release public accounts before they are tabled in the House; require the government to publish audited consolidated financial statements within six months of the end of the fiscal year; and request that the Canada Revenue Agency lead a review of the trade-offs between timeliness and accuracy in its methodology for producing tax estimates.

These are all sensible measures that could be implemented relatively simply, provided there is a political will to do so. The PBO last week released a new web tool to help users track the activities that take place through the fiscal year.

These are changes that will never win an election as the vast majority of voters will never see the documents in question, nor experience the frustration of navigating the current system.

At the same time, however, improving the way in which government spending is presented would improve the image of a level of government that has long been seen as lacking transparency.

It could also help instill confidence in federal spending itself, not to mention providing the public with a clearer idea of where their taxes are spent.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Canada doesn't need its own MAGA: letter writer

I received a political mailer from our local Conservative MP Scot Davidson recently. Assuming that it was generated by the party, it provides a clear insight into Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and his party.

The mailer stated the Conservatives' accomplishments on housing—one of their pet themes—by offering to fix Canada's housing crisis "by firing the gatekeepers and forcing municipalities to build homes people can afford." Poilievre is either not well-briefed on the Canadian political system and its separation of powers, or he is knowledgeable about it and is making stuff up. Either one makes him unsuitable as prime minister.

The federal government has no powers that allow it to interfere with either the provincial or municipal governments and to fire their staff and employees. If Poilievre—who has spent his entire career in government—doesn't know about the separation of powers then it's he who ought to be fired. The mailer also crowed about Conservative actions on Bill C-356 which, if passed, would "get homes built fast."

Housing, as everyone knows, is dependent on not just financing, but a host of other things. Land must be owned, zoned, and serviced with roads, water, sewer, and electricity. Developments also need schools, hospitals, policing, and emergency services—to mention only a few. In the GTA and other metropolitan areas, municipalities own very little—if any—developable land, it being almost exclusively in the hands of developers. It is the developers who must actually build the housing and, as private industry, they choose the type and cost of the construction that they intend building. But Poilievre will "fire" these gatekeepers and expropriate their land? Once again, he is missing the power and legal ability required, and is simply deceiving Canadians. The federal government can't expropriate provincial and municipal lands, or even attempt it without massive political consequences.

What we have with the Conservative Party is a Canadian version of MAGA. Canada does not need it.

Allan Bowman  
 East Gwillimbury, Ont.

### Opinion piece 'exploits pro-Israel pink-washing as a tactic': CJPME

Re: "Our Pride embraces, cares for, and protects all at-risk communities, and denounces hate," (*The Hill Times*, Sept. 16). The piece, written by three pro-Israel authors, is built on the false and harmful premise that Palestinians and pro-Palestinian protesters at Pride events "oppose the existence of Jews." The opinion piece also exploits pro-Israel pink-washing as a tactic to explicitly silence any form of solidarity with the Palestinian people who have been facing almost a year of genocide in Gaza.

Although I strongly empathize with the sentiment that Pride should embrace an intersectional form of solidarity with all marginalized communities, the argument of this piece promotes the exclusion of Arabs and Palestinians from queer spaces.

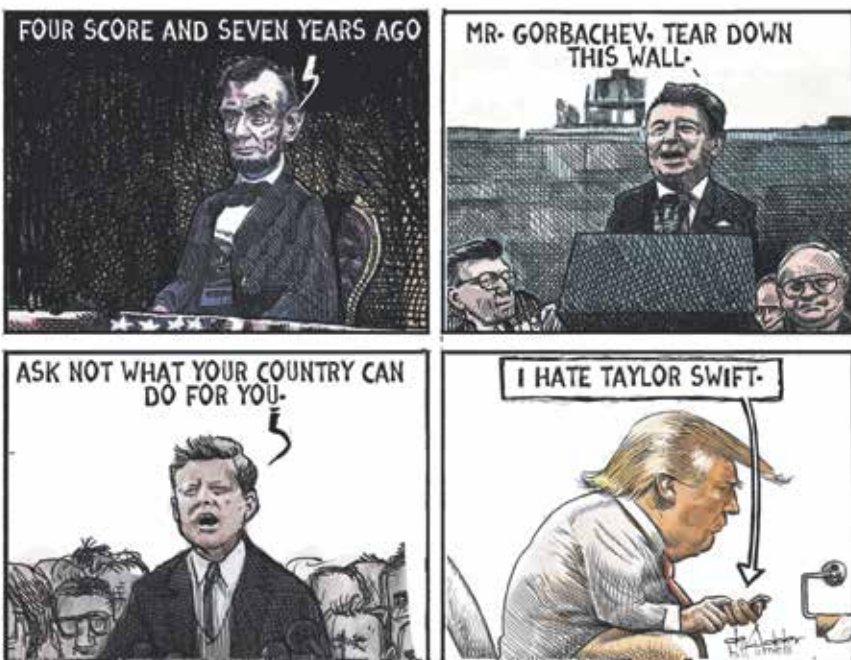
The argument unfairly defames Palestinians and their allies as being inherently antisemitic for supporting the 'Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions' movement, holding anti-Zionist positions, and the

crime of associating Israel with its heavily reported account of systemic apartheid against Palestinians.

This false equivalence is used to pressure allies of the Palestinian solidarity movement into silence. However, calls for justice and an end to the ongoing oppression of Palestinians—a population subjected to decades of occupation, displacement, and violence—is not a call against the existence of Jews.

Given these reasons, it is hard to take this as a good-faith argument about safety rather than a bad-faith attempt to demonize queer Palestinians and Arabs. If so-called activists believe in intersectional solidarity, then they should stop using their victimhood as a weapon to forcefully exclude the suffering of another marginalized group from these important conversations.

Anthony Issa  
 Canadians for Justice and Peace  
 in the Middle East  
 Saint-Laurent, Que.



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# The value of political uncertainty

The NDP's fundraising numbers have been stagnant lately, and maybe Singh thought a little uncertainty would help.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—When NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh ended his supply-and-confidence agreement with the Liberal government earlier this month it must have gladdened the hearts of every political party fundraiser in Canada.

Why would they care?

Well, if there's one thing that keeps political party fundraisers up at night it's worrying about donor complacency.

Keep in mind, for most people—including people who belong



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh with Videotron workers picketing Parliament Hill on Sept. 16, 2024, as the lockout by their employer continues after 10 months. *The Hill Times* photograph Andrew Meade

to political parties—donating hard-earned money to political causes is usually way down on their priority list.

After all, there are many more fun and useful things on which to spend disposable income.

This is why, when presented with a political fundraising pitch, the natural reaction for a lot of donors is to procrastinate, to put off giving money until some later date.

Of course, the problem from a fundraiser's point of view is "some later date" often never arrives.

Fundraisers see that as "leaving money on the table," and that's bad.

So, to help overcome this tendency toward procrastination and to help encourage donors to contribute with alacrity, fundraisers will often inject their appeals for money with a large dose of uncertainty.

That's to say, they will present donors with a cloudy vision of the future where unexpected or bad things could occur.

Essentially the message is, "We don't know what's going to happen in the weeks ahead, but we need to be prepared for all possible contingencies. So please send us money, and do it now!"

For instance, I recently received a fundraising email from the Ontario Progressive Conservative Party which declared, "We urgently need your help to stay on track. Our fundraising deadline is Aug. 31, and we are currently at risk of falling behind the opposition. The NDP used the summer to launch a massive fundraising campaign."

The uncertainty implanted within this particular pitch is clear: "We don't know who will win the fundraising race, the NDP or us. It's still up in the air, it's anybody's game."

Obviously, the idea behind this is to spur the competitive juices within the PC donor base, i.e., "Things are in doubt. It's possible our rivals could do better than us. Don't let that happen!"

During my stints as a fundraiser, I've certainly on occasion used the "uncertainty option."

For example, while raising money to help organizations fund constitutional court challenges, I'd write a letter saying something along the lines of, "Dear Donor, our legal bills are piling up and I need to pay the lawyers soon. But our budget is so tight, I just don't know if we can afford it. That's why I'm turning to you. I

need your help. Please make the most generous donation you can afford, and do it now!"

Please note, that's a pitch that combines uncertainty with a large dollop of drama.

At any rate, the point I want to make here is that Singh's decision to break his parliamentary alliance with the Liberals has created a tsunami of political uncertainty in this country.

Simply put: a snap federal election could happen at any time, which is something fundraisers from all political parties will want to take advantage.

Heck, the fundraising letters write themselves: "Dear Donor, a federal election could happen tomorrow, so we need money today!! Send cash!"

It's an easy and obvious ask, and it should work.

I expect all political parties will see a bump in their donations.

There's even a cynical side to me which wonders if one reason why Singh broke off his deal with the Liberals was to give his political base a jolt.

The NDP's fundraising numbers have been stagnant lately, and maybe Singh thought a little uncertainty would help.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

*The Hill Times*

# All the troubles Liberals are facing are self-inflicted

The result of last week's byelection in Montreal proves there's no such thing as a safe seat in politics. Liberal organizers also made a classic error: pushing aside viable local candidates for hand-picked head-office replacements.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



Continued from page 9

In Toronto-St. Paul's, Leslie Church—an Ottawa insider—was the chosen one. Several popular local candidates wanted to run for

the nomination, but were not given the chance to compete fairly.

In Montreal, nominee Laura Palestini was a well-known local councillor. But there were others who wanted to seek the nomination when Lametti stepped down to return to the legal profession.

National campaign co-chair Soraya Martinez Ferrada told Radio Canada last summer that Palestini was hand-picked by the party, bypassing an open nomination process.

Privately, she explained to disgruntled Liberals that the party preferred directed democracy.

But that decision meant that several long-term riding activists sat out the election, and in a race as tight as the one we saw on the evening of Sept. 16, their absence was costly.

The best way to ensure a candidate has the support of the riding is to allow an open nomination where all prospective candidates prove their organizational prowess, as well as their ability to connect with the community.

In both byelections, head office chose the candidates, and that left a bad taste in people's mouths.

The self-inflicted wound of trying to direct democracy was coupled with a political calcu-

lation that has cost the Liberals dearly.

In the July 2023 cabinet shuffle, three senior ministers were moved out, supposedly to reboot the party fortunes.

Not coincidentally, new cabinet choices depended on how the changes might help electorally.

In Ottawa, former minister Mona Fortier occupied what is supposed to be another safe seat.

The exits of Fortier, Lametti, and Bennett were all supposed to ensure a better political positioning for the Liberals.

Lametti's departure set the stage for the ministerial appointments of Tourism Minister Martinez Ferrada, and Justice Minister Arif Virani.

Both hail from minority communities, and it was thought that their promotions—like that of Small Business Minister Rechie Valdez—would increase party chances in Latin-American, Muslim, and Filipino communities. Fortier's replacement with Jenna Sudds was intended to solidify a tough seat in west Ottawa, the thinking being that ministers are more likely to be re-elected in a tight race.

Instead, the numbers have not moved up for the Liberals, and the losses in two previous strong-

holds have further damaged the prime minister's staying power.

The notion that ministerial status improves electability is also debatable.

Back in 1984, when I was the only Liberal elected between Toronto and Windsor, the ministerial moniker hurt rather than helped.

At that time, the party had governed for so long that anyone associated with a ministry was actually in greater danger of defeat.

The only reason I was able to win my seat was that I had come from the provincial legislature, and as a new candidate, I had the benefit of saying that I represented change.

In a change election, people vote for change. And if you are too closely associated with the previous government that can hurt rather than help.

The Liberal cabinet reset, carried out more than a year ago, has not improved the party's standing.

There is a mood in the country that people want change. For better or for worse, they are not focusing on Pierre Poilievre's destructive policies.

Instead, they are telling the Liberals they want new faces. Trudeau is trying to warn Canadians: "be careful what you wish for."



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ignores reporters' questions as he walks through the House of Commons foyer before Question Period on Sept. 18, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Meanwhile, some Liberal organizers are actively seeking to cherry-pick their candidates, and to slow the nomination process for others.

Long-time Members of Parliament like Judy Sgro have fulfilled all the requirements for renomination, but still haven't been given the green light.

If the party takes one lesson from these byelections, it is this: There is no such thing as a safe seat. And the best way to win an election is for the party to stay out of it.

Let local Liberals decide.

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

*The Hill Times*



## Comment



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, pictured on the Hill on Sept. 17, 2024. It's that swing of the historical pendulum that has so far allowed the Conservatives to wage a campaign for power largely devoid of policy, and full of the sound and fury of name-calling, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Liberals as the progressive choice in the next election.

Over the next weeks and months, Canadians will be treated to the odd spectacle of former allies in governing vilifying each other.

Singh has already said that the Liberals are a spent political force with no new ideas, and that the party has too many corporate connections to do anything about high grocery prices for consumers.

Trudeau has accused Singh of "caving" on the carbon-tax, and tut-tutted about the NDP's alleged hard turn to the right. In a way, it is play fighting. Neither wants—nor can afford—an election. But both leaders may be missing the point.

The trouble for both the Liberals and the NDP is that an extended period of progressive politics may simply have run its course. When change is in the air, details don't matter. Nor does the personal popularity of the alternative.

After nine years, Canadians are well acquainted with the benefits of a federal government that "invests" in its citizens and their future. Much has been achieved by the Trudeau government. Raising kids out of poverty, dental care, affordable daycare, lower interest rates, mortgage reform, pre-COVID inflation rates, and significant international investment, albeit often driven by generous federal subsidies.

But after nearly a decade, and in the midst of stubbornly tough times, Canadians have also seen the downside of the left's preference for Big Government: a huge expansion of the federal public service, a housing crisis exacerbated by a dubious immigration policy, a faltering and overburdened health-care system, and a doubling of the national debt.

This is the old cycle of politics. After eight years of Brian Mulroney's brand of conservatism, the country went big for Jean Chrétien and the Liberals.

After 10 years of Chrétien, the country turned to Stephen Harper.

After nearly 10 years of Harper, Canadians switched back to the Liberals and Justin Trudeau.

And now, after almost 10 years of Trudeau, all signs point to a stampede towards Pierre Poilievre.

It is that inexorable swing of the historical pendulum that has so far allowed the Conservatives to do something quite remarkable. They have waged a campaign for power largely devoid of policy, and full of the sound and fury of name-calling, negativism, and more than a little nonsense.

That said, Poilievre is as shrewd as he is hardworking. He knows that in politics, as in life, when your time is up, it's up. So watch for the Conservative leader to remain on cruise-control, and leave it to his opponents to try to jam the Batmobile into reverse.

The grinding noise coming out of Ottawa these days is the sound of change.

*Michael Harris is an award-winning author and columnist.*

*The Hill Times*

# All signs point to a stampede towards Pierre Poilievre

The grinding noise coming out of Ottawa these days is the sound of change.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Justin Trudeau is a coach in danger of losing control of the locker room.

After losing one Liberal stronghold in Toronto in June, the party has just lost another on the island of Montreal. Toronto St. Paul's, Ont., and LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que., are bookends of a brutal battering. The Grits once seemed to hold the deeds to these political properties. So in the wake of the losses, how does Trudeau sell the game plan going forward to a dispirited and downtrodden team?

No one knows. But I would suggest not by promising more of the same. And certainly not by burying his head in the sand. That has been his approach up until now. The political climate in Canada has changed, and Trudeau has suddenly become the climate-change denier.

He refuses to acknowledge what poll after poll shows: the majority of Canadians no longer want him on the voyage.

Unlike U.S. President Joe Biden, who ultimately saw that he was the problem and not the solution to the woes of the Democrats versus Donald Trump in the United States, Trudeau continues to say that he will lead the Liberals into the next election. Is that political heart, or mere hubris?

Here's how the latest Poll Tracker describes what it might look if Trudeau were to remain at the helm for another election: a projected 218 seats for the Conservative Party of Canada, and just 64 seats for the Liberals.

The same poll found that there was a 96-per-cent likelihood that the CPC would win the most seats, and a majority. It found that there was just a one per cent

chance that the Liberals would capture the most seats.

This is not breaking news. For a year now, the CPC has enjoyed a wide lead over the Liberals in every province but Quebec where the Bloc Québécois is in front. Now that the BQ has established a beachhead on the island of Montreal, even more traditionally Liberal seats could be lost. It stands to reason that if you lose by a hair in a stronghold, you get clobbered in more vulnerable seats.

But Trudeau isn't the only political casualty of the recent byelections and the polls. Although the NDP held onto its seat in Manitoba, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh has reason to be worried. Compared to past performances, the margin of victory was slimmer than most people's wallets.

The riding of Elmwood-Transcona should have been a cake-walk. Yet in an NDP province—and in a working-class riding—Leila Dance won the seat by just over 1,000 votes. Daniel Blaikie and before him his father Bill Blaikie held this same seat for 45 years. They were usually so far

ahead of their opponents that no one could see their tail-lights.

This time, the CPC ran a respectable second to the NDP, losing by just four percentage points and increasing their vote by 18 per cent. Not close, but close-ish. The Liberals were nowhere.

Why is that significant? It means that Poilievre's novel charm offensive aimed at the labour vote is gaining traction. And it means that his relentless efforts to tie "Sell-Out Singh" to the Liberals are also bearing fruit. If they continue, both of these trends could have a huge influence on the next election.

Despite the end of the supply-and-confidence agreement, Trudeau and Singh remain twins joined in political misery.

The PM has the greater problem, facing a catastrophic defeat if the Conservatives were to find a partner to bring down the government. There is no obvious way out or up for the Liberals. As Senator Percy Downe, former chief of staff of Jean Chrétien, recently noted, the chance for Trudeau to step down has passed.

But Singh has big problems, too. Back in 2015, the NDP won 43 seats. Under Singh's leadership, that number has dwindled to 24. True, his party won in Elmwood-Transcona, and in politics a win is a win.

But the CPC made a fight out of it in an NDP stronghold. According to Poll Tracker, the NDP is sitting at 17.4 per cent with voters nationally—four points lower than the Liberals.

It is projected that if an election were held today, the New Democrats would win just 21 seats. That's not chiselled in stone, but it's troubling for a party that's trying to replace the



# It's time for a very reasonable revolution: Dominic Cardy

The Canadian Future Party believes in a data-driven alternative to the sterile left versus right. No sane person believes government should do it all, or do nothing.

Dominic Cardy

Opinion



It's time for a very reasonable revolution. Half of Canadians in a recent Angus-Reid poll say Canada needs a new, moderate political party. The Canadian Future Party aims to be that

party. We're socially liberal, and fiscally disciplined. Those are complementary—not contradictory—ideas. We believe in the aggressive defence of democracy both at home and abroad. In a time of toxic division, we bring democrats together: a former Stephen Harper cabinet minister working with a former Jack Layton NDP MP; former Liberal organizers with former sovereigntists. We believe in evidence, and in science.

Anyone reading *The Hill Times* is already involved in public life: you're not here for the horoscopes. Whether you're sitting in a DFO office in Nunavut, a backbencher waiting to be told how to vote, or a staffer waiting for a minister to get out of a meeting in the Prime Minister's Office: you have a perspective on our country and its institutions that's up close and personal. You can see backbench MPs treated as animatronic voting dolls. Health-care reforms that can't be discussed because our leaders are afraid of upsetting doctors. National defence ignored as the world burns. And a politics

that's more angry, extreme, and subject to influence.

Many of us are equally alarmed about the Liberals' high-handed approach to these problems, and the Conservatives' willingness to play populist games to highlight the government's many failings. Poorly developed programs are as damaging to democracy as heedless program cuts. Opposition conspiracies are as dangerous as government excuses.

The CFP believes in a data-driven alternative to the sterile left versus right; in 2024, no sane person believes government should do everything, or that it should do nothing. That fight played out over 200 years. Both left and right lost. Democracy won. Neither offered complete answers: the extremes of the left and right have poisoned and continue to poison our politics as much as their centres made us richer, more equal, and freer. We want to build on that centre.

We know what works. Canada works. We are lucky to be among the small family of

free countries where individual rights and collective responsibilities are decided through fair elections. In Canada, the rule of law isn't a revolutionary goal, but a fragile achievement. Here, we can fix what's broken. We can solve problems. Whether its building houses, introducing competition in the airline, telecom, and agricultural sectors, supporting Ukraine's victory over Russia while boosting defence spending to two per cent of the GDP, or recognizing the credentials of foreign-trained doctors, making democracy deliver is at the heart of the CFP's political project.

Democracy defines the limits of the CFP's politics. We cannot tolerate the intolerable. We make no apologies for that rigidity. Open societies like ours are rare and fragile. Over the last couple of generations, we have been too quick to believe that the democratic enthusiasm that marked the Cold War's end meant anything more than dictators figuring out new ways to liberate democracies from our

cash. We assumed money would build democracy, instead it built the banks and battalions of our enemies. For the CFP there's a policy lesson: free economies only work in free societies, and the free societies always have strong governments.

No one has ever faced the problems of a post-industrial world, declining birthrates, climate change, aggressive dictators, and amoral algorithms. There is no road map. A government of the people that delivers universal social programs, protects universal human rights—we're lucky to live in a country with these problems to solve.

As the CFP's first leader, I am under no illusions about the challenges in front of me, my team, and my country. Equally, I have no doubt this start-up project is essential. In a chaotic world, it's time to define and then ensure Canada's place as a big country in every sense, ready to lead.

In the end, parties are just vehicles to move a country in a certain direction. I hope the Canadian Future Party helps drive our country not left, not right, but forward. I'm excited to start the journey and I hope, no matter your history, that you'll join us for the ride. For the future!

*Dominic Cardy is the leader of the new Canadian Future Party, and is a former New Brunswick cabinet minister.*

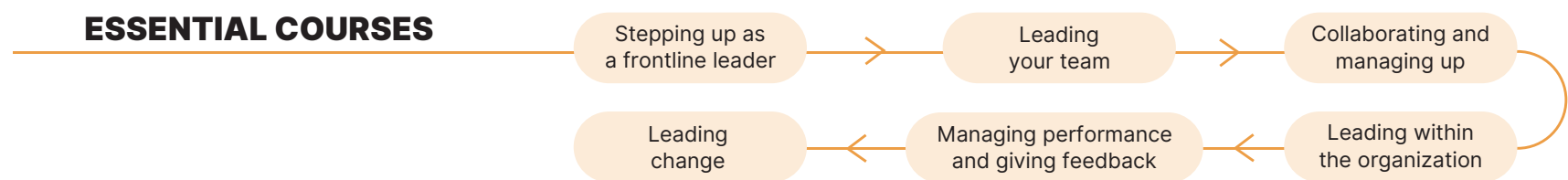
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## Opinion

# Ottawa's failed commitment to displaced Palestinians is a broken promise to Canadians

Canadian charities are at their limits, grappling with the humanitarian emergency in Gaza while also aiding families upon their arrival here.

Mahmuda Khan & Raheel Irfan

Opinion



On Nov. 1, 2023, in the wake of devastating losses in Gaza where thousands of Palestinians perished, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau convened with bereaved families at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre. These families, who had endured profound losses, implored Trudeau to leverage Canada's strong ties with Israel to facilitate the safe evacuation

of Palestinian-Canadian families from Gaza.

In January 2024, the Canadian government finally responded to longstanding appeals by committing to welcome 1,000 Palestinians for family reunification, offering a glimmer of hope to numerous families. Under mounting public pressure, this initial promise was subsequently increased to 5,000, reflecting a broader recognition of the urgent need for action. These decisions followed sharp criticism of Ottawa's lacklustre evacuation of Canadians from Gaza compared to those from Israel, and emerged amidst brewing legal challenges against the government. However, despite these promises, not a single Palestinian has exited Gaza with help from Canada, and Immigration Minister Marc Miller has placed the blame towards Israel for allegedly blocking the process. His narrative, however, is starkly contradicted by the extortionate fees of US\$5,000 per person levied by an Egyptian-linked company that facilitates the crossing of Palestinians across the border, suggesting that security concerns are not the real obstacle.

Families, desperate for reunification, are draining their life savings, refinancing homes, or borrowing vast sums to finance these exorbitant fees. For families with five or more members, the financial burden is crippling. Once these families manage to leave Gaza, they find themselves stranded in Egypt with no assurance from Canada of an eventual visa to join their family. Furthermore, the visa application process itself is bizarrely stringent, demanding such minutiae as descriptions of body scars—requirements not applied to most other foreigners.

Repeated discussions with Miller and his office have yielded no tangible improvements. On the contrary, the government has off-loaded the financial burden onto Canadian Muslim-led charities expecting them to cover everything from airfare to settlement support upon arrival. These families—who arrive with nothing but the clothes on their backs—are now reliant on a coalition of Canadian charities and community-based groups—already stretched thin—to step in where government agencies have stepped back. This coalition has spent more than

\$2.3-million to provide crucial support to more than 800 individuals from Gaza, including financial assistance, trauma care, and general well-being—all without the benefit of any government programs.

Adding insult to injury, the temporary Canadian visas bar recipients from working, offer limited health care, and complicate the approvals of work permits—a stark contrast to the expedited permanent residency process afforded to Ukrainians under similar circumstances. Without the ability to work or access adequate health care, arriving families face significant challenges in achieving independence, and reducing their reliance on social services.

The current policy is not just a logistical failure, it's also a moral one. It reflects a deeply ingrained bias in government and a concerning pattern of prejudice that impacts not just Palestinians, but also various minority groups across the board. This disparity paints a troubling picture of systemic bias in which programs intended for visible minorities—like Syrians, Afghans, and Sudanese—are inherently prejudiced, and set up to fail.

This situation underscores the important role of Amira Elghawaby, Canada's Representative on Combating Islamophobia, in addressing what may be an example of systemic bias within government policies. Elghawaby has already been engaging with community groups to better understand the issue, but the government needs to work with her to conduct a comprehensive review and revise its approach to Palestinian resettlement to ensure it is free of bias, and offers greater fairness and equity.

Every Canadian should find this situation unacceptable. We must demand accountability, and demand policies that offer real support to those in need, ensuring their successful integration into Canadian society.

Canadian charities are at their limits, grappling with the humanitarian emergency in Gaza while simultaneously aiding families upon their arrival here. Ottawa's unfulfilled commitment not only betrays the promises made last November to families who sought solace from Prime Minister Trudeau, but it also sets everyone up for failure. This situation poses a stark question every Canadian should be asking their Members of Parliament: why are Palestinians being relegated to second-class status on our soil? It's time for a hard reckoning with our values and policies.

*Mahmuda Khan serves as the CEO of Human Concern International, and Raheel Irfan is the CEO of National Zakat Foundation. Both are leading members of the coalition dedicated to supporting Palestinians settling in Canada.*

*The Hill Times*

## We all have to keep plastics out of our lakes and rivers

Researchers in Toronto found an average of 123 microplastics in one serving of freshwater fish, vastly more than the nine microplastics ingested in a serving of grocery store Alaska pollock found in a study by the same authors published earlier this year.

Pauline Gerrard

Opinion



As the world gathered for World Water Week in Stockholm, Sweden, from Aug. 25-29, it seems as though no one could escape news of the ubiquity of microplastics in our fresh water.

This time they had been discovered in freshwater fish fillets—that is to say, the part of the fish that we primarily eat—by researchers in Toronto.

They found an average of 123 microplastics per serving of fish, which is more than 12 times as many particles as the nine microplastics ingested per serving of grocery store Alaska pollock found in a study by the same authors published earlier this year.

It's a worrying finding to say the least, and matters because not only did we learn that microplastics are getting deeper into the bodies of fish—and, therefore, likely those of other freshwater dwellers, as well—but also because these are the parts of fish that are ingested by humans. This almost certainly means more microplastics entering our bodies.

And it doesn't come as a surprise given that overall quilt

of evidence of plastics' omnipresence in our environment—blown across the Sahara Desert and the Galapagos islands—has been building for years.

So, that's the bad news. Where do we go from here? How can we undo some of the damage that has already been wrought, and reduce the impact of what is yet to come?

First, as dejecting a process as it might be, we really do need to learn more about where plastics are found in the environment, and where they come from. This means more funds from government coffers for researchers to go out into nature and discover the trajectory of microplastics, from source to monitoring spots.

We also need to understand the fate of plastics in our environment. So, if microplastics are being leached into a lake through the air—which does happen, by the way—adding to the research that is already been undertaken means we will better understand how plastics move within our world.

A better grasp on the microplastics landscape needs to



Canadian artist Benjamin Von Wong's public art installation 'The Giant Plastic Trap' is pictured outside the Shaw Centre in Ottawa on April 23, 2024, where a UN meeting to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution was taking place. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

inform—and be coupled with—ongoing strategies to limit how much plastic ends up in the environment. This means we need to look at manufacturing methods. Single-use plastic bans at state, country and federal levels across the globe are heartening to see, but we need more—and fast.

And good, old-fashioned getting our hands dirty with the great general public is also a massive part of this complex puzzle.

This can mean many things. Rolling up our sleeves and organizing cleanups that empower citizens to clean up their own backyards. Public-awareness campaigns that encourage everyday folks to voluntarily

forgo single-use plastics for the greater good. Maybe even going one step further and asking them to take up the mantle as citizen scientists, and collect data on plastic pollution in their local environment.

Everyone has a part to play in this pressing environmental issue that affects, well, everyone. So as another World Water Week in Sweden passes us by this year, let's not forget the role that we all have to play—from governments to individual citizens—to keep plastics out of our lakes and rivers.

*Pauline Gerrard is executive director of IISD Experimental Lakes Area.*

*The Hill Times*





Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem, left, and Deputy Governor Carolyn Rogers on the Hill on Feb. 1, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# We need a serious growth plan for Canada, like the EU's

The European Union's recent report sets out priorities, a plan, and an estimated cost. This is what we need: something solid and serious for our future. We don't have that today, which is why why Canadians are losing confidence in their future.

David  
Crane

Canada &  
the 21st Century



**T**ORONTO—A majority of Canadians fear the country is on the wrong track. They have reason to be worried. The sharp increase in food prices, worries about access to health care, and fears over the cost and availability of affordable housing are all driving pessimism and a fear for the future.

As recurring polls and two critical byelections suggest, Canadians appear to have lost confidence in the Trudeau govern-

ment. Yet, nothing we are hearing from either the Conservatives or NDP shows they know how to do better.

So what can be done? In the short run, not much. There are no sliver bullets. The Bank of Canada will accelerate interest rate cuts, which will help in the short term. The government is increasing federal mortgage insurance levels so people can afford more expensive homes while stretching out repayment periods. But this will have little impact on the supply of housing, or on rents. But there's not a lot more the federal government can do that has immediate effect. Its fiscal cupboard is not empty, but it is approaching that point.

What the country clearly needs is a strategic growth agenda that builds confidence in the future with real deliverables, while acknowledging this will mean real short-term pain for long-term gain. Yet, a lack of realism abounds. Abacus Data pollster David Coletto, for example, argues that as a new parliamentary session begins, "Parliament and the federal government need to find ways to instill confidence in Canadians that there is a clear economic strategy in place to create wealth, grow the economy, and secure their future."

This is wishful thinking, and not just because of pre-election manoeuvring. Much hard thinking is needed. While Canada has talent and ideas, we don't know how to convert that into commercial success. Moreover, the

provinces have to be onside, given their shared responsibilities.

It is clear we need to create wealth, grow the economy, and secure the future. This is what the challenge of innovation and productivity is all about. Right now, we are not creating the wealth for a better future.

Only by investing in intangibles—research and development, patents, software, new business methods, branding, and skills—and in tangibles—machinery and equipment, buildings, infrastructure and equipment including trucks and planes—will we achieve the kind of progress we seek. The Canadian dream will fade away without a clear growth plan for the future.

A great failing in Canadian politics is our political parties' failure to underline the link between innovation-driven productivity growth, and our capacity to provide well-paying jobs and to finance health care, education, and the needs of an aging society. Our MPs have failed to be up front on the huge challenges we face as a nation.

It's not that we have lacked facts on our sluggish performance relative to leading nations on innovation, investment, and productivity. Our ongoing decline in per-capita GDP is a bottom-line demonstration of our failure. Moreover, we have in recent years seen many reports underlining our failings. For example, the C.D. Howe Institute, to its credit, has delivered many reports on underinvestment by business in new technology and productive

investment, though less so on the intangibles economy.

The latest report, by William Robson and Mawakina Bafale, again spells out the challenges. But there are two problems with the C.D. Howe report, *Under-equipped: How Weak Capital Investment Hurts Canadian Prosperity and What to Do About It*, as there are with similar papers.

First, it fails to explain exactly why Canadian firms are underinvesting—offering many possible explanations, but falling short of any clear explanation. Second, its suggested remedies are insufficient to bring about the real long-term change and restructuring we need.

The two authors cite many past and current reasons that might explain underinvestment by business. These range from our low population, cold climate, overreliance on resource revenues, weak business spending on research and development, interprovincial trade barriers, overinvestment in real estate, and a "hostile regulatory environment" for oil and gas projects to an economy with an excess of small and mid-size businesses, the attraction of investing in the United States after the 2017 U.S. tax cut legislation, and a complex Canadian tax system.

One could add to their list aggressive protectionism under the Buy America Act, a U.S. subsidy war to attract investment to the that country as set out in the U.S. Semiconductor CHIPS Act and Inflation Reduction Act, the

failure of the Canadian financial system to finance the scale-up of promising home-grown firms, poor management, risk-aversion and short-term corporate thinking, and the failure to support growth companies through government as a lead customer. These are easy rules that allow foreign multinationals to buy up our promising growth firms so that large Canadian businesses don't develop, a lack of technology diffusion programs or provision of manufacturing centres where innovators could test new ideas, and a weak policymaking capability due in part to lack of demand at the political level as well as an over reliance on outside consultants so in-house policymaking strengths are never developed.

At the same time, the suggested remedies—while useful—are insufficient to solve our underlying problem of weak innovation, poor productivity, and the reliance on an economy that is increasingly stale-dated, and that cannot deliver the increase in incomes and the wealth to support needed public goods such as education and healthcare. Without serious change, our weaknesses can only get worse.

So we need a serious growth plan for Canada, one with deliverables rather than aspirations. The European Union provides a good example with its report, *The Future of European Competitiveness*, drafted by Mario Draghi, the former European Central Bank president. This is a solid piece of work that sets out priorities, a plan, and an estimated cost. This is what we need: something solid and serious for our future. We have nothing like that today, which is one reason why Canadians are losing confidence in their future.

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*The Hill Times*



# Global



Exploding pagers killed at least 12 people and injured 2,800 others in Lebanon on Sept. 17 in an attack widely believed to be carried out by Israel. Screen capture images courtesy of CNN World

## What was the point of the exploding pagers?

Detonating the devices without an accompanying invasion is a far less effective attack.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—Exploding pagers killed at least 12 people and injured 2,800 others in Lebanon on Sept. 17 in an attack widely believed to be carried out by Israel. The strikes were mostly just a new wrinkle on the exploding cell phones that Israel has used to assassinate its opponents in the past. Except, in this case, there was one major innovation.

You expect competence and ingenuity from Israel's Mossad spy agency, so it's no surprise that it knew Hezbollah—the Lebanon-based Islamist organiza-

tion—was planning to replace the mobile phones of its planners and commanders with old-fashioned pagers. (One-way pagers cannot transmit, so do not reveal the holder's location.)

More impressively, Mossad found the information early enough to use it. Its operatives quickly turned to an obscure Hungarian firm called BAC Consulting that manufactures pagers under license from a Taiwan company called Gold Apollo.

Gold Apollo's founder, Hsu Ching-kuang, denies it made the pagers used by Hezbollah, claiming that BAC Consulting had bought the rights to manufacture its pagers in Europe. "The product was not ours. It was only that it had our brand on it," Hsu said. "We may not be a large company, but we are a responsible one. This is very embarrassing." Indeed.

Now come the speculative bits. Was BAC Consulting a front organization set up in Budapest by Mossad? That seems likely because sabotaging 5,000 pagers is an industrial-scale operation not easily hidden. It is not something that can be done by three spooks working in a garage.

And how on Earth did Mossad persuade some senior Hezbollah officials to order 5,000 Gold Apollo Model AR-924 pagers from a dubious Hungarian company? Hezbollah will be tearing itself to shreds today as it frantically hunts for the traitors, and some of its senior officials will be facing ruthless interrogations and probably even torture.

Speculations aside, the rigged pagers were all delivered to Hezbollah a couple of months ago, and have been in daily use ever since. The obvious question is: what was it all for? The answer to that lies in another question: why so many?

Normal Mossad assassinations target one or two key figures in militant Arab groups. There seems little point in targeting thousands of mid- and low-level officials, all of whom will automatically be replaced by their immediate subordinates. Unless, of course, you want to take out as many as possible of them on a single designated day.

The technical brilliance of the Mossad operation was not in how the pagers were manufactured, nor in the way the explosive was

disguised or concealed. It was the fact that all 5,000 pagers—widely dispersed across Lebanon and nearby countries—could be detonated simultaneously by a single coded signal.

That is exactly what the Israeli government would want to do on the day it finally launched its long-threatened invasion of Lebanon to 'destroy' Hezbollah.

True, such an operation is unlikely ever to succeed. After 11 months of fighting, the Israel Defense Force has not even managed to destroy Hamas, a far weaker foe. But for Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government—which cannot think of anything else to do—attacking Hezbollah is an almost irresistible displacement activity.

If he finally decides to go down that road, then thousands of pagers exploding and killing or maiming thousands of Hezbollah's key cadres on the first day of the attack would make perfectly good sense.

So why have the Israelis jumped the gun? According to their own leaked explanation it was because they thought Hezbollah was about to discover that

its pagers had been sabotaged. Use them or lose them, even if using them without an accompanying invasion is a far less effective action resulting only in a few thousand shredded hands, faces, and groins.

To maximize the damage, Mossad reportedly sent a message alert to the pagers less than a minute before the actual 'explode' command in order to ensure that as many Hezbollah commanders as possible would be looking at their pagers at just the right time. However, the pagers that stayed in trouser pockets did almost as much damage to stomachs and genitalia.

On the afternoon of Sept. 18, the Israelis also blew up several thousand Hezbollah walkie-talkies that it had also rigged to explode on command in a separate, probably much earlier operation. The next-day attack killed at least 20 people, and wounded 450, according to the Associated Press.

The whole thing is just a footnote in history, really, though a fascinating one. Most of the victims were actual combatants, for once, and the only message it sends is that Israel is not yet ready to invade Lebanon. Whether it ever will be ready remains to be seen, but doing so without crippling Hezbollah's communications first would be a very big mistake.

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

The Hill Times



# Blanchet's Bloc in a position to milk the Liberals for all they're worth



With the NDP-Liberal deal dead, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet is getting a lot more attention given his new power to keep the minority government afloat. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A Bloc-Liberal partnership is sort of a sovereignty association, where both parties use each other for political leverage, without the trappings of a formal union.

Éric Blais

Opinion



The last time Canadians outside Quebec paid any attention to Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet was during the English-language leaders' debate during the 2021 election. During that debate, moderator Shachi Kurl asked him, "You deny that Quebec has problems with racism, yet you defend legislation such as Bills 96 and 21, which marginalize religious minorities, anglophones,

and allophones. Quebec is recognized as a distinct society, but for those outside the province, please help them understand why your party also supports these discriminatory laws?"

Blanchet delivered the perfect response—a solid dose of outrage that played well with the only audience that matters to him and his party: Quebec nationalists.

To anglophone audiences, Blanchet can sometimes seem like a fish out of water. Here is the leader of a federal political party, yet his primary goal is Quebec's separation from the federation. And although Blanchet has a strong command of English, the expressions he uses can sound awkward at times. Now that the Liberal-NDP deal is dead, he's getting more coverage given his new power to keep the minority government afloat. Still, one of his more recent declarations offers a particularly fitting metaphor for the position he now finds himself in: "We are playing chicken with four cars. Eventually, one will hit another one, and there will be a wreckage."

Blanchet and the Bloc now hold the kind of power and influence for which they were created. It wasn't always that way. The

party struggled for legitimacy in Quebec after a succession of less inspiring leaders following Lucien Bouchard and Gilles Duceppe. But today, the Bloc has established itself as a bridge between Quebec City and Ottawa, forming what could be called the axis of independence—a close working relationship between the Parti Québécois and the Bloc Québécois.

Though the PQ and the Bloc cater to the same nationalist constituents, they swim in different lanes. Recent PQ leaders have shied away from using the words "referendum" and "independence," but current leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon (PSPP) has repeatedly stated his intention to call a referendum if elected. While much can happen between now and the next provincial election, polls suggest the PQ is poised to overtake the ailing CAQ and the Liberals, making PSPP the leader who could bring Quebec independence back into serious political discussion.

Blanchet, on the other hand, primarily focuses on defending and promoting Quebec's interests in Ottawa. If we were to create a word cloud of his speeches and declarations, terms like 'demands,' 'extract,' and 'leverage' would

dominate, reflecting his strategic positioning in Parliament.

The symbiotic relationship between the BQ and the PQ was on full display during and after the recent by-election in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun. PSPP attended Bloc rallies, and later declared that the narrow victory in this Liberal stronghold was historic victory for "indépendantistes." This is what is often referred to as "confirmation bias" or "motivated reasoning"—interpreting facts or events to fit a pre-existing belief or agenda. It's a common tactic in political framing, where results are spun to align with a particular narrative, regardless of what the data might objectively suggest.

Polling data shows that a consistent percentage of Quebecers favour independence, but that number remains relatively low, especially among younger voters who seem disinterested in the cause. Still, it's possible that what separatists call the "winning conditions" could materialize. Quebecers are famously fickle, as Premier François Legault knows all too well.

Meanwhile, the Conservatives are hoping to make inroads in Quebec, particularly in Montreal, where they aim to snatch the riding of Mount Royal from Liberal MP Anthony Housefather. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre spent a significant portion of the summer—family in tow—touring Quebec ridings in an RV. But the charm offensive isn't producing significant results. Most Quebecers seem allergic to Poilievre, de-

spite his strong French. Even his decision to sit for interviews on Radio-Canada, the very network he has pledged to defund, hasn't moved the needle.

Poilievre's message to Quebecers is largely the same as the one he delivers across the rest of Canada, with some regional tweaks. His "axe the tax" mantra, for instance, is translated into French as "couper les taxes et impôts," (cut taxes and income taxes). But his attempt to brand the Bloc as the "Bloc-Libéral" by accusing them of consistently supporting the Liberals in Parliament feels like a strategic misstep. While the Conservatives hope this bit of co-branding will resonate now that the Liberals need Bloc support to stay in power, I wouldn't bet on it.

Blanchet is far more likely to milk the Liberals for all they're worth. He just announced he has no plans to let this government fall when the Conservatives bring forward their promised confidence vote. A Bloc-Liberal partnership won't be based on mutual respect or shared goals—it's more akin to a common-law relationship, the kind that's popular in Quebec, where two people live under the same roof for economic reasons long after the romance has faded. In this case, it's a sort of sovereignty association, where both parties use each other for political leverage, without the trappings of formal union.

Eric Blais is president of Head-space Marketing in Toronto. *The Hill Times*



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre spent much of the summer touring Quebec ridings in an RV. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



## News

# Senators praise PBO report to release 'crucial' public accounts earlier, but government reluctant to commit to changes

Former parliamentary budget officer Kevin Page says all political parties should consider including the recommendations in their election platforms.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

The parliamentary budget officer's proposal calling for Ottawa's year-end financial reports to be released on an earlier timeline is drawing praise from MPs and Senators, but the government isn't yet willing to commit to the advice.

On Sept. 13, the Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) released a report that said the federal government should align itself with financial reporting practices preferred by the International Monetary Fund, and publish its annual financial statements within six months of the end of the fiscal year. That would mean changing the Dec. 31 deadline to a Sept. 30 cut-off, six months after Ottawa's fiscal year ends on March 31.

This year-end report, known as the public accounts, is a key document that shows what money the government actually collected and spent in a fiscal year. However, it tends to receive far less attention than the budget which comes near the beginning of the fiscal year, and lays out a blueprint of projected revenues and spending.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux said releasing the public accounts earlier would provide parliamentarians with vital information when they are making decisions about the current fiscal year.

As *The Hill Times* reported in a three-part feature series this spring, many former parliamentarians and public finance experts say the overall federal fiscal cycle happens on a flawed timeline, and is too opaque to promote proper scrutiny of government spending.

While there's "no perfect system," said Giroux, "every bit would help," and this proposed change is one step that would improve the overall cycle of budgets, estimates, and accounts.

In particular, a Sept. 30 deadline for public accounts would ensure parliamentarians have the



On Sept. 13, the Parliamentary Budget Office, led by Yves Giroux, released a report proposing an earlier timeline for the public accounts. 'Year after year, parliamentarians are asked to vote on appropriations when they don't know what really happened for the previous year,' said Giroux. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

bottom line from the last fiscal year when assessing two key documents for the current one: the fall economic statement in which the government updates its fiscal blueprint; and the second set of annual supplementary estimates through which the government formally requests Parliament's approval to spend billions of dollars.

"Year after year, parliamentarians are asked to vote on appropriations when they don't know what really happened for the previous year," said Giroux.

## Info that's 'almost ready for the archives': Sen. Marshall

Conservative Senator Elizabeth Marshall (Newfoundland and Labrador), who is a member of the Senate Finance Committee and previously served as auditor general of her home province, called the report "excellent."

She echoed Giroux's diagnosis that the present timeline "leaves parliamentarians without crucial information to hold spending to account."

"The information that we receive now is so old it's almost ready for the archives," said Marshall.

For example, when studying the fall estimates, it would be useful to know whether a department had spent its full budget in the previous year, said Marshall. If it hadn't, this would support questioning of department officials at committee about why they are asking for that sum again.

She said it would also be valuable to know sooner whether the government stayed within its deficit target for the previous year, or blew past it.

CSG Senator Krista Ross (New Brunswick), another member of the Senate Finance Commit-

tee, said she also supports the recommendation.

Ross, who joined the Upper Chamber in November 2023, said, as a new Senator, "it would be really helpful to have things more quickly" and "in a different order."

"We're studying estimates, budgets, everything at the same time," said Ross, making the case this impedes proper scrutiny. "They're huge documents ... it's just simply a lot to cover in a very short time."

CSG Senator Colin Deacon (Nova Scotia) said he supports the proposal because improving "legacy systems" is vital to maintaining trust in government.

"It is easier to do things faster today than we've ever done in the past, but government systems do not seem to adapt," said Deacon. "If we don't keep up with transparency standards, trust will diminish."

## 'Nothing to focus the mind like a deadline': Giroux

The PBO made several specific recommendations to achieve a quicker timeline.

Some involve saving valuable days near the end of the process, when the accounts are ready, but the product is not yet out the door.

In the past 10 years, the accounts have generally received sign-off from the auditor general by early September, but it has taken another 22-to-74 business days to release them.

Some of this time goes into producing print, PDF, HTML, and Open Data formats in both official languages. The government says this requires 30 business days but on several occasions has taken fewer, meaning there may be efficiencies to move closer to a Sept. 30 target, says the PBO.

Some of the latest releases have happened in election years because the accounts can only be tabled when Parliament is sitting.

Removing this requirement would eliminate a further source of delay, says the report.

It would also open the door to the accounts being released during an election campaign when there is the potential for them to receive greater public attention.

If these efficiencies are not enough, the PBO says the government could try to have the accounts themselves ready sooner.

It suggests asking the Canada Revenue Agency to provide tax revenue estimates earlier.

This would necessitate weighing trade-offs between timeliness and accuracy, but evidence from other jurisdictions shows "reliably estimating tax revenues can be done in a much timelier manner," says the report.

At deadline, CRA was still working on a response to a *Hill Times* inquiry about this recommendation.

The PBO also suggests some aspects of the public accounts could be released earlier by separating audited and unaudited statements.

In an email to *The Hill Times*, a spokesperson for the auditor general said their office is "supportive of any effort by the government to have the public accounts released in a timely manner while ensuring that the information is accurate."

Their reply did not specifically address the PBO recommendation about separating audited and unaudited financial statements.

Finally, the PBO recommends the government amend the Financial Administration Act so Ottawa is legally required to release the accounts by Sept. 30.

"Nothing to focus the mind like a deadline," said Giroux.

## PBO proposals should be in party platforms: Page

Former PBO Kevin Page, who now leads the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy at the University of Ottawa, said he supports the analysis, and called on the federal political parties to take action.

"Canada's federal political parties should consider the PBO recommendations as possibilities for inclusion in their election platforms to strengthen fiscal accountability," said Page.

However, members of the House Public Accounts Committee stopped short of a full endorsement.

Conservative MP John Williamson (New Brunswick Southwest, N.B.), who serves as the committee's chair, said in an email, "I agree with the PBO report, as does the Public Accounts Committee."

However, the committee favours an Oct. 15 deadline, not Sept. 30.

Williams pointed to the committee's studies of the 2020-21 and 2021-22 public accounts which made that recommendation.

That's two-and-a-half months earlier than the current deadline, but still half a month short of the PBO's recommendation.

Liberal MP Jean Yip (Scarborough-Agincourt, Ont.), a vice-chair of the committee, left the door open to maintaining even more flexibility.

"The tabling date of the public accounts has been a recurring topic at committee," said Yip in an email. "We understand the benefits outlined by the PBO but recognize the challenges in doing this, given that it is an incredibly large and complex document."

The Bloc and NDP committee members did not reply.

## Government won't commit to legislating change

Public Services and Procurement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.) is receiver general of Canada, the central treasurer and accountant of the federal government. His department is responsible for the public accounts.

A spokesperson for Duclos declined to comment "as the report was published only a few days ago and the recommendations have implications in various departments."

*The Hill Times* also reached out to the Treasury Board Secretariat. It has responsibility for the estimates, another key part of the fiscal cycle.

Martin Potvin, a Treasury Board spokesperson, said "the government is taking steps to streamline the process."

Potvin said following the House Public Accounts Committee's recommendations "the government committed to consultations to assess the feasibility of tabling the Public Accounts on or before October 15."

Based on this consultation, he said the government had notified the committee a "production plan is being adapted" to produce the accounts by Oct. 15 starting in 2025.

Potvin said this is "in line" with the PBO's recommendation to "look for ways to advance the release."

However, it falls half a month later than the PBO's recommendation, and a new production plan is not the same as changing the legal deadline.

Potvin did not address questions regarding the PBO's specific suggestions for speeding up the process.

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# Sutcliffe blames federal hybrid-work model for capital's transit woes as city's commuters face service cuts

The City of Ottawa is warning of an impending public transit 'death spiral' as politicians look to boost the downtown core with more federal public servants.

BY SOPHALL DUCH

As more federal public servants are forced to commute an extra day into the office, Ottawa's transit system cut its services despite the expected bump in commuters.

Two weeks before the new federal return-to-office mandate came into effect on Sept. 9, Ottawa's public transit system OC Transpo announced it would decrease service on its main east-west light-rail train line.

"A lot of my co-workers are having a harder time getting in," said Lauren, a public servant at Statistics Canada at Tunney's Pasture, who did not want to give her last name. "A lot of them have had to make up the time being an hour, hour-and-a-half late. And it's been really stressful on them and their families."

Lauren told *The Hill Times* that she now lives one bus stop away from work, but said that when she used to live in Ottawa's east end she would constantly be late for work due to OC Transpo's O-Train being shut down.

The system cut its service on its LRT line that passes through downtown Ottawa and Parliament Hill to every 10 minutes during off-peak hours between 9 a.m. and 3 p.m., and between 6:30 p.m. and 11 p.m.

The service cut—also announced during the busy back-to-school season—comes as the national capital's transit system faces a \$25.1-million deficit this year, and a projected \$120-million budget shortfall for 2025.

"By implementing this change immediately in September, with the fall booking, that will allow OC Transpo to save \$600,000—which is not a lot, but each penny counts," said Renée Amilcar, the city's transit general manager, at a City of Ottawa transit meeting on Sept. 12.

According to OC Transpo, approximately 275,000 people ride the transit system on a typical day. At a city transit commission meeting in June, officials estimated that an extra day in the office for public servants could add an additional 2.7 million trips on OC Transpo.

Officials said that if most federal public servants chose to work in the office on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday that there could be 20,000 more riders on those three days. If civil servants spread out their return to office evenly across the week—from Monday to Friday—then the system would see 12,000 more riders.

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, a City of Ottawa spokesperson said "OC Transpo is confident that we have sufficient capacity on the O-Train and on our bus network to support public servants as they return to the office and that there will be capacity remaining to accommodate many additional customers if ridership surpasses current projections.

But some are warning that this change in service frequency could be the final blow for residents already exasperated by the city's transit system.

"This is the transit death spiral in action if people don't believe that it is a reliable and accessible service that will get them where they need to go," said Ariel Troster, city councillor for Ottawa's downtown Somerset ward, at a Sept. 18 city council meeting.

## Hopeful beginnings

When OC Transpo's marquee \$2.1-billion Confederation Line opened in 2019—more than a year late—trains were to run every five minutes between 6:30 a.m. and 9:30 p.m. on weekdays.

OC Transpo also overhauled its bus network in 2019 by cutting many bus routes that passed through the downtown core. Buses were rerouted to force-feed commuters onto its main LRT artery instead.

Since the line's opening, there have been numerous incidents that have eroded the system's apparent reliability to its riders: derailments, shutdowns, axle issues, freezing-rain delays, stuck train doors, train failures, reductions to train capacity, and "not perfectly round" wheels.

Despite the fiascos surrounding the beleaguered Confederation Line, work is currently underway to expand it.

The Confederation Line—also known as Line 1—is currently 12.5 km long with 13 stations, including stops at Parliament Hill, the University of Ottawa, and the large federal government complex Tunney's Pasture.

The current plan is to extend the lines out to the eastern suburb of Orléans, and west near the new Department of National Defence Headquarters' Carling Campus. The latest re-opening date of the newly extended north-south Trillium Line still hasn't been set yet, despite being more than two years late.

## Ottawa vs. the Feds

Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe took a page out of the public service unions' playbook and launched his own 'summer of discontent' campaign against the federal government's return-to-work mandate—taking the side opposed to more remote work days.

"The number-one reason for our transit crisis is that, as the national capital, we built our transit system around public servants. And because they aren't going to the office every day, we've lost our best customer," said Sutcliffe at an Aug. 8 news conference.

Sutcliffe added that the city is "way behind" other municipalities when it comes to transit ridership.

"As of this year, the number of trips by downtown office workers alone has declined by 38 per cent, that is costing us \$36-million a year in lost fare revenue," said Sutcliffe.

The mayor's campaign to get Ottawa's "fair share" from the federal and Ontario provincial governments was quickly dismissed by federal Families, Children and Social Development Minister Jenna Sudds (Kanata-Carleton, Ont.).

"We must remember that there is only one taxpayer. The residents of Ottawa have paid their property taxes and they've paid their federal tax with the expectations that we manage their money well and spend it wisely. We, at the federal level, take this responsibility seriously, especially at a time when the people of Ottawa are watching their pocketbooks, and the City of Ottawa is not exempt from

this responsibility either," wrote Sudds, who is also a former Ottawa city councillor, in response to Sutcliffe.

Sudds later called out Sutcliffe for not following in other cities' footsteps—like Toronto and Halifax—which both raised property taxes.

"As a city council who has maintained property tax increases at less than the rate of inflation, you know, there's arguably challenges with those decisions and moving forward in that, and whether that is sustainable," said Sudds at a Aug. 16 news conference.

On Sept. 18, Ottawa City Council approved a "budget direction" motion to cap the 2025 municipal tax increase to 2.9 per cent. But what that final tax increase looks like it will become known when the city's draft budget is unveiled later this fall.

## Ottawa vs. Ontario

As for the province, Sutcliffe said the Ontario government pays for a greater share of the costs of transit projects in Toronto and the Greater Toronto Area than it does for Ottawa, the province's second largest city.

Joel Harden, Ontario NDP MPP for Ottawa Centre, spoke at a municipal council transit meeting and warned the municipality would need to fix its troubled transit system before it can expect more provincial funds.

"I don't think it's wrong for me to mention things that are said in private, in this case, that Ottawa needs to get its LRT system in order before it can count on more operating funds from Queen's Park. What I have told the premier and what I will say today—which I think is germane to our discussions—is if we reduce the efficacy of transit service, we aren't going to be working towards resolving any of our transit issues, we're actually going to be pulling in the other direction," said Harden.

There are no Ottawa-area MPPs in Ontario Premier Doug Ford's cabinet. Lisa MacLeod, a former provincial cabinet minister, is the sole Progressive Conservative MPP left representing the city at Queen's Park, following Goldie Ghamari being kicked out of caucus last June, and Merrilee Fullerton's resignation last year.

"I think it's safe to say Ottawa residents and upper levels of government would like to see the

city put some skin in the game by undertaking and publishing a back to basics review of core services and a value for money approach to additional services prior to asking for hundreds of millions of dollars after receiving a half a billion dollars six months ago," wrote MacLeod on X (formerly Twitter).

In her post, MacLeod, who represents the provincial riding of Nepean—Carleton, made reference to Ontario's \$543-million deal for Ottawa announced in March, which will see provincial funds go towards the city's highways, transit, housing, and the "revitalization of the downtown core."

## Ottawa vs. Itself

To cover the \$120-million shortfall, Sutcliffe told reporters that residents could see a fare increase in between the range of 2.5 per cent to "all the way up to 75 per cent."

A single OC Transpo fare for adults is currently \$3.80 for card users—five cents more if you pay cash—with a monthly pass costing \$128.75.

As it stands, it's not worth a public servant to buy a monthly pass if they plan on only commuting to the office three days a week. A transit rider would need to commute to and from work for 17 days—or make 34 individual trips—before a monthly OC Transpo pass pays for itself. The new return-to-office mandate will see most federal public servants commuting 12 days out of the month, or making 24 individual trips to and from work.

This decreased demand for monthly passes has also contributed to OC Transpo's financial woes.

"We would like to see more monthly passes versus single fare," said Isabelle Jasmin, deputy city treasurer for the City of Ottawa, at a municipal transit committee meeting on Sept. 12.

Jasmin said \$10-million of this year's \$25-million budget shortfall came from the decrease in transit fares.

When asked about how OC Transpo could expect to increase ridership while making service cuts, Amilcar said it would be by making good on their promises.

"We are doing a rational decision to be able to promise, deliver. This is what I can do with what I have. And again, by delivering the service that we have promised to the customers they will come," said Amilcar at a news conference on Sept. 18.

While the city tries to deliver on its promises, the city's federal public servants are left to make up the work for their late colleagues.

"We try to pick up the slack where we can. You know, it's hard. We try to be a team player and understand that things are happening, but at the end of the day we didn't make these decisions. We are trying. We're just trying to get to work," said Lauren.

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## News

# Bloc Québécois gains at Liberals' expense could ease path for Conservative majority in 2025, say political players

While Quebec is not typically Conservative-friendly territory, as long as the Bloc prevents the Liberals from maintaining their base, it will help the Conservatives, says pollster Darrell Bricker.

Continued from page 1

to win there [in Quebec]," said Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "But what they're doing is they're doing the work of the Conservative Party because the Conservative Party doesn't need to win a lot of seats in Quebec in order to form a majority. So if the Bloc does their work for them in the province of Quebec, it's the same thing."

Bricker noted that the Conservatives secured their 2011 majority by winning just five of the then-75 seats in Quebec, achieving success primarily in Western Canada and Ontario. In that election, they won 166 of the then-308 House seats, including 72 from the four western provinces, and 73 from Ontario. They could adopt a similar strategy in the next election. Quebec—Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) home province—has been pivotal to the Liberals' wins in 2015, 2019, and 2021.

Quebec is not traditionally seen as Conservative-friendly territory, but as long as the Bloc prevents the Liberals from maintaining their support base, it serves the same purpose, Bricker said. Given the current level of Conservative support nationally, gaining more seats in Quebec—beyond their existing nine—would make it easier for the Conservatives to secure a majority, though it's not essential. Bricker said that if the Conservatives sweep Western Canada, win half of Atlantic Canada, and secure victories in the 905 region, other suburbs, and small-town rural Ontario, they could comfortably achieve a majority government.

Bricker said the Liberals should be concerned about their electoral performance, a clear example being their loss in the



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau at the National Prayer Breakfast in Ottawa on May 7, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Sept. 16 byelection in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que. The Bloc Québécois managed to flip this historically safe Liberal riding which was a significant blow. Since the mid-1960s, the Liberals have only lost this riding twice: once in 1984, and again in 2011. But it was close.

Bloc candidate Louis-Philippe Sauvé won the riding with 28 per cent of the vote, while Liberal candidate Laura Palestini narrowly followed with 27.2 per cent, and NDP candidate Craig Sauvé came in third with 26.1 per cent.

In the second byelection held on Sept. 16 in Elmwood-Transcona, Man., the NDP secured 48.1 per cent of the vote, while Conservative Colin Reynolds garnered 44 per cent, and Liberal Ian MacIntyre received just 4.8 per cent. MacIntyre will not qualify for election expense rebates as candidates must receive at least 10 per cent of the vote to be eligible for reimbursement.



Liberal MP Darrell Samson says that when his constituents compare Justin Trudeau and Pierre Poilievre in the next election, they will stick with the prime minister. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Nationally, the Liberals have been trailing the Conservatives by 15 to 20 points for more than a year now. Even in Quebec, the Bloc is running neck and neck with the Liberals, and the Conservatives are also highly competitive.

Nanos Research's most recent polling numbers, released Sept. 13, suggested that the Liberals had the support of 28.9 per cent of Quebecers, the Bloc 26.04 per cent, the Conservatives 21.4 per cent and the NDP 17.3 per cent.

Bricker said that the loss in LaSalle-Émard-Verdun is not due to a sudden surge of sovereigntist sentiment in Montreal's West Island. Rather, it reflects a broader vote of no confidence in the incumbent government. If these trends continue, it could be disastrous for the Liberal Party, as once they lose a seat in Quebec, it will be extremely difficult for them to make this up elsewhere in the country.

"They [the Liberals] absolutely should be worried about this because those ridings [Quebec] they're the bulwark, they're the core of the Liberal base," Bricker told *The Hill Times*. "They build their coalition from Quebec out, and if they're not, if they're losing seats that are their core seats in the province of Quebec [that's going to be a serious problem]."

Liberals MPs say their drop in the polls is primarily due to affordability issues. MPs said that during their 2021 and 2022 national summer retreats, they learned that 2023 and the first half of 2024 would be challenging because of the economic slowdown and inflation. However, they were told by senior Liberals that conditions would improve in the second half of 2024, and further into the first quarter of 2025. They argued that if the cost-of-living crisis is addressed, they can regain lost support. They also assert that Canadians' frustration with Trudeau stems from affordability concerns rather than an endorsement of Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.).

But Bricker said, based on his experience, when things go wrong the incumbent governments often bear the blame, but when those things improve, they don't receive the same level of credit.

Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, agreed, adding that even if inflation and interest rates decrease, it won't fully resolve the affordability issue.

"The problem is not interest rates; the problem is declining real income," said Lyle. "So people

can't buy what they used to be able to buy. And if inflation comes down, it just means a bad situation is getting worse, more slowly. It doesn't mean anything's better."

Lyle said that the Liberals' winning coalition in 2015 was driven by the excitement and passion of young voters, but with low interest rates, housing prices are likely to rise again making home ownership more difficult for them.

Lyle said the Liberals should be very concerned about losing core ridings like LaSalle-Émard-Verdun. He said that based on seat modelling he conducted over the summer, the Trudeau Liberals were projected to win 57 seats nationally, with LaSalle-Émard-Verdun being one of them. If they're losing traditionally safe seats now, they could end up with even fewer than 57.

"Trudeau could double the number of seats he's likely to win, and still be completely out of the running to form a government," said Lyle. "So, at this point, I don't think anyone can have any illusion that the Liberals led by Justin Trudeau are anywhere in sight of any type of victory at all in the next election."

Liberal MP Darrell Samson (Sackville-Preston-Chezzetcook, N.S.) told *The Hill Times* that his caucus colleagues are unhappy with the party's recent byelection losses, and the party lagging behind the Conservatives in the polls. He said that the party needs to regroup, retool, and improve the communications of the government's message. Samson added that people in his riding do not want a Poilievre-led government, which he believes will cut essential programs and services. He said that Poilievre is still relatively unknown to Canadians, and once voters compare him to the current prime minister, they will favour the Liberal leader.

"Oh, just wait and see," said Samson when asked if the Liberals have any plans to define Poilievre using advertising.

"We've got to get our message out much better. [We have to] be very specific on where we want to take Canadians. We're the party that represents Canadians, [we're] there to protect them. We're not there to do cuts. We're there to balance between investing and keeping the economy strong, and we're going to continue doing that."

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.) said her party has an election strategy in place, which they are continually refining as they receive more feedback from Canadians. She also echoed Samson's sentiment that when voters compare the two main leaders, they will choose Trudeau over Poilievre.

"We need to continue to one, listen to them, and once we listen to them, then we're addressing their issues," said Dzerowicz. "And that is what we're doing. We're addressing their issues from an affordability perspective. We're addressing their issues on housing. We're addressing their issues on immigration. So we are taking steps."

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# Growing Conservative lead in Ontario creates challenge for Grits, chances for NDP: pollsters

The Tories' lead takes the pressure off 'New Democrat voters who in the past have voted for the Liberals in order to block the Conservatives,' says Nik Nanos.

Continued from page 1

at 25 per cent and NDP at 17 per cent. If that were to be replicated at a federal election, the Conservatives would win their highest vote in the province in their current iteration, besting the 44.4 per cent won in 2011. That result yielded 73 of Ontario's 106 seats for the party.

A Leger poll published on Sept. 9 showed the Conservatives with majority support from respondents, with 51 per cent backing the party, compared to 25 per cent for the Liberals and 17 per cent for the NDP.

The last time a party won a majority of votes in Ontario was in 2000, when the Liberals under Jean Chrétien received 51.5 per cent of votes cast in the province, winning 100 of the 103 seats. The last conservative party to win a majority of votes in the province was John Diefenbaker's Progressive Conservatives in 1958, winning 67 of the 85 Ontario seats with 56.7 per cent of the vote.

Polling aggregator 338Canada projected the Conservatives would win 219 seats across the country if an election were held last week, the Liberals 68, the Bloc Québécois 40, the NDP 14, and the Green Party two.

Currently, the Liberals hold 75 of the 121 seats in Ontario, the Conservatives hold 38, and the NDP hold five. Green Party MP Mike Morrice represents Kitchener Centre, Ont., and there are two Independents—Kevin Vuong (Spadina—Fort York, Ont.) and Han Dong (Don Valley North, Ont.)

That 338Canada projection showed that, of the 122 seats to be contested in Ontario at the next election, the Conservatives were ahead in 81, the Liberals in 23, the NDP in three, and the Green Party in Kitchener Centre, Ont. Fourteen ridings were considered toss-ups—12 between the Liberals



Polling shows Liberals led by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, are losing ground to Pierre Poilievre's Conservatives, a situation the NDP under Jagmeet Singh could use to their advantage, say some pollsters. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

and Conservatives, one between the Conservatives and NDP, and another as a three-way race.

Coletto said the figures, if they held true at a federal election, would likely lead to a better outcome for the Conservatives in Ontario than during the 2011 federal election. He said the party could see a repeat of the Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., byelection result in June in which Conservative candidate Don Stewart defeated Liberal candidate Leslie Church.

"So not just the Greater Toronto Area around Toronto—the 905 almost can get swept by the Conservatives—but they can make inroads into the 416, winning those Etobicoke, North York, Don Valley seats, and maybe even venturing into the old city like they did in the byelection," he said.

Nik Nanos, founder and chief data scientist at Nanos Research, said the Conservatives' lead across the country—with the exception of Quebec—allowed the party to contest areas they may not have previously considered within reach. The Liberals, though, would need to develop a strategy to retain their hold on Quebec.

At the same time, however, Nanos there were also opportunities for the NDP in three- or four-corner races across the country's metropolitan areas, such as the GTA, Montreal, and British Columbia's Lower Mainland.

The firm's weekly poll tracking showed the Conservative Party with 41.6 per cent support nationally, the Liberals at 24.5 per cent, and the NDP at 22.4 per cent.

The NDP's support has received a bump in the tracking since Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) ended the party's supply-and-confidence agreement with the Liberals on Sept. 4.

"If the Conservatives are ahead by 17 points, there's no need for strategic voting if you're a progressive voter," he said. "That doesn't put any pressure on New Democrat voters who in the past have voted for the Liberals in order to block the Conservatives."

He said the New Democrats could look to their race in LaSalle—Émard—Verdun, Que., where candidate Craig Sauvé came third, but were only 622 votes—or 1.9 per cent—of winning Bloc Québécois candidate Louis-Philippe Sauvé. Craig Sauvé improved the NDP's

vote share by 6.74 percentage points.

"Yes, the NDP didn't win, and they didn't come second, but they did quite respectably," he said. "For them, part of their strategic franchise for the campaign is likely going to be something along the lines of, 'where are the three-way races, and let's see if we can just incrementally do a little better in order to come out on top.'"

Outside the major cities, however, the NDP could face challenges in their traditional heartlands, such as industrial and rural centres with historically high unionized workforces. The Conservatives have made a pitch to regions in which they have not previously been competitive, such as Windsor, Ont., and Northern Ontario.

Windsor West has been held by NDP MP Brian Masse since 2002, having been previously held by Liberal Herb Gray since the seat's creation in 1968.

Windsor—Tecumseh has flipped between the Liberals and NDP in various forms since 1988. It has been represented since 2019 by Liberal MP Irek Kusmierczyk, the parliamentary secretary to Employment Minister Randy Boissonault (Edmonton Centre, Alta.).

The Conservatives have also turned to Northern Ontario to pick up seats. The party currently holds two of the 10 seats in the region, the Liberals hold six, and the NDP hold two. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) has frequently visited the region, most recently this summer.

Outside Ontario, the Conservatives selected construction electrician and International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers member Colin Reynolds as the party's representative in the Sept. 16 Elmwood—Transcona, Man., byelection. NDP candidate Leila Dance retained the historically orange riding, but Reynolds cut the party's winning margin from 21.56 points to 4.09.

Nanos said the NDP has always had to reconcile that it is a "a downtown, high density city party of progressives and, you know, another part of the party—say, for example, in Saskatchewan and parts of Manitoba and Northern Ontario—is much more a rural social democrat party."

At the same time, the party would need to watch out for a split between public sector union members and private sector union members, the latter of whom could be attracted by Poilievre's appeals to the working class.

"The union vote is not really a monolith," Nanos said. "I don't see a situation where Pierre Poilievre has a lot of appeal among public sector unionized workers, just because of who he is and what the Conservatives generally stand for. That said, I could see him having more traction among private sector unions, [such as] construction unions and trades. Those particular individuals are probably also concerned about the amount of taxes that they might be paying, and the cost of living."

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## Liberal/Conservative/NDP federal results in Ontario, 2004–2021

| Election | Liberal Popular Vote | Liberal Seats | Conservative Popular Vote | Conservative Seats | NDP Popular Vote | NDP Seats |
|----------|----------------------|---------------|---------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-----------|
| 2021     | 39.30%               | 78*           | 34.90%                    | 37                 | 17.90%           | 5         |
| 2019     | 41.60%               | 79            | 33.10%                    | 36                 | 20.80%           | 6         |
| 2015     | 44.80%               | 80            | 35.10%                    | 33                 | 16.60%           | 8         |
| 2011     | 25.30%               | 11            | 44.40%                    | 73                 | 25.60%           | 22        |
| 2008     | 33.80%               | 38            | 39.20%                    | 51                 | 12.20%           | 17        |
| 2006     | 39.90%               | 54            | 35.10%                    | 40                 | 25.40%           | 12        |
| 2004     | 44.70%               | 75            | 31.50%                    | 24                 | 23.50%           | 7         |

\*Kevin Vuong was removed as the Liberal candidate in Spadina—Fort York, Ont. between advanced polls and election day, meaning he appeared as the party's candidate on the ballot. Excluding his win, the Liberals won 77 seats in 2021.

Source: Elections Canada

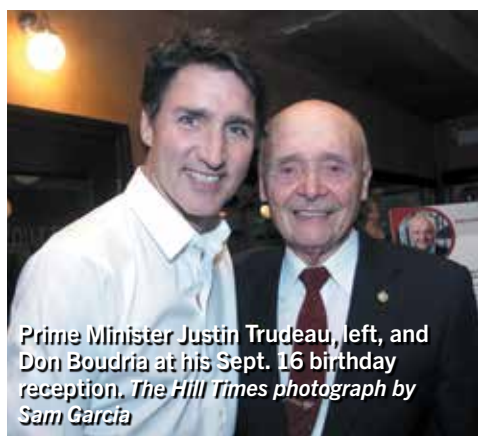




Stuart Benson

# Party Central

## Parliamentary people pack The Met for a double-feature Rat Pack birthday and *iPolitics*' Housewarming shindig



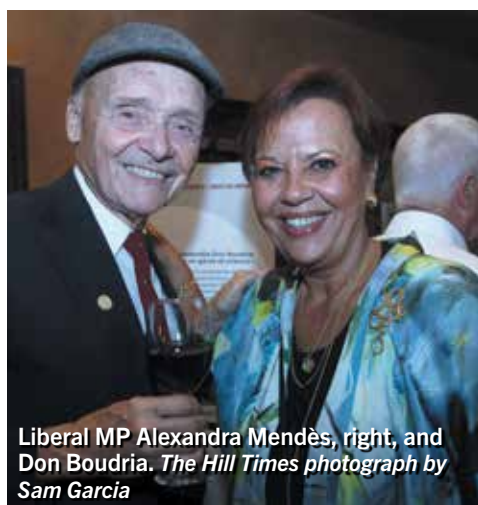
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and Don Boudria at his Sept. 16 birthday reception. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



The Boudrias perform a cover of *Stand by Me*. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



International Development Minister Ahmed Hussain, left, and Don Boudria. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Liberal MP Alexandra Mendès, right, and Don Boudria. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

The return of Parliament means the return of the Hill's social scene which kicked off with a party for Don Boudria on Sept. 16, followed by a double feature on Sept. 17 with the Speaker's garden party and *iPolitics*' annual Housewarming.

Despite all of the clamour over a potential early election and the return of what is already a combative Parliament, the parliamentary social calendar was chock-full of "back to school" shindigs on the Hill. And what better way to kick off the week than a birthday party for "The Don of the Rat Pack," followed by a double-feature garden party with the House Speaker, and *iPolitics*' House-warming for Round Two.

Hosted by Sandstone Group, parliamentarians past and present, politicians, and even Prime Minister Justin Trudeau ended the first day of the fall parliamentary session on Sept. 16 by flocking to the Métropolitain Brasserie to celebrate former Chrétien-era cabinet minister Don Boudria's 75<sup>th</sup> birthday, as well as his half-century career in politics, and the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his first election to Parliament.

While *Party Central* was late to the shindig, the gathering drew well-wishers from all three major parties, both past and present. With the help of the night's designated photographer and friend-when-in-need Sam Garcia, *Party Central* spotted—and was informed of appearances by—most of Boudria's Sandstone teammates, including Kevin Bosch, Naresh Raghubeer, former *Sun* columnist Anthony Furey, former House speaker Geoff Regan, former Harper-cabinet minister Tony Clement—rocking the only Hill moustache to rival *Party Central*'s—as well as plenty of Boudria's former colleagues from municipal, provincial, and federal politics. Boudria, who served in the House from 1984-2006, was a member of the rowdy "Rat Pack" in the 1980s along with then-Liberal MPs Brian Tobin, Sheila Copps, and John Nunziata. He went on to become a cabinet minister in prime minister Jean Chrétien's government, but got his start on the Hill as a busboy.

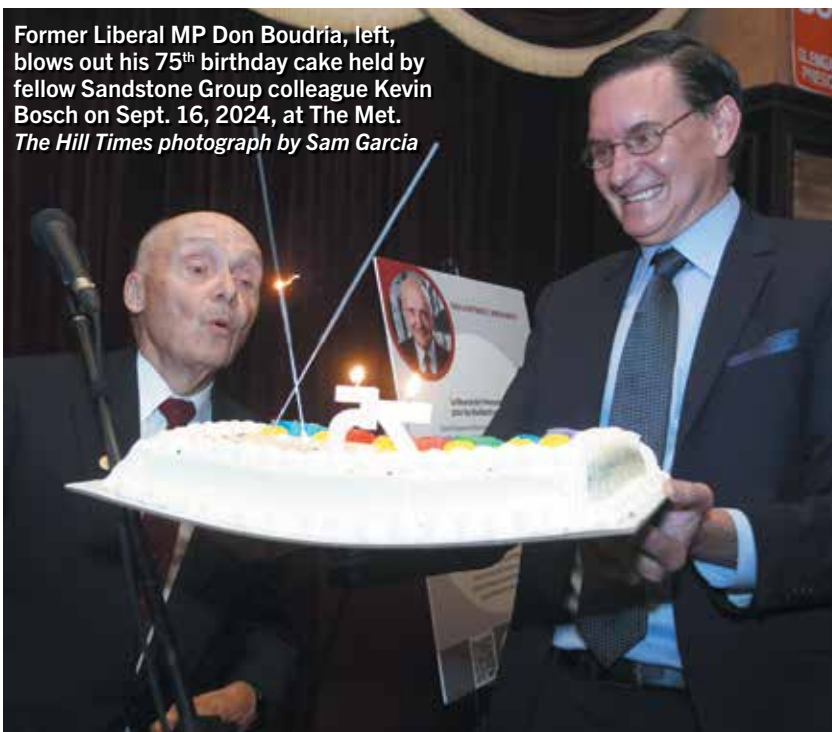
Of the current federal politicians, *Party Central* spotted Liberal MPs Marc Séguin, Alexandra Mendès, Judy Sgro, Anita Vandenbeld, and Charles Sousa who was sporting a new beard and a killer tan; Independent Senators Pierrette Ringuette and Stan Kutcher, as well as the former Conservative leader in the Senate Marjory LeBreton, and Cornwall Mayor Justin Towndale.

Despite missing an extended appearance by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and Boudria performing an acoustic guitar cover of *Stand By Me*, *Party Central* did possess the impeccable timing required to arrive just as the birthday boy was cutting the cake.



While the party was indeed a celebration of Boudria's storied career—from Parliament Hill busboy to municipal councillor, Ontario Liberal caucus, and federal cabinet minister—he dug into his archives to raise money for the future. The reception was also the official launch of the Don Boudria Scholarship Fund, created by Don and his wife Mary Ann Boudria to support students entering science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) programs at the University of Ottawa. The institution holds "deep personal significance" as it's where two of their children and four of their grandchildren have or are attending—three in STEM—and is home of Boudria's ministerial and parliamentary archives.

Alongside an initial \$30,000 contribution to the fund, Sandstone Group donated an additional \$10,000—via a giant novelty cheque to start the fundraising goal of \$50,000. To help raise the remaining funds, guests were encouraged to donate—in return



Former Liberal MP Don Boudria, left, blows out his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday cake held by fellow Sandstone Group colleague Kevin Bosch on Sept. 16, 2024, at The Met. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



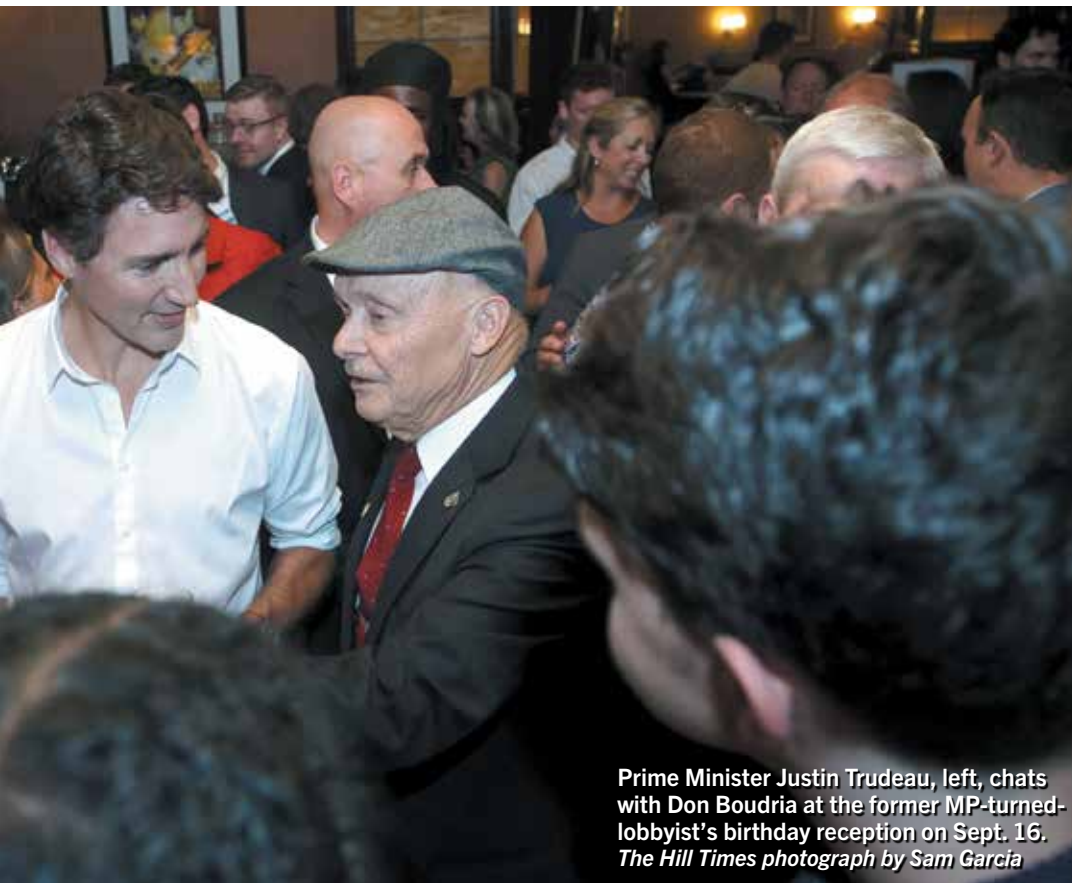
Don Boudria, left, and his wife Mary Ann Boudria. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



Sam Sgro, left, Mary Ann Boudria, Don Boudria, and Liberal MP Judy Sgro at the Sept. 16 reception. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



# Party Central



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, chats with Don Boudria at the former MP-turned-lobbyist's birthday reception on Sept. 16. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

for a collectible Boudria button—or bid on one of several Boudria swag items, including an original Rat Pack t-shirt, or a copy of his book *Busboy: From Kitchen to Cabinet*.

For those unable to attend, you can still sign Boudria's birthday card online, or make a tax-deductible donation to the scholarship fund through the University of Ottawa. As of Sept. 18, attendees and online donors have raised a collective \$7,000, bringing the funds current grand total to \$47,000.

## A low-key soirée at House Speaker's garden party, and *iPolitics* and Earncliffe host a reception at The Met

Round Two of the fall session shindigs took place on Sept. 17 featuring a double-booking for **Party Central** with an off-the-record garden party at The Farm—the official residence of House Speaker **Greg**

**Fergus**—and the annual *iPolitics* Housewarming at the Métropolitain Brasserie.

While the invitation to the Speaker's party explicitly stated that it was "confidential [and] off the record" and no photos were allowed, *Politico's* **Nick Taylor-Vaisey** and **Kyle Duggan** were up early to report on several of the attendees in the **Ottawa Playbook**.

**Party Central** also spotted Defence Minister **Bill Blair** and Justice Minister **Arif Virani**; Deputy Speaker **Carol Hughes**, Liberal MPs **Taleeb Noormohamed**, **Kody Blois**, and **Ryan Turnbull**; NDP MPs **Heather McPherson**, **Richard Cannings**, and **Peter Julian**; Green Party MP **Mike Morrice**, and journalists **Émilie Bergeron**, **Nojoud Al Mallees**, **Guillaume St-Pierre**, **Elizabeth Thompson**, **Christopher Nardi**, **Catherine Lévesque**, **Ryan Tumilty**, **Raffy Boudjikian**, **Dylan Robertson**, **Marie Vastel**, **Stephanie Taylor**, **Carl Meyer**, **Meagan Gillmore**, **Gerd Braune**, **David Ljunggren**, and **Promit Mukherjee**.

**Party Central** spent most of the night chatting with fellow *The Hill Times'* colleagues **Neil Moss**, **Irem Koca**, **Paul Park**, and **Sophall Duch** and various other journo who floated past our table.

Shortly after 8 p.m., after thanking "Greg" for his hospitality, the *HT* crew hopped on the shuttle buses back to the Hill, and made our way over to The Met to catch the latter half of Earncliffe and *iPolitics'* shindig.

While the usually well-attended event kept with tradition—with the crowd of primarily staffers, strategists, and lobbyists filling the entirety of The Met's two main bar rooms and spilling out onto the patio—by the time **Party Central** had arrived closer to 9 p.m., things had settled down significantly. Yet a sizable crowd of revelers remained well into the night, further reinforced by the other journo's returning from The Farm.

**Party Central** spotted still lingering around the bar or enjoying the last of the warm night air Earncliffe Strategies' **Mary Anne Carter**, **Megan Buttle**, and **Craig Robinson**; *iPolitics'* **Marco Vigliotti**, Google's **Sean Murphy**, Rogers Communications' **Hardave Birk**, Pendulum Group's **Heather Bakken** and **Yaroslav Baran**; the NDP's **Anne McGrath**, and—leading the journo-party cavalry—CTV News' **Rachel Aiello** and **Stephanie Ha**; Global News' **Mackenzie Gray**; The Canadian Press' **Alessia Passafiume**; *The National Observer's* **Natasha Bulowski**, **Matteo Cimellaro** and **John Woodside**; and *The Toronto Star's* **Joy SpearChief-Morris** and **Althia Raj**.

Liberal MPs **Ali Ehsassi**, **Kody Blois**, **George Chahal**, and **Taleeb Noormohamed** were also spotted holding court in the super special bar-side rear booth. However, from another perspective, they may have just been politely entertaining the buzzing journo's—fresh from the garden party open bar—while trying to enjoy a late dinner.

While this reporter takes pride in surviving until midnight on a Tuesday, if there was to be any hope of making it to Friday, **Party Central** tapped out while The Met was still bumping, with one final farewell and a prayer to managing partner **Sarah Chown**, and her hardened suds-slinging soldiers behind the bar with no hope of escape until last call. Once again, party people: tip your bar staff well.

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*The Hill Times*



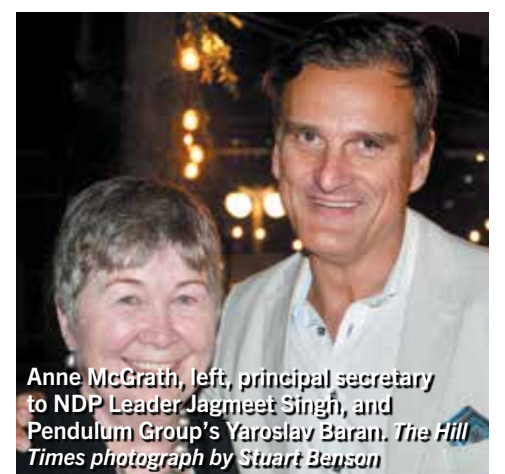
The crowd of mostly staffers and strategists spilled onto the patio on Sept. 16 at Earncliffe and *iPolitics'* annual 'Housewarming' at the Métropolitain Brasserie. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



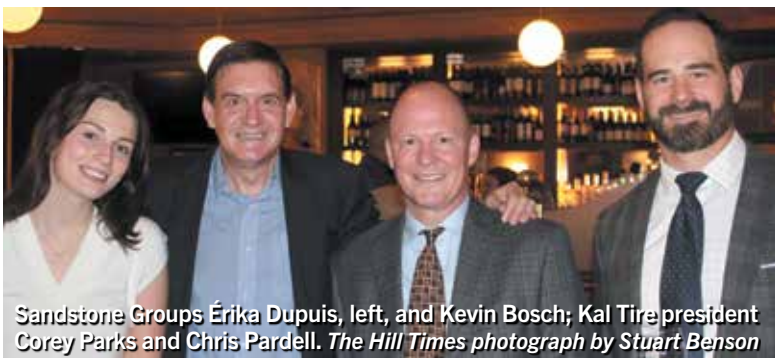
The Embassy of Japan's **Akihiko Sunami**, left, and **Nobuhiro Taniyama**, with **Colin Campbell**, legislative assistant to Liberal MP **Terry Sheehan**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



**Anthony Carricato**, left, director of events for the House Speaker; Earncliffe Strategies' **Mary Anne Carter**, and **Mathieu Gravel**, the Speaker's director of outreach. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



**Anne McGrath**, left, principal secretary to NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh**, and **Pendulum Group's** **Yaroslav Baran**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



**Sandstone Groups** **Érika Dupuis**, left, and **Kevin Bosch**; **Kal Tire** president **Corey Parks** and **Chris Pardell**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



*The National Observer's* **Natasha Bulowski**, left, *The Canadian Press's* **Alessia Passafiume**, *The Toronto Star's* **Joy SpearChief-Morris**, and *The National Observer's* **Matteo Cimellaro** and **John Woodside**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



**Dylan Hellwig**, left; **Food, Health & Consumer Products of Canada**, and **Impact Public Affairs's** **Tasso Housakos**; **Brett Hartley**; **Artur Gomes**; and **Dan Marino**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



*City News's* **Glen McGregor**, left, **Pendulum Group's** **Heather Bakken**, and **Searchlight Strategy Group's** **Greg Weston**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson



**Dylan Hellwig**, left, **Canadian Chamber of Commerce's** **Pascal Chan**, **Build a Dream's** **Stacey Noronha**, and **RBC's** **Amanda Ball**. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson





## Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

# Joanna Dafoe to take over as chief of staff to Environment Minister Guilbeault

Other recent staff moves in the environment minister's office include press secretary Kaitlin Power's exit for Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu's team.

Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault** has seen a fair bit of staff shakeup in his office of late, but he's been quick to tap a new chief of staff to step in once **Jamie Kippen** leaves at the end of this month.



Joanna Dafoe will officially take over as chief of staff to Minister Guilbeault at the end of this month. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Deputy chief of staff **Joanna Dafoe** has already started transitioning into the role on an acting basis ahead of Kippen's official departure. Dafoe has been working for the federal environment minister since March 2021 when she was hired as director of policy, climate, and international affairs to then-minister **Jonathan Wilkinson**. Guilbeault kept Dafoe on to lead his policy team after taking charge of the portfolio following that year's federal election, and roughly a year later she was promoted to deputy chief of staff. She filled a dual role as both a policy director and deputy chief until the spring of 2023, when she dropped the former duties.

Prior to joining Wilkinson's office, Dafoe had most recently been national director for climate change with the Insurance Bureau of Canada, but before then she'd spent roughly two years working as a public servant with Environment and Climate Change Canada, largely as a senior policy adviser to the department's ambassador for climate change. Dafoe is also a former adjunct professor of international climate law at Queen's University, and has worked as a thematic expert with the International Institute for Sustainable Development, and as a policy consultant with the Stockholm Environment Institute. She is currently an advisory board member with the Yale Center for Environmental Law and Policy.

With Dafoe stepping into the chief's chair, director of policy for nature and biodiversity **Michael Brewster** has been promoted to deputy chief of staff.



Michael Brewster has been promoted to deputy chief of staff. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Brewster has been working for Guilbeault since 2019. After serving as a field co-ordinator on Guilbeault's successful re-election campaign, post-election, Brewster was hired as director of parliamentary affairs in Guilbeault's office as then-minister of Canadian heritage—a role he held until the 2021 election, at which point he followed Guilbeault to the environment office as a policy director. Brewster previously spent the 42nd Parliament as an aide to then-families, children, and social development minister **Jean-Yves Duclos**, beginning as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs—later issues management—in January 2016, and ending as a senior policy adviser.

**Kurtis Layden** continues as director of policy for climate and energy policy to Guilbeault. **Joshua Swift** and **Caroline Lee** remain senior policy advisers, while **Isabelle Hurley** is a senior policy and Northern regional affairs adviser, and **Eddy Pérez** is a senior adviser for international affairs.

Earlier this month, press secretary and senior communications adviser **Kaitlin Power** said her goodbyes to Guilbeault's team. She marked her last day with the environment office on Sept. 9, and is now director of communications to Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu**.



Kaitlin Power is now director of communications to Minister Hajdu. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Hajdu's previous director of communications and issues management, **Simon Ross**, has left the minister's office after almost a year and a half on the job. Ross, who was hired by Hajdu in June 2023, is a former Quebec Liberal staffer who began working for the Trudeau government in 2017 starting as press secretary to then-heritage minister **Mélanie Joly**. He's since been press sec-

retary to current Transport Minister **Pablo Rodriguez** during Rodriguez's time as both heritage minister, and as government House leader and Quebec lieutenant. Ross was also a senior adviser to Rodriguez during his second run as minister for heritage from 2021 to 2023. Stay tuned for an update on where Ross has landed.

Now communications director to Hajdu, Power has been a full-time staffer on the Hill since the end of 2019. After completing a Liberal Summer Leadership Program (SLP) internship earlier in the year, post-election, Power was hired as an assistant to Duclos as the MP for Québec, Que. In early 2021, Power joined the ministerial staff ranks when she landed a job as a communications adviser to Guilbeault as then-heritage minister. She went on to briefly serve as a Quebec regional affairs adviser in the heritage office before following Guilbeault to the environment portfolio as a press secretary in January 2022 shortly after the last federal election.

A new press secretary has yet to be hired in Guilbeault's office, but standby for an update on that end.

That said, one now-ex staffer to Guilbeault has recently stepped into a press secretary role: parliamentary affairs adviser **Gabriel Brunet** left the environment minister's office as of Sept. 6, and is now press secretary to Public Safety, Intergovernmental Affairs, and Democratic Institutions Minister **Dominic LeBlanc**.



Gabriel Brunet is now press secretary to Minister LeBlanc. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Brunet had been with the environment office since February 2021, having originally been hired as a special assistant for communications to then-minister **Wilkinson**. He briefly stepped in as acting press secretary to Guilbeault after the 2021 federal election before Power officially took over the role. Brunet's CV includes time spent working as an analyst with the Centre de services scolaire de Montréal, and with public relations firms Mongeau Pellerin and Torchia Communications.

In LeBlanc's office, Brunet replaces **Jean-Sébastien Comeau** who has been promoted to director of communications to the minister on the heels of **Kelly Ouimet**'s exit.

Ouimet had been overseeing communications for LeBlanc since coming to work on the Hill in the fall of 2020, starting in LeBlanc's office as then-president of the Queen's Privy Council and minister for intergovernmental affairs. A former communications director to then-social development minister **Tony Ianno** and ex-government relations director with the Forest Products Association of Canada, before being hired by LeBlanc, she'd most recently been president of her own eponymous public relations firm.

Comeau has been working for LeBlanc since the spring of 2021, starting as press secretary and communications adviser in his office as then-Privy Council president and intergovernmental affairs minister. An ex-parliamentary tour guide and former media analyst with Global Affairs Canada, between 2018 and 2021, Comeau worked

for then-agriculture minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau** beginning as a special assistant and ending as press secretary.

Jumping back to Guilbeault's shop, there are a few more staffing changes to note. In early August, Quebec regional affairs adviser **Éric Amyot** left the minister's team to study law at the University of Ottawa. He's since been replaced by **Camille Leblanc** who until recently had been doing the same for Small Business Minister **Rechie Valdez**.



Camille Leblanc has taken over the Quebec desk in the environment minister's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former Quebec Liberal staffer, Amyot had been working for Guilbeault since May 2023. Before then, he was a Quebec regional adviser to then-housing, diversity, and inclusion minister **Ahmed Hussen**.

Leblanc had been working for Valdez since this past March, and before then spent four years working for the non-profit Regroupement des jeunes chambres de commerce du Québec, ending as deputy director of operations and head of member services, amongst other past experience.

In Guilbeault's office, Leblanc is working alongside fellow regional advisers **Hurley**; **Kelsey Lane**, who covers the Atlantic; **Liam Olsen**, who's responsible for the Prairies and British Columbia; and **Natalie Woodland**, who covers Ontario.

**Sarah Gingles**, who spent the summer as an SLP intern in Guilbeault's office, has now been hired as an executive assistant. She graduated from Queen's University with a bachelor's degree in environmental science and global development studies earlier this year.

In more belated news, **Molly Wilkins** joined the environment office back in June as a new parliamentary affairs adviser.

Wilkins was most recently Ontario regional affairs and issues adviser to Rural Economic Development Minister **Gudie Hutchings** whom she'd been working for since January 2022, beginning as a special assistant for operations and executive assistant to the chief of staff. Wilkins got her start on the Hill in the spring of 2021 when she was hired as executive assistant to the managing director of the Liberal research bureau. Prior to working for Hutchings, Wilkins spent a few months as an assistant to London West, Ont., Liberal MP **Arielle Kayabaga**. Wilkins became national membership chair for the Young Liberals of Canada—for which Olsen is currently national chair—in May 2023.

**Kathleen Legault-Meek** is director of parliamentary affairs to Guilbeault.

Aside from those already mentioned, the environment team also currently includes: director of communications **Oliver Anderson**, director of media relations and strategic outreach **Bruce Cheadle**, communications adviser **Selin Ozturk**, director of operations **Elena Mitchell**, senior adviser for outreach **Jennifer Lash**, issues manager **Sean Mitchell**, operations and communications assistant **Catherine Hu**, executive assistant to the minister **Marie Froggatt**, and driver **Christy-Ann Ferguson**.

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The Hill Times



# Champagne will be at BIONATION this week and will speak at Montreal Council on Foreign Relations on Sept. 25



Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne will take part in a bilingual chat with European Commissioner for Competition Margrethe Vestager on Wednesday, Sept. 25, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Centre Mont-Royal, in Montreal. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

## SUNDAY, SEPT. 22—WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 25

**Prime Minister to Attend UN General Assembly**—Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will attend the 79<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York City. Sunday, Sept. 22, to Wednesday, Sept. 25.

## MONDAY, SEPT. 23

**House Sitting**—The House will resume sitting on Monday, Sept. 16, and will sit for four weeks from Sept. 16-Oct. 11, but will take Monday, Sept. 30, off. It breaks Oct. 14-18, and resumes sitting on Oct. 21. It sits Oct. 21-Nov. 9, and breaks on Nov. 11 for Remembrance Day week until Nov. 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18 to Dec. 17.

**Silencing Survivors is Violence**—Experts in trauma, gender-based violence, racism, law and more will gather for a special evening: “Silencing Survivors is Violence: Why Nova Scotia Needs to Ban Abusive Non-Disclosure Agreements.” The event comes on the heels of the recent unanimous passage of a bill declaring domestic violence an epidemic in the province. Monday, Sept. 23 at 6p.m. AT at Halifax’s Cathedral Church of All Saints, 1330 Cathedral Lane. Contact [liz@cantbuymysilence.com](mailto:liz@cantbuymysilence.com).

**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](mailto:RSVP@space-canada.ca).

## TUESDAY, SEPT. 24

**Panel: ‘Canada as Natural Resource Powerhouse’**—The Ottawa Board of Trade hosts 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](mailto: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., 7<sup>th</sup> floor, and online. Details: [irpp.org](mailto:irpp.org).

**Strategies for Success in a Post-C18 World**—Reporters Without Borders hosts a webinar outlining strategies for Canadian media to find success in a “post-C-18 world”. A panel of journalists and media executives will share how they are coping with these unprecedented changes in the Canadian media landscape. Tuesday, Sept. 24, 2p.m. ET happening online. Details via Eventbrite.

**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. Arguing against the motion are former Liberal cabinet minister John Manley, and the University of Calgary’s Martha Hall Findlay. Tuesday, Sept. 24, at 5:15 p.m. at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Details: [cdhoweregntdebate.org](http://cdhoweregntdebate.org).

## TUESDAY, SEPT. 24—WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 25

**BIONATION 2024**—BIOTECCanada hosts BIONATION, a gathering of researchers, entrepreneurs, investors, policy makers and the workforce of today and tomorrow to celebrate the Canadian biotech sector’s strategic economic and social importance. The two-day program will explore the opportunities ahead, and includes speakers such as Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne and Health Minister Mark Holland. Visit: [biotech.ca/bionation](http://biotech.ca/bionation) for details or [info@biotech.ca](mailto:info@biotech.ca).

## 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 Pélouin, 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. Details online: [boardoftrade.com](http://boardoftrade.com).

**Minister Champagne to Deliver Remarks**—Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne will take part in a bilingual discussion with Margrethe Vestager, executive vice-president of the European Commission for a Europe fit for the Digital Age and Commissioner for Competition, hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, Sept. 25, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Centre Mont-Royal, 2200 Mansfield St., Montreal. Details: [corim.qc.ca](mailto:corim.qc.ca).

**Panel: ‘Reweaving the Legal Fabric’**—The David Suzuki Foundation hosts a discussion, “Reweaving the Legal Fabric: Indigenous Governance and Conservation Law in Canada,” moderated by Jesse Wente. Wednesday, Sept. 25, at 7:30p.m. ET at the Canadian Museum of Nature, 240 McLeod St. Details via Eventbrite.

## WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 25—THURSDAY, SEPT. 26

**CEPCA 2024**—The two-day Canadian Emergency Preparedness and Climate Adaptation Convention will take place in Ottawa. The emergency preparedness and climate adaptation industry will gather to discuss how public safety is at risk as natural disasters increase across the country. Wednesday, Sept. 25, to Thursday, Sept. 26 at the Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details: [emergencyexpo.com](http://emergencyexpo.com).

## THURSDAY, SEPT. 26

**Webinar: ‘Maximize Impact Post-Lobby Day’**—The Beacon North Mentorship Academy hosts the second in a two-part online course, “Maximizing Impact After Your Lobby Day.” This second session will explore the steps to take after your lobby day to ensure your advocacy efforts produce results. Thursday, Sept. 26, from 12-1:30 p.m. ET. Details: [beaconmentorshipacademy.com](http://beaconmentorshipacademy.com).

**‘Wildfires and the Need for Resilient Communities’**—Emergency Preparedness Minister Harjit Sajjan will discuss “Canadian Wildfires and the Urgent Need for Resilient Communities” with Celyeste Power, president and CEO of the Insurance Bureau of Canada, at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Ottawa. Thursday, Sept. 26, at 12 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details: [canadianclubottawa.ca](http://canadianclubottawa.ca).

**Liberal MP Fortier to Host Spaghetti Dinner**—Liberal MP Mona Fortier hosts a spaghetti dinner featuring conversations with community members. Thursday, Sept. 26, at 6 p.m. ET at the Centre Pauline Charron, 164 Jeanne Mance St. Ottawa. Details: [liberal.ca](http://liberal.ca).

**Murray Sinclair to Discuss His New Book**—Former senator and Truth and Reconciliation Commission chair Murray Sinclair will discuss his new memoir, *Who We Are: Four Questions For a Life and a Nation*, on stage with CBC host Matt Galloway. Thursday, Sept. 26, at the RBC Convention Centre, 375 York Ave., Winnipeg. Details: [mcsnallyrobinson.com](http://mcsnallyrobinson.com).

## FRIDAY, SEPT. 27

**Via Rail President to Deliver Remarks**—Mario Pélouin, president and CEO of Via Rail, will deliver remarks titled “Connecting Manitoba with Via Rail’s Vision for 2030” hosted by the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Friday, Sept. 27, at 7:30 a.m. CT at the Delta Winnipeg Hotel, 350 St. Mary Ave. Details online: [business.mbchamber.mb.ca](http://business.mbchamber.mb.ca).

## SUNDAY, SEPT. 29

**MP Majumdar to Attend Party Fundraiser**—Conservative MP Shuv Majumdar will take part in a special evening with Conservative candidate Roman Baber in support of the York Centre EDA. Sunday, Sept. 29, at 6:30 p.m. at the National Event Venue, 1000

Finch Ave. W., North York. Details: [events@conservative.ca](mailto:events@conservative.ca).

## MONDAY, SEPT. 30

**National Day for Truth and Reconciliation**—The fourth annual National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, also known as Orange Shirt Day, is today, honouring the children who never returned home and Survivors of residential schools, as well as their families and communities.

**Unveiling of Indian Residential School Memorial Monument**—The Canadian Museum of History hosts a ceremony marking the installation and unveiling of the *Indian Residential School Memorial Monument*. Monday, Sept. 30, at 6p.m. ET at the Canadian Museum of History, 100 Laurier St., Gatineau. Details: [historymuseum.ca](http://historymuseum.ca)

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