

BREAK DOWN THE BARRIERS FOR **DISABLED VOICES** IN POLITICS

► *KAIT LAFORCE*  
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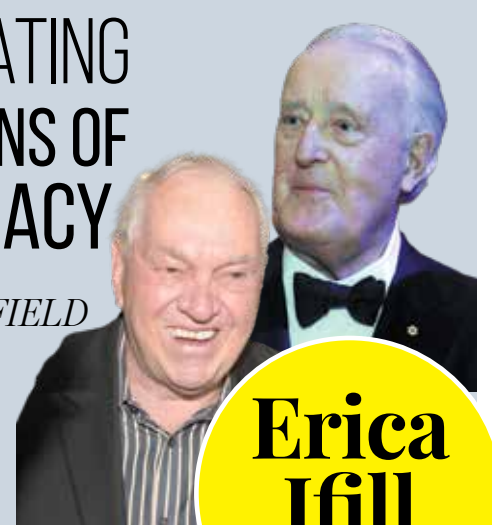


**BACK-TO-OFFICE MANDATE:** THE PITFALLS OF PRIORITIZING PERCEPTION OVER PRODUCTIVITY

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# THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2166

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2024 \$5.00

NEWS

A new age for Canada-Saudi relations? Human rights concerns passed over for economic links

BY NEIL MOSS

The federal government welcomed a Saudi minister's high-level visit with open arms last week, which observers say is a sign of the changing tide in how Ottawa is approaching Riyadh. Sixteen months ago, Canada and Saudi Arabia restored relations and placed ambassadors in each other's respective capitals after a high-profile diplomatic spat in 2018 over Canadian social media posts raising concern over Saudi Arabia's human rights abuses. In the next step towards more cordial relations, Saudi Industry and Mineral Resources Minister Bandar Alkhorayef was welcomed to Ottawa on Oct. 2, holding meetings with International

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NEWS

**'They want to be everywhere right now': Conservatives go big with 'full suite' of election-ready social media ads**

BY STUART BENSON

The Conservatives' latest big-budget political ad campaign was paired with a mountain of spending on social media ads last month, nearly surpassing the party's entire advertising splash over the summer as the party continues its aim of cementing itself as the party of change. However, with the Conservative message allowed to operate in a near vacuum, Liberal strategists say that unless the party plans to begin closing the gap soon with ads of their own, the Grits' best bet may be to call an election sooner.

According to data from Meta's Ad Library—one of the few publicly available resources tracking

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Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and his party spent more than \$350,000 on Meta Ads last month, while Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the governing Liberals seem content with earned media and having their online surrogates get the message out. Screenshots courtesy of Youtube and background image courtesy of Unsplash

NEWS

Attitudes on use of notwithstanding clause have changed, and Senate's approach should, too: Senator Harder

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Spurred on by use of the controversial clause in recent years, Ontario PSG Senator Peter Harder says his motion to have the Red Chamber express opposition to the use of the Charter of Rights' notwithstanding clause in future government legislation is aimed at sparking debate and reflection, and hopefully changes to how the Senate weighs any such future bills.

Harder tabled his motion last May, and spoke to it for the first time on Sept. 24, outlining his view of how the political landscape in Canada has changed since the Charter was adopted in 1982. "The politics of today don't align with those four decades

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NEWS

**'It's going to destroy everything we depend on': visiting Indigenous delegation seeks to stop Canada-Ecuador trade talks**

BY NEIL MOSS

Indigenous voices opposed to trade talks between Ecuador and Canada are being ignored, says a delegation of Ecuadorian Indigenous leaders who travelled

to Ottawa last week calling on Canada to cease trade talks with their country.

Canada started formal trade talks with Ecuador in April, and Canadian stakeholders are warning that the negotiators are

aiming to complete those talks by 2025, ahead of Ecuador's February elections.

Public consultations for Canadian stakeholders began in early 2023, but the delegation of Indigenous Ecuadorian leaders

who came to Ottawa on Oct. 2 said they haven't been consulted.

The delegation consisted of Zenaida Yasacama, vice-president of the Confederation of Indigenous Nationalities of Ecuador; Fanny Kaekat, who leads exter-

nal affairs for the Shuar Arutam People; Hortensia Zhagüi, who represents the Board of Potable Water Administrations of Victoria del Portete and Tarqui; and Ivonne

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Christina Leadlay

## Heard On The Hill

# Mark Carney, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Lloyd Axworthy all have new books coming



Mark Carney, left, Jody Wilson-Raybould, and Lloyd Axworthy all have new books coming out soon. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia and Andrew Meade

This season's harvest of books includes a bumper crop of ones written by former politicians or political-adjacent types, starting with ex-governor of the Bank of Canada and Bank of England **Mark Carney**.

"Excited that my new book, *The Hinge*, will be published by Signal in May 2025," the current chair of the federal Liberals' task force on economic growth posted on X on Oct. 3. "It's all about how we can to build an even better Canada in an increasingly dangerous and divided world."

The title is a nod to **Winston Churchill's** 1950 book *The Hinge of Fate*, the fourth in the former British prime minister's history of the Second World War.

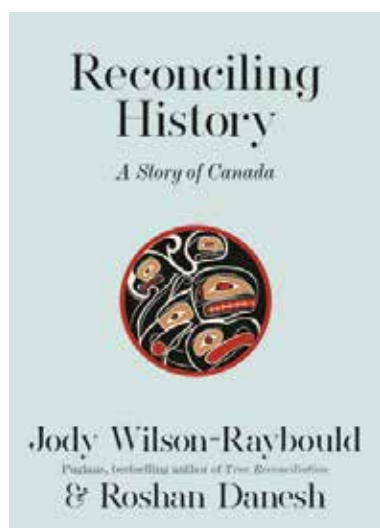
"We are at a hinge moment in history—reminiscent of what the Allies faced at the end of 1941, when Winston Churchill was in Ottawa meeting with [William Lyon] Mackenzie King—an age of uncertainty and rising perils that is reshaping global political, economic, technological, and social orders, and overturning our day-to-day lives," reads the promotional blurb.

"The good news is that, just as Churchill, King, and [Franklin Delano Roosevelt] would eventually swing what Churchill termed the 'Hinge of Fate' towards freedom and prosperity, we too have agency to build an even better Canada." The book's cover art is not yet available.

This is Carney's second book. His first, *Value(s) Building a*

*Better World for All*, came out in 2021.

## Jody Wilson-Raybould writes about reconciliation



Jody Wilson-Raybould's new book will be out Oct. 29. Book cover courtesy of Penguin Random House Canada

Former Liberal cabinet minister **Jody Wilson-Raybould** also has a new book out, and she'll be in Ottawa next month to promote it along with co-author **Roshan Danesh**.

Titled *Reconciling History: A Story of Canada* and published

by Penguin Random House Canada, this book was "Born out of the oral history in [her 2022 book] *True Reconciliation*, and complemented throughout with stunning photography and art," according to the Ottawa International Writers' Festival, which is hosting the authors' event on Nov. 8. "*Reconciling History* takes this approach to telling our collective story to an entirely different level."

The book will be out Oct. 29.

From 2015 to 2019, Wilson-Raybould was in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** cabinet, first as justice minister and attorney general, and then briefly as veterans affairs minister before she resigned from cabinet and from caucus. She sat as an Independent MP for Vancouver Granville, B.C., from 2019 to 2021 when she did not re-offer.

Danesh is a lawyer and educator who has served as the special counsel on reconciliation to the federal minister of justice and attorney general, and has advised the British Columbia government on the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

This book is Danesh's second book—his *Dimensions of Bahá'í Law* was published in 2019—and the fourth for Wilson-Raybould: *From Where I Stand: Rebuilding Indigenous Nations for a Stronger Canada* marked her author debut in 2019, *Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power* was published in 2021, and *True*

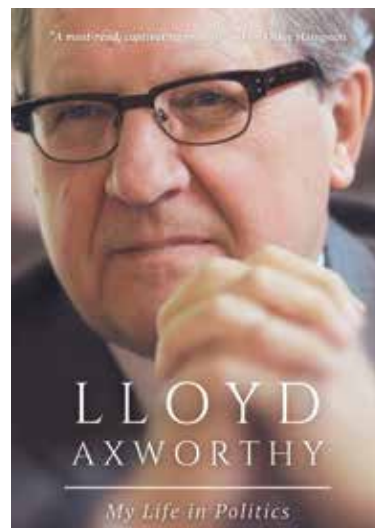
*Reconciliation: How to Be a Force for Change* came out in 2022.

## Chrétien-era minister Lloyd Axworthy pens memoir

Another former Liberal cabinet minister is releasing a book. **Lloyd Axworthy's** memoir, titled *My Life in Politics*, will be published by Sutherland House on Oct. 15.

The 84-year-old former federal staffer and Manitoba MLA was first elected to Parliament in 1979, and held cabinet roles in **Pierre Trudeau** and **John Turner's** cabinets. He went on to become **Jean Chrétien's** minister of foreign affairs, of employment and immigration, and of labour.

Axworthy "invites readers inside his roles in some of the most important political stories of the last half century, including the enactment of Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the great debate over the Canada-U.S. free trade agreement, and the global fights to ban landmines and establish the International Criminal Court," reads the promo.



*My Life in Politics* will come out Oct. 15. Book cover courtesy Sutherland House Press

"He also writes frankly about the disappointments of political life and the challenges of staying true to progressive ideals while dealing with the often brutal requirements of political power."

After stepping back from politics as of the 2000 election, Axworthy was president of the University of Winnipeg from 2004 to 2014. He currently chairs the World Refugee and Migration Council.

*My Life in Politics* is Axworthy's fifth book. In 2001, he published *The Axworthy Legacy*, followed by both *Navigating a New World*, as well as *Liberals at the Border* in 2004, and then *Boulevard of Broken Dreams: A 40 Year Journey through Portage Avenue* in 2014.

## Métis National Council at a 'crossroads' as it awaits presidential vote



Cassidy Caron's last day at Métis National Council president was Sept. 30. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The Métis National Council is without a president following **Cassidy Caron's** departure on Sept. 30.

Caron—who was first elected on Sept. 30, 2021—announced in May that she wouldn't seek a new term, and also that she's pregnant with her first child.

She called her three-year tenure "the honour of a lifetime" in her final president's message in the Sept. 18 edition of the MNC's newsletter, *Pemmican Post*.

Back in May, Caron noted the board of governors would be voting on her replacement on Sept. 26, but things have changed since then.

In her farewell note, Caron announced that on Aug. 30 the board "unanimously passed a resolution to postpone the MNC General Assembly and Election" as it first wants to read the MNC's Expert Panel's final report, which is expected on Oct. 15. The new date for the AGM and election will be "held no later than Nov. 14, 2024."

"In the interim, the MNC Board of Governors can exercise its discretionary powers under the MNC bylaws to appoint an existing MNC employee to assume duties to ensure the MNC's operations will not be impeded or frustrated in any way prior to the next MNC General Assembly where a new MNC President will be elected," Caron wrote on Sept. 18.

But then, the next day, the Métis Nation-Saskatchewan withdrew from the MNC, the latest in a trend of individual Métis governments choosing to go solo. The Manitoba Métis Federation left the group three years ago. At issue is the Métis Nation of On-

Continued on page 3

## Heard on the Hill

Continued from page 2

tario's membership in the MNC, "and, according to the MN-S, continues to represent people who are not Métis," APTN reported on Sept. 24. APTN also noted that the "Métis Nation British Columbia said it's considering its own role within the Métis National Council."

"We seem to be at a crossroads," Caron said in a statement on Sept. 23.

### Ottawa police to create Hill unit: CBC

The Ottawa Police Service will create a special unit to keep the peace on Parliament Hill, CBC News reported on Oct. 4.

The news is based on a letter Liberal MP **Pam Damoff** received from Sergeant-at-Arms **Patrick McDonnell** in which he "confirmed his office has worked with the Parliamentary Protective Service to establish a secure perimeter around West Block," according to **Olivia Stefanovich's** reporting.

"In his reply, McDonnell said the Ottawa police had stationed officers in key locations around the Parliamentary Precinct during



A Parliamentary Protective Service car sits near a fence that cordons off public access to West Block and the Parliamentary Precinct on Oct. 4. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

sitting hours within the last week."

The first contingent of officers in the new Hill unit are expected to start in the coming weeks, according to McDonnell's letter, which confirmed the unit would be funded through federal assistance, but didn't disclose the price tag.

While PPS has increased its presence in the Parliamentary Precinct, those "officers do not have peace officer status, so they can't charge anyone with criminal offences," relying on the local police to do that.

### Blackbird Strategies feathers its nest



Olivier Cullen. *Photograph courtesy Olivier Cullen*

Blackbird Strategies' founder **Lisa Kirbie** announced last week that **Olivier Cullen** and **Annalisa Harris** have joined her flock of strategists.

"Both come to us having worked in ministerial offices on Indigenous and other files. Their combined expertise and experience continues to strengthen an already amazing team," Kirbie posted on X on Oct. 1.



Annalisa Harris. *Photograph courtesy X*

"After an incredible journey at Summa Strategies Canada, it's time for a new challenge," Cullen posted on LinkedIn on Sept. 30. The former Liberal staffer will be Blackbird's director of strategy "focusing on the work of supporting Indigenous communities, organizations, and others supporting vital initiatives to advance reconciliation," he wrote.

Montreal-based Harris is also a former Liberal ministerial staffer who worked under then-Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Minister **Carolyn Bennett** from 2015 to 2018. Until recently, Harris

was doing communications for aerospace manufacturer CAE. She also previously worked in the office of Montreal's mayor, **Valérie Plante**.

### Gerry Byrne, son of ex-MP Gerry Byrne, joins Senator's office

Verging into **Hill Climbers** territory, **Heard on the Hill** has a bit of noteworthy staffing news coming out of Senator **Bev Busson's** office. The Senator announced that **Gerry Byrne** joined her team as a parliamentary research assistant on Oct. 3.

If Byrne's name sounds familiar, that's because he shares it with his father: former Liberal MP **Gerry Byrne**. The elder Byrne was MP for Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte in Newfoundland and Labrador from 1997 until 2015. He held a few parliamentary secretary roles during his time in Parliament, and was minister of state for the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency from January 2002 until December 2003.

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## News

# Diaspora communities need 'proactive' measures to guard against foreign and homegrown hostility, inquiry hears

Protecting Canadians against transnational repression is 'a matter of life and death' for the Sikh community, says B.C. Gurdwara spokesperson Moninder Singh.

BY STUART BENSON

As the federal government boosts funding for vulnerable communities affected by a rising level of domestic hate crimes and transnational repression by foreign hostile actors, representatives of various diaspora communities say heightened security and police activity is an insufficient "last line of defence" against a threat that they say has already infiltrated their communities and Canada's democratic institutions.

On Oct. 2, the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference heard from representatives from diaspora communities affected by foreign interference who shared their experiences and insights on how governments, political parties, and intelligence and police forces can better address, support, and protect them from the growing threat of transnational repression.

Moninder Singh, representing the B.C. Gurdwara Council, told the commission that protecting the Sikh community from foreign interference and transnational repression is "now a matter of life and death."

Singh pointed to the June 2023 killing of Sikh activist Hardeep Singh Nijjar. On Sept. 18, 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) told the House of Commons that there were credible allegations of a link between the killing and the Indian government.

Singh told the inquiry that a year before Nijjar's death, Canadian security officials had warned Nijjar and other Sikh leaders that their lives were in danger, but that he had been provided with insufficient protection.

Singh called on the government to provide more protection to his community and their places of worship, and for a separate inquiry into Nijjar's death.

Following his testimony, Singh told *The Hill Times* that programs

like the recently announced Canada Community Security Program (CCSP) would be helpful in protecting gurdwaras and other Sikh community centres. However, he said that security infrastructure is only a "last line of defence," and there is far more that can and should be done before the threat becomes that immediate.

On Oct. 1, Public Safety and Democratic Institutions Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) announced the launch of the CCSP, which replaces the previous Security Infrastructure Program. The new program expands the eligibility for funding to include office and administrative spaces, cemeteries, and childcare centres; increases the eligible financing to 70 per cent of project costs; provides funding for time-limited third-party licensed security personnel; and removes the maximum level of total federal, provincial, territorial, or municipal government assistance those organizations can receive. Eligible organizations can now apply for funding year-round through a continuous intake process, and on behalf of affiliated, eligible recipients.

Singh said that while it is important to provide increased security for places of worship being targeted by rising levels of domestic hate crimes, in many cases, security measures are only

implemented "after something tragic has happened."

"We can put up walls or cameras in our places of worship or have security guards standing around, but we're just putting up a wall to a problem we're not dealing with," Singh explained. "If we're only taking physical security measures, that's just acknowledging the problem without actually dealing with it."

Beyond physical security, Singh said one of the most pressing concerns for the Sikh community is the "padded glove" with which the Canadian government continues to treat the Indian government compared to other countries implicated by the commission in acts of foreign interference like Russia or China.

"There is passing acknowledgement of their interference, but India is still being treated very softly, in my opinion, because of the economic and diplomatic ties," Singh said.

While the Canadian government rightly refers to the governments of Russia and China as "hostile actors," India is still referred to in relatively "friendly" terms, said Singh.

"I think it matters a lot how Canada refers to India, but the language the government puts out is very soft," Singh explained. "They're not referring to them as a hostile actor, but I can't think

of a more hostile action than assassination."

Gloria Fung, a former president of the Canada-Hong Kong Link who testified alongside Singh at the inquiry, also told *The Hill Times* that addressing the threat of transnational repression will require far more "proactive" preventative measures than remedial security or law enforcement measures.

Fung, a co-convenor of the Canadian Coalition for a Foreign Influence Transparency Registry, said the passage of Bill C-70, the Countering Foreign Interference Act, was an important first step to providing a legislative tool to combat the issue and enhancing transparency in Canada's democratic processes.

Fung said that prior to the passage of Bill C-70, Canada's laws regarding foreign interference were "backward and outdated" compared to countries like the United States and Australia, leading Canada to become "one of the most covertly infiltrated of all liberal democracies."

Fung told *The Hill Times* that prior to the relatively recent focus on the subject, Canada's "political arena" and law enforcement were insensitive or "naive" towards acts of foreign interference.

While the inquiry and Bill C-70 are both important tools for combating foreign interference and raising awareness among govern-



ment, law enforcement, and the general public, more work is still needed, particularly in defining transnational repression in Canadian law, said Fung.

She said a more-concrete legal definition of transnational repression, coupled with additional training for law enforcement agencies like the RCMP on how to handle those allegations, would allow them to better identify the "true agents" without causing a spillover chilling effect on the larger community.

Earlier in the day, the commission heard from members of the Chinese community who spoke about that chilling effect on their participation in politics, academia, and community life.

Wawa Li, a second-generation Chinese-Canadian student living in Montreal, spoke about the impacts of the RCMP's investigation into so-called "Chinese police stations" alleged to be operating out of community centres throughout Canada.

Following its investigation in June 2023, the RCMP said it had "shut down illegal police activity" in three provinces, including British Columbia, Ontario, and Quebec.

Two Chinese community centres in Montreal have since served the RCMP with a \$5-million defamation lawsuit over its accusations the centres were hosting illegal police stations on behalf of China's government.

Li told the commission that while the RCMP has never publicly offered any evidence to support those allegations, because of the cloud of suspicion, the centres have had funding opportunities reduced, forcing them to cut programs and staff.

"I am against foreign interference, and I hope the government takes action if it exists, but not at the expense of the community," Li said.

The next day, Mark Flynn, the RCMP's deputy commissioner for federal policing, declined to comment on whether any of the "police stations" are still operating, citing an "ongoing investigation."

## Security Infrastructure Program and Canada Community Security Program comparison:

	Security Infrastructure Program	New with the Canada Community Security Program
Who can apply?	Private, not-for-profit organizations including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools</li> <li>Victims' shelters</li> <li>Places of worship</li> <li>Community centres</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office and administrative spaces</li> <li>Cemeteries</li> <li>Childcare centres</li> <li>Affiliated eligible recipients</li> </ul>
What is eligible?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Security equipment and hardware</li> <li>Minor renovations to enhance security</li> <li>Security and emergency assessments and plans</li> <li>Training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Time-limited security personnel</li> </ul>
Where can I find funding?	Up to 50 per cent of eligible project expenses.	Up to 70 per cent of eligible project expenses; 30 per cent from sources including private funding, or provincial, territorial or municipal funding.
When are applications accepted?	Once a year for eight weeks	Continuous intake
What documents are needed to apply?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A budget template</li> <li>Two comparable quotes</li> <li>Floor plans</li> <li>Two letters of support</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A budget template</li> <li>One quote</li> </ul>

Source: Public Safety Canada



Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue presides over the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference at Library and Archives Canada in Ottawa on Sept. 27. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“It is exactly because of things like this that we have to move more quickly to take proactive measures, and make sure the legislation and the corresponding regulations will be up and running as soon as possible,” Fung said.

In the meantime, Fung said there is more the RCMP and agencies like the Canadian Security Intelligence Service can do to help alleviate the anxiety and suspicion hanging over her community, particularly by improving its “two-way communications.”

Fung explained that in many cases, including the investigation into the police stations, when community members speak to law enforcement, “they just gather the information from us,” and rarely follow up with updates on their investigations.

“It’s important that there should be a meaningful two-way communication between enforcement, intelligence agencies, and selected members of vulnerable diaspora communities,” Fung said, adding that she doesn’t expect every member of the community to be updated on every single investigation.

“I’m not asking the enforcement staff to talk to all of our community, but they should know which ones know what they’re talking about.”

Katherine Leung, a policy adviser with Hong Kong Watch, told the commission she has also heard from members of the community



Katherine Leung, a policy adviser with Hong Kong Watch, says regular updates and followups from the RCMP can send the message that ‘Canada cares.’ *Photograph courtesy of Katherine Leung*

out compromising an ongoing investigation, simply remaining in regular contact with a text or phone call to ask the victim if there are any updates to share sends the messages that “Canada cares about you.”

Leung also said that while increased funding for police services for training and staff for followups would be helpful, the best remedy to prevent acts of transnational repression is a “strong deterrence.”

While Leung said that anyone acting on behalf of a foreign entity to intimidate Canadian citizens wouldn’t willingly register themselves, the existence of the foreign agent registry would deter those acts before they happen due to the severe penalties the legislation contains.

However, Leung said that in order to affect transnational repression, the legislation will need to be expanded to define it more clearly and identify the activities that would qualify.

“Essentially, if you are using different tactics to suppress activism or political engagement, there should be a very costly penalty involved,” Leung said.

Under the current legislation, those failing to register for the new foreign agents registry, or who are in contravention of other parts of the act, could face a fine of up to \$5-million and/or up to five years in prison.

*sbenson@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*

On Oct. 4, Weldon Epp, an assistant deputy minister at Global Affairs Canada (GAC), said the government had been monitoring the community centres, which he said offered seemingly legitimate community services to the diaspora as cover for the more clandestine operations.

Epp said that the Chinese government had not only officially endorsed many of those services, but also advertised them on

platforms like WeChat, beginning when the COVID-19 pandemic restricted travel to China.

Fung said while it is unfortunate that the investigation has resulted in the termination of legitimate services, including English-language courses and programs for seniors and victims of domestic violence, she pushed back on pinning the blame on the fight against foreign interference.

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## Comment

# Submarine saga could turn into ‘sellers beware’

One would have to caution those potential bidders that in dealing with the Canadian government it will be a case of ‘sellers beware’ rather than ‘buyers beware.’

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—On Sept. 16, Defence Minister Bill Blair announced that Canada intends to purchase a fleet of new submarines for the Royal Canadian Navy. In the request to industry, the project calls for the acquisition of eight to 12 diesel-electric submarines to replace the Navy’s current aged fleet of four Victoria Class submarines.

The mission-specific requirements for the new subs are for them to have an operational range of 7,000 nautical miles. More importantly, these new subs will need to have the capability to operate underwater for up to 21 continuous days.

While this will allow them to conduct patrols under the Arctic ice cap, it will not give them full access to the Arctic Ocean.

On the surface, the submarine purchase sounds like a long-overdue Canadian government investment in renewing underwater-combat capability for the Navy.

However, the real kicker to this story dropped last week. *Ottawa Citizen* reporter David Pugliese revealed the fact that the timeline for the submarine acquisition would not see the first of these boats delivered to the Navy and operational until 2037. The estimated price tag for this fleet of eight to 12 submarines has already ballooned from \$60-billion when first proposed, to Navy planners now suggesting that the figure will top \$100-billion by the time these subs become operational.

The projected delivery schedule does not even guess at when the last of the eight to 12 new subs will enter service.

Despite this ridiculously long lead time on actually building these submarines, the staggering price tag of the project has generated substantial interest from potential bidders. To date, South Korea, Spain, Sweden, and France have expressed interest in offering their diesel-electric submarine designs to Canada, while both Norway and Germany currently produce submarines that could meet the requirements.

However, for those who follow the saga of submarines in service with the Navy, one would have to caution those potential bidders that in dealing with the Canadian government it will be a case of “sellers beware” rather than “buyers beware.” Back in 1987, the Mulroney Progressive Conservative government tabled a very ambitious white paper on defence. The Cold War was at its zenith, and—in keeping pace with then-United States president Ronald Reagan’s strategy

of outspending the Soviet Union into oblivion—Canada was to go on a wild spending spree to beef up the Canadian Armed Forces.

In addition to buying 400 new main battle tanks—I kid you not—Canada was to purchase a fleet of eight to 12 nuclear-powered attack submarines to replace three old Oberon Class diesel-electric submarines then in service. While the notion of this underwater-combat capability—which would have been fully operational under the Arctic ice cap—undoubtedly worried the Soviets, it also unnerved our American allies.

Despite the lucrative dollar figure of providing eight to 12 nuclear-powered submarines to Canada, the U.S. did not bid on the project. Both France and the United Kingdom did offer to provide the subs to Canada. However, under heavy U.S. pressure, Canada scrapped the whole project in 1991 under the guise of a budget cut due to the Soviet Union’s collapse.

The old Oberon subs still needed to be replaced if Canada

was to remain with an underwater-combat capability. This resulted in the U.K. fobbing off their four mothballed, Upholder-class submarines to Canada in 1994. Because of the volume of refit and overhead required to bring the Upholders back to full readiness, the Navy did not take delivery of the first submarine until 2000 with the last of the four being commissioned in 2004. Unfortunately for Canada’s submarines, the teething troubles experienced by the Navy were never fully resolved. With almost a quarter of a century of service with the RCN, these challenges still continue.

In the past two years, only one Victoria-class sub has been operational for a total of 53 days at sea. Lack of crew training is a major factor in that equation, and one that is not easily resolved. You cannot put a submarine to sea with an untrained crew, and you cannot train a sub crew without going to sea.

At present, the Victoria class are due to be decommissioned in the mid-2030s. With the eight to 12 new subs not due to start delivery until 2037, it will be one hell of a challenge for the RCN to even begin to train the crews necessary to operate them.

Of course, the way things are developing, by 2037 all these weapons platforms will likely be uninhabited.

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

*The Hill Times*

# It is time for Amira Elghawaby to step down

In the last 18 months, she has shown limited credibility in promoting her mandate for ‘greater understanding and awareness between people.’

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—I first met Amira Elghawaby in the fall of 2000 when we were both students in an international reporting class at Carleton University. Our professor, the late David Van Praagh, was well connected, and we met diplomats at several embassies. After each meeting, we were to write a column quoting the diplomats we met.

Up until that time, Elghawaby struck me as a studious woman with an interest in journalism.

The events of Sept. 11, 2001, had not yet occurred, but I had been working for the United Nations in Muslim Bangladesh and Macedonia, where Muslim Albanians had sheltered during the 1999 war in Kosovo, so I was sympathetic to the situation of Muslims abroad. As she wore a hijab, I engaged her in conversations, and she invited me to appear on the program she hosted on the Carleton radio station.

One afternoon, we went on a field trip to the United States Embassy in Ottawa. The questions were mostly related to Canadian-American relations. Suddenly, she stood up and began denouncing the United States. To me, it was a sign of extremism and lack of judgment: these were field trips, designed to allow us to get access to experts in the field and write about our impressions. Not moments to harangue.

In subsequent years, I have read her work, notably a 2019 op-ed accusing Quebecers of racism after the passage of Bill 21. The law prevented anyone from working in the public service who wore “ostentatious” religious apparel, like a turban, yarmulke, or hijab. The column, co-written with former Canadian Jewish Congress CEO Bernie Farber, cited polling data to say that “a

majority of Quebecers” who supported Bill 21 also held anti-Muslim views.

On her appointment as Canada’s special representative on combatting Islamophobia in early 2023, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau should have expected there would be criticism from ministers in Premier François Legault’s government sensitive to “Quebec bashing.”

I have worked with Deborah Lyons, the special envoy on preserving Holocaust remembrance and combating antisemitism, who had been a long-time diplomat and UN representative in Afghanistan. Lyons took the place of Irwin Cotler, our former minister of justice, and has been balanced in her approach.

Elghawaby was nothing like either of them. I was concerned she would be more of an advocate for extremists than an apostle for understanding.

Now that she has been at her job for 18 months, my greatest fears have come true. Since Israel was attacked by Hamas on Oct. 7, 2023, and responded, so-called “pro-Palestinian” protests and occupations have manifested support for Hamas and Hezbollah, and called for the extermination of Israel. Elghawaby has added fuel to the fire: on social media

this past February, she defended protesters who blocked Toronto’s historically Jewish Mount Sinai hospital chanting vile antisemitic slogans, accusing critics of Islamophobia.

In her post, Elghawaby said the protest route had a “negative impact and that’s troubling and wrong,” but what was “also troubling and wrong is the rush to label protesters as antisemitic and/or terrorist sympathizers.”

Most recently, she wrote Canadian university administrators to say—according to a Canadian Press report—that “since the start of the war between Israel and Hamas in October 2023, a dangerous climate has arisen on campuses.” She suggested the way to ease tensions would be hiring more professors of Muslim, Arab, and Palestinian origin. Quebec’s Higher Education Minister Pascale Déry said Elghawaby should “mind her own business,” stating hiring professors based on religion goes against Quebec’s principles of secularism in Bill 21, and was a federal incursion into provincial jurisdiction.

While I consider Bill 21 anathema, have denounced Quebec nationalism, and support affirmative action, this was not the way to go about it. Even *The Suburban* newspaper in Montreal—no

friend of the Legault government—wrote: “Elghawaby’s views are divisive and inflammatory. She exacerbates tensions rather than fostering dialogue.” Both the Canadian Antisemitism Education Foundation and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs have called for her to step down.

Her office budget is \$5.6-million, and she is paid more than \$162,000 a year. For that money, there should have been prudence on her part, and advisers who could have counselled her from making inflammatory statements.

It appears that is not the case, and, in my opinion, Elghawaby’s time is up. As they say in sports, she has “lost the room.” She has limited credibility in promoting a mandate for “greater understanding and awareness between people and reducing Islamophobia.” By speaking out in support of radical Muslims, she has only encouraged them. Surely, someone else could do a better job.

*Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at pips52@hotmail.com.*

*The Hill Times*

# Is the Liberal ‘Light Brigade’ following their leader into disaster?

Are the Liberals content to walk into the political valley of Death as the Light Brigade did in Alfred Tennyson’s poem?

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—With the Thanksgiving weekend approaching, there really are only a very few weeks—if not days—if Prime Minister Justin Trudeau does want to step down. That would give his party a chance to select a new

leader, and then give that leader some semblance of opportunity to compete in a future election.

Yes, yes, the prime minister has said he is staying on. Maybe he will do that, and we should all stop speculating that he will step aside. But the decision gates are getting mighty close to being locked with his continued leadership being the only option.

When then-prime minister Brian Mulroney resigned, it was within months of the end of a five-year parliamentary term. He stepped down in February, and a leadership race was held in June. Kim Campbell won and had about two months to get sorted before being thrust into a federal election. She never found her footing as leader, despite some early positive polls, and ended up getting throttled.

Pierre Trudeau also stepped down as prime minister in the winter; John Turner was selected as Liberal leader a few months

later. Believing the potency of his own early polling, Turner went to the electorate earlier than he needed to, and Mulroney won the largest majority to date in Canadian political history.

Already, the odds for a replacement to Justin Trudeau to succeed—if, in fact, there will be a pre-election successor—are damn low. Nonetheless, it is a possibility that can’t be ruled out until it actually is.

Are the Liberals content to walk into the political valley of Death as the Light Brigade did in Alfred Tennyson’s poem? After a brutal defeat in the June 24 Toronto–St. Paul’s, Ont., byelection, they did appear to be rebellious, and not inclined to commit themselves to certain political death. But for the most part, the Liberal caucus has gone quiet.

Do they believe the only and best one to guide them into this political scrap is the prime minister? Ultimately, they need to decide if they will be complicit in accepting the terms and condi-



Ultimately, Liberal caucus members need to decide if they will be complicit in accepting the terms and conditions of an almost-certain political defeat, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

tions of an almost-certain political defeat. While yes, they owe the prime minister a certain degree of fidelity, no prime minister or leader is bigger or more important than the organization they lead.

Political obituaries are often written early and prematurely. There is no doubting either Justin Trudeau’s political skills, or the DNA of political victory that still makes the federal Liberal Party one of the most successful political parties anywhere. No political opponent is invincible. Today’s polling lead can be blown away by circumstances, accidents, unexpected events, and the like.

Patterns or trends can’t be willfully ignored, either. That is a fool-hardy approach. Rarely do Canadian political leaders win fourth terms in government. When the public renders a verdict of dislike in a leader, that is hard to undo. See, for example, Pierre

Trudeau, Mulroney, and Stephen Harper. A consistent gap in the polls of 15 to 20 points—no matter the skills of great campaigner—is also hard to undo. Mulroney did it in the 1988 free trade election with much help, but that would be hard to repeat in this era.

If the prime minister is staying, and the Liberal caucus is fine with that, then that is their choice. But for reflective purposes, here is a final word from Tennyson: “Forward the Light Brigade!” Was there a man dismayed? Not though the soldier knew. Someone had blundered. Theirs not to make reply, theirs not to reason why, theirs but to do and die. Into the valley of Death Rode the six hundred.”

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

*The Hill Times*

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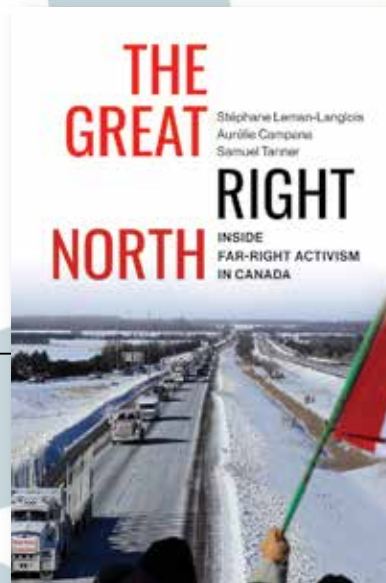
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# Editorial

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## Editorial

### Feds need to seal the cracks in the immigration consensus

During last week's Francophonie summit, Quebec Premier François Legault made the latest move in his ongoing campaign to push the federal government for both a reduction in the number of immigrants who settle in the province, as well as a massive infusion of cash to support them.

Speaking to reporters in Paris, Legault said the federal government should copy France and institute "waiting zones" for asylum seekers, which exist at roughly 100 sites at the country's airports, ports, and train stations.

According to the CBC: "People arriving in France can be held there for up to 26 days if they are seeking asylum, if they are refused entry, or if they're denied boarding to the country of their final destination. Their use, however, is controversial. Media reports have documented that the holding rooms in some of these centres resemble cells. Refugee advocacy groups have called for them to be shut down, claiming people held there often do not have their basic needs met."

Despite the euphemistic language, these zones are officially "administrative detention centres."

Legault also said the number of asylum seekers in Quebec should be addressed by forcing them to move to other provinces.

"Currently, everything that is proposed by the federal government is on a voluntary basis for asylum seekers, and on a

voluntary basis for the provinces. What we want is for half of the asylum seekers who are currently in Quebec to be transferred to other provinces," Legault said, as reported by *The National Post*.

Immigration, Citizenship, and Refugees Canada and Minister Marc Miller have been making moves towards slimming down the country's temporary resident population. Miller has also mused about reducing the number of permanent immigrants. He has so far responded negatively to Legault's half-baked proposals, as he should. They're inhumane, and driven by politics in an environment where Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec is losing polling ground to the Parti Québécois.

There's no question that there are very real strains on housing and social services which won't be helped by adding more people without plans to support them. But as global events from war to climate change spur the desire and outright need for people to migrate to places like Canada, simply turning our backs won't help.

Despite the country's long history of welcoming newcomers, more people are looking to shut the door behind them, with an "I got mine, so screw you" mentality.

The federal government needs to work harder and faster shore up the consensus on immigration before it spirals further into hate.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Parliament still has a stake in the MAID fight, says letter writer

Re: "Fight over MAID shifts from Parliament back to the courts amid political stalemate," (*The Hill Times*, Oct. 2).

It should be noted that reporter Ian Campbell is correct in saying that some proposed changes to medical assistance in dying legislation have shifted from Parliament to the courts, but one piece that's still in Parliament's hands is Bill C-390.

If passed, it would amend the Criminal Code to allow a clinician to provide MAID under a provincial framework that

allows for advance requests. Quebec is moving ahead with advance requests for MAID on Oct. 30, leaving the rest of the country behind in something that 83 per cent of Canadians support. The bill will be debated and voted on in late October, and it's a chance for Parliament to offer great peace of mind to people across the country though an amendment MAID legislation.

Susan Harrison  
 Gloucester, Ont.

### Rapid COVID-19 vaccine development was a major economic lift, says health-care consultant

Re: "The prescription for Canada's health care future," (*The Hill Times*, Sept. 18.)

The opinion piece by Bettina Hamelin, president of Innovative Medicines Canada, provided readers with insightful expert opinion by stressing, "let science and innovation drive health-care policy, not political point-scoring."

Hamelin decried the fact that: "Too often, the debate around health-care policy in Canada gets bogged down in discussions about cost. While managing health-care costs is essential, we cannot afford to ignore the value that innovative treatments provide."

Let's consider the overall costs of the COVID-19 pandemic. The World Health Organization bemoaned that the

"COVID-19 pandemic is the most extreme combined health and economic crisis in the last century." And the International Monetary Fund estimated a cumulative \$13.8-trillion loss globally as a consequence of the pandemic.

COVID-19 vaccines that were rapidly researched, clinically tested, and produced in record time not only saved countless precious lives, but also rescued our already sagging economy. It is now evident that the rapid supply of COVID-19 vaccines by the innovative medicines sector was one of the greatest single contributions made to our citizens, to our economy, and society at large.

Rudy Fernandes  
 President, Global Health Strategy Inc.  
 Mississauga, Ont.

### Breaking the cycle of gender inequality through vaccines

A well-known African proverb states that when you educate a woman, you educate a nation; but how can she be educated if she can't be reached? A study done by Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance shows that social and cultural norms, and the unequal status of women in many societies can reduce the chances of children being vaccinated by preventing their caregivers from accessing immunization services.

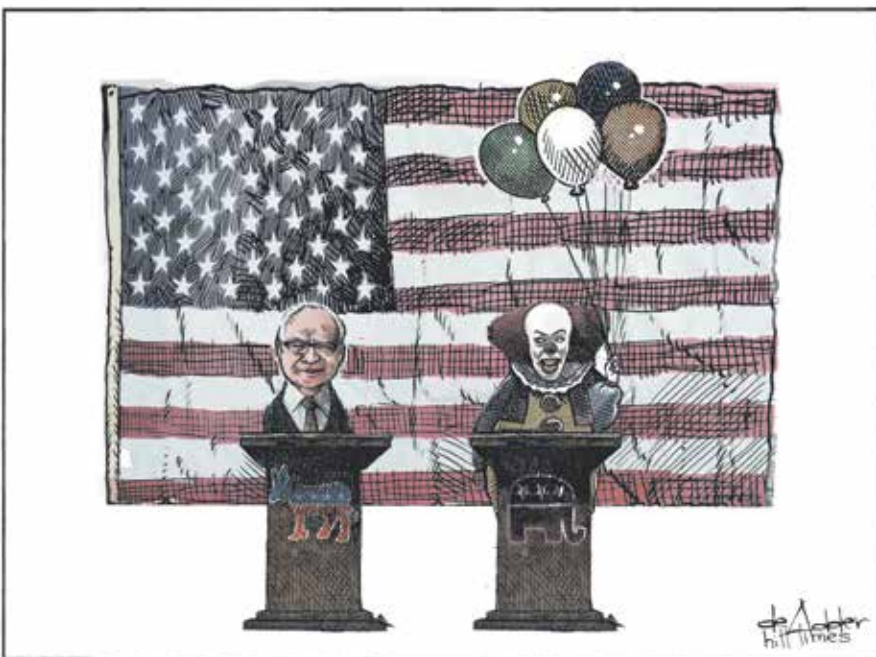
Due to gender norms, it is often women's responsibility to bring children for vaccination; yet women in lower-income countries often face gender-related barriers to doing so, including: lack of access to information on disease prevention,

time constraints due to high household workload, and limited funds for transport.

To address these challenges, Gavi has developed a policy that focuses on overcoming gender-related barriers faced primarily by caregivers, health workers, and adolescents.

However, for this policy to be implemented and to ensure every woman is given an equal chance at success, Canada needs to support it by making a pledge of at least \$720-million to Gavi's 2026-2030 Strategy. Gavi promises not only to deliver life saving vaccines, but to also break the gender-related barriers that often inhibit countless children from accessing them.

Santa Amanda Mugabekazi  
 Ottawa, Ont.



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circulation@hilltimes.com  
 613-688-8821

THE HILL TIMES

Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

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

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

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# Who has the right to safety?

Safety is an imperative for societies to function, and to ensure participation in civic life—but it's not equally applied.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Safety is designed to ensure protection against damage and/or injury. After a year of genocide—and a year after Hamas' attack on Israeli settlers—safety is an imperative for societies to function and to ensure participation in civic life.

So why is safety being weaponized?

Out of the many outpourings of remembrance for the dead and the surviving victims of fanatical violence, one side was left out of the equation: Palestinian victims of Israeli violence. An example of this lopsided recognition is the prime minister's Oct. 7 tribute to the vic-

tims of Hamas militants, which barely recognized the Israeli government's evisceration of Palestinians. If they are recognized, they barely receive the dignity of a line that amounts to futile and perfunctory recognitions of the humanitarian crisis that Israel is conducting as part of its exercise in ethnic cleansing. Leadership and democratic institutions in Canada recognize one side's right to safety, but not the other's rights.

Do the Palestinians have a right to safety? And if so, do they have a right to defend their safety? That question has not been raised enough to the powers-that-be whose bias is painfully obvious.

From these discrepancies in human dignity, what emerges is a country still committed to white supremacy, and violence that is acceptable in the halls of power. Safety in the western world depends on how close you are to whiteness, and therefore power. It is through this model that protection is distributed by the state—the further you are from the power of whiteness, the more likely the state will fail to recognize your right to safety, i.e. your right to humanity.

The last year has seen an exponential increase in antisemitism, which is rightly addressed, yet we do not hear the same

care and duty afforded to not only Palestinians, but also to Arabs, Muslims, and anti-genocide Jews. We see this in the demonization of pro-Palestinian protests. Before you say those protests are inciting hatred with words and symbols that are offensive to some, it is still free speech. (Funny, I didn't see this handwringing over the Nazi flags of the convoy.) The state continues to arrest demonstrators calling for the end to mass violence against the unheard and unprotected, while moving the needle closer to fascism under the guise of combatting antisemitism.

Former CBC journalist Samira Mohyeddin, who has been documenting the campus encampments, reported how far the Orwellian actions of the state will go to silence any criticism of Israel and its actions in Gaza and Lebanon. On Oct. 2, the Niagara Regional Police paid a visit to Canadian immigration lawyer Joanne Berry. As Mohyeddin reports, "They told her they were there on behalf of the Ottawa Police Department because of her 'personal social media.' They begin to tell her that 10 lawyers who are of the Jewish faith 'have filed a complaint with the police about her social media.'"

This doesn't sound like the free speech many were com-

plaining we lost when people of colour—namely Black people—stood up for our rights four years ago. Now the Overton window has retracted from the equity space to the expansion of irreconcilable positions that include the demonization of immigrants, residential school denialism, racism, misogyny, and anti-trans and anti-queer rhetoric. As we all know, eventually rhetoric turns into actions, which ostensibly are led by actions of the state. These ingredients are all part of the same pot, the one we call Canadian democracy.

At the University of Toronto, vigilante groups have sprung up on campuses, allegedly to keep Jewish students safe. The safety of Jewish students is being weaponized against those students who oppose Israel's actions in the Middle East. The brunt of potential violence will disproportionately fall on students of colour and anti-genocide Jewish students, making them disproportionately unsafe. Their rejection of the standpoint of power is what makes them a target, and also removes their proximity to whiteness.

The weaponization of safety is actively being used to limit our Charter rights with the result of Canada materializing into a police state. It's already happening in Germany—which has

never been on the right side of a genocide.

That brings up another question: who do our Charter rights protect? Who is Canadian enough to have those rights protected versus who isn't? We've heard a lot of rhetoric which incorporates who is allowed to tell the stories of their existence and experiences from the perspective of citizenship. Some people have been screaming to deport Canadian protesters because their principled stance on genocide is not in line with power, and therefore not aligned with the perspective of whiteness.

There is a straight line between Liberal MP Anthony Housefather's demand letter to university presidents concerning the safety of Jewish students and the resultant criminalization of anti-genocide protesters. In addition, administrative criminalization is well underway with the firings of pro-Palestinian employees who dare stand for their principles and ethics against ethnic cleansing.

As someone who has had to leave my house due to safety concerns, I am acutely aware of the premium that exists in terms of the ability to go through day-to-day life knowing that you will not be threatened. But who is the threat and who is protected from that threat is a matter of power, measured in proximity to whiteness.

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

The Hill Times

## Opinion

# Protecting democracy requires bold leadership that puts country and citizens first

Those who lead and champion democracy show us that even in times of crisis, our values must endure.

Jaime Pitfield

Opinion



As global crises escalate and authoritarian leaders become increasingly aggressive, many of us at times feel that democracy might be slipping away. Yet, I refuse to lose hope. The strength of the Canadian spirit is a powerful force of resilience. Those who lead



and champion democracy show us that even in times of crisis, the



values of freedom, human rights and justice must endure.

The late former prime minister Brian Mulroney, left, and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent are the recipients of this year's Democracy Award, which the Parliamentary Centre will hand out on Oct. 24. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Jake Wright

protect democracy and freedom. From conquering Vimy Ridge during the First World War, to landing at Juno Beach on D-Day, to our engagement in Korea and our determined presence in Afghanistan, we have and will remain on the first line of defence in advocating for freedom from tyranny and standing up for democratic rights and values. Alongside our grit and resolve, we have had a significant presence in international peacekeeping missions, and our unwavering support for human rights has brought us a colourful and culturally rich Canada today. As we witness profound destruction across the world—from the Russian aggression and full-scale invasion of Ukraine to the current serious of conflicts in the Middle East and the

We, as Canadians, have a long history of fiercely fighting to

Continued on page 36

## Opinion



How many talented, capable individuals with disabilities might never have been considered in politics, and missed out on a chance to bring their unique perspectives and skills to the table, asks Kait LaForce. Photograph by Catherine Baril

# Beyond buzzwords: we need more disabled voices in Canadian politics

Our political landscape and the people working in it should reflect the diversity of our population.

Kait LaForce

Opinion



At the age of 22, I embarked on an exhilarating journey working on Parliament Hill, diving headfirst into the world of politics. Each day was a new adventure, revealing the complexities of what was really behind the scenes in Canadian politics. The days were long and exhausting—often starting with a very early morning meeting, and ending late at a reception with my phone still attached to me at bedtime. I relished in every moment, from the work itself, to the industry and—most importantly—the people.

There were so many moments that I could never forget. Moments when important pieces of legislation would pass, when then-American president Barack Obama would visit and speak to caucus and staffers, when I would make friendships that felt

like family, when I got to be part of once-in-a-career meetings, when I got the opportunity to be taught by brilliant minds that had been working in politics decades before I got there—and quiet moments in a green room when the prime minister would take a deep breath, and I would understand for the first time that he is human, too. All of this, every moment, deepened my passion for politics.

This eventually led me to a career in government relations consulting where I got to work with companies and organizations to navigate the complex world of politics. Over the past decade, this path has not only shaped my professional life, but has also grounded my purpose. These enriching experiences have reinforced my unwavering commitment to driving meaningful change through policy and advocacy.

Yet, one question persists upon my reflections: what if I had been overlooked for the job at the start?

Something I haven't yet mentioned is that I am disabled. I have a visible physical disability and use crutches to walk. As a disabled woman, my journey in politics has been accompanied by difficult moments, uncomfortable conversations, unfair situations, and inaccessible spaces. In the most prestigious places with the most exclusive invitations I would ever receive, I've had the most-humiliating conversations filled with deeply personal ques-

tions about my body. Disabled people commonly get asked inappropriate questions about their body and their health on a daily basis. Throughout history, in society, disabled bodies are viewed as a public body where people—including strangers—have the right to examine and ask questions. I've organized and hosted caucus events that I could not enter because they became inaccessible after officials and their security arrived, having to shut down all elevators for safety protocols.

So, do I think politics is ablest? No, I don't. I think it's an industry that disabled people have not typically been in, and therefore, entities like the RCMP have never had to think about disabled people also attending an event that the prime minister would attend. Many people, including politicians, have not had exposure to disabled colleagues or staffers, leaving people unsure of what to say and do when working with a disabled person. Politics is an industry that is thankfully beginning to make room for minorities, but the doors are not yet accessible for the disabled community. It makes me wonder how many talented, capable individuals with disabilities might never have been considered in this field, missing out on a chance to bring their unique perspectives and skills to the table.

Inclusivity and diversity have become buzzwords across sectors, yet Canadians with disabilities continue to face significant

barriers in the workforce. In Canada, the underrepresentation of disabled individuals in the workforce—especially in politics—is a significant, yet overlooked, issue. Despite legal frameworks such as the Canadian Human Rights Act, Employment Equity Act, and Accessible Canada Act that are meant to ensure inclusivity, disabled Canadians face persistent barriers that keep them from contributing to sectors. My journey and those of other disabled professionals highlight the challenges within the political landscape, emphasizing the urgent need for a more equitable and diverse workforce.

Deep-rooted misconceptions—such as doubts about productivity, reliability, and physical limitations—along with the scarcity of disabled individuals in leadership roles perpetuate these barriers. Notably, research from the Canadian Disability Participation Project indicates that less than four per cent of executives in Canadian companies have disabilities. This is not only a social issue, but an economic one. A 2021 Accenture study published in the *Journal of Business Ethics* found that companies with inclusive hiring practices—including those for disabled individuals—showed 27-per-cent higher revenue, and 30-per-cent higher profit margins compared to those with less inclusive practices. The Disability Equality Index report, also published in 2021, found companies that scored higher on disability

inclusion saw 28-per-cent higher revenue and 30-per-cent higher profit margins compared to their peers. The Institute for Corporate Productivity also revealed that disabled Canadians often exhibit higher levels of retention and commitment to their workplaces. Even more importantly, inclusive workplaces tend to have higher employee morale and retention rates, largely benefitting the workplace.

To address these issues across Canadian industries, it is essential to implement concrete solutions. These solutions can vary, but should start with policy changes and inclusion initiatives. Expanding on existing workplace training and frameworks will slowly begin to allow disabled talent to populate the workforce. Taking the initiative to conduct training sessions, and hire disabled speakers and educators to speak to employees will also begin to dismantle myths, and create a more inclusive workplace for all. Lastly, but debatably most crucial, is to encourage and support disabled individuals to apply for the job, to pursue leadership roles, and invite them to be part of decision-making processes.

Politics is a unique industry when discussing accessibility issues because politics inevitably affects every Canadian. Our political landscape and the people working in it should reflect the diversity of our population. With the Canadian political climate becoming increasingly tense, it is crucial for minorities to be represented in politics, providing both representation and expertise. It is time to stop overlooking disabled Canadians in politics—and all industries. Disability inclusion is not only a matter of equity, but also a vital step towards a more diverse, innovative, and prosperous society.

Kait LaForce is a disability advocate, senior consultant at Summa Strategies, and former political staffer.

The Hill Times

# ‘Pack your bags’: this Parliament is headed for the exit

The debate now is not whether the Liberals would lose an election held tomorrow, but whether they would be wiped out *à la* Conservatives in 1993.

Les  
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—“Pack your bags,” as we used to say in the Ottawa press gallery when it became clear that a government was about to be ousted, and all concerned would soon be climbing on the campaign buses.

It was a common occurrence in the early part of this century. From 2000 to 2015, Canadians were treated to a roller-coaster of six federal elections as governments were either toppled or pulled the plug in hopes of gaining an advantage.

Jean Chrétien, after serving only three years of his Liberal government’s mandate, easily defeated the divided conservatives in 2000, but was driven out of power by his own party. His antagonist, Paul Martin, took over amid great hopes, but struggled as prime minister in the fallout from the Liberal sponsorship scandal.

With the help of the RCMP, which intervened in the 2006 election with a baseless accusation against then-finance minister Ralph Goodale, Conservative leader Stephen Harper won a minority government. He went to the people in 2008, but failed to get a majority and did it again three years later—this time achieving a majority against a Liberal leader, Michael Ignatieff, who was basically a politics tourist. Next came the Liberals’ surprise majority victory under Justin Trudeau in 2015.

Nine years on, the current government’s situation has the same feel as Martin’s minority government in 2005 as it struggled almost day to day to keep from being brought down by the election-hungry Conservatives.

As of Oct. 7, the Trudeau government had not been defeated on a confidence vote in the Commons. But the chances of the Liberal minority surviving very much longer have gone from iffy to something approaching zero.

As in 2005, the election fever coursing through the opposition parties rolls off Parliament Hill in waves. With Canadians having turned against Trudeau, the Liberals seem more vulnerable than they have been since 2011 or—before that—since the John Turner fiasco of 1984. The debate has for some time now not been about whether the Liberals would lose an election held tomorrow, but whether they would be wiped out *à la* Conservatives in 1993.

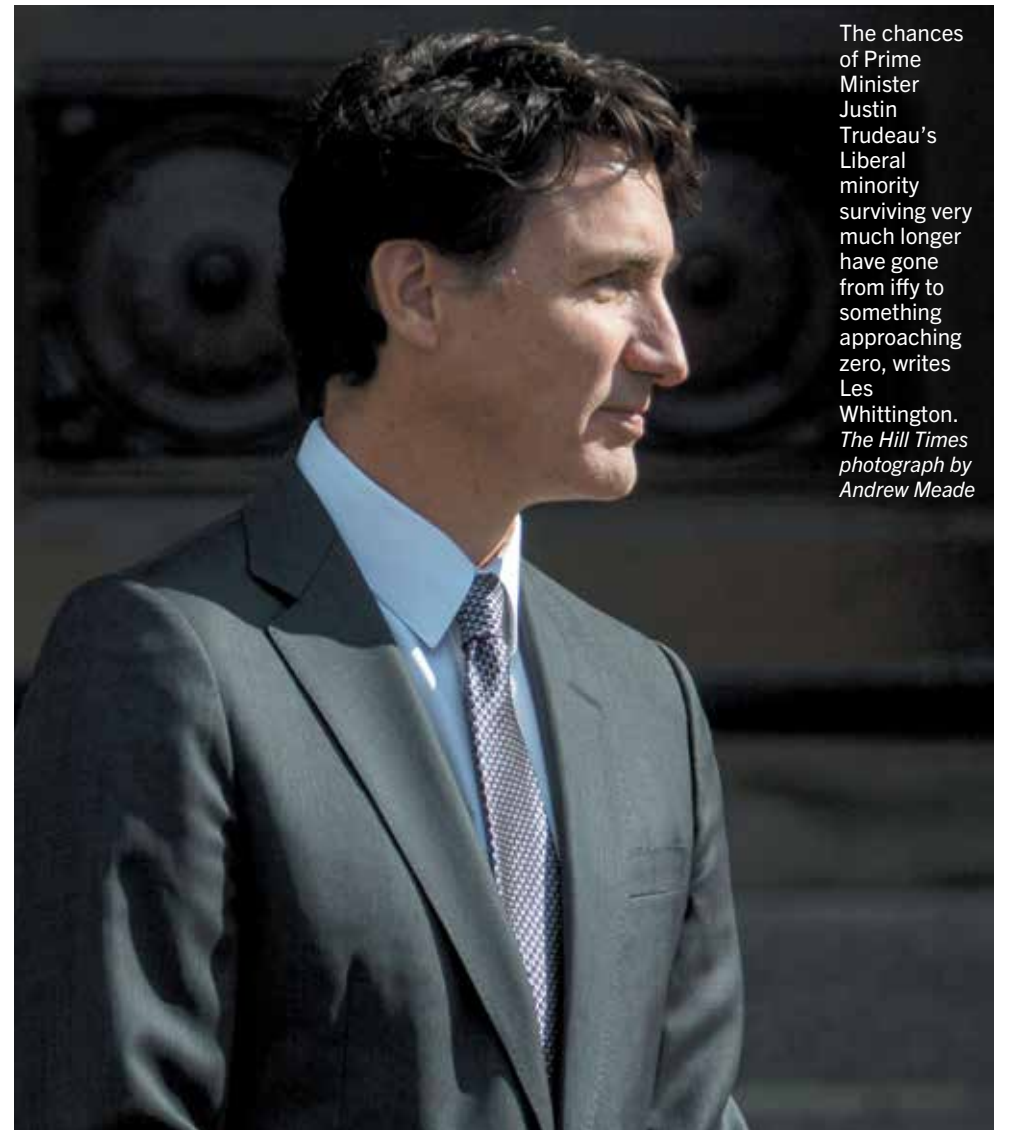
In that context, Pierre Poilievre is, of course, pushing for an election right away. The Conservatives have already released

soft-focused TV election ads featuring their gentle, fatherly leader doing a jigsaw puzzle with a toddler.

Trudeau is likely to soon find himself dependent on the NDP again for support on Commons votes. Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, despite having said he doesn’t want to kick off an election that would produce a Conservative majority, has got the wind in his sails after his party’s Sept. 16 byelection win in Montreal, and also is eyeing major gains in Quebec if the Liberal vote craters. One would be forgiven for thinking the demands Blanchet is making of the Liberal government for Bloc support seem designed to fail.

As for the NDP’s Jagmeet Singh, it’s widely believed his party is unprepared—financially and otherwise—for a federal campaign, particularly with several provincial elections in the works. And the common thinking is that Singh needs more time to distance himself from Trudeau now that their governance agreement is finished. But don’t count on the NDP leader—whose grip on political reality often appears dreamlike—not to roll the dice. The party is trying to envision itself as the most-attractive alternative to the Conservatives, and the polls are offering some support for that notion. Like Jack Layton in 2011, Singh would no doubt be thrilled to be the official opposition leader, even if holding that position during a Conservative majority would give the NDP much less influence than it had working with the previous Liberal minority government. Also, continuing to support the Liberals may prove too awkward for Singh after the way he slammed Trudeau as a corporate toady when the NDP scrapped the governance deal.

Another reason for haste in dumping the Liberals is the possible re-election of Donald Trump as the United States



The chances of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s Liberal minority surviving very much longer have gone from iffy to something approaching zero, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

wipresident in November in the insane asylum disguised as a country south of the border. This could cause voters here to think twice about electing a far-right, shape-shifting populist like Poilievre to run the federal government. (But at this point, that factor—although predictable—may not make much difference given Canadians’ overwhelming dislike of Trudeau and desire for change.)

Also, the opposition parties would like to have Canadians go to the polls before the economic crunch of the last few years

subsides a bit as Bank of Canada-influenced borrowing costs decline.

Add all that up, and you have a set of heated, easily mismanaged circumstances that could lead MPs to charge into an election even though Bloc and NDP voters are split on forcing a vote right away. Barring an attempt by Trudeau to put off the inevitable through prorogation, such a scenario now seems likely to unfold much sooner than later.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for *The Hill Times*.

*The Hill Times*



## WINE GROWERS CANADA IS PLEASED TO ANNOUNCE THE ELECTION OF DEL ROLLO AS CHAIR OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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Wine Growers Canada member wineries are responsible for over 90% of all wine produced in Canada.

## Opinion

# Whither the centrist option?

The state of our politics may have centrist Canadians dreaming of the different electoral system the Trudeau government promised, but ultimately failed to deliver.

Andrew Tzembelicos

Opinion



As the election campaign in British Columbia continues to unfold, all signs suggest the provincial map is now essentially a two-party race between the governing BC NDP and the formerly-moribund-but-suddenly-in-contention Conservative Party of BC.

B.C. politics changed for the worse with the late August collapse of the BC United party (previously the BC Liberals). In removing his party from contention in the upcoming provincial vote on Oct. 19, BC United leader



Kevin Falcon essentially returned the province to a two-party system of two extremes.

When I relocated from Ontario to B.C. in 2004, the BC Liberals and the “big tent” built by then-BC Liberal premier Gordon Campbell were arguably the most natural fit for a centrist in those days. Not connected with the federal Liberals other than in name only, the Campbell-era provincial Liberals were a hybrid of liberals and conservatives, and were relatively moderate by today’s standards—seemingly more so in Campbell’s later years. That changed following Campbell’s departure from B.C. politics, with the arrival of his successor, Christy Clark, who enjoyed much closer ties with the federal Conservatives.

While he had his detractors, Campbell was fiscally responsible, but environmentally



We may be heading in the same direction federally as in the upcoming B.C. election, where there is no discernible middle ground between David Eby’s, left, NDP and John Rustad’s Conservatives, writes Andrew Tzembelicos. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and photograph courtesy of the Province of B.C.

friendly. For example, B.C. was the first province to introduce a carbon tax back in 2008. Campbell also eschewed the perennial, populist provincial stance of defaulting to Ottawa-bashing. Instead, he found common ground with the federal Liberal governments of Jean Chrétien and Paul Martin, and then the Conservative government of Stephen Harper. It was a style that benefitted both the province and British Columbians. In this day and age, it is a shame more premiers do not approach federal-provincial relations in this manner.

Today, with deep political cleavages on the left and right, and nothing in between, centrist voters in B.C. no longer have a political home. Moreover, British Columbia now has a polarized “American-style” political system

dominated by two parties. This is not the case in Ontario where the Ontario Liberal Party has typically shared close ties with its federal cousins.

Nationally, these developments in B.C. matter a great deal: they may foreshadow the federal Liberal Party’s fortunes in the next election as this same dichotomy appears set to play out country-wide. The latest Abacus Data poll shows the federal Conservatives with 43 per cent of the vote share, the federal Liberals with 21 per cent, and the federal New Democrats close behind at 19 per cent. While the Liberals did place second overall, a key finding in that same polling data showed them placing third in all regions except Quebec and Atlantic Canada.

Though a week is a lifetime in politics, the current trajectory suggests the federal Liberal vote may be on the verge of a major collapse. The question is whether it will be of 1984 or 2011 proportions, or worse.

As the only centrist federal option, any scenario with a significantly weakened federal Liberal Party threatens to usher in the same divisive, two-party, American-style political system at the national level. This should be highly alarming for all centrists, especially given the combative, Republican-style posturing of

Pierre Poilievre and his Conservative Party.

So, what’s a centrist voter to do?

In the upcoming B.C. election, the choice is far from clear as there is no discernible middle ground.

Federally, despite the extreme unpopularity of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and his government, one option is to hope Liberal fortunes change between now and the next election. Another is to vote strategically, as many federal New Democrats did in 2015 when they supported the Liberals in successfully ousting the Harper Conservative government from power. This time around, it could be that the NDP’s “Stop Pierre Poilievre” movement starts gaining traction.

In Canadian discourse, there is a tendency to believe we do not tolerate American-style politics. However, for any number of reasons, in B.C. and at the national level, it is clear they are already here.

Across the country, the state of our politics may have centrist Canadians dreaming of a different system—more specifically, the electoral reform the Trudeau government promised, but ultimately failed to deliver. That may prove to be yet another hurdle the Trudeau Liberals must face at the ballot box.

Andrew Tzembelicos is a Vancouver-based writer and editor who worked with the federal Liberals on Parliament Hill from 1997 through 2004.

*The Hill Times*

# Driving out deepfakes: Canada can lead on responsible AI innovation

Convincing deepfakes of political and business leaders pose serious risks to our national security, democratic institutions, and markets.

Patrick Rogers

Opinion



In recent weeks, a bipartisan group of United States members of Congress introduced the NO FAKES Act, which aims to protect Americans against harmful artificial intelligence deepfakes by creating a federal intellectual property right to an individual’s voice and likeness. The introduction of this identical House companion to the previously introduced Senate legislation is a

powerful demonstration of bipartisan solidarity that reflects the American public’s strong desire for swift and unequivocal action against harmful deepfakes. And it’s time that Canada follows suit.

Most of us have seen deepfakes or heard vocal clones made by generative AI. This technology has become so advanced that these digital impersonations can be made with little effort and with such close mimicry that it can be hard to tell whether they’re real. And they can be shared on a massive scale—around the world—in a matter of minutes. The range of potential harms is daunting.

For recording artists, unauthorized deepfakes steal and manipulate their voices and images without their knowledge or permission. An artist’s voice and image is their livelihood. When they’re cloned, artists are robbed of their identity, reputation, and relationship with their fans who increasingly must question whether what they’re hearing or seeing is real. Actors, athletes, and celebrities all face these risks. It’s why organizations like The Human Artistry Campaign—the global initiative for responsible AI, of which Music Canada is a member—have



Bills like Justice Minister Arif Virani’s C-63 recognize the need to address sexually explicit deepfakes, but the government’s piecemeal approach misses the chance to take a stand against the misuse of the technology, writes Patrick Rogers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

applauded the introduction of the NO FAKES Act.

But the threat extends far beyond music. Convincing deepfakes of political and business leaders pose serious risks to our national security, democratic institutions, and markets. But the very worst kind of these digital

replicas are non-consensual, sexually exploitative deepfakes that are becoming more and more common. And the victims aren’t just celebrities, but also children in our communities who are targeted by peers, and exploited by predators.

When such grave but preventable harms are happening across this wide spectrum, it’s time for government to step in. In bills C-63 and C-65, the Canadian government has recognized the need to address sexually explicit deepfakes, and deepfakes used to interfere in elections. But this piecemeal approach misses the opportunity to take a stand against not just the misuse of the technology, but also the mindset that encourages the creation of these deepfakes.

And while we believe that current laws offer some protections, they were designed for an analogue era. They can be slow to enforce, inconsistent across jurisdictions, and ineffective for the digital space.

We should question the motives of those who seek responsibility-free, permissionless innovation, and who argue that any limits are a chill on

free speech. Simply put: using a technology to put *your words* in *my mouth* is not you exercising your free speech. What’s more, we can build in clear, narrow, and purpose-driven protections for the public interest. Generative AI needs to be responsible, accountable, and transparent to protect not only artists, but also the Canadian public.

With laws against the most exploitative harms, we can still protect the best that this technology has to offer—like the preservation of one’s voice lost for medical reasons, or to tell the story of one’s legacy with the permission of your loved ones. And even leaders in the tech community have called for more guardrails. AI developers who act ethically will be able to attract investment and grow within ethical markets.

Canada can continue to be a leader in AI innovation. But it must not come at any cost. We can take steps to build an AI ecosystem that is safe and responsible. We can embrace the promise of AI in all fields while protecting the most vulnerable.

The music sector stands ready to support a government commitment and action to ensure that AI-generated deepfakes are illegal.

Patrick Rogers is the CEO of Music Canada, the trade association representing Canada’s major labels: Sony Music Entertainment Canada, Universal Music Canada, and Warner Music Canada.

*The Hill Times*

# When the government prioritizes perception over productivity, we're all in trouble

The arbitrary monitoring of employees is proven to increase distrust and disengagement, and decrease performance.

Nathan Prier

Opinion



Since announcing the three-day in-office mandate for public sector employees last spring, the government has refused to share any justification for the decision, only patronizing their workers and Canadians with vague allusions to collaboration and career development. Well, now we know the actual reason: scoring cheap political points.

This decision had nothing to do with improving productivity and workplace culture—in fact, it's the opposite. Through new information uncovered by the Public Service Alliance of Canada, it's clear that despite knowing that remote-work flexibility improved productivity for employees to the tune of a 4.5 per cent increase, the government made the decision to force in-office compliance solely based on misguided assumptions about “public perception.”

The three-day in-office mandate is another abject policy failure that has further exposed a weak and incompetent leadership. The reality is that workers are more productive when they



Cancelling mandatory in-office days is something Treasury Board President Anita Anand could do with the stroke of a pen, writes Nathan Prier. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

have the flexibility to work at home. But the government made a cop-out decision to appease an entirely imagined narrative that productivity necessitates an in-office presence. In the glaring absence of any rationale for the in-office policy, many workers are speculating about who this government really serves. Shadowy commercial landlord interests? Peddlers of archaic management theories? Canadian taxpayers and federal workers want explanations, and fast.

It is the government's responsibility to tell the truth to the public: that the increase in remote work flexibility for public sector employees in the early days of COVID-19 was a boon for productivity, and allowed essential programs and services

to be delivered to Canadians at a record rate. Willingly peddling falsehoods about remote work is a disservice not only to their own employees, but also to all Canadian workers who would benefit from increased availability of remote work—and every taxpayer in the country shouldering an exorbitant bill for entirely optional office maintenance and the rollout of dystopian attendance-tracking technologies.

The Orwellian surveillance methods being used to track attendance are both drawing resources away from necessary work and creating a workplace culture that will drive good employees away. Developing vast tracking systems, having people log their location, and having managers monitor attendance is

wasting taxpayers' time and money. The arbitrary monitoring of employees is proven to increase distrust and disengagement, and decrease performance. So, as the government claims it is ordering employees back to offices to build a workplace culture, it is doing everything in its power to ensure that culture is toxic by design.

Other employers have already figured out that remote work is the default going forward. The governments of British Columbia, Australia, and the United Kingdom are all purposefully implementing remote work. If Canada doesn't reverse course quickly, our government will become an unappealing dinosaur, unable to recruit or retain top-level talent—or deliver quality services to Canadians.

If this move is what many fear it to be—an intentional increase in workplace toxicity to drive resignation numbers up ahead of more draconian measures—Canadians should know the truth: that big public sector cuts just feed expensive contractor payrolls. We don't need more ArriveCan disasters, we need a well-functioning public sector defined by good jobs and strong accountability practices. And that doesn't mean managers hovering over desks with attendance sheets.

The government has a long track record of obliterating employee morale, so wasting money by forcing employees back into totally optional offices with rapidly declining standards is par for the course. A crisis in the federal workplace has been building for years. The Phoenix pay system has been an epic failure and, eight years later, the government continues to drag its feet to find a solution while its employees are still struggling to receive an accurate paycheque. The Canada Life fiasco placed many employees in financial jeopardy, and had real impacts on mental and physical health.

The biggest employer in the country has made enemies of the vast majority of its workers, who are slowly but surely building up capacity to fight back. Cancelling mandatory in-office days is something Treasury Board President Anita Anand could do with the stroke of a pen, immediately saving both her relationship with federal workers and taxpayers' dollars.

The naked cynicism behind the in-office mandate—which cares about perception more than productivity or the responsible use of taxpayer dollars—is something that all Canadians should be concerned about. Because when keeping up appearances is a higher priority for the government than serving the needs of the country, we're all in trouble.

Federal public sector employees want to deliver for Canadians. But their employer keeps doing everything it can to distract them from this critical and sacred task.

*Nathan Prier is president of the Canadian Association of Professional Employees.*

*The Hill Times*

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## Opinion

# Canada's false 'solution' for used nuclear fuel waste

Potentially trucking waste to a deep geological repository could be a recipe for disaster.

William Leiss

Opinion



The Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO) is a curious hybrid body created out of whole cloth by the federal government in its 2002 Nuclear Fuel Waste Act to find a permanent solution for that waste. Governments tried and failed to find that solution for the previous quarter-century. Now, NWMO is weeks away from identifying the "final resting place" in a deep geological repository (DGR) in Ontario, either far into the province's northwest at Ignace near Dryden/Wabigoon Lake First Nation, or

South Bruce close to Lake Huron near Teeswater and the Bruce Peninsula. One of two small municipalities and one of two groups of treaty-rights holding First Nations will need to agree, but millions of Canadians potentially affected won't get a say.

Last month, *The Globe and Mail* described the organization's DGR solution: "For 40 or so years ... big trucks carrying specially designed waste containers would trundle from the reactor sites to the DGR facility, where the fuel canisters would be lowered."

More than 90 per cent of that waste is currently at the Pickering, Darlington, and Bruce nuclear generating stations. The rest is at far-off Point Lepreau, N.B., and in Quebec, Manitoba, and Ottawa. If NWMO chooses the Ignace site and an all-road transportation method, it estimates that those trucks will travel 84 million kilometres on Canadian roads.

Each truckload will hold exactly 192 used fuel bundles, packed into a special steel container weighing 35 tonnes. The current array of operating reactors will ultimately produce a total of six million bundles. But

that figure doesn't include the announced "Bruce C" development of new reactors, or other new ones yet to be unveiled, adding at least two million more bundles. Eight million bundles will require 40,000 truckloads over at least a 40-year period.

And there will be a further 20,000 dry-cask containers in which those bundles had previously been stored which will also require transportation to a DGR. Empty, they each weigh 60 tonnes and will be radioactive. They will need to be cut in half due to their weight, adding up to another 40,000 truckloads. If they go to a DGR in Ignace, that will add another 84 million kilometres of truck travel on Canadian roads. (The NWMO has not done this estimate.)

Is everybody OK with all this? Are most Canadians even aware of these scenarios? The NWMO says that the containers on the trucks will survive any imaginable road accident, and no radioactivity will escape. But trucks travelling 168 million kilometres are—quite obviously—going to be involved in a fair number of road accidents, some serious, across

those four or more decades. In those cases, folks likely will be told, "Don't worry, it may look awful, but you and your kids won't be irradiated."

The two small communities designated as potential "hosts" for the DGR do not, apparently, care too much about the transportation issue. However, others are starting to become alarmed, especially in and around the city of Thunder Bay, which is on the road route for those 80,000 trucks if the DGR is sited in Ignace. If the choice is South Bruce, well, who knows? The NWMO has not published any kind of transportation plan for that choice. Just looking at a map, however, a lot of those trucks will have to go through or near the already gridlocked GTA.

And what about the First Nations? Here's where things get interesting. The designated First Nation treaty rights holders for the Ignace site are the 28 First Nation communities of Grand Council Treaty 3, the governing body of the Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty 3, which maintains rights to all lands and water in the territory. Development in the

Treaty 3 territory requires the consent, agreement, and participation of the Anishinaabe Nation in Treaty 3. To date, that consent hasn't been granted.

The designated First Nation treaty rights holder for the South Bruce site is Saugeen Ojibway Nation (SON); the Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation-Neyaashiinigiing Anishinaabek, and the Chippewas of Saugeen First Nation. CBC News recently quoted Greg Nadijwon, one of SON's two chiefs, that "if you think about how many [other] treaty territories that waste would have to go through, I don't think it will happen." The CBC then paraphrased the chief: "Nadijwon says even if Ignace and nearby Wabigoon Lake Ojibway Nation say yes to the proposed nuclear dump, he doubts the spent nuclear fuel from the Bruce station, which is currently in temporary storage, would ever leave his nation's traditional territory." Mere weeks from a site selection announcement, there clearly isn't agreement.

NWMO's approach isn't going to work. Canadians do not have an acceptable solution to the problem of long-term storage or disposal of used nuclear fuel. It's past time to consider some alternative options.

William Leiss, O.C., FRSC, is an emeritus professor at Queen's University, and the author of *Deep Disposal (2024)*, and *Canada and Climate Change (2022)*.  
*The Hill Times*

# Trudeau is dead wrong about Canada's debt

Despite the prime minister's claim that Canada has the 'strongest fiscal position' in the world, Fraser Institute evidence shows it's actually among the most indebted advanced economies.

Jake Fuss

Opinion



In the House of Commons recently, Prime Minister Trudeau proclaimed that "Canada actually has the strongest fiscal position of any of the world's advanced economies." Upon close examination of the data, however, this statement is categorically false. In

reality, Canada is one of the most indebted advanced economies on the globe.

The prime minister's proclamation originates from the 2024 federal budget in which the government pointed to data from the International Monetary Fund that states Canada has the lowest level of net debt—as a share of its economy—among G7 countries that include Germany, Italy, Japan, France, the United Kingdom, and the United States.

However, this specific measure of Canada's indebtedness is flawed because it assumes the country's financial assets can be used to offset debt, and therefore subtracts these assets from total government debt. And this is a significant problem because Canada's financial assets include the assets of the Canada Pension Plan (CPP) and Quebec Pension Plan (QPP), which were valued at a combined \$717-billion at the end of 2023.

Obviously, Canada cannot use CPP and QPP assets to reduce government debt without compromising the ability of those public pension plans to pay benefits to current and future retirees. That's why it's misleading to use

net debt to compare Canada's indebtedness to other countries; it makes it appear as though we have a stronger fiscal position than we actually do.

So, what's a more accurate way to measure Canada's government debt burden?

In a recent study, we compared Canada's total—a.k.a. gross—government debt, which measures all government liabilities and is not offset by any financial assets, with 32 advanced economies worldwide—not just the G7 countries, which are all conveniently highly indebted like Canada. We found that Canada ranks 26<sup>th</sup> out of 32 on total debt relative to the size of the country's economy. Clearly, despite the prime minister's claim that Canada has the "strongest fiscal position" in the world, the evidence shows Canada is actually among the most indebted advanced economies, and that fellow G7 countries Germany and the United Kingdom have lower debt than Canada.

Why should Canadians care?

Because government debt has immediate and long-term consequences. In the short term, governments must pay debt interest on their borrowing.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. Government debt has immediate and long-term consequences, writes Jake Fuss. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Federally, debt interest costs are projected to surpass \$54-billion this year. At the provincial level, Canadian taxpayers are expected to collectively spend another \$37.1-billion on government debt interest costs.

Long term, future generations of Canadians must repay the debt through a combination of tax increases and/or a reduction in services. Despite having no say over current government decisions, in the coming years and decades, Canadians under the

age of 18 will likely repay most of today's debt accumulation.

Trudeau's assertion that Canada has the "strongest fiscal position" of any advanced economy is incorrect. We are, unfortunately, one of the most indebted advanced economies in the world. It's important for policymakers to root their statements in facts rather than conjecture.

Jake Fuss is director of fiscal studies at the Fraser Institute.  
*The Hill Times*

The Hill Times Policy Briefing | October 9, 2024

# INFRASTRUCTURE

**IF YOU  
BUILD IT,  
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come?***

Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities  
Minister Sean Fraser. *The Hill Times*  
photograph by Andrew Meade

## Infrastructure Policy Briefing

# Housing crisis requires more long-term infrastructure planning, say housing and construction experts

An advisory body for a National Infrastructure Assessment is expected to be announced early this fall, says Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A housing crisis in Canada is increasing the urgency for the federal government to follow through on a three-year-old promise to conduct an assessment of Canada's long-term infrastructure needs, according to the president and CEO of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies.

"Without [an assessment], we're going to continue to be reactive," said John Gamble. "We need good information and data, and evidence-based public policy, and this would be a cornerstone of that."

A National Infrastructure Assessment (NIA), first announced in the 2021 federal budget, is intended by Ottawa to establish a vision for Canada's infrastructure needs, including the best ways to fund and finance infrastructure projects during the transition towards a net-zero future. On July 29, 2021, the Liberal government released a report outlining recommendations intended to help guide the design of the



John Gamble, president and CEO of the Association of Consulting Engineering Companies, says a national infrastructure assessment could be 'a potential legacy item for the government,' which he would like to see 'treated with urgency.'  
Photograph courtesy of John Gamble



In an April press release, Housing Minister Sean Fraser said 'Canada can and will solve the housing crisis.'  
The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

assessment, following public engagement with more than 300 individuals and groups, including representatives of provinces, territories, municipalities, and Indigenous groups.

Among those recommendations was that the federal government should create an independent advisory body, which would provide impartial, expert, and evidence-based advice regarding major infrastructure in Canada.

The *Daily Commercial News* reported in March that an Infrastructure Canada spokesperson confirmed an advisory body would be "launched in the coming weeks," but so far nothing has been announced.

Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Canada told *The Hill Times* in a Sept. 27 emailed statement that an announce-

ment for the establishment of the advisory body is expected "early this fall."

"This body will be responsible for developing Canada's first ever National Infrastructure Assessment," said the statement. "With a country as big and diverse as Canada, with needs that vary from region to region, the NIA will help ensure greater alignment at all levels of government on how best to support communi-

ties as they grow and change into the future."

When asked about progress towards an NIA since its announcement, Gamble said he is concerned.

"We want this. We see this as a potential legacy item for the government," he said. "This is something that's going to pay dividends for Canadians for decades, because it will result in better and more forward-looking public pol-



Federation of Canadian Municipalities research said that a housing unit requires an average investment of around \$107,000 towards municipally owned capital assets, such as roads. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

icy. I would certainly like to see it treated with urgency, and I would like to see infrastructure in general regarded with the urgency and respect that it deserves."

Gamble said that Canada's current housing crisis must be thought of in the broader context of community infrastructure because "a building without infrastructure is just a box."

"Where we are building homes, is it going to allow people to access community services? Is it going to allow them to access work and a livelihood? We need to think of these things more holistically," he said. "We also need a vision. What is the infrastructure we need to look for? Not just in five or 10 years, [but] we need to look 30, 40 years into the future."

The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation estimated in June 2022 that about 3.5 million new housing units will be needed by 2030 to help achieve housing affordability for everyone living in Canada, in addition to the 2.3 million units already projected based on current rates of construction.

To help address the housing crisis, the Liberal government launched a National Housing Strategy in 2017. The strategy is currently a 10-year, \$115-billion plan.

On April 12, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), and Housing Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) also announced the Liberal government's housing plan, which envisions construction of 3.87 million new homes by 2031.

"Canada can and will solve the housing crisis, and we're going to do it by getting every home builder, not-for-profit, mayor, city councillor, and premier pulling in the same direction to build the homes Canadians need," said Fraser in an April press release.

Research conducted by the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) in 2023 determined that a housing unit requires an average investment of around \$107,000 towards municipally owned capital assets, such as roads, water and wastewater facilities, community amenities, and public transit. The construction of the total 5.8 million housing units will therefore require a local infrastructure investment of about \$600-billion, according to the FCM.

The FCM is currently calling on federal, provincial, and territorial governments to commit to a new Municipal Growth Framework to help modernize municipal funding. Municipalities—which are responsible for maintaining infrastructure such as roads, transit services, and water and wastewater systems—are struggling to fund and maintain these services due to an "outdated revenue framework that is creaking under Canada's record population growth," according to a June 6 FCM press release.

FCM president Geoff Stewart told *The Hill Times* that Canada is facing a housing crisis, "and the infrastructure to go with it is in



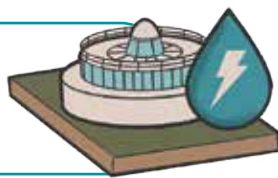


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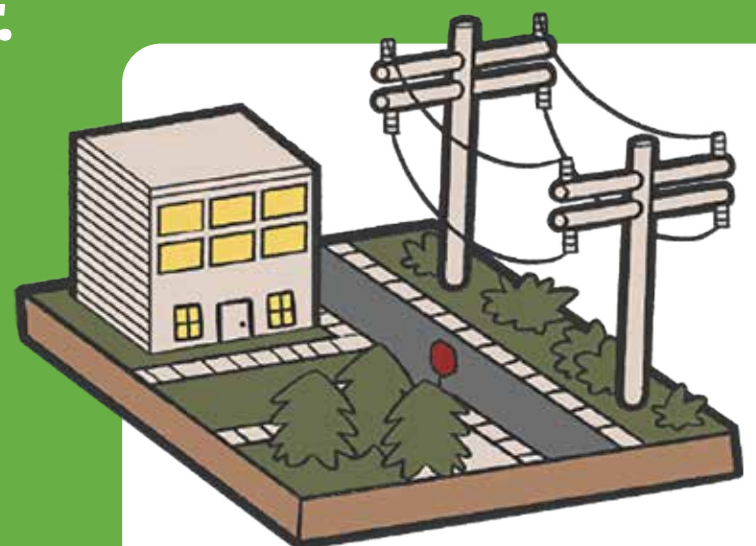
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## Infrastructure Policy Briefing

Housing construction in a Claridge Homes development at Findlay Creek in Ottawa on Aug. 22, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



# Canada is rising to meet the challenge of housing

Solving the housing crisis is a critical priority for the federal government. We are increasing the supply and supporting those who can't afford a decent place to live.

Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis

Opinion



Canada is facing a housing crisis like it hasn't faced since the end of the Second World War almost 80 years ago.

After six years of struggle, we won the war by focusing all our efforts and resources on one objective. After the war, we also met the challenge of building enough homes and infrastructure to accommodate millions of new families.

The current context is different, but the task at hand is similar. We are now an urban country with four times the population, and 14 times the economy. The baby boomers who grew up in those houses are in their retire-

ment phase, and our birth rate has plummeted. Without immigration, our average age will climb, the population will decline, the shortage of skilled workers will accelerate, and economic growth and our ability to care for an aging population will diminish.

In recent decades, private-sector home construction did not meet increasing demand, but governments did not fill the gap by investing in housing. Additionally, municipal and provincial rules designed to improve the quality of city life—or in response to residents' concerns—compounded by the very slow and cumbersome process to obtain construction permits, make it difficult, slow, and expensive to build homes.

The COVID-19 pandemic was the great disruptor when everything stopped or slowed to a crawl for two years, including immigration, supply chains, and home construction. This led to a spike in inflation; peaking at eight per cent. The Bank of Canada tripled interest rates to beat down inflation—now finally back at two per cent—allowing it to start reducing rates, but also resulted in increased financing and mortgage costs.

In addition, after the COVID pause, there was a large rebound in permanent and temporary worker and student immigration, whereby levels were the highest since the 1950s and '60s, further compounding the problem.

These factors caused a shortage of homes to buy or rent, driv-

ing up the cost beyond the reach of many Canadians, especially young people. This is not unique to Canada, and is also the case in the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, etc. It is particularly true in attractive cities where people want to live, like Canada's excellent metro areas.

Solving the housing crisis is a critical priority for the federal government. We are increasing the supply, and supporting those who can't afford a decent place to live. The government has also moved to lessen demand by substantially cutting the levels of several categories of immigration and temporary residency.

The National Housing Strategy was launched in 2017, and was expanded to a 10-year national project that will generate \$115-billion from various sources to meet the current challenge, but there are no magic solutions. We've already invested more than \$53-billion to help up to 1.8 million Canadians get the housing they need, including the construction or renovation of more than 439,000 homes.

Our government has recently set a bold—but realistic—objective for Canada to build 3.87 million new homes by 2031. This will greatly improve the housing status of millions of Canadians and is vast, including more than 30 initiatives.

We have laid the foundation for an additional two million new homes. Of these, 1.2 million are a direct result of feder-

al action, and at least 800,000 through measures and conditions introduced at the provincial and municipal levels.

The solution will require the full participation and co-operation of all concerned: the federal, provincial, and municipal governments; the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's Housing Accelerator Fund; private developers; investors; financial institutions; planners; and interest groups. It is critical for cities and provinces to make it easier, faster, and less expensive to build. There has to be a reasonable balance of the greater public good and the ideal.

There is no alternative but to densify much more than we have in order to alleviate our housing crisis, but also to alleviate environmental and congestion problems. This is a national project, and I am confident that with our strategy—by focusing our collective efforts on the same objective—Canada will meet the challenge of housing as we did in the 1950s and 1960s.

Liberal MP Annie Koutrakis represents Vimy, in Laval, Que., and was the parliamentary secretary to the minister of transport from 2021-22. She is now PS to the minister of tourism, and minister of economic development for Quebec's regions. She served on the House Finance Committee from 2019-21, and is now on the transport and language committees.

The Hill Times

## Improving practices and updating standards will take us a long way towards preparing for climate change

Building code standards are significantly out of date when it comes to storm and sanitary sewage pipes.

Barbara Robinson

Opinion



The expected increase in storm water peaks associated with climate change represents a risk that our engineering infrastructure—both sanitary and storm—will be insufficient. However, an even greater and more tangible risk exists right now.

Firstly, we are not constructing new sewers in accordance with *existing standards* and specifications. And secondly, we are not operating or maintaining the infrastructure we have now in accordance with *existing bylaws* to minimize risk of flood. The rainwater and groundwater leaking into pipes as a result are known collectively as Inflow and Infiltration (I/I). Both mean that residents today are experiencing more flooding than necessary. Valuable federal funding dollars are being used to expand wastewater treatment plants, when more organic solutions are readily available. Additional capacity in our pipes for housing is not being realized. The federal government has an essential role to play in both cases.

New subdivision sewers are constructed according to municipal standards on the public side, and building codes on the private side—eventually owned by property owners. Municipal standards are not being enforced,

Continued on page 25

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## Infrastructure Policy Briefing

There is far more to be done in the Yukon, and this work will require the ongoing commitment of all involved, writes ISG Sen. Pat Duncan.  
Flickr photograph by Louis White



# Far more still to be done for infrastructure in the Yukon

Supporting the families and people who live, work, play, and visit in the North requires more critical infrastructure, including energy and communications.

ISG Senator  
Pat Duncan

Opinion



**H**ill Times readers and people on the Hill are familiar with me stating that the three northern territories are completely different. Addressing the topic of infrastructure—especially critical infrastructure in the North—requires a separate piece for each territory, and a distinct approach for each territory by the federal government. I will address the Yukon.

All communities in the Yukon save one—Old Crow—are connected by a strong road network. Old Crow is the home of the Vuntut Gwitchin, one of the initial Yukon First Nations to complete a land claim agreement with the

Government of Canada and the Yukon Government. A self-governing First Nation, the VGFN Development Corporation owns 49 per cent of Air North. The airline made air transportation within and outside of the territory more accessible and affordable for their shareholders: Yukoners.

Investment in the critical air service by the Vuntut Gwitchin and other Yukon investors has been enhanced by funding from the territorial and federal governments for improvements to the runway infrastructure in Dawson City in 2019, and, most recently, in Whitehorse with the extension of the runway at the Erik Nielsen International Airport. The runway required an expansion to accommodate larger aircraft flown by international airlines like Condor that operate regular flights to Whitehorse during the tourist season. The improvements are a \$248-million investment by governments in critical infrastructure. An international airport, Whitehorse hosted Korean jetliners diverted from Anchorage on Sept. 11, 2001, and we regularly witness American military aircraft en route to Alaska.

Alaska and the United States have also—notably—returned to their practice of providing funding for reconstruction and maintenance of the Alaska Highway in the Yukon. The highway is fundamental to providing goods and services to the Yukon from Southern Canada; the movement

of military personnel in Alaska; visitors who drive from the lower 48 or arrive by cruise ship to southeast Alaska and travel by tour bus to the state; and other visitors from Canada and all over the world. Tourism is a \$367.8-million industry in the Yukon and worth US\$2.2-billion in Alaska. Passable roads and airports that promote smooth travel for people and products are critical infrastructure.

Melting permafrost caused by climate change necessitates ongoing expensive reinvestment in highways. The cost to rebuild one metre of the Alaska highway has been estimated at \$10,000. The territorial government's investment in roads in the budget estimates was nearly \$100-million. The investment by the Americans of \$42.6-million and visits to the territory by Alaska Governor Mike Dunleavy and U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen to observe firsthand the impact of melting permafrost on the roads show significant public support for American funding. This is investment that is supported by the strong relationships between our countries at the federal, provincial, and territorial levels. Alaskans and Yukoners are not only friends and neighbours. In many situations—as in other border communities—there are families that live on either side of the border.

Supporting the families and people who live, work, play, and

visit in the North requires more critical infrastructure, including energy and communications.

The Yukon has some electrical power generation with a hydro-electric dam in Whitehorse, built in 1958 by the Northern Canada Power Commission; the Aishihik hydro plant, built in 1975; and a dam in Mayo where the Yukon government added additional generation capacity 2011. The demand for electric power has grown exponentially due to a 12 per cent increase in population over the last five years, construction of new housing with electric heating, and increased access to the 19 government-operated charging stations for electric vehicles. The Yukon government—in partnership with the Kwanlin Dün First Nation—has added the four-megawatt Haeckel Hill Wind Project to the grid with four windmills in Whitehorse. A Yukon government solar generation program that allowed consumers to add to the grid has now been suspended as it was so well received the grid could not accommodate more at this time. With these innovations there is still a need for significantly more power to satisfy demand. Yukon has been exploring possible solutions to meet this demand. Most recently, Yukon announced \$40-million in federal support to seek a grid connection with British Columbia.

Yukon has made other significant investments in infrastructure including connecting all

Yukon communities—particularly schools and Yukon University campuses—with internet access and 911 emergency telephone service some years ago. On more than one occasion, a forest fire, road construction error cutting the fibre line in northern British Columbia, or minor equipment failure would result in the complete loss of internet and cell phone coverage throughout the territory. This past May, this loss and vulnerability of critical communications infrastructure tested the Yukon's resiliency and emergency responsiveness. This reinforced the wisdom of the territorial government's investment in the Dempster fibre link scheduled for completion this year, which will provide redundancy by routing an additional fibre communications link through Inuvik in the Northwest Territories.

The governments of the Yukon, Northwest Territories, Yukon First Nation, the state of Alaska, and the Canadian and American federal governments are all part of the funding, construction, and support for this snapshot of the critical infrastructure in the Yukon. There is far more to be done in the Yukon, and this work will require the ongoing commitment of all involved. The Northwest Territories and Nunavut have their own stories to tell of critical infrastructure that also requires the visionary leadership, financial support, and commitment of governments. Northerners and Canadians expect no less of their governments than support for this commitment to one another in the north and our country as a whole.

*Pat Duncan is the Senator for the Yukon. She has previously served as an MLA and Yukon's premier.*

*The Hill Times*

Policy Briefing **Infrastructure**

# The Liberal infrastructure record is nothing to be proud of



While Liberals like Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal are proud of their so-called increased investments, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are suffering in overcrowded, substandard housing, writes Lori Idlout. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Infrastructure gaps have major social, health, and economic impacts on Indigenous Peoples.

NDP MP  
Lori Idlout



Opinion

This Liberal government proudly embarrasses itself every time it talks about funding for Inuit, First Nations, and Métis.

The figures speak for themselves.

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) reports that the infrastructure gap for First Nations stands at \$349.2-billion.

The Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami reports that the infrastructure gap for Inuit is at \$425-billion.

The Métis National Council had submitted a request that the Government of Canada provide \$166.21-million to fill the infrastructure gap for the Métis.

These are not sources of pride that the Liberal government should be bragging about.

These infrastructure gaps have major social, health, and economic impacts on Indigenous Peoples. Not only are Indigenous Peoples continuing to suffer the ravages of the impacts of colonial and genocidal policies, but refusing to invest in Indigenous Peoples is also not acting in good faith. It is not acting on the reconciliation so needed between governments and Indigenous Peoples.

I repeat what I said in June: "Inuit, First Nations, and Métis children were taken from their loving homes and put into environments filled with hate and violence. Their languages and cultures were beaten out of them. For Inuit, their sled dogs were

murdered and were forcibly relocated to High Arctic communities, and so much more."

While Liberals like Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hadju and Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal are proud of their so-called increased investments, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit are suffering in overcrowded, substandard housing; living with generations of boil-water advisories; and being flown thousands of miles away from their homes for basic health-care services, and so much more. The Liberals are being sued again for their discriminatory underfunding of First Nations. These patterns of underinvestment must be amplified.

Again, from June, I repeat: "At the current spending rate, it will take between 58 and 141 years. The AFN now report the gap to reach almost \$530-billion for First Nations alone by 2040."

The Conservatives would be worse. People are still reeling from when Nunavut had a Conservative MP who served as the minister of health in the Harper cabinet, and made cuts to important programs. I remember specifically the importance of the Aboriginal Healing Fund. Important progress was being made in healing when the Conservatives decided to cut this important program. They will not make improvements. Their focus has been and will remain on making up rhymes and slogans to keep Canadians desperate, and to keep the ultra-rich just that: ultra-rich.

Inuit, First Nations, and Métis will keep their strength. They will keep demanding reconciliation. They will keep highlighting that this underinvestment is not justified. Indigenous Peoples will keep rising up, using their voice, and demanding governments make good on their promises.

Lori Idlout is a Canadian politician who has served as an NDP MP for the riding of Nunavut in the House of Commons since 2021. Before her election, Idlout practised law in Iqaluit with her own firm, Qusagaq Law Office.

*The Hill Times*

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## Infrastructure Policy Briefing

# Housing crisis requires more long-term infrastructure planning, say housing and construction experts

Continued from page 16

dire straits.” He said the Municipal Growth Framework could provide municipalities with the proper tools to move forward.

“Much of the infrastructure in this country is 75 [to] 80 years old, or even older, and it’s getting to the point of disrepair, and we just don’t have the funds to maintain, let alone expand what we currently have,” he said. “This housing crisis that we’re facing is going to take all three orders of government to work together to solve. There’s not one order of government that can do it alone.”

Stewart said that Fraser “is very much aware of the infrastructure challenges that municipalities are facing.”

“We’re ready to work with him and to implement this new Municipal Growth Framework, just as we’re ready to work with anyone who has the interest of municipalities at heart. We’re willing to sit with anyone and have that discussion,” he said.

Ana Bailão, head of affordable housing and public affairs for Dream, a real estate company headquartered in Toronto, told *The Hill Times* that an NIA would be beneficial because “we’re seeing substantial growth,” and “the way that you respond to that growth is making sure that you have the infrastructure.”

“I think there’s an urgency in having the conversation on how the federal and provincial governments can play a bigger role in the delivery of infrastructure in our municipalities. I think that is very clear,” said Bailão, who is also a former deputy mayor of Toronto. “I think if you talk to any mayor from rural and urban communities across the country,



NDP MP Bonita Zarrillo says ‘the Liberals have shown over and over again that they have actually no desire to invest in infrastructure or housing.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Samantha Wright Allen

they are very much in tune on the need to have more involvement and more delivery. I think having a plan just goes hand in hand with that.”

When asked about Fraser, Bailão said he has approached housing in Canada as a crisis.

Fraser and the Liberal government have implemented “great” initiatives intended to address housing, such as introducing enhanced rebates for purpose-built rental housing that relieves builders of their obligation to pay the federal component of GST/HST, according to Bailão.

“There’s been a lot of things that have been done since [Fraser] came into office and I think he needs to keep going in this di-

rection,” said Bailão. “I think he’s really trying to make sure that the provinces are coming to the table as well, which I think is the right thing to do.”

NDP MP Bonita Zarrillo (Port Moody-Coquitlam, B.C.), her party’s critic for infrastructure and communities, told *The Hill Times* that the infrastructure and housing gaps are a reflection of a lack of investment from the Liberal government, and a lack of investment from the previous Conservative government.

“The Liberals have shown over and over again that they have actually no desire to invest in infrastructure or housing. Their plan relies on corporate investment, private investment, PPP [public-private partnership] loans. The idea of actually investing in the safety of Canadians is not on their plan,” she said. “We know that the Liberals and the Conservatives have continued to let corporate greed, corporate landlords, [and] large corporations profit from infrastructure in Canada and housing in Canada. An NDP government would invest in Canadians, ensuring that those corporate profits that the Liberals and the government send out of the country—basically—would stay with Canadians.”

When asked about Fraser’s performance on the housing file, Zarrillo said that the minister is “missing Indigenous housing,” and added that “the Liberals and

because of the Liberals and the Conservatives who voted against any funding for Indigenous housing,” Idlout said. “When will the Liberals end their genocidal policies, stop breaking their promises, and ensure Indigenous Peoples have places to call home?”

In response, Liberal MP Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, N.B.), the parliamentary secretary to the minister of Indigenous services, argued that the Liberal government is taking action to address “the tremendous lack of safe, affordable housing and housing supports for Indigenous Peoples” across Canada.

“Since 2016, we have taken a different approach, working closely with partners to determine the scope and scale of housing needs on reserve. In our efforts to help close the gap, we have increased our funding for on-reserve housing by over 1,100 per cent. We are supporting the construction, renovation, and retrofit of over 36,000 homes in First Nations communities, and are co-developing a 10-year housing and infrastructure strategy. We will not stop,” Atwin told the House.

[jcnockaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:jcnockaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*

Conservatives have never caught up on Indigenous housing.”

Zarrillo referred to comments made by NDP MP Lori Idlout (Nunavut), who spoke in the House on Sept. 20 about inadequate funding towards housing for Indigenous Peoples.

Idlout told the House that—according to the CEO of Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services—only 0.2 per cent of all funding to end homelessness is going to Indigenous Peoples.

“This means thousands will be living out in the cold this winter

## Public infrastructure statistics



*The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

- At the end of 2020, core public infrastructure in Canada—excluding social and affordable housing—had a total replacement value of \$2.1-trillion. Roads (\$894.2-billion), and bridges and tunnels (\$244.7-billion) accounted for more than half (52.9 per cent) of the total estimated replacement value, while water infrastructure (\$771.8-billion) accounted for more than one-third (35.8 per cent)

- Municipalities owned 61.7 per cent (\$1,328.5-billion) of the total estimated replacement value of core public infrastructure in Canada. Of that amount, more than two-thirds (68.1 per cent) were in urban municipalities. Despite accounting for 17.8 per cent of Canada’s population, rural municipalities accounted for almost one-third of the replacement value of the core public infrastructure.

- Roads made up most of the total replacement value of core public infrastructure in rural municipalities (57.9 per cent), while they accounted for 21.5 per cent in urban municipalities. The cost to build new roads in rural municipalities was estimated at an average of \$0.4-million per two-lane equivalent kilometre, compared with \$1.2-million in urban municipalities.
- Wastewater infrastructure had the largest value of all infrastructure categories in urban municipalities at \$205.7-billion (22.7 per cent of the total).

—Source: Canada’s Core Public Infrastructure Survey: Replacement values, 2020, released by Statistics Canada on March 20, 2023

## Housing statistics from major cities



A rental building is pictured at 178 Nepean St. in Ottawa on Aug. 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

- In the first half of 2024, combined housing starts in Canada’s six largest cities (Vancouver, Calgary, Edmonton, Toronto, Ottawa, and Montreal) increased by four per cent, reaching 68,639 new units—the second-highest level since 1990. However, when adjusted for population size, these numbers are only around the historical average, and fall short of meeting growing demographic demand.

- Calgary and Edmonton led the growth in housing starts. This was driven by strong interprovincial migration, better affordability compared to other large urban centres, and robust economic conditions.
- Nearly half of the new apartments started in 2024 were purpose-built rentals, the highest share on record. This shift reflects declining homeownership affordability, and increased demand for rental options.

- Housing starts in Canada’s largest cities have increased overall, but the growth is uneven across regions. This disparity is due to varying economic conditions, affordability, and local policies.
- While construction activity has been increasing in 2024, the overall supply is not keeping up with demand, especially in fast-growing urban centres. As economic conditions and demographic trends evolve, the housing market will need ongoing adjustments to address affordability and supply challenges.

—Source: Housing starts in major Canadian cities show mixed trends, released by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation on Sept. 26, 2024



Ana Bailão, head of affordable housing and public affairs for Dream, says ‘I think there’s an urgency in having the conversation on how the federal and provincial governments can play a bigger role in the delivery of infrastructure in our municipalities.’ Photograph courtesy of Ana Bailão

# Housing-enabling infrastructure: a key piece to solving the housing crisis puzzle



Housing, Infrastructure, and Communities Minister Sean Fraser. Every new housing development, whether urban or suburban, places demands on infrastructure, writes Janice Myers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Resolving the housing-supply crisis needs a complementary abundance of new civic infrastructure.

Janice Myers

Opinion



What does addressing Canada's housing crisis look like? We know there isn't a "one-size-fits-all" solution.

While closing the 3.5-million-home supply gap must remain a priority, it's far more complex than simply increasing housing starts. The creation of new housing is intertwined with other key factors such as accessing skilled labour, modernizing building codes, expediting permits, and securing adequate capital.

If housing supply is going to rapidly increase in the near term then housing-enabling infrastructure—meaning things like water, wastewater, roads, transit, and power distribution—will need to accelerate in tandem and, crucially, above and beyond what municipalities have been anticipating in their capital and operational plans. However, it's often overlooked despite its crucial nature and large price tag.

Every new housing development, whether urban or suburban, places demands on infrastructure. While urban densification projects like a new condo tower or a fourplex can tap into existing infrastructure, it can't service an unlimited number of people. Eventually, watermains and roads will need to be expanded or replaced, perhaps sooner than expected.

When it comes to new builds, current estimates for the per-house cost of housing-enabling infrastructure range between \$100,000 and \$130,000, highlighting that we face not just a housing supply deficit, but also an equally costly infrastructure deficit.

Even if municipalities approve building permits faster, houses simply can't be built without the enabling infrastructure.

The federal government recognized the critical need for housing-enabling infrastructure in its housing plan by announcing the Canada Housing Infrastructure Fund, which will provide \$1-billion directly to municipalities to support urgent infrastructure needs, and \$5-billion for agreements with provinces and territories for longer-term priorities. Some provinces have also announced similar and complementary provincial programs.

Now, the challenge lies in implementation, which will require unprecedented co-ordination across all levels of government. Canada has a strong history of intergovernmental collaboration on major infrastructure projects like highways, wastewater facilities, tunnels, and power networks. But the magnitude of the housing crisis demands even more robust efforts.

There's a recent model for this type of collaboration. When the federal government ambitiously set out to build a new Canada-wide childcare program, it launched the Federal Secretariat on Early Learning and Child Care, which brought together governments, experts, and stakeholders to collaborate on designing and implementing a new national program. The secretariat helped to efficiently launch what is now a national social program worth more than \$9-billion annually. A similar approach could be key to tackling the housing crisis.

Our national housing crisis is ultimately a housing-supply crisis, yet its resolution requires more than just increasing housing supply. It needs a complementary abundance of new civic infrastructure. Addressing both is a monumental task that will require intense co-operation and co-ordination between all levels of governments.

Janice Myers is the CEO of the Canadian Real Estate Association (CREA), with more than two decades of experience in the Canadian real estate sector. She brings deep expertise and a successful track record from executive leadership roles at real estate associations nationwide. At CREA, Myers champions housing policy reforms, drives transparency across the industry, and spearheads innovative solutions, all aimed at building a more resilient, accessible, and sustainable real estate ecosystem for Canadians.

*The Hill Times*

# Closing the infrastructure gap is about more than just money

When we prioritize infrastructure, we are investing in the communities in which we live, and in the people who call them home.

Kerry Black

Opinion



Globally, closing the infrastructure gap has been a focus of national and international dialogues for decades. Most recently, the federal government committed to closing the infrastructure gap for First Nations in Canada by 2030. However, in this Canadian context, discussions on aging infrastructure and infrastructure investments have yielded debates from all sides for as long as anyone can remember.

Infrastructure investments have long been touted as an engine of economic stimulus. In the 1960s and 1970s, infrastructure spending was at an all-time high during a period of significant population growth and equally strong economic growth. Historically, large-scale infrastructure investments have occurred following disaster-related events, as well as during important economic events in Canadian history. Investments in infrastructure can be seen during economic pinch-points like the 2008 recession, or most recently the COVID-19 pandemic; but they can also be seen during times of economic prosperity, with investments in infrastructure historically increasing in parallel to increasing oil revenues.

A 2013 report from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives showed that public investment in infrastructure peaked in the late 1950s at three per cent of the GDP, and has steadily decreased until the mid-2000s. In that same time, infrastructure asset shares have shifted from predominantly federally owned assets, to majority municipality-owned assets. This shift is significant in the context of who shares the ultimate burden, with municipalities with small revenue bases bearing the brunt of the load when it comes to infrastructure spending. This has resulted in a significant infrastructure gap in many Canadian municipalities, with the rural and remote communities facing markedly higher impacts ranging from dilapidated and inadequate infrastructure, to the absence of critical infrastructure entirely.

We know that investments in infrastructure are essential. For every dollar that is invested into resilient infrastruc-

ture, it is estimated that an average of \$3-\$5 is saved on post-disaster reconstruction. Investments in infrastructure benefit the larger GDP, and serve to stimulate the economy. This relationship has been attributed to Keynesian economics, whereby when a recession occurs, the economy becomes stuck in a self-sustaining cycle marked by high unemployment and a stagnant GDP. According to Keynesian theory, one alternative is to overcome a lack of private-sector demand through public-sector deficit spending to help "stimulate" the economy. This deficit spending has typically been applied to outputs like building infrastructure.

The return on the dollar is often higher in areas that have been historically excluded from investment. Indigenous communities in Canada are disproportionately affected by inadequate and obsolete infrastructure as a result of chronic underfunding. The federal government's commitment to close the infrastructure gap by 2030 is a direct response to decades-long advocacy from First Nations across Canada demanding increased investments in infrastructure that has exacerbated the health and economic gap that exist between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. These investments in infrastructure are more than just dollars and cents; for every dollar invested in infrastructure in Indigenous communities, there's an estimated 17 per cent increase in employment levels, productivity, and earned wages. These benefits are not just seen within Indigenous communities, but also have very real and positive impacts on the larger Canadian economy.

What is most important to note is that whereas our approach to infrastructure investments has been largely reactive, a proactive response requires an understanding that this funding is critical to sustainable and resilient community development, and the broader health and well-being of citizens. A return to sustained and increased federal infrastructure spending is necessary to building a strong and resilient economy. These decisions must be supported by provincial and municipal governments, and must prioritize Indigenous communities in order to adequately address the issues of funding inequality that have exacerbated the infrastructure gap in Indigenous communities in Canada. When we prioritize infrastructure, we are investing in the communities in which we live, and in the people who call them home. It's about much more than just money.

Kerry Black, PhD, P.Eng., is an assistant professor and Canada Research Chair in the department of civil engineering at the University of Calgary's Schulich School of Engineering. Her work focuses on sustainable infrastructure and community development.

*The Hill Times*

## Infrastructure Policy Briefing

# Are federal government measures supporting infrastructure sufficient?

While targeted efforts exist, federal investments are often short term and insufficient.

Ranjan Datta & Margot Hurlbert

Opinion



The Investing in Canada Plan—launched in 2016—allocated more than \$154-billion to infrastructure projects, focusing on public transit, green energy, roads, and rural development. While the plan aims to modernize Canada's infrastructure and address deficits in transportation, environmental sustainability, and water systems, significant gaps persist, particularly in Indigenous communities across Western Canada and the Arctic.

Slow fund allocation and project delays have caused frustration for municipalities and Indigenous nations, with bureaucratic hurdles stalling essential projects. As a result, many Indigenous communities face outdated infrastructure, poor road conditions, limited public transit, and unreliable clean-water access. Rural and remote areas—especially Indigenous communities—remain underserved with inadequate housing, deteriorating infrastructure, and limited broadband services. The disparity between urban and rural investments exacerbates regional inequalities and stifles economic growth.

While targeted efforts exist, federal investments are often short term and insufficient. To fully achieve the plan's goals, the government must accelerate project delivery, prioritize Indigenous infrastructure, and ensure long-term, sustainable investments.

### Climate change and extreme weather risks to Canadian infrastructure

Climate change and extreme weather events pose significant risks to Canada's infrastructure, threatening the reliability, safety, and longevity of key systems like transportation networks, energy grids, and water systems. As floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and extreme heat or cold become more frequent and intense—occurring often in succession and/or close geographical proximity—much of Canada's aging infrastructure is unprepared for these challenges.



Much of Canada's aging infrastructure is unprepared for more frequent challenges like floods, wildfires, hurricanes, and extreme heat or cold, write Ranjan Datta and Margot Hurlbert. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Flooding is a growing concern, especially in cities with outdated stormwater or wastewater management systems where homes, businesses, and public infrastructure face increased flood damage. Indigenous communities in Western Canada and the Arctic are particularly vulnerable, as rising sea levels and permafrost degradation threaten coastal infrastructure, traditional food sources, and transportation. Wildfires also jeopardize energy infrastructure, particularly in remote areas where response times are slower.

Addressing these risks requires a community-led, multi-faceted approach. Resilient infrastructure design—such as improved stormwater management and reinforced roads—must be prioritized, along with protecting natural infrastructure like wetlands. The federal government must invest in retrofitting existing infrastructure and implementing climate adaptation strategies to ensure long-term resilience.

### Challenges to telecommunications resiliency and the federal government's role

Canada's telecommunications infrastructure, though advanced, faces significant challenges in terms of resiliency, particularly in rural Indigenous communities. Climate change and the growing reliance on digital services—such as remote work and telemedicine, or internet-delivered post-secondary or secondary education—emphasize the need for reliable networks. Rural areas are especially vulnerable, relying on fewer and more isolated telecommunications hubs, leading to slower recovery and extended outages during disasters.

A major issue is the digital divide between urban and rural regions. While urban centres enjoy high-speed internet, many rural and Indigenous communities lack reliable broadband, affecting both daily communication and emergency response.

To address these challenges, the federal government should invest in climate-resilient telecommunications infrastructure by funding stronger cell towers, expanding fibre-optic networks, and encouraging private-sector investment through tax breaks and partnerships to extend broadband and 5G services.

### Addressing Indigenous infrastructure problems

Indigenous communities in Canada face ongoing infrastructure challenges including inadequate roads, poor wastewater systems, and inconsistent access to clean drinking water. Despite federal commitments and targeted funding, many Indigenous communities still experience infrastructure below national standards. A critical issue is the lack of access to clean drinking water. As of 2021, long-term boil-water advisories persisted in numerous Indigenous communities, some lasting more than two decades. This highlights a human

rights concern, and underscores the historical neglect of Indigenous infrastructure needs.

To address these challenges, the federal government must prioritize long-term, sustainable investments, and community-led Indigenous infrastructure. This includes funding for immediate repairs, self-governance, capacity-building for managing systems, and ensuring Indigenous involvement in planning and implementation. Solutions must be culturally appropriate and community-driven. The dedicated infrastructure funds for Indigenous communities—free from bureaucratic delays and restrictive conditions—are necessary to address urgent needs such as clean drinking water and adequate housing swiftly and effectively.

### Evaluating Canada's housing plan

Launched in April 2023, Canada's Housing Plan aims to tackle the housing crisis by increasing affordable housing supply and promoting homeownership. While the plan is a positive step, many argue it falls short of addressing core issues like housing affordability, speculation, and the shortage of social housing. Further, will housing be built to achieve Canada's net-zero carbon emission targets, and be resilient to future climate change? What ensures the housing will not be built in future flood zones? Without these measures, might housing be even more costly in the future?

A key limitation is its focus on homeownership, which may not be feasible for low-income Canadians. Rising home prices and high interest rates mean that—even with government incentives—many are still priced out of the market. Additionally, the plan does not adequately prioritize social and affordable rental housing, critically needed by those who cannot afford to buy. The plan's success will ultimately depend on addressing affordability and ensuring accessibility for vulnerable populations.

*Dr. Ranjan Datta is a Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Community Disaster Research in the department of humanities at Mount Royal University. His research focuses on decolonial and anti-racist perspectives on climate change and disaster. Prof. Margot Hurlbert is a professor and Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) Climate Change, Energy, and Sustainability Policy of the Johnson Shoyama Graduate School of Public Policy, University of Regina. She explores the gap between what is needed to address climate change and current policy and behaviour.*

*The Hill Times*



# Now is the time for Canada to assume its infrastructure responsibilities to First Nations

The original peoples of this land deserve the dignity of accessing infrastructure that they can count on, all the time.

Tyler Elizabeth Ball

Opinion



Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu's First Nations Clean Water Act is still being debated in committee, nearly 300 days after its first reading in the House of Commons. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

All water use restrictions have now been lifted in the City of Calgary, ending 109 days of frustration for its residents. In contrast, another Alberta community south of Edmonton has just revived a 10-year-old lawsuit against the federal government to finally provide them with a functional treatment system. For now, the residents of Ermineskin Cree Nation continue to rely on bottled water for all their needs, including for bathing.

Canada is known for excellent infrastructure. Big spaces are no match for our roads, which are everywhere. The major temperature swings at the end of

spring don't keep us from filling our swimming pools when we want to. Our world-class public education system attracts and inspires scholars from around the world. Canada's provinces are the driving force behind our excellent infrastructure, so cheers to them.

But you know who is failing at providing dependable infrastructure for Canada's most vulnerable population? The federal government. For historical reasons, it literally owns the responsibility for everything on First Nations reserves south of the 60<sup>th</sup> parallel. And that includes water treatment and emergency response.

The inadequate state of safe drinking water on many First Nations reserves is a long-standing national shame, and Ermineskin is no exception. Even when water produced on reserve is declared safe by the federal government, children are often not afforded the dignity of being able to use it comfortably.

A mother in Shoal Lake 40 First Nation whose son had a recurring rash kept taking him to the doctor. "When I finally told him that we do not have treated water in the community, he said, 'Well, there's your problem.'" Her son occasionally asks her if they can rent a hotel room off

the reserve so he can take a proper bath.

It took a lawsuit to persuade Parliament in 2021 to propose new legislation: Bill C-61, First Nations Clean Water Act. The bill is still being debated in committee, nearly 300 days after its first reading in the House of Commons.

Before anyone calls for patience, remember that failings exposed by the Walkerton drinking water crisis in 2000—when bacterial contamination led to the deaths of seven people, and caused illness in more than 2,300 individuals—were addressed with reassuring expediency. First Nations leaders have clearly expressed what needs to be done to correct Bill C-61, including underscoring the fact that First Nation peoples have a human right to safe drinking water consistent with a 2010 United Nations resolution.

The auditor general's recent report on emergency management in First Nations found that Canada invested more than \$825-million over four years for the communities affected, responding to 598 emergencies, and requiring 207 separate evacuations. To put that number in perspective, Alberta recently announced that it would provide \$149-million to Jasper to help the municipality with infrastructure recovery after July's wildfire.

Unsurprisingly, the auditor general's report also found that \$825-million wasn't remotely enough, especially since most of it was spent *reacting* to the disasters, rather than *preventing* them. Even though the First Nations affected had identified many projects that would have helped do just that, and every \$1 invested in preparing for damage saves \$6 in emergency response and recovery costs.

What most Canadians don't understand is that these communities are not legally permitted to address these issues themselves. The reserves—on which nearly half a million First Nations people live—were created under the discredited Indian Act, and remain classified as federal land. First Nations are not able to expand the size of reserves, and many of them were forcibly moved from their original territory by the government, often to land that—as predicted—turned out to be more vulnerable to flooding and other emergencies.

Critics may argue that Canadian taxpayers have spent enough on First Nations' tiny communities already, that they should move to towns or cities with all the clean drinking water they could want. But these places are their homes, with their community, and like other Canadians living in rural areas, they have the right to pursue their livelihoods and happiness. The original peoples of this land deserve the dignity of accessing infrastructure that they can count on, all the time. Canada can and must do better.

*Tyler Elizabeth Ball, P.Eng., is a member of l'Ordre des ingénieurs du Québec with 20 years' experience designing and managing the construction of water treatment systems across North America.*

*The Hill Times*

## Improving practices and updating standards will take us a long way towards preparing for climate change

Continued from page 18

even though they are referenced precisely on engineering drawings. For example, new sewer pipes must not leak more than a specified amount. The only means of ensuring that this standard is met is to check actual leakage against a specified allowable. However, very few municipalities are doing this. This is resulting in pipes leaking unacceptably for their lifetime.

Building code standards are significantly out of date when it comes to storm and sanitary sewage pipes, and other items related to flood and backup risk. For example, the codes were originally written when metal or concrete pipes were the norm,

and they have not been updated to reflect the requirements of the now more-commonly used PVC pipe, which behaves substantially differently than more rigid pipe.

The National Building Code (NBC) also neglects to consider menstruators' unique needs in public toilet stalls, failing to specify even a trash can, much less a sink, counter, and paper towel in some stalls. This results in millions of tonnes of menstrual products, and other deleterious materials—like "flushable" wipes—ending up in our sewer systems, at our wastewater treatment plants whence they need to be removed and trucked to landfill sites, and in our waterways and natural environment during overflow events, which are

bound to increase with climate change. One simple change to the NBC—known as a code change request—requiring a sink, counter, paper towel, and trash can in 30 per cent of women's stalls has been proposed. Liberal MP Bardish Chagger—supported by Green MP Mike Morrice—is taking a petition to the floor of the House of Commons soon to bring attention to this simple, but profoundly effective, change.

For existing sewer systems, municipalities are not doing enough to reduce existing I/I, which will be less once we enforce leakage standards in new sewer construction. Specifically, municipalities have ignored leakage on the private side where 50 per cent of the length of our

sewer systems exist, even though experts across North America conclude that's where 60-70 per cent of the leakage occurs. Downspouts illegally connected to the sanitary sewer are a prime example of private-side I/I that must be tackled by municipalities.

There is a very substantive role for the federal government here. For the national codes, extensive research has been published on gaps that represent risk of flood, as well as solutions to these gaps. The current code change request is a start, but there is much more to do.

As for municipalities, it should be obvious by now that property taxes and user fees generate insufficient dollars to fund major infrastructure projects. Our infrastruc-

ture is aging apace. A stable source of funding from the federal and perhaps provincial governments *must* be established so that municipalities can plan ongoing renewal and replacement programs.

The criteria for this funding must be modernized to ensure that municipalities are following best practices to reduce I/I *before* they are allocated additional resources for expansion. These criteria must include requirements for ongoing, monitored, and reported programs, such as:

- Mandatory enforcement of sewer-use bylaws;
- I/I reduction;
- Water loss reduction; and
- Ongoing public education campaigns.

We need to take bold action to get ahead of climate change, and the opportunities are right in front of us.

*Barbara Robinson is the president and founder of Norton Engineering, a national engineering company focusing on making sewers better across Canada, by working with all levels of government.*

*The Hill Times*

## Infrastructure Policy Briefing



Pet-friendly housing options should be considered a necessity, not a luxury, as companion animals are critical to the well-being of many Canadians, write Dalhousie University academics. *Pexels photograph by Anastasia Shuraeva*

In addition, climate change is fuelling internal migration within Canada as people move from climate-vulnerable areas to cities and regions perceived to be safer. This further increases demand in already-overburdened urban housing markets, exacerbating affordability issues.

Investing in climate-resilient infrastructure—such as flood-proof housing and wildfire-resistant communities—should be a key priority in any national housing strategy. Failing to properly account for climate risks in housing policy will only perpetuate the cycle of housing loss and rising costs in the face of disasters.

### A holistic approach is needed

The Canada Housing Plan is a vital step to implement stronger tenant protections, and increase the supply of affordable housing. Actually, Canada's housing crisis cannot be solved by blaming other issues such as immigration—it requires a holistic approach that addresses the true drivers of housing inequality, and a rethinking of how housing policy impacts vulnerable groups. The core of the problem remains as Canada's housing crisis is rooted in a number of combined socio-economic factors: inequality, housing precarity, and the increasing impacts of climate change.

The recently proposed cutting of immigration is not only a distraction from these issues, but it also ignores the contribution that newcomers make to the economy and housing sector. Instead, the solution lies in addressing the non-structural and social factors that are driving the crisis. What needs to be dwelt on is ensuring that policies are inclusive of all Canadians—including those with companion animals, and those at risk of displacement due to climate change.

*Dr. Haorui Wu is Canada Research Chair in Resilience (Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction), and an associate professor in the School of Social Work at Dalhousie University. His innovative socio-ecological protection strategies aim to stimulate the transdisciplinary application of engineering, social, cultural, ecological, economic, and political dimensions into the empowerment of grassroots-led community development initiatives. Dr. Parth Bansal is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Social Work. His research focuses on housing sustainability, through the lens of social and energy justice. Dr. Siyu Ru is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Social Work. Her research focuses focus is on human-animal studies, specifically disasters' impacts on both human and animal well-being, as well as promoting human-animal welfare to strengthen individual and community resilience. Dr. Szymon Parzniewski is a postdoctoral fellow at the School of Social Work. His research focuses on drawing from the intersections between migration (diversity), and disaster (resilience) research fields.*

*The Hill Times*

# Shifting the focus from structural issues to immigration will not fix Canada's housing crisis

Centring immigration neglects the growing effects of climate change, and the often-overlooked struggles of people with companion animals.

Haorui Wu, Parth Bansal, Siyu Ru & Szymon Parzniewski

Opinion

The housing crisis across Canada is one of the most pressing social issues in the country today, with skyrocketing prices and a lack of affordable housing causing widespread distress. Some policymakers claim that the reduction of immigration could lessen the problem, arguing that fewer newcomers will ease

pressure on the housing market. However, this belief misses the mark as it fails to address the root causes of the crisis, and overlooks key social and non-structural factors that are driving housing inequality. Moreover, it neglects the growing effects of climate change, and the often-overlooked struggles of people with companion animals.

### The real issue: housing supply and social inequality, not immigration

Canada's housing shortage is not primarily driven by immigration. Actually, the real issue is the lack of housing supply, and the growing social inequality within the housing market. For decades, housing policies have prioritized the construction of high-end, luxury developments over affordable homes. This trend, coupled with restrictive zoning laws and bureaucratic delays, has created a scarcity of affordable and mid-range housing options. Meanwhile, speculative investment in real estate—particularly

by corporate landlords—has driven prices even higher, making homeownership and stable rentals increasingly out of reach for many Canadians.

### Companion animal guardians: a neglected group

Amid this housing crisis, a particularly vulnerable group has been overlooked: people with companion animals. For many, companion animals are considered family members, and they rely on their animals for emotional and psychological support. While Ontario's Residential Tenancy Act disallows no-pet clauses in rental agreements, similar protections are absent in most other provinces and territories. Companion-animal guardians are increasingly squeezed out of housing options due to restrictive landlord policies or costly pet-related fees.

These policies place an additional burden on people—especially immigrants—already struggling to find affordable housing. In some cases, individuals are

forced to choose between giving up their pets or living in unstable or substandard conditions. The emotional toll of this choice is profound, yet the new Canada Housing Plan fails to address this aspect of housing inequality. Pet-friendly housing options should be considered a necessity, not a luxury, as companion animals are critical to the well-being of many Canadians.

### Climate change and climate-induced disasters: a growing impact on housing

The worsening effects of climate change must also be considered when addressing Canada's housing crisis. Extreme weather events such as wildfires, floods, and hurricanes are becoming more frequent, destroying homes and increasing insurance costs, particularly in provinces like British Columbia and Nova Scotia. These climate-related risks make housing more precarious and drive up costs in regions previously considered affordable or safe.

# Without the necessary resources, it becomes harder for universities to stay competitive on the global stage



Canadian universities are not currently eligible for several key federal programs that could help address urgent infrastructure needs, writes Gabriel Miller. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Many schools are now facing a significant backlog of urgent repairs, which affects the quality of education they can offer.

Gabriel Miller

Opinion



With more than 1.3 million students enrolled in Canadian universities across the country, these institutions are shaping the next generation of innovators, researchers, and leaders.

To ensure these students thrive and make the groundbreaking discoveries that benefit all Canadians, they need access to modern, high-quality facilities. Yet, rising building costs, aging infrastructure, and inadequate funding tools are putting this critical mission at risk.

Beyond their primary function of providing education and training, universities serve broader societal needs. From acting as gathering spaces for communities to providing emergency shelter and supporting public health initiatives, universities play a key role in the well-being of all Canadians. When wildfires ravaged communities in 2016, 2017, and 2021, universities opened their doors to support their local communities. The University of Alberta helped house displaced residents, and provided mental health support through its faculty and students, while the University of Northern British Columbia and Thomp-

son Rivers University provided emergency shelter for evacuees during wildfires. Thompson Rivers University—home to the Institute for Wildfire Science, Adaptation and Resiliency—is the only Canadian university with two research chairs dedicated to wildfire science, leading studies on climate change, human health, Indigenous cultural burning, social impacts, species at risk, and artificial intelligence applications.

In the face of mounting challenges like climate change, health crises, and economic uncertainty, university campuses also provide the infrastructure needed to tackle these issues through research and community programs.

Unfortunately, Canadian universities are struggling with outdated facilities, and the costs of maintaining and modernizing them are rising. Many universities are now facing a significant backlog of urgent repairs, which affects the quality of education they can offer. In the past, these institutions have relied on a patchwork of funding tools, often insufficient to cover the cost of essential upgrades. Without the necessary resources, it becomes harder for universities to stay competitive on the global stage, and meet the needs of both students and the broader community.

One solution to this problem is for the federal government to broaden access to infrastructure funding. Currently, Canadian universities are not eligible for several key federal programs that could help address these urgent needs. For example, the Green and Inclusive Community Buildings Program—which supports energy-efficient and accessible retrofits for community infrastructure—excludes universities. Expanding eligibility for programs like this would be a game-changer. Excluding universities, which fuel some of the world's most groundbreaking discoveries, from

key funding initiatives that support critical infrastructure is a missed opportunity.

Allowing universities to apply for federal funding dedicated to energy efficiency and infrastructure renewal would help address the growing backlog of maintenance and repairs while simultaneously reducing energy costs and greenhouse gas emissions. This would not only improve educational facilities but also contribute to Canada's climate goals and environmental sustainability.

In addition to the immediate environmental benefits, modernized, energy-efficient university infrastructure would provide long-term economic advantages. Improved facilities attract local businesses and foster partnerships that lead to innovation. These partnerships—in turn—generate new industries, create jobs, and position Canada as a leader in key sectors like technology, health care, and clean energy. Investing in university infrastructure is not just an expense, but it's also an investment in Canada's future prosperity.

A collaborative approach between all levels of government and universities is key to addressing this issue. By including universities in programs for infrastructure and energy efficiency, governments can empower institutions to continue providing high-quality education while driving economic growth. This would help alleviate the financial burden on universities and allow them to focus on what they do best: training students, conducting cutting-edge research, and serving as vibrant community hubs.

It is time for the federal government to recognize the critical role universities play, and make them eligible for federal infrastructure and energy efficiency funding.

*Gabriel Miller is the president and CEO of Universities Canada. He is an experienced not-for-profit leader who has built an extensive track record in member relations, advocacy, stakeholder engagement, and public policy development over his 22-year career.*

*The Hill Times*



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## News

# A new age for Canada-Saudi relations? Human rights concerns passed over for economic links

A former Canadian envoy praises Ottawa's new approach to Saudi Arabia, as the NDP says Riyadh has bought Canada's silence on its human rights record.

Continued from page 1

Development Minister Ahmed Hussen (York South-Weston, Ont.) and Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.).

The visit came six years to the day after United States-based dissident journalist Jamal Khashoggi was assassinated by Saudi operatives in the country's consulate in Istanbul, Turkey. That killing led to a period of ostracization for Saudi Arabia on the international stage, highlighted by now-U.S. President Joe Biden calling the Middle Eastern nation a "pariah" for its human rights abuses during a 2019 Democratic presidential debate.

During an interview with *The Hill Times* at Saudi Arabia's embassy on Sussex Drive, Alkhorayef said his trip is "very symbolic" as one of the first high-level visits following the restoration in relations.

He praised the return to operations of the Saudi-Canadian Business Council after a five-year hiatus, as well as the opening of an office of the Federation of Saudi Chambers in Toronto.

He said those two announcements show the Saudi government's commitment to its relationship with Canada, adding that there has been "genuine interest" on both sides to develop the relationship "in all aspects."

"We need to work harder on understanding each other and respecting each other," he said. "This is something that I feel is happening, which is a good sign, and it will definitely reduce the risks of any events happening in the future."

Alkhorayef said Saudi Arabia respects the agenda and views of other governments.

"We don't mind people to criticize us—it's only natural," he said. "But we need people to do it with the right intention, and also the right effort to understand what the real situation is."

Canada's criticism of Saudi Arabia's detention of Samar Badawi, the sister of Saudi dissident blogger Raif Badawi, in the form



Saudi Industry and Mineral Resources Minister Bandar Alkhorayef speaks to *The Hill Times* during an Oct. 2 interview at the Saudi Embassy. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

of a tweet from Global Affairs Canada and then-Foreign Affairs minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) set off the dispute six years ago. Soon after, Riyadh expelled then-Canadian ambassador to Saudi Arabia Dennis Horak, and recalled its envoy from Ottawa.

But human rights were seemingly not top of mind during Alkhorayef's Canadian visit as meetings were held on areas for co-operation in mining.

Spokespeople for Champagne and Hussen didn't respond before publication deadline as to whether concerns over Saudi Arabia's human rights records were raised in their meetings with Alkhorayef.

In a post on X, Hussen wrote that "building the green economy of the future offers new opportunities for growing ties between Canada and Saudi Arabia."

He added that during his meeting with Alkhorayef, the two ministers discussed critical mineral innovation in both countries.

Alkhorayef said he encourages those who question his country's human rights record to travel to Saudi Arabia.

"Come to Saudi Arabia and make up your own opinion," he said. "Today, it's an open world. It's not very smart to take other people's opinion. You need to go to see it for yourself."

One goal of the country's Vision 2030 development program is to address human rights concerns, but its progress has been questioned as the European Saudi Organisation for Human Rights found in a July report that executions increased by 42 per cent in the first half of 2024, com-

pared to the same period in 2023, amounting to one person killed every other day.

## Canada-Saudi ties 'building up better' than before rift, says former envoy

Horak told *The Hill Times* that Canada's relationship with Saudi Arabia is "building up better" compared to the time before ties were severed in 2018.

He said the decision has not only been made to build the relationship up to its state before the spat, but also to deepen it compared to what it was like in the years leading to the dispute.

"They decided to engage them," said Horak, noting the visit of Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) to Riyadh last March.

He called Joly's visit a "step up" in ties as during his three years in Riyadh, there was never a bilateral visit of a foreign minister.

"It's not only appropriate, it's about time," he said, remarking that the added engagement on economic co-operation shows that Canada is aiming for a "broader" and "fuller" relationship with Saudi Arabia compared to his time as envoy.

Horak noted that a change in the Canadian government's approach could be an appreciation of the internal shifts occurring in Saudi Arabia.

"There have been positive changes in Saudi Arabia—it's not perfect for sure—but it's a process that's working," he said. "I

think it's a realization that Saudi Arabia is too big of a player to ignore."

He said that includes both economically and their stature in a region that has become increasingly important.

"They're players in the region, and that can't be ignored any longer," he said.

Horak said Canada's pivot to a focus on the economic relationship with Saudi Arabia is a realization that it can "walk and chew gum at the same time," and all engagement with Saudi Arabia doesn't have to be on human rights.

"Just because you have an economic relationship or a political relationship with a country doesn't mean you can't criticize them," he said. "In fact, you get a much better hearing if you have the relationship than if you stand on the sidelines yelling, which is what we basically did for the three years I was there. It's a pointless exercise that is basically aimed at Canadians and others who don't want anything to do with Saudi Arabia."

He said Canada has adopted a "much more mature" approach now than it had previously.

## Mining sector ripe for co-operation, says Alkhorayef

As Saudi Arabia moves to diversify its economy to combat its reliance on oil exports, Alkhorayef said Riyadh is looking to Canada to co-operate in the mining sector.

"Mining is relatively new for Saudi Arabia, and we believe that the model of mining in Canada is a unique, successful one because it was able to utilize and benefit from the raw material and the minerals, but it was done in a very good way and a very responsible way," he said.

He said that Saudi Arabia is also looking at Canada's model for geographical survey and exploration.

Saudi Arabia has indicated its interest in investing in critical mineral production in Canada, which could trigger a national security review following a regulatory change in 2022 that set out approvals would only be granted on an "exceptional basis."

But Alkhorayef said he isn't concerned that Saudi investment would be heavily affected by the change.

"My understanding is that there are very limited activities that will be limiting for us," he said. "The kind of investment we are looking for is to do with complementing our needs in our industrial sector."

He remarked that another area of opportunity for Canadian companies in Saudi Arabia could be in services involved in mining.

"This is really where the huge opportunity comes," he said.

## 'Unacceptable' for Liberals to be silent on Saudi rights record: NDP

A 2023 report from the House Subcommittee on International Human Rights highlighted concerns over rights and freedoms for women and girls in Saudi Arabia, as well as Iran and Afghanistan. The report noted that Saudi Arabia has enacted legislation to target women's rights, and has responded harshly to women human rights defenders who criticize the Saudi government, including doling out a 34-year prison sentence to Salma al-Shehab for having a Twitter account that retweeted Saudi dissidents.

In the government response to the report, which was tabled in April, Hussen highlighted that the government considers the situation of women and girls' rights and freedoms in Saudi Arabia to be "qualitatively different than the situations in Afghanistan and Iran."

"In comparison, Saudi Arabia is pursuing a wide range of reforms under its ambitious Vision 2030 which have improved women's social, economic, and human rights," he wrote.

"We share avenues for meaningful and mutually respectful dialogue with Saudi Arabia on these issues. With the restoration of our bilateral relations, Canada and Saudi Arabia now have the benefit of a fulsome diplomatic dialogue which can enable meaningful exchanges between our countries on such issues," Hussen added.

NDP MP Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), her party's foreign affairs critic, criticized the Canadian government's rapprochement with Saudi Arabia, and its silence on the sixth anniversary of Khashoggi's death.

"In the six years since Khashoggi's murder, Canada has only strengthened its diplomatic and trade relationship with Saudi Arabia," she said in a statement to *The Hill Times*. "Canadian-made weapons have continued to flow to Saudi Arabia despite Saudi atrocities against civilians in Yemen, despite serious human rights violations against Saudi civil society, and despite the murders of hundreds of Ethiopian refugees by Saudi forces."

"This is unacceptable. It is impossible to reconcile the Liberal government's claims regarding feminist foreign policy with its increasing closeness to the Saudi regime," said McPherson, remarking that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) has continued the policies of the previous Conservative government of prioritizing trade and arms sales to Saudi Arabia.

"Saudi Arabia has effectively bought Canada's silence," she added.

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The Hill Times

# What citizenship applications tell us about policy implementation

Analysis of citizenship data shows that operational policy changes have a real impact, making naturalization either harder or easier for new Canadians.

Andrew Griffith

Opinion



Analysis of citizenship applications between 2005 and 2023 reveals the impact of policy changes over that time period.

In particular, this shows us how former prime minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government's pledge to make citizenship "harder to get and easier to lose" resulted in significant delays and reduced approval rates before political realities resulted in mitigating those impacts.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Liberal government's return to previous residency and other requirements cemented a return to historic approval rates and processing times.

## History of policy changes

This analysis looks at four timeframes which are roughly aligned to census periods:

**2005-10:** This period saw the introduction of the *Discover Canada* citizenship study guide in 2009. It contained more detailed content and more complex language than previous citizenship guides. Applicants were also required to take a more rigorous knowledge test based upon

**Figure 1: Processing time and refusal rates**

In the wake of Harper government policy changes, approval times dropped and refusal rates rose in the 2011-15 window.

This table shows the percentage of applications processed in each of these timeframes.

	Processing times: women				Processing times: men			
	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	More than 2 years	Not accepted	Less than 1 year	1 to 2 years	More than 2 years	Not accepted
2005-10	53.9%	37.3%	4.2%	4.7%	47.2%	35.3%	4.6%	5.0%
2011-15	33.5%	42.4%	15.7%	8.5%	29.0%	37.7%	14.9%	7.8%
2016-20	80.5%	15.4%	1.7%	2.3%	73.4%	14.8%	1.8%	2.4%
2021-24	52.0%	35.5%	11.2%	1.3%	49.0%	34.2%	10.9%	1.6%

Source: Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada

the guide, and to complete more objective language assessments. The policy intent was in part to reduce the approval rate from approximately 95 per cent to between 80 and 85 per cent, thereby making citizenship "harder to get."

**2011-15:** The impact of these 2009-10 operational policy changes was felt during this period. Additional policy changes were also made. In 2014, the Conservative government passed Bill C-24, the Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act. This expanded the requirement for knowledge testing and language assessment to those between 14 and 64 years old, compared to the previous range of 18 to 54 years of age. In 2015, fees increased from \$200 to \$630 per adult, or more than \$1,400 for a family of four. The fee increases may have been a Treasury Board condition in order to obtain funding to address a processing backlog. Revocation provisions for "treason and terror" were added.

**2016-20:** The Liberal government's election resulted in the required age bracket for knowledge and language assessment reverting to the former age

range of 18 to 54 years. The Liberals also removed the revocation provisions, among other changes. The Liberal Party's 2019 and 2021 election platforms committed to waiving citizenship fees, but this change has not been implemented. Similarly, successive immigration ministers

noted plans for a revision to *Discover Canada*, but the current version remains in effect.

**2021-24:** This period saw the citizenship oath updated with a reference to

Continued on page 36

**Figure 2: Averages approval times by immigration category**

The average number of years to receive an approval rose above 1.5 years for all immigration categories in the wake of Harper government policy changes.

This table shows the average number of years to process applications by immigration category.

	2005-10	2011-15	2016-20	2021-24
Economic	1.4	1.7	1.2	1.5
Family	1.4	1.6	0.9	1.5
Refugees	1.5	1.6	1.2	1.7
Other	1.4	1.6	1.1	1.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>1.4</b>	<b>1.7</b>	<b>1.2</b>	<b>1.6</b>

Processing times of 1.5 years or less are green. Times greater than 1.5 years are red.  
Source: Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada

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News

# ‘They want to be everywhere right now’: Conservatives go big with ‘full suite’ of election-ready social media ads

Grit strategist Greg MacEachern says the Liberals may have ‘missed the boat’ on defining Pierre Poilievre, allowing the Conservatives to succeed in a messaging vacuum.

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spending by political parties on Facebook and Instagram—the federal Conservatives spent more than \$352,000 on online ads in September across both the party’s official accounts and those of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), with nearly half of that—\$150,963—in the final full week from Sept. 22-28.

On Sept. 29, the same day the party unveiled its newest “Mountain” ad campaign, the Conservatives spent an additional \$44,318 on Meta—which was more than was spent in the entire first week of the month—and an additional \$11,995 on Sept. 30. The Conservatives’ total advertising spending for September was also just shy of their entire summer outlay of more than \$367,000 from June 1 to Aug. 30.

In comparison, the official accounts of the Liberal Party and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) spent a combined \$30,227 on ads. This was followed by the official pages of the NDP and Leader Jagmeet



GT&Co’s Cole Hogan says the Conservatives have become ‘just as much a production house as a political party.’ Photograph courtesy of Cole Hogan



Loyalist Public Affairs’ Dan Mader says that while it may be too late for Liberals to dislodge Poilievre as a representative of change, there could still be time to convince Canadians he represents a bad change. Photograph courtesy of Loyalist Public Affairs

Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.), which purchased a combined \$15,618 worth of ads. Comparing their three-month summer totals, Trudeau and the Liberals spent \$92,993 on ads, followed by the NDP and Singh with \$69,459.

Conservative strategist Cole Hogan said he has it on “good authority” that the Tories’ ad spending on Meta represents a much larger advertising budget that spends comparable amounts on similar platforms, as well as

television, radio, YouTube, and Spotify, and “possibly even gas station terminals,” or anything else with a screen and speakers.

“I’d imagine they’re on a full suite of platforms because they want to be everywhere right now,” said Hogan, a principal at GT&Co.

Hogan, who has worked on digital ads for Ontario Premier Doug Ford and former Alberta premier Jason Kenney, said that with all of the new people available in the Conservatives’ committed voter base, the party will need to go wherever there are eyes and ears.

“I think you’ll be seeing ads pop up in all sorts of places you wouldn’t expect them so they can try and reach those voters,” Hogan said, explaining that during his time working on Ford’s campaign, they had placed advertisements on Xbox Live, the gaming platform’s online networking service.

Former Conservative campaign staffer Dan Mader, who led the development of the party’s 2021 campaign platform and oversaw policy and speechwriting during the election, said the continued ad spending is an effective tool for the Conservatives to keep Canadians in an election mindset, regardless of whether the government falls in the near future or next year.

“This is a sign to Canadians that Conservatives are ready to go for an election when these confidence motions are tabled, and that it’s not just for show,” Mader said. He added that even if the motions aren’t successful and the government stands for another year, “when you have an effective ad, it’s worth spending the money on.”

“Election or not,” Hogan said he predicts the Conservatives will maintain a similar level of spending and a steady stream of new ads to match, as the Conservatives under Poilievre have become “just as much of a production house” as it is a political party.

Alongside the more high-budget ads—which Hogan noted are all released with smaller, bite-sized versions—the Conservatives have hundreds of smaller, less expensive ads that can be pumped out quickly with still images and simple voice-over narration.

“Opposition is the mother of all campaign innovation,” Hogan said, noting that the Conservatives are far more willing to try new formats, styles, and mes-

sages, while the Liberal Party seems scared to use any of their resources on anything new.

Hogan said that while the Liberals’ most effective messenger, Trudeau, has been effectively neutralized by bad polling, the party has struggled to find an effective narrative that both resonates with Canadians and pushes back on Poilievre.

“Anything they have tried has been way too little, and way too late,” Hogan said, noting that in the past week, the Liberals had seemingly dusted off the “hidden agenda” attack line from the days of then-prime minister Stephen Harper.

“I think they’re trying to go back to what’s worked for them in the past, but they can’t run the 2015 campaign again in 2025,” Hogan said.

Hogan said that while the Liberals have a long way to go to begin closing the message gap between themselves and the Conservatives, if they have any hope to do so, now is the time to start.

While the Liberals may be in a “tough spot” between limited resources and unfocused messaging, their position will only get tougher the longer they allow the Conservatives to cement themselves as the party representing change for more voters, Mader said.

What the Liberals can do is try and convince those Canadians that Poilievre’s Conservatives represent a bad change, but with more and more Canadians indicating they will vote Conservative in the next election, “it may already be too late,” he said.

For those Liberals anxious for the party to unveil its own slate of ads to begin defining Poilievre or begin making the case for why it deserves to continue governing, Trudeau hinted those will happen “more organically, closer to the actual day when people choose.”

During an Oct. 1 appearance on an episode of the *UnCommons* podcast, hosted by Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches–East York, Ont.), Trudeau explained that while releasing a multimillion-dollar ad campaign to attack Poilievre to match the Conservatives’ spending on his re-introduction was an option, “something didn’t feel true” picking a fight when he should be “fighting for Canadians.”

“If I’m going to drive someone down in the polls a year or two before an election, or even three or four years before an election, is that the best time to knock them down and lift myself up?”

Former Liberal ministerial staffer Greg MacEachern said the problem with Trudeau continuing to promise “the ads are coming” is that “it starts to raise expectations of what these ads are going to look like, and what they’re going to accomplish.”

MacEachern said that while he doesn’t attribute all of the Conservatives’ success and the Liberals’ lack thereof solely to advertising, the former’s has undoubtedly been far more effective “operating in a vacuum.”

Meta ad spending in September							
	Sept. 1-7	Sept. 8-14*	Sept. 15-21	Sept. 22-28	Sept. 29	Sept. 30	Monthly totals
<b>CPC HQ</b>	\$11,803	\$22,576	\$24,871	\$96,957	\$33,065	\$11,995	\$201,267
<b>Pierre Poilievre</b>	\$25,754	\$24,644	\$31,631	\$54,006	\$11,253	\$4,211	\$151,499
<b>Total</b>	\$37,557	\$47,220	\$56,502	\$150,963	\$44,318	\$16,206	\$352,766
<b>LPC HQ</b>	\$7,241	\$8,069	\$2,282	\$1,145	\$261	\$255	\$19,253
<b>Justin Trudeau</b>	\$3,278	\$3,479	\$2,340	\$1,660	\$160	\$157	\$11,074
<b>Total</b>	\$10,519	\$11,548	\$4,622	\$2,805	\$421	\$412	\$30,327
<b>NDP HQ</b>	\$4,222	\$4,075	\$2,045	\$2,536	\$1,120	\$120	\$14,118
<b>Jagmeet Singh</b>	\$222	\$1,160	\$118	<\$100	\$0	\$0	\$1,500
<b>Total</b>	\$4,444	\$5,235	\$2,163	\$2,536	\$1,120	\$120	\$15,618

\*Week leading up to Sept. 16 federal byelections in Elmwood-Transcona, Man., and LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que.

—Source: Meta Ad Library Report



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## News

# Attitudes on use of notwithstanding clause have changed, and Senate's approach should, too: Senator Harder

'We're sleepwalking into normalizing a significant retrenchment of entrenched rights,' says PSG Senator Peter Harder of recent use of the Charter of Rights' Section 33.

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ago," he said, raising his concern with the recent trend of pre-emptive use of the clause by provincial governments.

"[The clause] was never intended to be pre-emptively used; it was to be a safeguard, not an instrument of clever political use, which has sadly been the case at the provincial level," said Harder in a recent interview with *The Hill Times*.

Contained in Section 33, the notwithstanding clause enables a legislature to declare that an act can go ahead notwithstanding the fact it is seen to—or could be seen to, in the case of pre-emptive use before a court ruling—contravene Section 2, or sections 7 through 15 of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, which protect fundamental freedoms (of religion, thought, peaceful assembly etc.), and legal and equality rights. Unless an earlier date is specified, use of the clause sunsets five years after it comes into force, at which point it can be re-enacted.

In his Senate speech, Harder outlined the history of the constitutional negotiations that took place through the late 1970s into the early 1980s, and how the inclusion of Section 33 was accepted as a "political compromise" by the federal government in order to get the sign on of all provinces with the exception of Quebec.

"The intent was that this clause be used with utmost restraint," he said, noting previous expert opinion held that using the clause would be seen as an exceptional measure to be accompanied by political debate, and would carry "political consequences."

But previous expectations of how it would be used, and how its use would be perceived, no longer seem to hold. "All polls suggest that the Charter is a significant point of identity for Canadians ... and yet we see a chipping away at

it, without any acknowledgement that the normalization of taking away rights through the use of the notwithstanding clause isn't as worrisome to the public as I believe it should be," Harder told *The Hill Times*.

Harder's motion calls for the Senate to "express the view that it should not adopt any bill that contains a declaration pursuant to Section 33 of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, commonly known as the 'notwithstanding clause.'"

## Past uses of Section 33

In its first 23 years, the notwithstanding clause was invoked 16 times in relation to bills proposed or passed by provincial legislatures between 1982 and 2017, the last example being Quebec's use of the clause in 2005 in relation to an Act to Amend Various Legislative Provisions of a Confessional Nature in the Education Field to circumvent Section 2(a) rights to freedom of religion and conscience, and Section 15 equality rights.

It was next used in 2018, and has since been invoked eight times:

- 1. Saskatchewan, 2018:** used in relation to the proposed School Choice Protection Act to circumvent Section 2 and 15 rights. The act, which sought to protect public funding for non-Catholic students at Catholic schools in response to a judicial ruling, received royal assent but was never brought into force, and use of Section 33 became unnecessary after the original court ruling was appealed and overturned.
- 2. Ontario, 2018:** invoked in the proposed Efficient Local Government Act to circumvent all applicable Charter sections in order to reduce the size of Toronto City Council in the midst of a municipal election. This bill was ultimately dropped after the Court of Appeal overturned a lower court decision that the original Better Local Government Act contravened the Charter, allowing the municipal council changes to go ahead.
- 3. Quebec, 2019:** invoked in relation to an Act Respecting the Laicity of the State, also known as Bill 21, which prohibited the wearing of religious symbols by certain public employees, to circumvent all applicable Charter sections.
- 4. New Brunswick, 2019:** used in relation to the proposed Act Respecting

Proof of Immunization to circumvent all applicable Charter sections. The act had sought to require children in schools and daycares to provide proof of vaccinations, or a signed exemption. The clause was later removed ahead of the bill's defeat at third reading.

- 5. Ontario, 2021:** invoked in the Protecting Elections and Defending Democracy Act to circumvent all applicable Charter sections. The bill—which among other things sought to impose tighter spending limits on third-party advertising—passed but was struck down last year after the Ontario Court of Appeal ruled it violated a Charter section on democratic rights not subject to Section 33.
- 6. Quebec, 2022:** used in relation to an Act respecting French, the official and common language of Québec, also known as Bill 96, to circumvent all applicable Charter sections. These amendments to the Charter of the French Language added new French-language requirements related to government services and businesses.
- 7. Ontario, 2022:** invoked in relation to the Keeping Students in Class Act to circumvent Section 2, 7, and 15 rights. The bill forced Canadian Union of Public Employees education workers who were on strike to return to work, and imposed a new collective agreement. It passed but was soon after repealed and retroactively nullified.
- 8. Saskatchewan, 2023:** used in relation to The Education (Parents' Bill of Rights) Amendment Act, which requires students under the age of 16 to get parental consent to change the names or pronouns they use at school, to circumvent Section 2, 7, and 15 rights.



PSG Senator Peter Harder says he was prompted to table his motion on use of the notwithstanding clause after hearing comments from the federal Conservative leader this past spring. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Despite the specific wording of the motion, Harder told *The Hill Times* his main goal is to get Senators talking and reflecting on use of the clause, "because I think we're sleepwalking into normalizing a significant retrenchment of entrenched rights."

Harder said his motion was prompted by recent comments by federal Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.). As touched on in Harder's Sept. 24 Chamber address, Poilievre hinted at his willingness to use the clause "for other criminal law purposes" after previously stating he would use it to "overturn a 2022 Supreme Court ruling on parole ineligibility" in a speech to the Canadian Police Association this past April.

"That's the first time a federal leader—Conservative, Liberal, or Progressive Conservative, or NDP for that matter—indicated that they would be open to using the notwithstanding clause federally. Not been done in 42 years; and I was surprised, frankly, that it didn't get more attention than it did, and I thought my motion might bring some attention to that because I think it's a significant backward step in the protection of our Charter rights," said Harder in an interview.

Since being appointed in 2016, Harder has spoken and written much about his view that the Senate's role is to be a complementary Chamber to the House of Commons, in line with the Salisbury Convention, which holds that the Upper Chamber should not block the will of the elected House when it comes to government legislation.

Asked how that meshes with his proposed motion, Harder said those views are "one of the reasons" he felt "compelled to make this statement."

"It could be assumed that I would be less forceful than I'm trying to be, and that's why in my speech I was trying to set down some criteria that—if a government followed—I might be more sympathetic to the use of the notwithstanding clause," he said. That "checklist of sorts," as he de-

scribed it in his speech, includes that its use not be pre-emptive, that the bill be accompanied by a Charter statement, that there be public consultation and a "comprehensive committee process," and that time allocation not be used to curtail debate.

## B.C.'s Rustad latest to raise possible clause use

In a podcast interview last week, British Columbia Conservative Leader John Rustad said, if elected, his government would consider use of the notwithstanding clause if his party's pitch to enable people suffering severe drug addiction to be put into treatment involuntarily were to come to fruition and be challenged in court.

Since its inception, the clause has been proposed or invoked more than 20 times at the provincial level—predominantly in Quebec—and eight times since 2018 alone, but has yet to be used federally.

The most recent example arose last year in Saskatchewan when Premier Scott Moe's government used the clause in enacting the Parents' Bill of Rights after a provincial court ruling called for a pause on the then-proposed changes to require all students under the age of 16 to get parental consent to change their names or pronouns at school until completion of a full judicial review of their constitutionality.

Both Ontario and Quebec invoked use of the clause in 2022. In Ontario, it was used in the Ford government's Keeping Students in Class Act, which sought to preemptively stop a school union strike, but was later repealed and nullified. And in Quebec, the clause was invoked in passing Bill 96, which amended the Charter of the French Language to further limit use of English by adding new French-language requirements related to government services and businesses.

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# 'It's going to destroy everything we depend on': visiting Indigenous delegation seeks to stop Canada-Ecuador trade talks

Opposition MPs and Canadian civil society group say the Canadian government should be ensuring consultations with Indigenous groups in Ecuador occur.

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Ramos, a member of Acción Ecológica (Ecological Action).

"We say a clear 'no' to this [free trade] agreement and 'no' to extractivism that is the cause of very serious problems in terms of violations of human rights, in particular of Indigenous peoples' rights to the lands and the territories," Yasacama told *The Hill Times* through a translator on Oct. 2.

"This agreement that the Canadian government and the Ecuadorian government want to sign also is going to violate the sovereignty of Ecuadorian people," she said. "There has been no information. There is no transparency. The negotiations are completely opaque."

During their visit to Ottawa, the delegation met with Liberal MPs Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.) and Pam Damoff (Oakville North-Burlington, Ont.), parliamentary secretaries to the international trade minister and foreign affairs minister, respectively; as well as Bloc Québécois MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay (Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, Que.) and NDP MP Richard Cunnings (South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C.). The group also met with Jacqueline O'Neill, Canada's ambassador for women, peace, and security.

Yasacama said the delegation's message is that the trade agreement should be rejected.

"The Canadian government [should] stop these negotiations and leave us in peace," she said. "These negotiations are amplifying and increasing the violations of rights in Ecuador. With this free trade agreement, we are going to see more persecution, more incarceration, more criminalization."

Kaekat said the trade deal will bring no benefits.

"It's going to destroy everything we depend on," she said. "There is no desire to protect



Indigenous leaders from Ecuador Yasacama, left, Fanny Kaekat, and Hortencia Zhagüi called on the Canadian government to end trade talks with their country. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

our way of life. On the contrary, it's going to open the doors to transnational corporations to come into our territories, to our Indigenous lands. The companies are already advancing encroaching on our territories. We see it every day."

"So, we ask the Canadian government to listen to our voices, to hear our voices," she said.

A June report from the House Committee for International Trade included a recommendation for the Canadian government that trade talks with Ecuador include "full, transparent, effective consultations" with affected Indigenous people in Ecuador, and that no agreement be implemented without their "free, prior, and informed consent."

## Opposition MPs 'very concerned' about Canada-Ecuador trade negotiations

Opposition MPs and Canadian civil society groups say that if the Ecuadorian government isn't consulting with affected Indigenous groups, then Canada has to ensure it happens.

"It was very disappointing to hear that there had been no further consultation with them," Cunnings told *The Hill Times*. "It seems that both the Canadian and Ecuadorian governments have shown no indication to set aside these demands, for instance for investor-state dispute mechanism in a Canada-Ecuador free trade agreement."

An investor-state dispute settlement (ISDS) system allows companies to sue foreign governments through arbitration instead of domestic courts if their investment is threatened. In an April constitutional plebi-

scite, Ecuadorians voted to keep a constitutional provision that bans international arbitration to address investment disputes.

In 2023, before the constitutional referendum, Ecuadorian Ambassador to Canada Carlos Játiva told *The Hill Times* that his government was in favour of including an ISDS provision in the agreement.

Both the NDP and Bloc Québécois have indicated their opposition to the ISDS regime.

Cunnings said in the case of a free trade pact with Ecuador, an ISDS provision would only benefit Canada's mining interests in the South American nation.

The British Columbian MP said he wouldn't declare his support or opposition to a free trade agreement with Ecuador until after he saw a final text, but indicated that he is "very concerned" about what is happening in the negotiations.

"It speaks to the seriousness of the issue when a group of Indigenous women come all the way from Ecuador to Ottawa to make sure their voices are heard because—clearly—they have felt that their voices weren't heard before that," he said.

Cunnings said that if Ecuador isn't providing fulsome consultation then there could be a possible role for Canada to step up.

"If Ecuador is not providing that then perhaps Canada should sit down and have some discussions," he said.

Savard-Tremblay said it is a "real problem" that full consultations have not been done, but he added that he won't say whether he would support a finalized trade pact until he sees the final text.

The Quebec MP sponsored and participated in the delegation's press conference on Parliament Hill. He said the House

International Trade Committee was supposed to meet with the group, but that meeting was cancelled.

"I find it very disgraceful that, first, they were not received fully as witnesses by the International Trade Committee," said Savard-Tremblay, a vice-chair of the committee. "We chose to have an informal meeting with them, but it was cancelled. When we receive some representative like that from a foreign country, from people that are directly touched by the current negotiations, we have to receive them and to hear what they have to say."

He said that the Canadian government should both be consulting with affected groups in Ecuador, as well as pushing the Ecuadorian government to do so.

"Of course, the Ecuadorian government has its own responsibility, but yet we know that the Canadian diplomacy offshore has the policy of supporting mining companies at all costs," he said.

Global Affairs Canada (GAC) spokesperson Jean-Pierre J. Godbout said broad engagement is a priority of public consultation for all of Canada's free trade agreements, including engagement with Indigenous Peoples.

"We value independent and constructive perspectives and appreciated meeting with the visiting delegation along with Canadian civil society groups," he said.

"Canada remains a strong advocate for the full and effective participation of Indigenous Peoples around the globe in international matters that affect them. Indigenous Peoples have the right to participate in decisions that affect them at the global, regional, and local levels," he added.

Godbout added that as a proponent of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), Canada "remains committed" to advancing Indigenous rights in Canada and globally.

GAC didn't directly answer whether it would consider suspending negotiations until the concerns of the visiting delegation are addressed.

Last February, a GAC official told the House International Trade Committee that a completed "ambitious" agreement could increase Canada's GDP by \$113-million by 2030.

Conservative MP Ryan Williams (Bay of Quinte, Ont.), his party's international trade critic, told *The Hill Times* in an email that trade pacts should focus on economic co-operation between countries while respecting sovereignty of respective nations to address their own environmental and social standing, including with regards to consulting Indigenous communities.

## Canada has obligations to consult in Ecuador: Amnesty International Canada

Kathy Price, Amnesty International Canada's Latin America campaign co-ordinator, said that Canada has an obligation to affected Indigenous groups in Ecuador, including under UNDRIP.

"Canada must fulfill those obligations," she said. "Canada has done consultations of sorts ... [but] they didn't offer the same opportunity to organizations in Ecuador."

"They have felt that that's not their role. That it's their partner in these trade negotiations who would make the decision to how they deal with the situation of consultations and consent," she said. "That's just not good enough [because] clearly that's not happening in Ecuador."

Price, who helped co-ordinate the visit to Ottawa, said the trip was needed because the delegation is not being listened to in Ecuador.

"They came here because Canada bears responsibility and Canada is implicated, and so it's incredibly important for Canadian decision-makers and Canadian civil society to know what is going on in Ecuador," she said.

Price added that delegation members did so knowing the risks they face upon returning to Ecuador.

"There are huge risks for speaking out in Ecuador," she said. "[There have been] violations of human rights, there are threats, there are stigmatization, false accusations, there's criminalization, there's physical attacks and repression, there have been assassinations."

"Those raising their voices to challenge resource extraction without consultation or consent... those who challenge those specific situations are particularly at risk," she said.

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## News

# ‘They want to be everywhere right now’: Conservatives go big with ‘full suite’ of election-ready social media ads

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During the podcast, Trudeau pointed to the Conservatives’ failure to define him with their early and increasingly negative attack ads in the leadup to the 2015 election as a reason not to attack Poilievre early. But MacEachern said that was comparing apples to oranges.

“It’s much harder to define someone who was front-page news from the day they were born to a sitting prime minister,” MacEachern said, noting that the Conservatives had been much more effective at negatively defining short-lived Liberal leaders Michael Ignatieff and Stéphane Dion.

“If Trudeau’s experience gave the Liberals confidence that they didn’t need to shore up his image or do to Poilievre what the Conservatives did to [Dion and Ignatieff], they may have missed the boat,” MacEachern said.

MacEachern said that if the Liberals are committed to holding their fire on Poilievre, the party could at least focus on messaging to convince supporters—and even some members of the caucus—that Trudeau is committed to leading them into battle.

“People are starting to wonder when the Liberals are going to get up off the mat,” MacEachern said. “Because sometimes it feels like they’re just waiting on their surrogates and supporters to carry their weight, or for the Conservatives to knock themselves out.”



Crestview Strategy’s Hunter Knifton says if the Liberals aren’t planning on closing the spending gap soon, they may need to consider calling an election even sooner. *Photograph courtesy of Crestview Strategy*



KAN Strategies’ Greg MacEachern says the Liberals may have ‘missed the boat’ on defining Poilievre. *Photograph courtesy of Greg MacEachern*

Hunter Knifton, a consultant and data scientist with Crestview Strategy, said that while he isn’t convinced things are hopeless for the Liberals, without more spending from the Liberals and NDP soon, the current advertising gap is a “case for going early” into the next election.

Knifton, who served as data director and deputy director of communications for Erskine-Smith’s 2023 Ontario Liberal Party leadership campaign, said that if the Liberals and NDP have no plan or ability to reverse the current trend, the Conservatives’ vote will only continue to expand and entrench over time.

However, if the Liberals do have advertising campaigns planned, “all hope is not lost” if the party begins campaigning seriously and soon, Knifton said.

“I think they need to start telling a positive story about what they see as the framing of the next election, and why they deserve a chance to govern again,” Knifton said. “Then they need to start telling Canadians about the downsides of Poilievre.”

While the Liberals have made attempts to do just that through various “organic” means, such as earned media, online, and in the House of Commons, if they want those messages to reach enough Canadians, they will have to put some substantial money behind them.

“But the longer they wait, the harder and harder it gets,” Knifton said.

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# Attitudes on use of notwithstanding clause have changed, and Senate’s approach should, too: Senator Harder

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A number of past uses of the clause in Quebec are set to expire in January 2025.

## Harder’s motion a ‘dramatic’ way to spark a ‘relevant’ conversation: Saint-Germain

Harder told *The Hill Times* that while he hopes the motion gets to a vote, he’s not counting on it. A Senate motion like this can be debated on any sitting day, should a Senator signal a desire to speak to it, but Harder noted that “we normally adjourn debates readily.”

“I don’t see this as one where those who are against my view are anxious to get to a vote, and will adjourn the debate or otherwise delay,” he said. “So I’m content to have my purpose be that of drawing public attention, and Senate attention, to this issue.”

Even if passed, the motion would be non-binding.

The offices of both Canadian Senators Group Leader Scott Tannas (Alberta) and Conservative Senate Leader Don Plett (Landmark, Man.) indicated they were not yet ready to speak about Harder’s motion, but plan to in the future.

Speaking with *The Hill Times*, Independent Senators Group facilitator Raymonde Saint-Germain (De la Vallière, Que.) said Harder’s motion is a “dramatic way to try to get the attention of the Chamber of the bills that could come with the notwithstanding clause,” and she thinks the conversation and criteria suggested by

Harder “are interesting and relevant.” But in general, she said she doesn’t think the Senate should draw a hard line—as the motion proposes—when it comes to potential bills requiring use of the notwithstanding clause.

Section 33 “was one of the conditions” for provinces agreeing to patriate the Constitution and adopt the Charter, and “we cannot revisit that today and state that it is something that should not have been accepted,” she said.

“So, we need to cope with that,” and study any such bills “with the most respect and rigour and interest for protecting minorities, institutions, and the specificities of the provinces and territories,” said Saint-Germain.

“The role of the Senate is to give sober second thought to all legislation that would come from the democratically elected government, and then we can make the difference in amending bills when so needed, and if so needed.”

Still, she said with no such bills currently before the Red Chamber, now is a good time to have a conversation around potential future criteria for weighing legislation that would require use of Section 33. “Should we have a threshold that is different from the simple majority for these bills?” she suggested for example.

“This needs, really, to be carefully thought of,” said Saint-Germain, noting she’s supportive of Harder’s goal of sparking a conversation and plans to speak to his motion.

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*The Hill Times*



Quebec ISG Senator Raymonde Saint-Germain says she’s supportive of the goal of sparking a conversation in the Senate, but doesn’t believe a hard line should be drawn. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

# INNOVATION

## POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date: **Monday, October 21**  
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Canada is lagging behind peer competitors in areas such as research and development, intellectual property and innovation outcomes, according to a report released on April 29 by the Information Technology & Innovation Foundation. What can be done to improve Canada's competitiveness?

What is the extent of the "brain drain" of graduates and talent moving from Canada to the United States or other countries? How can Canada reverse the talent flow?

What are examples of innovation sectors, such as biotechnology or artificial intelligence, which represent Canada's strengths? How can the federal government support these innovation sectors?

What are the strengths and weaknesses of some current legislation under consideration related to innovation, such as Bill S-6, which is intended to repeal or amends provisions that have become barriers to innovation and economic growth, or Bill C-72, which includes an objective of encouraging innovation in the health care system through adoption of new technologies and data-driven solutions?

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## Opinion

# What citizenship applications tell us about policy implementation

Continued from page 29

Indigenous treaty rights in 2021. The pandemic resulted in a near shutdown of citizenship ceremonies for several months, and a shift to most ceremonies taking place online. This past May, the government introduced Bill C-71. It proposes to repeal the first-generation limit for citizenship transfer which states that Canadian citizens born outside Canada cannot pass on citizenship to their children born outside Canada. This change would result in an unknown number of additional Canadian citizens.

## Analysis

Application data by gender, immigration category, or country of birth highlights the dramatic initial impact of the Conservative government's policy changes. It also shows how these were then relaxed by the Tories themselves, and then had virtually no impact after a number of years under the Liberals. The same pattern applies no matter what the variable. The 2011-15 period was the worst period in terms of delays and approval rates.

Figure 1 provides the overview by period. It highlights that, in general, women applicants were granted citizenship faster than men, and had higher approval rates, save for the 2011-15 period. The number of applicants not granted citizenship rose to over 10 per cent in 2012 and 2013 before

recovering to just over seven per cent in the last years of the Conservative government. Moreover, only about 20 per cent of applications were processed within the service standard of one year from 2010-13. Apart from 2021-22, when the pandemic remained a factor, service standards were met close to 80 per cent of the time.

Figure 2 provides the category comparison. It highlights lower refusal rates for economic class, and relatively higher refusal rates for family and refugee class during the first years of the Liberal government, given that legislation reversing the Conservative age range requirement for knowledge and language assessment only came into force in October 2017. Since then, refusal rates are negligible—less than three per cent, or lower than 2005.

Figure 3 shows the impact on the five largest immigration source countries. It reflects the same overall patterns. Of particular note is the higher rate of Chinese rejections across most periods. This may reflect weaker language fluency compared to other large source countries.

## Concluding observations

This analysis highlights the impact that operational policy changes may have on citizenship, making naturalization harder or easier, particularly for family class and refugees. The effective relaxation of knowledge and language assessment in 2014-15 reflects that



Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

high refusal rates were not politically tenable, particularly in the lead up to the 2015 election.

Application data suggests that immigrants delayed submitting applications in 2016-17 once the Liberal government announced it would return to the previous 18 to 54 age requirement. The data also shows a drop in applications in 2020, reflecting applicants waiting for the government to implement its 2019 election commitment to eliminate citizenship fees.

Citizenship applicants pay attention to operational and legislative policy changes, and adjust their application timing accordingly.

It is unclear whether or not citizenship changes would be a priority for a future Conservative government, and whether it would revert to Harper-era policies.

However, citizenship changes would likely be a lesser priority than immigration updates, given changing public sentiment on immigration which reflect the debates and discussion regarding immigration's impact on housing and health care.

Moreover, the fact that the previous government had to soften its "harder to get" approach may provide a cautionary tale in terms of what may or may not be acceptable to immigrant-origin communities.

## Methodological notes

Data provided by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada from 2005 up to April 2024. The partial 2024 data is included in overall 2021-24 numbers.

Andrew Griffith is the author of 'Because it's 2015...': Implementing Diversity and Inclusion, Multiculturalism in Canada: Evidence and Anecdote, and Policy Arrogance or Innocent Bias: Resetting Citizenship and Multiculturalism. He is a regular media commentator, and writes his blog, Multiculturalism Meanderings. Griffith is a former director general for citizenship and multiculturalism at IRCC, and is now a fellow of the Environics Institute. *The Hill Times*

# Protecting democracy requires bold leadership that puts country and citizens first

Continued from page 9

lesser reported genocide of the Rohingya in Myanmar—I urge you to let these events serve as stark reminders of the fragility of democracy, and the urgent need to protect and strengthen it.

In the declaration signed by 74 countries at the 2023 International Summit for Democracy, summit leaders committed themselves to meet the rising challenges to democracy worldwide. Democracy is not a static or autonomous system; it thrives on accountability, transparency, and the active participation of all who benefit from it. It is during these times—we believe—that in order to defend democracy, it is essential to pause and reflect on the contributions of those who came before us. By honouring their sacrifices and success, we gain perspective that can guide us through the chaos of the present.

Democracy is a shared endeavour. It requires leaders who rise above partisanship and work for the common good, who believe that citizens hold the power. It demands citizens hold their leaders accountable, and it requires systems that promote fairness and inclusiveness, even when challenged by those who look to change our system. To uphold democracy is to honour those who have dedicated their lives to these values: individuals who have made courageous efforts, often at great personal cost, to ensure the survival of freedom.

Each year, the Parliamentary Centre has the privilege of awarding a worthy recipient "The Democracy Award," and as we prepare to celebrate those who have played a pivotal role in strengthening democracy, I reflect on what it means to uphold these values in the current global context. This year, we are extremely proud to posthumously honour two statesmen whose contributions to Canadian democracy can not be understated: former Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney, and former NDP leader Ed Broadbent. Despite their differences in political philosophy, both leaders shared a deep and

abiding belief in the power of democracy. They understood that true leadership is not about power for its own sake, but about creating systems of governance that work for all. Each exemplified strong and unrelenting values that led to a better Canada. Their legacies remind us that democracy is a collective project, and one that transcends political parties, nations, or generations. Ultimately it is for the people and the society they have created.

Holding an event to recognize these leaders helps us step back from the noise, and be guided by a beacon of hope for all of us who continue the fight.

The individuals we honour—this and every year—exemplify the kind of leadership the world needs now. They are visionaries who understood the importance of building democratic institutions that withstand the test of time. Their shared vision of democracy as a force for good, a system built on accountability, and a means of fostering peace and equality, is more relevant today than ever.

At a time when democracy is under threat, I believe we must not only defend it but also celebrate it. By recognizing those who have dedicated their lives to strengthening democracy, we reaffirm our commitment to its values and inspire others to do the same.

Democracy is our collective future, one that we must fight for, nurture, and protect, now and always. So, as we raise a glass for the two recipients of the 2024 Democracy Awards, I invite all Canadians to join me in celebrating democracy, because even in these dark times, a commitment to the citizens who have built this community we know as Canada will light the way forward.

Jaime Pitfield is the president and CEO of the Parliamentary Centre, which is a non-partisan non-governmental organization that is committed to bringing together Canadian and international expertise and experience to help strengthen democracies around the world. *The Hill Times*

## Figure 3: Approval times by source country

The impact of policy changes was mostly consistent regardless of source country.

This table shows the percentage of applications by source country processed in less than one year.

2005-10			2011-15		
Country of birth	Female	Male	Country of birth	Female	Male
Philippines	62.7%	58.7%	Philippines	37.1%	25.1%
India	53.7%	46.9%	India	33.2%	31.6%
China	59.1%	50.5%	China	31.8%	22.2%
Iran	61.7%	56.4%	Iran	38.5%	35.4%
Pakistan	51.2%	45.9%	Pakistan	31.4%	28.6%
2016-20			2021-24		
Country of birth	Female	Male	Country of birth	Female	Male
Philippines	89.1%	63.0%	Philippines	49.8%	34.3%
India	76.6%	84.8%	India	60.7%	64.6%
China	81.8%	61.6%	China	45.0%	39.8%
Iran	79.0%	71.9%	Iran	47.2%	41.9%
Pakistan	71.3%	71.4%	Pakistan	46.7%	44.1%

Approval rates above 50 per cent are green, and below 40 per cent are red. Source: Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada



## Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers

# New press secretary for Minister Lebouthillier, raft of changes for Minister Duclos

Public Services Minister Jean-Yves Duclos has hired a new director of parliamentary affairs, and tapped a new acting communications head, among other changes.

Fisheries, Oceans, and Canadian Coast Guard Minister Diane Lebouthillier recently welcomed a new press secretary to her team, Jean-Christophe Armstrong.



Jean-Christophe Armstrong is now press secretary to Minister Lebouthillier. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Armstrong spent this past summer as an intern in then-transport minister Pablo Rodriguez's office, and according to his LinkedIn profile, he's in the midst of working towards an undergraduate degree in international studies at the University of Montreal. He started on the job on Sept. 23.

Previously, Jérémy Collard was press secretary to Lebouthillier, but, as reported, he left the minister's team in early July and is now a strategic communications adviser in Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office.

Lebouthillier's director of communications, Gabriel Bourget, went on leave around mid-September, and director of issues management and parliamentary affairs Andrew Richardson is now filling in as the minister's acting communications lead. Also currently working on communications in the office is special assistant Jérémy Savard.

Another fresh face on the fisheries team is Nick Penner, who's been hired as an operations adviser.

Penner comes from the Liberal research bureau (LRB) where he'd been working since the 43rd Parliament, starting as a special assistant for operations and ending as operations project manager. Prior to joining the LRB, Penner worked at Liberal Party headquarters.

Kevin McHarg is director of operations to Lebouthillier, whose office is run by chief of staff Faizel Gulamhussein.

There's a laundry list of changes to catch up on in Public Services and Pro-

curement Minister Jean-Yves Duclos' office, with the naming of a new director of parliamentary affairs and a new acting director of communications topping the list.

As reported last month, deputy chief of staff and director of parliamentary affairs James Fitz-Morris has left Lebouthillier's shop to become director of communications to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly.



Pierce Collier is now parliamentary affairs director to Minister Duclos. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Pierce Collier has since been hired as the minister's new director of parliamentary affairs, having been scooped up from International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen's team where he'd been director of issues management and parliamentary affairs. Collier had been working for Hussen since early 2021, beginning as a parliamentary affairs adviser and issues manager to Hussen as then-families, children, and social development minister. After following Hussen to the housing, diversity, and inclusion portfolio following that year's federal election, Collier was elevated to director of issues management and parliamentary affairs—a title he's held ever since, having followed Hussen again to his current portfolio after the July 2023 cabinet shuffle.

Hailing from the East Coast, Collier is also a former issues manager and Atlantic regional affairs adviser to then-seniors minister Deb Schulte, a past special assistant for the Atlantic to then-science and sport minister Kirsty Duncan, and an ex-aide to then-Liberal MP Nick Whalen, amongst other past experience.

On Sept. 27, Duclos' director of communications, Marie-France Proulx, went on maternity leave. Proulx has been working for Duclos since early 2020, beginning as a special assistant for communications and issues management in his office as then-Treasury Board president. She was promoted to press secretary while working for Duclos at Treasury Board, and first took on the title of director of communications to Duclos in 2022 when he was then-minister for health. Duclos was named to his current portfolio in July 2023.

Senior communications adviser and press secretary Guillaume Bertrand has since stepped in as acting communications director to Duclos.



Recent moves in the offices of both Fisheries and Oceans Minister Diane Lebouthillier, left, and Public Services Minister Jean-Yves Duclos include communications staff changes. The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade



Guillaume Bertrand is now acting communications director to Minister Duclos. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

While he only recently joined the public services and procurement team—having been hired this past May after a roughly nine-month-long run as director of Quebec outreach and strategy to Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland—Bertrand is well familiar with both Duclos and Proulx, having previously succeeded Proulx as press secretary to Duclos as then-health minister after she was elevated to director in 2022.

"Marie-France has been an incredible support to Minister Duclos during some of the biggest challenges our government has faced, like the COVID-19 pandemic and the health-care negotiations with the provinces and territories," wrote Bertrand in an email to Hill Climbers. "On a personal note, I will forever be grateful for her leadership, her advice, and her trust. She really has been the best mentor anyone could ask for."

Nader Bedair, who was hired as a social media adviser this past spring, has left Duclos' office. But offsetting that departure are four recent hires: James Christie, as senior policy adviser; Piper McWilliams, as communications adviser; Mujtaba Hussain, as digital communications adviser; and Hayat Razak, as regional affairs adviser for Quebec.



Piper McWilliams is now a communications adviser to Minister Duclos. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Christie joined Duclos' team in May and was last working as a senior policy adviser to Women, Gender Equality, and Youth Minister Marci Ien. He'd been working for Ien since the 2021 election, before which he was a youth policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser to then-diversity, youth, and inclusion minister Bardish Chagger.

McWilliams comes from Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech's office where she'd juggled responsibilities as a communications assistant and executive assistant to both the minister and chief of staff since shortly after Beech was named to cabinet in July 2023.

A Hill staffer since the spring of 2022, McWilliams is also a past executive assistant to then-families minister Karina Gould, a former assistant to British Columbia Liberal MP Joyce Murray, and an ex-volunteer in the office of Ontario Liberal MP Sonia Sidhu. According to her LinkedIn profile, McWilliams is currently wrapping up a graduate degree in public relations and communication management at McGill University.

Hussain was until recently busy as a parliamentary assistant to Energy and Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson as the MP for North Vancouver, B.C. A part-time infanteer with the Canadian Armed Forces, Hussain is another staffer currently juggling work and school, with his LinkedIn profile indicating he's expected to complete a bachelor's degree in political science and government at Carleton University next spring. He's currently president of the Carleton Pakistani Student Association, and is a former membership chair for the university's Young Liberals branch. Hussain is also a former intern to B.C. Liberal MP Ron McKinnon, among other past roles.



Mujtaba Hussain is a new digital communications adviser to Minister Duclos. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Razak, meanwhile, has been hired straight from the constituency office of Louis-Hébert, Que., Liberal MP Joël Lightbound.

With Razak responsible for Quebec, other regional advisers in Duclos' office are: Dillon McGuire, senior regional adviser for Ontario; Pavan Sapra, senior policy and Atlantic regional adviser; and James Rourke covering the West and North regional desks.

Élisabeth d'Amours is director of operations to Duclos. Other directors currently with the minister's office are Mary-Rose Brown, who leads policy, and Jean-Sébastien Bock, who is director of strategy and planning. Anthony Laporte is Duclos' chief of staff.

Hill Climbers

# One staff in, two out for Minister Anand



Treasury Board President Anita Anand at Rideau Hall on Sept. 19 for her swearing in for the added role of minister for transport. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 37

Treasury Board President **Anita Anand** has a new special assistant for communications, **Arash Randjbar**, who was most recently working for the *Daily Hive* in Vancouver.



Arash Randjbar is now a special assistant for communications to Minister Anand. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Carson Baker has left Minister Anand's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

in August, and special assistant for operations **Osman Abdalazez** bade the office

farewell last month.

Baker had joined the office this past March, and has already started in a new—and at the same time, old—position as a junior trade commissioner intern with Global Affairs Canada. He previously spent much of 2023 doing an internship as junior trade commissioner with the department. At that time, he'd focused on automotive, clean energy transition, and oil and gas files, according to his LinkedIn profile, whereas this time his focus is on climate finance, international financial institutions, and infrastructure.

Abdalazez had been working for Anand since January of this year.

**Sher Rodrigo** is director of operations to Anand, whose Treasury Board office is run by chief of staff **Monique Lugli**.

Following Rodriguez's resignation from cabinet last month, Anand is now also the minister for transport. Treasury Board Secretariat rules give ministers 30 calendar days after a shuffle to decide on staffing; once the clock runs out on those 30 days, any staff not re-hired to work for the new minister, or to work in another minister's office, are deemed to have been laid off. That said, ministers can buy extra time to firm up their teams post-shuffle by offering short-term contracts to staff to bridge the gap.

Stay tuned for an update.  
[lryckewaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:lryckewaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*

Two staff have left Anand's team: **Carson Baker**, who'd been assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, exited

Feature

## Malaysia lays out breakfast spread

*The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia



Acting Malaysian High Commissioner Mohammad Al Hafiz Bin Mohd Nadzir, left, greets Aalya Al Shehhi, chargé d'affaires of the United Arab Emirates Embassy, at the 61<sup>st</sup> Malaysia Day celebration breakfast on Sept. 16 at Bayview Yards.



Former Conservative MP Harold Albrecht, left, Netherlands Ambassador Margriet Vonno, and Darlene McLean, executive director of the Christian Embassy.



Vietnamese Ambassador Vinh Quang Pham digs into the 'Taste of Malaysian Breakfast.'



Furuya Tokuro, left, deputy head of mission at the Japanese Embassy, with Bin Mohd Nadzir.



Bin Mohd Nadzir, left, and Bangladeshi High Commissioner Nahida Sobhan.

## Switzerland throws national day party



Swiss Ambassador Olaf Kjelsen delivers remarks to guests of Switzerland's national day reception at the official residence on Sept. 11.



Ina Ozolina, wife of the Latvian ambassador, left; and Eun Sun Lee, wife of the South Korean ambassador.



Senegalese Ambassador Gorgui Ciss, left, and Kjelsen.



Italian Ambassador Andrea Ferrari, left, and Kjelsen.



South Korean Ambassador Woongsoon Lim, left, Peruvian Ambassador Manuel Gerardo Tala-vera Espinar, Supreme Court of Canada Chief of Justice Richard Wagner, and his wife Catherine Mandeville.

## Parliamentary Calendar

## Tory MP Jeneroux to be feted as mental-health champion, discuss mental well-being in Parliament on Oct. 10



Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux will be honoured as one of seven Champions of Mental Health by the Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health on Oct. 10. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

## SUNDAY, OCT. 6—FRIDAY, OCT. 11

**ASEAN Summit**—The ASEAN Summit will take place in Vientiane, Laos, from Sunday, Oct. 6, to Friday, Oct. 11. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau will be in attendance Oct. 10-11.

## MONDAY, OCT. 7—THURSDAY, OCT. 10

**AFN's National Climate Gathering**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its third annual National Climate Gathering on the theme "Catalyzing First Nations Climate and Conservation Leadership for Transformative Change." Monday, Oct. 7, to Thursday, Oct. 10, at the Calgary Telus Convention Centre. Details online: afn.ca.

## TUESDAY, OCT. 8—WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9

**Couchiching Annual Conference on Diplomacy**—The Canadian International Council and the Aga Khan Museum host the Couchiching Annual Conference on Diplomacy exploring themes such as cultural diplomacy, artificial intelligence, the Arctic, the implications of the U.S. election on NATO, summit diplomacy, and the future of diplomacy. Tuesday, Oct. 8, to Wednesday, Oct. 9, at the Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr., Toronto. Details: agakhanmuseum.org.

## WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9

**House Sitting**—The House is sitting until Oct. 11. 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.

**U.S. Ambassador Cohen in Toronto**—U.S. Ambassador to Canada David Cohen will take part in two events in Toronto today. First, he will deliver remarks at a roundtable lunch hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St. Details: cdhowe.org. Then

at 2:30 p.m. ET, Cohen will participate in Toronto Metropolitan University's Democracy Forum on the topic "Democracy has its day in America." Details via Eventbrite.

**Webinar: 'Health Research System Recovery'**—The Royal Society of Canada hosts a webinar on "Health Research System Recovery," a discussion on the 12 recommendations presented by the RSC's Working Group on Health Research System Recovery, and how they can be implemented. Wednesday, Oct. 9, at 1 p.m. ET, happening online. Details: rsc-src.ca.

**Carbon Removal Canada's Policy Report Launch**—Treasury Board President and Transport Minister Anita Anand will take part in a fireside chat with Michael Bernstein, executive director of Clean Prosperity, part of the launch of Carbon Removal Canada's new policy report, *Procuring with Purpose: Canada's Opportunity to Shape the Carbon Removal Market*. Wednesday, Oct. 9, at 5 p.m. ET at the Ottawa Art Gallery, 50 Mackenzie King Bridge. Details via Eventbrite.

**Writing Women Into History**—The Other Hill hosts "Writing Women Into History" featuring Dianne Dodd, author of *Our 100 Years: The Canadian Federation of Women's History*. Wednesday, Oct. 9, at 5:30 p.m. ET at All Saints Event Space, 330 Laurier Ave. E. Details: theotherhill-lautrecolline.ca.

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

**Ukraine's Ambassador to Deliver Remarks**—Yuliya Kovaliv, Ukraine's Ambassador to Canada, will deliver remarks on "Prospects for Ukraine: Ending the War and Afterwards," hosted by Carleton University and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church. Wednesday, Oct. 9, at 7 p.m. ET at St. Andrew's Presby-

terian Church, 82 Kent St. Details via Eventbrite.

## WEDNESDAY, OCT. 9—THURSDAY, OCT. 10

**SMR Forum 2024**—The Canadian Association of Small Modular Reactors hosts the inaugural "SMR Forum 2024: Pioneering Small Modular Reactors in Western Canada." Industry leaders, government officials, and experts from across Canada and the United States will explore the role of SMRs in advancing Canada's economic growth and achieving net-zero emissions by 2050. Wednesday, Oct. 9, to Thursday, Oct. 10 at the JW Marriott, Edmonton ICE District. Details: smr-forum.ca.

## THURSDAY, OCT. 10

**Champions of Mental Health Awards**—The Canadian Alliance on Mental Illness and Mental Health will honour seven Champions of Mental Health, including Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux, at an event on Parliament Hill as part of Mental Health Week. Thursday, Oct. 10, at 11 a.m. in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Details: camimh.ca. Call 647-839-0445.

**Webinar: 'Mental Wellbeing in Parliament'**—Conservative MP Matt Jeneroux will take part in "A Conversation on Prioritizing Mental Wellbeing in Parliament," an hour-long virtual event in honour of World Mental Health Day hosted by Equal Voice and Nominee. Other participants include former Ontario Liberal minister Mitzi Hunter, Earncliffe Strategies' principal Dale Richardson, and Memorial University political science professor Amanda Bitner. Thursday, Oct. 10, at 11:30 a.m. happening online: gonominee.com.

**Frank McKenna Awards 2024**—Rural Economic Development Minister Gudie Hutchings is among those delivering remarks at the "Frank McKenna Awards 2024: An evening celebrating outstanding public policy leadership in Atlantic Canada," hosted by The Public Policy Forum. This year's honourees

are Chief Mi'sel Joe of Miawpukek First Nation in Newfoundland; Laura Lee Langley, head of the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency; and oceanographer Anya Waite. Thursday, Oct. 10, at 5 p.m. AT at Pier 21, 1055 Marginal Rd., Halifax. Details online: pforum.ca.

## SUNDAY, OCT. 13

**Senator Bellemare's Retirement**—Today is Quebec PSG Senator Diane Bellemare's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

## TUESDAY, OCT. 15

**CGAI 2024 US Election Webinar**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a webinar, "Is Canada Prepared for the Next U.S. President?" featuring The German Marshall Fund's Bruce Stokes, former Canadian ambassadors to the U.S. David MacNaughton and Gary Doer, and former Canadian ambassador to the UN Louise Blais. Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 11 a.m. ET happening online: cgai.ca.

**Webinar on Engaging Canada's Climate Audience**—Carleton University hosts the first of a two-part webinar, "The Five Canadas: Discover New Ways to Engage Canada's Climate Audience." Dr. Louise Comeau and Dr. Erick Lachapelle will unpack the results of a large-scale national survey of more than 6,000 Canadians broken down into the "Five Canadas": progressive activists, civic nationals, centrist liberals, the disengaged middle, and fossil fuel conservatives. Tuesday, Oct. 15, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: events.carleton.ca.

**AKFC Book Club**—The Aga Khan Foundation of Canada's "Global Reads" Book Club is back. International development expert Ian Smillie will discuss his memoir, *Under Development: A Journey Without Maps*, with Maureen O'Neil, chair of Water Aid International. Tuesday, Oct. 15 at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Delegation of the Ismaili Imam, 199 Sussex Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

## WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16

**An Evening with Minister Champagne**—Kitchener South—Hespeler Federal Liberal Association hosts a special evening for MP Valerie Bradford featuring special guest Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne. Wednesday, Oct. 16, at 6:30 p.m. ET at Borealis Grille and Bar, 4336 King St. E., Kitchener, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

## WEDNESDAY, OCT. 16—FRIDAY, OCT. 18

**Toronto Global Forum**—Treasury Board President and Transport Minister Anita Anand, Business Council of Canada president Goldy Hyder, EDC president and CEO Maïread Lavery, Belgian Ambassador Patrick Van Gheel, and Ontario cabinet ministers Vic Fideli and Peter Bethlenfalvy are among the speakers on deck at this year's Toronto Global Forum. Wednesday, Oct. 16, to Friday, Oct. 18, at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: torontoglobalforum.com.

**AFN Special Chiefs Assembly**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the Special Chiefs Assembly on Long-Term Reform of the First Nations Child and Family Services Program. Wednesday, Oct. 16, to Friday, Oct. 18, at BMO Centre, 20 Round Up Way SE, Calgary. Details: afn.ca.

## THURSDAY, OCT. 17

**Fundraiser for MP Zahid**—Liberal MP Salma Zahid hosts a fundraising event. Thursday, Oct. 17, at 6:30 p.m. ET at the Kennedy Convention Centre, 1199 Kennedy Rd., Scarborough, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

**Marc Garneau to Discuss His New Book**—Former Liberal cabinet minister Marc Garneau will discuss his memoir, *A Most Extraordinary Ride: Space, Politics, and the Pursuit of a Canadian Dream*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Thursday, Oct. 17, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details: writersfestival.org.

## SATURDAY, OCT. 19

**B.C. Election**—Voters in British Columbia head to the polls today for the provincial general election.

## MONDAY, OCT. 21

**New Brunswick Election**—It's general election time in New Brunswick, with the province's residents voting for their next members of the Legislative Assembly.

**Panel: 'Innovative Pathways to Future-Ready Housing'**—The Institute for Research in Public Policy hosts a panel discussion on "Innovative Pathways to Future-Ready Housing: Affordable, Energy-Efficient and Climate-Resilient." Among the participants are Cherise Burda, policy analyst and member of the national Affordability Action Council and the Task Force for Housing and Climate; and Ray Williams, member of CMHC's board of directors. Monday, Oct. 21 at 5 p.m. ET at the Centre for Social Innovation Spadina, 192 Spadina Ave., Toronto. Details: irpp.org.

## MONDAY, OCT. 21—SATURDAY, OCT. 26

**Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting**—The Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting will take place in Apia, Samoa, from Monday, Oct. 21, to Saturday, Oct. 26. Details online: samoahogm2024.ws.

## MONDAY, OCT. 21—FRIDAY NOV. 1

**COP16 Conference on Biodiversity**—The COP16 Conference on Biodiversity will take place from Monday, Oct. 21, to Friday, Nov. 1, in Cali, Colombia. Details online: cbd.int.

## MONDAY, OCT. 21—SATURDAY OCT. 26

**IMF and World Bank Annual Meetings**—The 2024 annual meetings of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund will take place in Washington, D.C., from Monday, Oct. 21, to Saturday, Oct. 26. Details: worldbank.org.

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## HOUSE FOR RENT



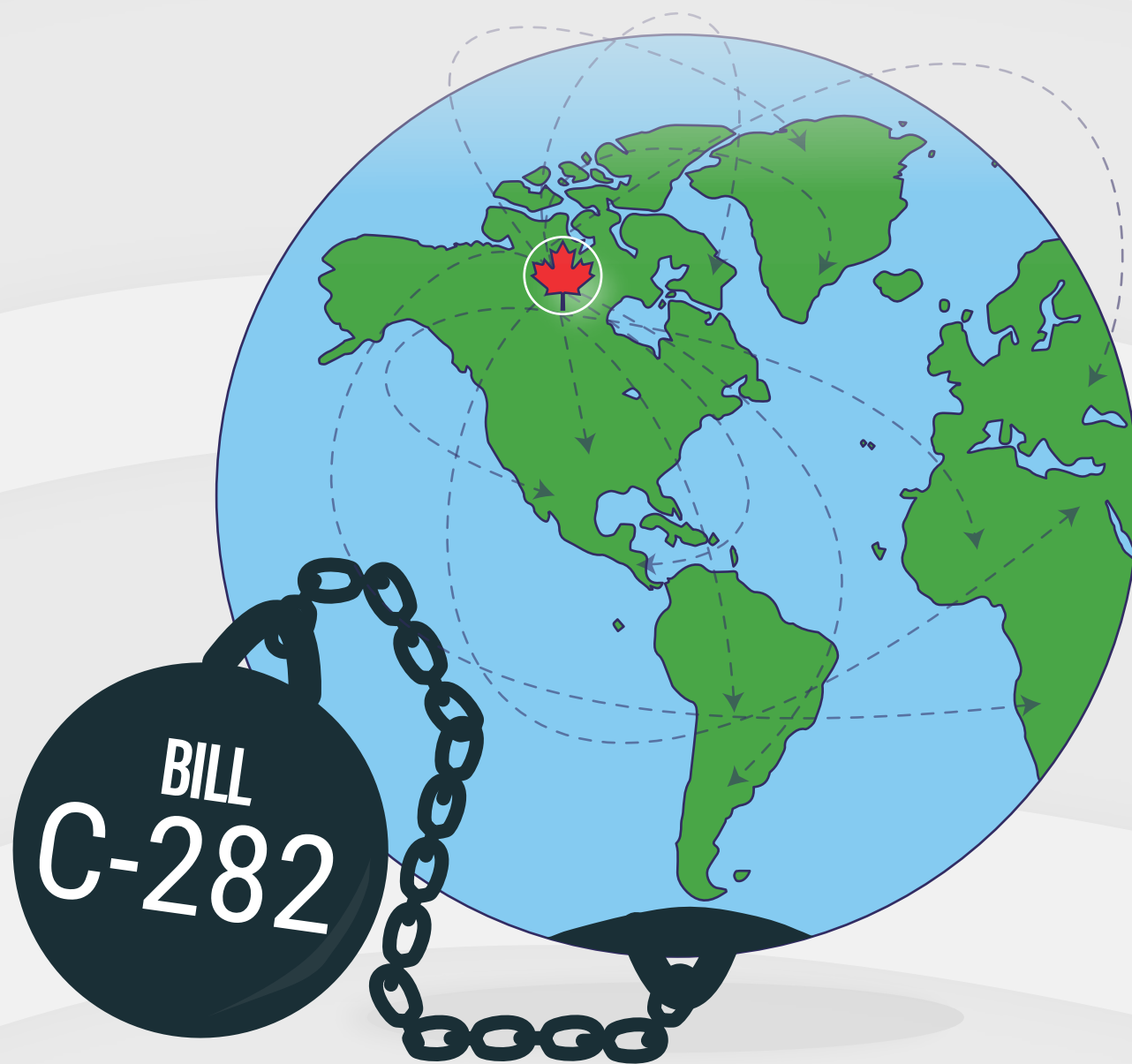
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The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to [news@hilltimes.com](mailto:news@hilltimes.com)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

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