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THE HILL TIMES

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CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

NDP won't be 'baited' as Tories attack Singh amid Liberal labour moves, says MP Green

NDP labour critic Matthew Green says his party won't be pushed to vote down the Liberal government by Conservatives who 'hide when workers are in a fight.'

BY STUART BENSON

With work stoppages in two parts of the country and in the House of Commons, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce's Pascal Chan believes binding arbitration may have been the Liberal government's only safe port in a perfect storm of labour disruptions costing the Canadian

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Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon announced the federal government would be forcing a resumption of operations at B.C. and Quebec ports, and sending the disputes to binding arbitration on Nov. 12. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

Not if, but when: Foreign Affairs Committee keys in on question of Palestinian statehood

BY NEIL MOSS

MPs who've been looking into Canada's role in fostering peace in the Middle East will have their work cut out for them as they prepare a final report after a contentious study that

saw witnesses shunned and disinvited.

The committee, which is chaired by Liberal MP Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.), held four meetings in October and November to look at the ways Canada can advance recognition of a

State of Palestine as part of a two-state solution.

The short study had no shortage of friction—United Nations special rapporteur on the occupied Palestinian territories

Continued on page 28

NEWS

Review of solitary confinement law a year late as report finds prisoners' rights still violated

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

The mandatory parliamentary review of the law created to end solitary confinement is more than a year late as successive

reports find the replacement system keeps prisoners in conditions that violate their rights to time outside of cells.

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Christina Leadlay
Heard On The Hill

Team Canada athletes coming to the House on Dec. 4



Team Canada wheelchair basketball athlete Patrick Anderson, left, and Para swimmer Katarina Roxon were the flag bearers at the Paralympics opening ceremony in Paris, France, on Aug. 28. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube/CBC

Canada's 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes will be on Parliament Hill in two weeks' time.

According to a point of order raised by Kingston, Ont., Liberal MP **Mark Gerretsen** on Nov. 7, "at the expiry of the time provided for Oral Questions on Wednesday, Dec. 4, 2024, the House resolve itself into a committee of the whole in order to welcome Canada's 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games athletes."

His point of order notes that House Speaker **Greg Fergus** will make "welcoming remarks on behalf of the House," that the athletes' names will be read and printed in the Debates, and then there will be time for photos with "authorized photographers."

At this year's summer Olympics in Paris, France, back in August, Team Canada brought home nine gold, seven silver, and 11 bronze medals. Athletes who took part in the Paralympics two weeks later earned 10 gold, nine silver, and 10 bronze medals.

Hogue Commission granted extra time to finish its final report

Justice **Marie-Josée Hogue** has had her request for extra time to submit her final report on foreign interference approved.

"Her final report will now be delivered no later than Jan. 31, 2025," reads a statement from Public Safety Minister **Dominic LeBlanc's** office on Nov. 15.

Hogue was originally scheduled to deliver her final report on Dec. 31.

Launched in September 2023, the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral



Justice Marie-Josée Hogue presides at the foreign interference commission on Sept. 26. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Processes and Democratic Institutions—chaired by Hogue—submitted its initial report on May 3, which summarized the first half of its two-phase mandate. The commission spent this past September and October holding public hearings.

NDP staffer Salloum gets quarter-century swag

Longtime New Democrat staffer **Anthony Salloum** got a piece of hardware for his hard work last week.



NDP staffer Anthony Salloum received this thank-you gift for his 25 years of House work. *Photograph courtesy of X*

"Received my gift today for 25 years of work at @OurCommons," he posted on X on Nov. 14 with a close-up photo of a shiny ring engraved with a likeness of Centre Block on the face, and with the numeral "25" on the side.

"It has been a privilege to serve @NDP MPs on the Hill, and for the past 13 years, in the Opposition Lobby."

Salloum's time on the Hill is in two parts: the first is from 2000-2007 when he moved to Ottawa to work in then-NDP MP **Alexa McDonough's** office (he'd already been her constituency assistant for three years by this time), according to **Laura Ryckewaert's** profile of Salloum as part of *The Hill Times's* 2022 Terrific Staffers' Survey.

He left the Hill in 2007 to work at the Rideau Institute, but returned three years later as an assistant to then-Ontario NDP MP **Claude Gravelle**. Salloum then made the move to the party whip's office in September 2011, and has been there ever since.

Salloum came in second in the "Best NDP Hill Staffers" category of the 2024 *Hill Times* Terrific 25 Staffers survey in June, and has appeared on past versions of the survey in a number of catego-



Anthony Salloum. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ries including "Best All-Round," "Most Knowledgeable," and "Most Influential."

Congratulations poured in for Salloum on social media from NDP MPs including **Leah Gazan**, **Lori Idlout**, **Taylor Bachrach**, **Bonita Zarillo**, and **Peter Julian**, as well as former NDP MP **Svend Robinson**.

Public Affairs Association honours Jaime Watt



Jaime Watt, executive chair at Navigator. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Navigator's executive chair **Jaime Watt** also received some recognition recently for all his work in the government-relations sector.

Having been nominated by his peers, Watt received the 2024 Award of Distinction from the Public Affairs Association of Canada. The announcement was made at PAAC's annual conference which took place in Toronto last week.

"Thank you Jaime for all the things you have taught me (and so many others feel the same way)," Crestview Strategy's **Chad Rogers** posted on LinkedIn on Nov. 13.

A published author and Conservative strategist, Watt helped the **Mike Harris** Progressive Conservatives win power in Ontario in the 1990s. Based in Toronto, Watt has been in his current role since 2000.

Ex-MP Peggy Nash hosts a new podcast

Former NDP MP **Peggy Nash** is the host of a new podcast.

Titled *Activists Make History with Peggy Nash*, the podcast is part of a series produced by the left-wing Broadbent Institute, and *Perspectives: A Canadian Journal of Political Economy and Social Democracy*. The podcast launched on Nov. 4.

"I talk to activists, experts, political leaders, and those like me who've been there and done that to show you can make real progressive change in how Canadian democracy functions," Nash explains in the podcast's intro.

The inaugural episode features Nash—who represented Parkdale-High Park, Ont., as an NDP MP for two non-consecutive terms from 2006-2008 and again



Then-NDP MP Peggy Nash in 2012. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

from 2011-2015—speaking with Unifor organizer **Angela Drew Kimelman**, who helped unionize the first Walmart warehouse in Canada.

Since losing her seat to Liberal **Arif Virani** in 2015, Nash has been a political commentator for many publications including *The Hill Times*. She is affiliated with Toronto Metropolitan University, and wrote a book in 2022 called *Women Winning Office: An Activist's Guide to Getting Elected*.

Episodes will air biweekly on the *Perspectives Journal* Podcast feed, and wherever you download your podcasts.

Anja Karadelija joins CP permanently

Hill Times alumna **Anja Karadelija** has some job news: she's now a permanent member of The Canadian Press' Ottawa team.

"I'm sure anyone who knows me won't be surprised to hear I'll be taking on the Heritage and AI beats (as well as Justice). So reach out for anything tech policy-related!" she posted on X on Nov. 13.

Karadelija was editor of *Hill Times* Publishing's *The Wire* report from 2016 to 2021. She then reported for *The National Post* for just over two-and-a-half years before joining CP last November on a contract basis.

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The Hill Times

CORRECTIONS:

The Hill Times, Nov. 13 issue

Re: "Human rights matter for us all," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 13, p. 13). This op-ed incorrectly stated that the RCMP had visited a Canadian woman, identified as FJ, in a Turkish prison. The RCMP says it did not have any engagement with FJ in Turkey, or at all since June 2023.

Re: "Stonewalled committee shows limits of Parliament's prosecutorial powers: former CSIS analyst," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 13, p. 20). This article said Liberal MP Pam Damoff had tabled a motion at committee to re-summon Lauren Chen. In fact, her motion was to summon Tenet Media content creator Lauren Southern.

The Hill Times regrets these errors.



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Plant Vogtle Units 1-4 | January 2023
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Comment

'America First' playbook comes to life and crystallizes uphill battle for the Trudeau Liberals

The prime minister has no goodwill amongst Canadians to squander in the event U.S. protectionist policies begin to take hold on this country's economy

Josie Sabatino

Opinion



OTTAWA—The dust is finally beginning to settle in the aftermath of the United States presidential election. For decision-makers around the globe, the “break glass in case of emergency” contingency plans are already being deployed as leaders grapple with the existential threat of the new “America First” playbook.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau is fighting a battle on three fronts, and has very few levers he can pull to effectively communicate and change the rising tide of negative public opinion coming his way, writes Josie Sabatino. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

President-elect Donald Trump has moved with lightning speed to announce appointment after appointment in the short, two-week span since election day. It's an early indication that his administration has taken seriously the criticisms that came during Trump's first term, when a slow transition led to crippling staffing challenges at the political level, and subsequent resistance at the departmental level.

Trump won't officially take back the White House until Jan. 20, 2025, but when he arrives on Day 1, his administration is set to govern from a position of strength. As was the case in 2017, the Senate and House of Representatives have both flipped Republican, which all but guarantees the ability to whip votes and get legislation passed quickly.

While some high-ranking Trump appointees will require Senate confirmation, it's unlikely to slow down the president's ability to move on key policy pledges like the implementation of global tariffs, border reform, and the move to increase oil and gas production.

In Canada, the negotiating position of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau couldn't be any more different. Not only does Trudeau not have the luxury of a majority government to make quick, impactful decisions, but there is also no goodwill amongst Canadians to squander in the event U.S. protectionist policies begin to take hold on the Canadian economy.

Trade irritants are expected to dominate the Canada-U.S. relationship next year. The re-

lationship between the Trudeau government and the first Trump administration was a blank slate, but in the last several years, the Liberals have made several attempts to capitalize on Trump's unpopularity here at home by comparing Canada's Conservatives to the Republicans south of the border.

Parliament is also trapped in gridlock over a privilege motion that is keeping bills from progressing through the House. While it is a fair assumption that most Canadians aren't paying attention to the minutiae of parliamentary business, it more broadly means that any announcements the government makes at this stage are tied to existing programs or funding envelopes that don't require new legislative measures. This severely limits the Trudeau government from introducing any drastic new measures—either reactive or proactive—without the help from one of the opposition parties to end the stalemate in Parliament.

There is also a critical bye-election slated for Dec. 16 that threatens to once again resurface the grievances of those in the

Liberal caucus who want to see the prime minister gone before the next election if they fail to hang onto the seat in the suburbs of Vancouver.

Trudeau has been crystal clear that he has no plans to step down, and will lead the Liberal Party into the next election. But even if Trudeau can strike the correct balance between effectively representing Canada's interests on the world stage, while keeping his fragile caucus united, there is still the issue of mounting an effective campaign against the Conservatives in the next general election.

Trudeau is fighting a battle on three fronts, and has very few levers he can pull to effectively communicate and change the rising tide of negative public opinion coming his way. The next federal election is shaping up to be a battle fought on issues, rather than values. That means micro policy measures that reach cash-strapped consumers, rather than blue-sky thinking on tackling climate change.

The prime minister has a limited runway in front of him to define the ballot-box question on his terms, and Liberals would do well to avoid framing it around the fate of democracy resting in the hands of Canadians.

Josie Sabatino is a senior consultant at Summa Strategies. Prior to joining Summa, Sabatino spent nearly a decade as a Conservative political staffer, providing communications and issues management advice to Members of Parliament and the leader of the official opposition.

The Hill Times

Trump's 'America First' plans may undermine global trade

A nightmarish world in which economic rules don't apply, and trade is suffocated is in no one's interest—especially not Canada's.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



MONTREAL—Earlier this year, the Bretton Woods Institutions—the International Monetary Fund and World Bank—celebrated their 80th anniversary. Although not as well known as the founding of the United Nations or the end of the Second World War, it was one of the most significant events of the 1940s.

For three weeks in July 1944, more than 700 representatives from 44 countries met in Bretton Woods, N.H., for the United Nations Monetary and Financial Conference, creating the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development—part of the World Bank. Parenthetically, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade set global trade standards until the World Trade Organization came to be on New Year's Day, 1995.

While the Second World War was far from over, the purpose of the conference and its institutions was to ensure the world would emerge from conflict with economic stability, and the ravages of the Great Depression would never occur again.

These institutions have attempted to ensure financial stability, purposeful international development, and a system of fair trading in a rules-based system. And with a few exceptions, the system has worked: we have yet to suffer a worldwide depression. Indeed, the growth of the global economy was one of the miracles of the 20th century, lifting billions of people out of poverty.

All that may now go down the drain. When United States president-elect Donald Trump invokes “America First” in promising huge tariffs on foreign goods, he knows the U.S. is effectively a self-contained economy. In 2022, the World Bank calculated U.S. trade amounted to only one-quarter of its GDP. Canada's stands at two-thirds of GDP, just above the global average of 63 per cent.

The use of tariffs by the U.S. varied in the last century. The protectionist Smoot-Hawley Tariff Act of 1930 was said to have spawned the Great Depression. In the 1970s, the Nixon administration applied a tax on profits by American subsidiaries abroad, including Canada. Eventually, because our economies were so integrated, tariffs were phased out in the free trade agreement signed by then-Canadian prime minister Brian Mulroney and then-president Ronald Reagan in 1988.

When Mexico approached the Americans for a similar agreement, Canada jumped in to ensure there would be no “hub-and-spoke” agreement where it would be on the periphery, and the U.S. would

benefit as the centre. The North American Free Trade Agreement was intended to grow trade across the continent, but also had the objective of making Mexico economically stable to keep its citizens from flooding into the U.S.

As the U.S. “rust belt” saw jobs go elsewhere—including Mexico—Trump was elected in 2016 to “tear up” NAFTA. Instead, with effective negotiating by Canada, it was replaced by the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, or CUSMA, in 2020.

Fast forward to today, where Mexico is being used as a “back door” for China's manufacturers who rely on cheap or slave labour and state financing to keep costs low. Trump's tariffs would counter that. However, the solution being proposed by Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith is a bilateral trade deal with the U.S. that would simply replicate the “hub-and-spoke” conundrum.

Although it's hard to believe Trump wants to plunge the world into recession, or force higher prices on his citizens for “Made in America” goods, he is impossible to predict.

For example, it would be counterintuitive of the U.S. to place tariffs on Canadian oil and gas, but all past administrations have placed duties on our softwood lumber, raising prices on American construction.

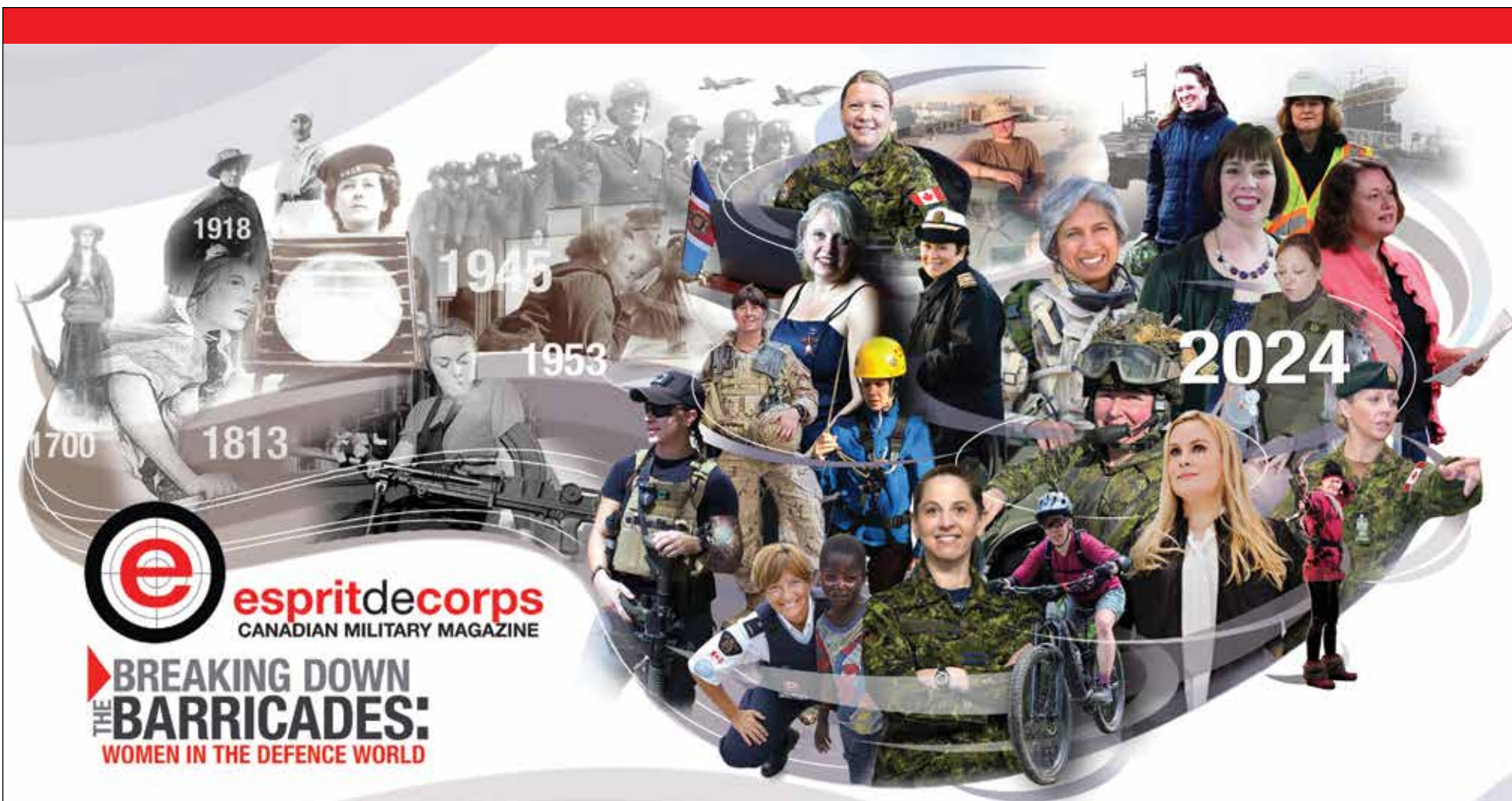
Rather than panicking, Canada's leaders need to remember the lessons of history: rules-based, open trade is good, and comparative advantage lowers prices. That said, China has used its economic clout to underprice its goods, and assert control over many developing countries; it appears Mexico is now in its sights.

There will always be a need for a rules-based system of international trade, but if countries cheat that system, people will lose faith. The recent U.S. election was a psychodrama in which Americans believed their “birthright” of eternal prosperity had been stripped away.

As a result, Trump's invocation of “America First” protectionism appealed to disaffected workers. But a nightmarish world in which economic rules don't apply, and trade is suffocated is in no one's interest. Especially not Canada's.

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

The Hill Times



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News

New AI safety institute limited by legislative vacuum: NDP innovation critic Brian Masse

After more than two years, and a year-long committee study, Bill C-27 is in a holding pattern awaiting government amendments.

BY STUART BENSON

Canada's new Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute shows that Liberals are "running up the white flag" on passing their privacy and artificial intelligence legislation, says NDP MP Brian Masse. Amidst that policy vacuum, AI governance researcher Christelle Tessono says there are more questions than answers about how effective the institute will be in keeping Canadians safe.

On Nov. 12, Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) announced the launch of the new body at a press conference at the Mila-Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute in Montreal.

Initially signalled as part of a broader \$2.4-billion investment in the 2024 budget to promote safe and responsible AI development, the federal government will provide \$50-million over five years to create the Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute (CAISI). An additional \$27-million has been allocated to the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research to administer CAISI's research stream in collaboration with the Mila-Quebec Institute, the Alberta Machine Intelligence Institute in Edmonton, and the Vector Institute in Toronto. The National Research Council will administer



Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne, left, announced the tabling of the Liberal's privacy and artificial intelligence legislation on June 16, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

CAISI's second research stream, and focus on government priorities like cybersecurity.

At the announcement, Champagne said the creation of the new institute "marked a historic milestone ... to protect humanity."

Champagne said that in order to move from "fear to opportunity," Canada would need to build trust and confidence in AI, and provide safeguards against the present and future harms the technology poses.

"If there's no trust, there will be no adoption," Champagne said. "And if there's no adoption, we will squander the incredible potential of many new technologies."

However, Masse (Windsor West, Ont.), the NDP's innovation critic, told *The Hill Times* that Champagne and the Liberal members of the House Industry and Technology Committee were squandering the past year's study

of Bill C-27, which the Liberals introduced in 2022 to repeal parts of the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), as well as to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act.

The legislation is the Liberals' second attempt to amend PIPEDA after the former Bill C-11, the Digital Charter and Implementation Act, died on the Order Paper following Parliament's dissolution ahead of the 2021 election.

With another election on the horizon between now and next fall, Masse said he believes the Liberals' latest piece of legislation will suffer the same fate.

Despite Champagne blaming the Industry Committee for delaying its study during his announcement in Montreal, Masse said the minister has "flushed down the toilet a year in committee testimony" without providing any of the suggested amendments he described to the committee two Septembers ago.

On Sept. 24, 2023, at the outset of its study of Bill C-27, Champagne appeared before the committee to verbally summarize the proposed changes to the legislation. While he didn't provide written details of the amendments, he told the committee they would include the recognition of privacy as a fundamental right and the obligation to protect children's data online; strengthen and clarify the role of the proposed artificial intelligence and data commissioner, as well as enabling it to share information and co-operate with the privacy commissioner and Competition Bureau; and define specific obligations for "high-impact" generative systems,

as well as general purpose ones like ChatGPT.

Champagne initially told committee members the text of the amendments would not be provided until after the legislation reaches the final clause-by-clause review stage after witness testimony.

According to Masse, those tenuous amendments created a significant obstacle to the committee's study of the legislation, but the current major stumbling block was that of the proposed Privacy Tribunal, which the legislation proposes would hear appeals of orders issued by the privacy commissioner.

Masse said the NDP is concerned that the new tribunal would "neuter" the commissioner, particularly if it is filled with "lobbyists and other political appointments" from within the industry.



Christelle Tessono, an AI and governance researcher at the University of Toronto, says research is only one piece of a larger AI safety puzzle. *Photograph by Christian Diotte, House of Commons Photo Services*

"That would undermine Canadians' ability to have the privacy commissioner respond responsibly," Masse said, adding that while he would prefer not to have a tribunal at all, he is willing to work to ensure it would be restrained both in its composition and ability to override the commissioner.

To get that work done, Masse has already received a Speaker's ruling allowing the legislation to be broken up into separate pieces, letting the AI and privacy component proceed while the committee works toward a compromise on the tribunal.

However, Champagne's office told *The Hill Times* that splitting the bill is "not on the table."

"Our government is committed to the entirety of Bill C-27," wrote Audrey Champoux, Champagne's director of communications. "We'll continue working with opposition members to get this important legislation through committee as soon as possible."

Masse said he hadn't been entirely bothered by what he previously assumed was a delay caused by Liberal committee members filibustering the bill as it has given more time for the group to spend on his study of credit card interest rates. However, the latest announcement has signalled that it's not just a regular hold up to protest splitting the bill.

"That announcement basically said the minister is running up the white flag on passing the legislation," Masse said. "[The institute] is a good idea, but it's going to be in a vacuum of public policy at the end of the day, which is required and expected from our partners across the globe."

Masse said that while the institute will be able to research and begin to generate more international partnerships, its mandate and influence "is very much born in a political context versus that of a legislative context."

"This is a unilateral political response to basically not being able to fulfill what they promised on legislation," Masse said. "So it will have limitations to the contributions it can make, and how it's going to influence and shape public policy in the absence of legislation."

Tessono, a policy and research assistant at The Dais, a public policy think tank at Toronto Metropolitan University, said the launch of the new institute has left her with "more questions than answers."

As a researcher, Tessono said she welcomes the increased funding, but said researching AI is only one piece of the safety puzzle.

Tessono said that joining international partners like the United States and United Kingdom—which have their own safety institutes and voluntary code of conduct—are additional, helpful pieces. However, to have a fully robust AI strategy, she said Canada would need legislation to complete the puzzle.

"Enforceable regulations that can come through legislation is the only way to have a robust regulatory regime," Tessono said.

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The Hill Times



NDP MP Brian Masse says the Liberals have squandered a year of committee study on Bill C-27. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

POLICY BRIEFING

THE NORTH

Publication date: Monday, December 2 | Advertising deadline: Tuesday, November 26

How is a changing climate affecting the North, in terms of infrastructure, the environment and supply chains? What more can the federal government do to help?

How can Canada ensure sovereignty in the Arctic? What are the current threats and challenges?

Many Indigenous people in Canada contend with inadequate housing, particularly among those living in remote or northern communities according to data from Statistics Canada. What challenges are Indigenous people facing in the North?

What are the opportunities for innovation in Arctic science and technology? What are the opportunities in Canada for polar research, Arctic geology or marine research related to the North?

Ottawa is finalizing an Arctic foreign policy with Inuit leaders, which is expected to include the reinstatement of an Arctic ambassador, as reported on Nov. 9 by Global News.

What is the scale of the task ahead of a new Arctic ambassador? How will a second term for Donald Trump as president of the United States affect affairs related to the Arctic?



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THE HILL TIMES

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Editorial

Defence spending boost useless without clarity of purpose

Since Nov. 5, there has been plenty of shand-wringing in some circles over how the incoming United States president will react to Canada's slow roll towards meeting the NATO target of spending two per cent of our GDP on defence.

Since his first time in the White House, Donald Trump has had beef with his northern neighbours, casting Canada as freeloaders, and lumping the country in with everyone else the U.S. is going to let fend for themselves should an attack come their way.

Some may chafe at the idea that the Canadian government only seemed to properly kick into gear on defence spending once Trump made it an internationally embarrassing issue, but the commitment was made in 2014—well before Trump entered the political arena.

But even as detractors continue to pick at Canada's prolonged timeline—the government says it will meet the target in 2032, though the parliamentary budget officer says otherwise—there is general public support for boosting defence spending.

According to an April Leger poll conducted after the most-recent federal budget, 58 per cent of respondents indicated that “A planned increase in military and defence spending over the next 20 years” was a good thing.

But, as Jackson Walling and Mathieu Landriault write in this week's *Hill*

Times defence policy briefing: “current polling should be viewed with a level of skepticism when questions relating to defence spending are not constructed with tradeoffs in mind. Moreover, the data shows that when defence spending is put alongside other contemporary Canadian issues such as health care, housing, climate change, and immigration, defence spending takes a back seat.”

And that's to say nothing of the myriad other issues with which the Canadian Armed Forces and surrounding ecosystem still need to contend. The federal defence procurement system is wildly inefficient, the military can't seem to hire and keep personnel, and systemic issues affecting employees' mental and physical safety are still being grappled with. The federal government should outline a clear battle plan, fix underlying issues, and actually stick to it before making any more promises.

Yes, the geopolitical environment is unstable, and giving the people who've pledged to stand at the ready to protect Canada what they need to do their job is always going to be important. But throwing good money after bad just to save face and keep up with the orange Joneses won't make Canadians—or the rest of the world—any safer.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Cutting the government payroll is no easy budget fix: Kazdan

Re: “Public service job cuts loom as Ottawa misses spending and deficit targets,” (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 13).

The purge of the public service is not “unavoidable”; it is merely a political choice. The Liberal government has decided to prioritize deficit reduction as the criterion for determining the size of its workforce.

For economist John Maynard Keynes, this kind of program was akin to a dog chasing its own tail. Canada currently has well over one million unemployed people. Cutting government expen-

ditures through reduced payroll will reduce economic activity, throw even more people on the rolls, lessen tax revenues, increase social costs of employment insurance and social welfare, and lead to the call for yet another round of cutbacks.

Keynes had different ideas. He recommended keeping employment tight, and letting the deficit fall where it may. In his words, “Look after the unemployment, and the budget will look after itself.”

Larry Kazdan
 Vancouver, B.C.

Political marketing isn't magic, says Toronto letter writer

Re: “Read the room. Know your audience. Get a grip,” (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 13, p. 7).

How do highly unsuitable people—who care little for the welfare of the people they lead—keep getting elected? Well, it's their marketing, stupid! Tim Powers is right about the “magic”—however, the “magic” has been bought. High-priced marketing agencies build an advertising strategy based on identifying a suitable subgroup of society, targeting their concerns, and bringing them together as a “tribe” in support of the candidate they were hired to get elected. (Can this really work? It sells expensive soap, doesn't it?)

How can a marketing strategy make this happen? A successful strategy will focus on simplistic “solutions” to concerns that will widely resonate with the day-to-day anxieties of this subgroup of the electorate. These may include “hot-button issues” like inflation, cost-of-living, housing, and job security.

Strong words evoking fear and anger are the way to galvanize a group, and make it cohesive. This generates a common goal with the energy and momentum to achieve it. (Think of the Jan. 6, 2021, event at the U.S. Capitol, or of Conservative Pierre Poilievre's 2022 visit to the

“Freedom Convoy.”) Angry, disheartened people look for a leader to validate their feelings.

To further stoke the emotional flames, an enemy—either real or invented—is identified for the tribe to scapegoat, further hardening their cohesiveness and resolve, and near reverence for their leader. Yes, this is a careful and crafty appeal to the emotions of a disaffected tribe.

These are dangerous times, made more so with the Wild-West nature of social media so vulnerable to conspiracy theories, disinformation, and foreign interference. Also, its clever use for communicating with a disaffected subgroup of society, especially those people who are unaware of the principles of science and ethical

journalism. With the spell cast, and the new leader canonized, the leader may now be impervious to any aspersion or even the exposure of their legal or sexual misdeeds.

The use of high-priced marketing strategies is a clear danger to democracy. We must be aware of the risks and advantages, and ensure a level playing field for all candidates.

Tom McElroy
 Toronto, Ont.



It's marketing, not sleight of hand, that politicians are using to advance their agendas, writes Tom McElroy. *Pexels photograph by Vitezslav Vylicil*



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Will the Liberals develop sharper labour pains?



Canada Post workers picket outside the postal service's Station T location in Ottawa on Nov. 18. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Governments pick winners and losers in labour disputes. Who do you think they align with? Hint: it's not you.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—Why do y'all hate labour so much?

On Nov. 15, after little headway in the bargaining process, the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) confirmed that 55,000 mail carriers walked off the job. CBC reported that shortly after receiving the 72-hour strike

notice on Nov. 12, "Canada Post served the union with a lockout notice not long after but said it didn't intend to lock workers out," proving they're playing in the workers' faces.

CUPW is demanding indexed wage increases, an additional 10 paid medical days, enhancements of the group benefits plans such as vision care and fertility care, protection against harassment, and to improve rights for temporary employees.

I don't see the problem.

We keep hearing in the news that real wages—which includes inflation—have increased, so we're all good. Unfortunately, that was most likely due to the fall of inflation rather than an increase in paycheque amounts. As described by CBC News: "When prices rise faster than wages do, workers essentially experience a wage decrease, with their paycheques not going as far as before." In addition, "people in Canada have higher wages than

a decade ago. Since 2013, the median hourly real wage rate has grown by just under one per cent on average each year." Just under one per cent? This is a joke, right? We need more unions that work—many unions are fossilized in their ability to fight for workers.

A National Bureau of Economic Research paper entitled, "New Evidence that Unions Raise Wages for Less-Skilled Workers," showed that "because unions offer a larger wage premium to less-skilled workers, unions have an important equalizing effect on the income distribution to the extent that they are successful in organizing the less-skilled." Oh, so unions' wage premium reduces income inequality. Wild.

Canada Post lost "\$490-million in the first half of 2024, part of a total \$3-billion lost since 2018. The company says a strike will only further contribute to its already dire financial circumstances, and that the union's demands will lead to more fixed costs that

Canada Post can't afford," according to the CBC. Why should the burden of bad managerial decisions be borne by workers? You can't lose \$3-billion in six years without obscenely terrible management decisions.

Y'all have all this smoke for labour, but never ask yourselves why management can't bear the costs of its own terrible choices?

As researched by The Centre for Future Work, "Management bonuses, stock options, dividends, and other forms of profit-dependent income (all received disproportionately by the richest segments of society) are thus reduced, when unions are able to redistribute income from capital to labour." This also has tax implications that I have written about in this paper before.

We are a country that empowers its managerial class to suck up business resources for work no one sees, and decisions they are never held accountable for, yet the union claims that Canada Post is contemplating cancelling vacation time and lay-offs. Canada Post has 22 executives running the enterprise, apparently into the ground (how many executives does it take to screw in a \$3-billion light bulb?). How many of them have given up their bonuses or their vacation time, or taken a trim to their salary to make up the multimillion-dollar shortfall?

This is why back-to-work policies of successive governments are part of the increase of income inequality we face due to those policies that reduce workers' bargaining power. CBC also reports that during previous "work stoppages in 2011 and 2018, the federal government passed legislation which sent Canada Post employees back to work." Both the Liberal and Conservative governments worked to kill labour's right to strike, even though the Charter of Rights and Freedoms recognizes it as a right. Section 2(d) of the Charter enforces protections from "associations' activities, including collective bargaining and striking." Governments pick winners and losers in labour disputes. Who do you think they align with? Hint: it's not you.

Although this Liberal government is an expert in undermining our constitutional right to strike, exemplified by using back-to-work legislation on the country's port workers, they have vowed to stay out of workers' business. This is a stark turnaround considering this past May, "the government attempted to prevent Teamsters rail workers from exercising their right to strike as negotiations with the Canadian National Railway Company and Canadian Pacific Kansas City Ltd," as chronicled by *The Maple*. At least they're staying out of workers' business.

Finally, the Liberals are exercising their oft-absent political sense: it's not a good look to weaken labour rights when we are all facing multiple affordability crises.

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

The Hill Times

Appeasing Donald Trump with defence dollars

Many of the hawkish pundits are self-flagellating in anticipation of facing Trump's wrath, but we need to look at the situation from a detached perspective.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—With the landslide election of Donald Trump to a second term in office as the United States president, it is clearly evident that the Trudeau Liberals—despite their protestations to the contrary—never bothered to draft a plan to deal with the eventuality of a Trump 2.0 presidency.

This is particularly true when it comes to Canada's lack of spending on national defence.

Admittedly, Trump can be erratically inconsistent in some of his policies.

However, when it comes to America's NATO allies' spending of defence dollars, on this Trump has been crystal clear. During his first term in office, Trump labelled as "shirkers" any NATO country not spending the alliance's budget goal of two per cent of gross domestic product on their military.

During his lengthy campaign for re-election, Trump claimed that he would direct the U.S. to ignore Article 5 of the NATO Charter—which ensures collective defence of all NATO members—should the attacked party not be compliant with the two per cent of GDP spending guideline. This puts Canada squarely in Trump's gunights as we currently spend only 1.3 per cent of our GDP on national defence.

While many of the hawkish pundits in Canadian defence circles are self-flagellating in anticipation of facing Trump's wrath, we need to look at the situation from a detached perspective. This past April, Minister of National Defence Bill Blair unveiled the Liberal government's long-awaited defence policy update (DPU).

Continued on page 10

Comment

A lesson for Canadians in Americans' economic disconnect

As voters look for relief from the high cost of living, misguided nostalgia can play a major role in a campaign.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



President-elect Donald Trump won because people in the U.S. believe he will be better than the Democrats at improving the country's economic conditions, writes Les Whittington. Screenshot courtesy of CSPAN

The general take is that Trump won because people in the U.S. believe he will be better than the Democrats at improving the country's economic conditions. How they got that idea reflects the general foginess, COVID backlash, and misguided nostalgia that played a major role in the 2024 campaign.

Trump's claim that his presidency enabled a great economy runs counter to what actually happened. The U.S. economy did perform fairly well for most of Trump's first term, but the upbeat business conditions were largely inherited from former president Barack Obama's second administration. Despite Trump's suggestion in 2016 that he could get U.S. GDP running as high as six per cent, and his later claim that his income tax cuts would touch off boom times, nothing like that happened. U.S. output between

2017 and the arrival of COVID in 2020 grew at about 2.5 per cent—pretty much the same as under Obama.

The rate of unemployment under Trump was exceptionally low, but the rate had already been very low during the second Obama administration. Trump also stuck Americans with more debt than any president in U.S. history.

It seems Americans have forgotten the chaos under Trump, and no doubt think of the years when he was president before COVID as being better than the hardships of the inflationary pandemic aftermath under President Joe Biden. But this perspective is in many respects out of sync with the facts concerning the past four years.

Some 15.4 million jobs were added during Biden's presidency versus 6.7 million under Trump—without factoring in the COVID

impact. The same goes for manufacturing jobs: 773,000 created under Biden, compared to 461,000 manufacturing jobs created under Trump in 2017 through 2019.

Because of the pandemic, Biden inherited a devastated economy from Trump. But the current administration helped the U.S. recover from COVID more effectively than any other advanced country. Today, the U.S. economy is at its strongest in modern history and is envied around the world, with robust 2.8 per cent GDP growth in 2024.

Like other nations, the U.S. was hit with an explosion in consumer prices in 2022 as a result of tangled post-pandemic supply chains, pent-up consumer demand, and Russia's attack on Ukraine. But it was far from the worst inflation in American history as Trump claimed.

While the COVID-era spike in consumer prices continues to reverberate through Americans' daily lives, the hellscape depicted by the president-elect in the recent campaign has little to do with reality. U.S. inflation is returning to near-normal levels and wage gains have exceeded inflation since early 2023, with wages now at an all-time high. Unemployment remains low while stock markets have roared to record heights, and consumer spending has continued at above-average levels since the end of COVID.

Contrary to Trump's constant accusations that the Democrats

are elitists with no interest in the needs of average people, the Biden administration—including Vice-President Kamala Harris—was arguably the most pro-worker government since Franklin D. Roosevelt. Biden worked to reverse the Trump administration's efforts to undermine union organizing, improved working conditions for employees of government contractors, and altered overtime eligibility rules to increase earnings for millions of workers—now blocked by a Trump-appointed federal judge in Texas.

A record number of Americans are now enrolled in health-care coverage as a result of Biden's improvements to Obamacare. Biden also forgave billions of dollars in federal student loan debt—something Trump may now undo—and reduced onerous pharmaceutical costs for Medicare beneficiaries.

In the election campaign, Harris called for middle-class tax reductions paid for by higher corporate taxes, an increased child tax credit, efforts to address housing and rent affordability, protecting social programs, and increasing competition in the food industry.

Most analysts end up saying the Democrats failed to communicate their policies, or didn't find ways to project sympathy for average people. But it is clear that, unlike in other elections, the economy itself and policies meant to improve living standards for most Americans mattered little this time. As MSNBC columnist Michael A. Cohen put it, "Democrats are a party of 'doing stuff' with an electorate utterly indifferent to the stuff they do."

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Appeasing Donald Trump with defence dollars

Continued from page 9

Titled *Our North, Strong and Free*, the policy outlines a significant spending increase, and promises to acquire some very specific new capabilities and equipment for the Canadian Armed Forces.

While this current DPU projects a massive increase from Canada's current annual defence budget of \$30-billion to a staggering \$50-billion by the end of this decade, thanks to Canada's robust economy, that will only put us at the 1.76 per cent GDP mark. In other words, closer but still no cigar from Trump.

In terms of equipment acquisitions, the DPU shopping list includes early-warning aircraft, tactical helicopters, and new long-range missiles for the Army.

The government plans to buy specialized maritime sensors to improve ocean surveillance, as well as build a new satellite



Before investing in modern weapon systems, the CAF needs to invest in its greatest asset: the men and women who serve, writes Scott Taylor. DND photograph by Canadian Armed Forces Imagery Technician

ground station in the Arctic. The DPU blueprint includes plans to establish additional support facilities in the Arctic for military operations. Also referenced is a new fleet of up to 12 diesel-electric submarines for the Royal Canadian Navy.

There will also be a major investment in domestic ammunition production to replace those

stocks of artillery shells which Canada donated to Ukraine. Having learned their lesson from that war, Canada also plans to significantly increase the Army's strategic reserve of ammunition. All of these equipment items will add or modernize actual combat capabilities for the CAF.

However, none of these expenditures addresses the existen-

tial threat crippling the CAF at present: the personnel shortfall due to the ongoing recruitment and retention problem. Given that the NATO two-per-cent GDP target is an arbitrary expenditure of money rather than a definition of actual combat capability, the struggling CAF leadership could turn this to their advantage.

To encourage new recruits to join and recently released CAF members to rejoin the ranks, why not offer lucrative signing bonuses? I'm sure that a \$250,000 bonus to lure a trained fighter pilot back into the Royal Canadian Air Force is more cost efficient than the millions of dollars necessary to train such a pilot from scratch. Likewise, a currently serving member looking to retire early would be tempted by a similar bonus to retain their expertise for an additional three years.

Another short term win-win would be a massive investment in affordable housing for service personnel on an urgent-emergency basis. While the current DPU does mention building such housing, the fact is that—at present—there are zero dollars in the current fiscal year budget to even begin to alleviate the problem of military housing. This is the situ-

ation, despite the fact that there have been numerous reports and studies of soldiers being homeless, couch surfing, or living in squalid conditions.

I'm sure that there are all sorts of real estate developers who would jump at the opportunity to partner with the Canadian military to build such housing and improved barracks. It just is not a priority, it seems, for DND's senior leadership.

Before investing in modern weapon systems, the CAF needs to invest in its greatest asset: the men and women who serve. Pay them well and give them decent affordable housing, and you might see a boost in morale.

Another upside to such a program is that these defence dollars would be going to Canadian service members in the form of bonuses, and to Canadian construction companies in communities all across Canada.

All of it is attributable to our defence budget, and pushing us closer to that two per cent of GDP that Trump is demanding that we spend.

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

The Hill Times

Let's ride out the Trump circus by giving him some mutually beneficial wins

Keep the incoming U.S. president focused on himself so that he stays away from things that could hurt us.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—As we creep closer to the swearing in of United States president-elect Donald Trump on Jan. 20, 2025, the normal Canadian anxieties are blooming. Will we be crushed by Trump's talk on tariffs? Will we be pushed and fail on the need to spend more on

NATO? Will our borders become overrun as the incoming president launches a scoop of undocumented immigrants in the U.S.?

Fierce pearl-clutching is happening as many of Trump's would-be cabinet members have either said mean things about Prime Minister Justin Trudeau or Canada itself. The stress and strain knows no bounds. Canada should just turtle, and take the whooping that is coming. Or not.

We already know Trump is unlike any other modern American political leader Canada has ever dealt with. We know he has little time for established political conventions or practices. We know he can deviate or depart from one point of view to another at a moment's notice. We know he likes turbulence, truculence, and chaos of his own making. We also know we only have four more years of his rule.

We know that Trump likes nothing more than to be acknowledged for his business

and entrepreneurial savvy. For possessing an other-worldly sense of economic policy. For just being great and brilliant at whatever he touches, regardless of an ability to stay focused on multiple options at once.

So instead of reinvigorating the old cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations from Trump's first reign, relying on our many-points-of-light approach, or broad network in America, shouldn't we look at helping find Trump some political wins from which Canada can benefit, and for which he can take credit? The guy loves nothing more than to demonstrate he is a winner. Keep him focused on him so that he stays away from things that could hurt us.

So are there areas where we could find mutual wins that the president could claim as his, but don't leave us in the fetal position? Energy supply and security is one. Northern sovereignty is another. Does the trade narrative



Canada should be taking another tack instead of reinvigorating the old cabinet committee on Canada-U.S. relations—chaired by Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland—from Trump's first reign, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

need a reframing or even a carve out of Mexico, as some premiers are suggesting?

There's also showing we are working on immigration reform, and going to a place where we find the right mix on immigration. Tightening some of our screening and security review processes. Upping our own game on improving border security. Not making it oppressive, but rather realistic in addressing some of the incoming trafficking challenges we have.

The Liberal government is already doing what it can to keep its mouth shut and not deliberately antagonize the incoming president—there isn't a great benefit to our own politics to doing that. For now, Trump—and he will flame out as he did before—is winning the connection game with many people who feel they are being left behind. Leave the moralizing to others, and focus on our own knitting.

Demonstrate Canada has political power in other parts of the world, and that we simply aren't the mouse to the American elephant. Trump likes some version of strength, or what he thinks is strength. Remind him we do still have a little weight in Europe, the Indo-Pacific, and elsewhere. Yes, admittedly it has declined, but we aren't entirely impotent.

Canada should not serve as a Trump fan boy or enabler of the horrendous, but we can be strategically smart in how we think about and apply ourselves over the next four years in the Canada-U.S. relationship. We're going into this era of Trump's reign with more fore knowledge than we had before. Let's not waste it.

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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News

Rebuild underway: fresh peek inside

Plans for the Senate Chamber include installation of a new glass-enclosed viewing platform for visitors to peek in on proceedings.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Media got a fresh look inside the Centre Block construction site on Nov. 14, with new details and a new tour stop offered up along the way.

The Centre Block Rehabilitation Project being led by Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) includes both the renovation of the 100-year-old building, as well as construction of a new underground Parliament Welcome Centre (PWC).

Along with heritage restoration, the project will see Centre Block modernized with new building systems, and brought up to par with modern fire safety and universal accessibility requirements. Improved energy efficiency is also a project priority, and PSPC is aiming to ultimately reduce the building's energy use by roughly 65 per cent. Pre-renovations, it was one of the worst-performing buildings in PSPC's portfolio in terms of energy efficiency.

Centre Block has been closed for construction since the end of 2018, and with demolition and hazardous material abatement work complete, "we are now into the phase of rebuilding," Siavash Mohajer, PSPC's senior director of the Centre Block Rehabilitation Program, told reporters



PSPC's Siavash Mohajer points out a concrete sandwich beam that will be part of the support network holding up Centre Block during an exclusive *Hill Times* tour of the site this past February. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

gathered for the "second annual media tour."

Despite higher-than-anticipated rates of inflation since PSPC first released project estimates in June 2021, Mohajer confirmed that work continues to "track" in line with the projected \$4.5- to \$5-billion price tag.

"Inflation—or escalation, as we call it—is a pressure," said Mohajer. "There are various pressures on our cost, but we planned for it to some extent. Obviously we didn't expect eight per cent inflation when we put together the budgets, but we carried enough that we're able to absorb these pressures."

But "time is money, and so when you're having monetary pressures it translates into time pressure, as well."

"We are seeing pressures on the schedule, however everything is still tracking to finish in that 2030-31 range in terms of construction," said Mohajer.

The department has previously noted that once construction finishes, it'll be another year—roughly—before the building is ready to be fully reoccupied.

The finalization of conceptual design plans for Centre Block—expected by the fall of 2025—will be a "key checkpoint" in confirming "that we're still able to absorb all these pressures," noted Mohajer.

As of Sept. 30, a total of \$975-million had been spent on the project to date.

Along with work to prepare for structural upgrades throughout Centre Block—including installation of a new, slightly raised roof, as well as new elevator banks, stairwells, and more—the work ongoing on the building's first and basement levels is currently a main project focus.

As has been previously detailed by *The Hill Times*, a lot of work needs to happen to stabilize Centre Block ahead of excavations, including instal-

Mohajer highlighted the complex work ongoing in Centre Block's basement in preparation for excavations that will happen underneath the historic structure—both to connect the building to the PWC, and to install base-isolation seismic upgrades—as another "pressure" on project costs.

"So far, when we put together all these pressures and what we can see in the future, we're still tracking within that [cost estimate range]," he said.

But "time



lation of a network of 800 steel posts, structural steel supports, and concrete sandwich beams, and replacement of the building's level 1 slab. About 85 per cent of those steel posts—or piles—are now in place.

Excavation under Centre Block is projected to start next spring, and will involve removal of an estimated 100,000 cubic metres of bedrock to dig down roughly 23 metres—in line with the depth of the welcome centre pit.

Digging will start in the building's courtyards—starting in the west—and eventually move south to connect to the welcome centre through openings on either side of the Peace Tower.

Mohajer has previously said that at least 50 per cent of the building's slab needs to be replaced before the building's load will begin its transfer onto the support network in advance of digging.

PSPC's second-quarter progress report this year flagged some delays in slab replacement work—which first got underway in the spring of 2023—with the department having failed to meet its target of replacing 20 to 25 per cent of the building's slab by June 30. Progress has since reached the 25 per cent mark.

Speaking to those delays, Mohajer highlighted the "complexities" and "physical constraints" of the space: "The work is complex [and] in small, confined spaces—so you

Reporters, photographers, and camera operators got a roughly three-hour tour of Centre Block on Nov. 14. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

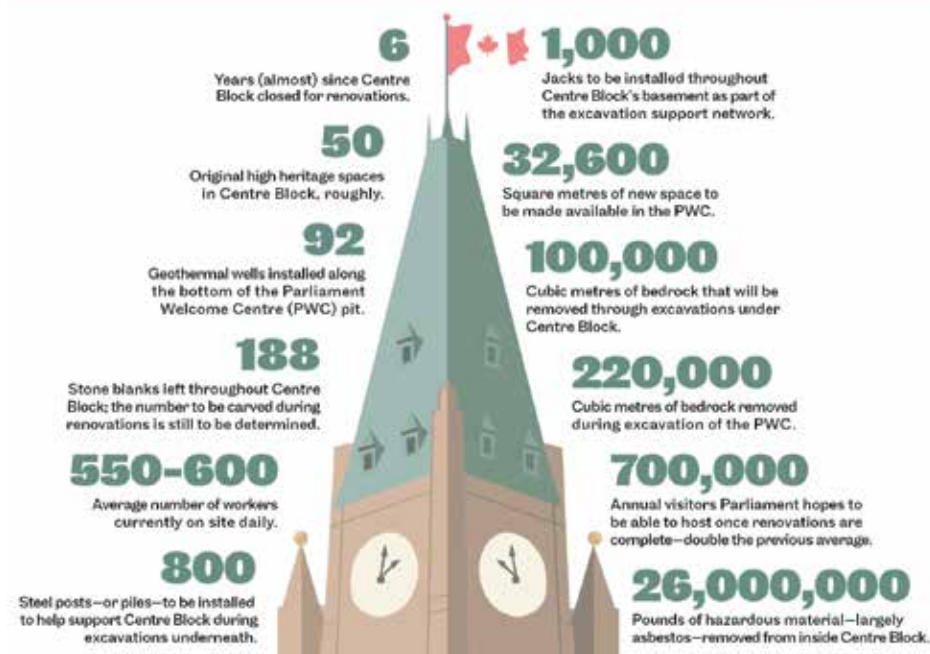


can't throw more people at it—and the sequence of it is very prescribed, and so we can only move as fast as we are physically allowed."

"We are working with the construction manager and structural engineers to see if we can change things—re-sequence things—to continue with our excavation while we progress with the level 1 slab [replacement], and right now all signs are positive," he said.

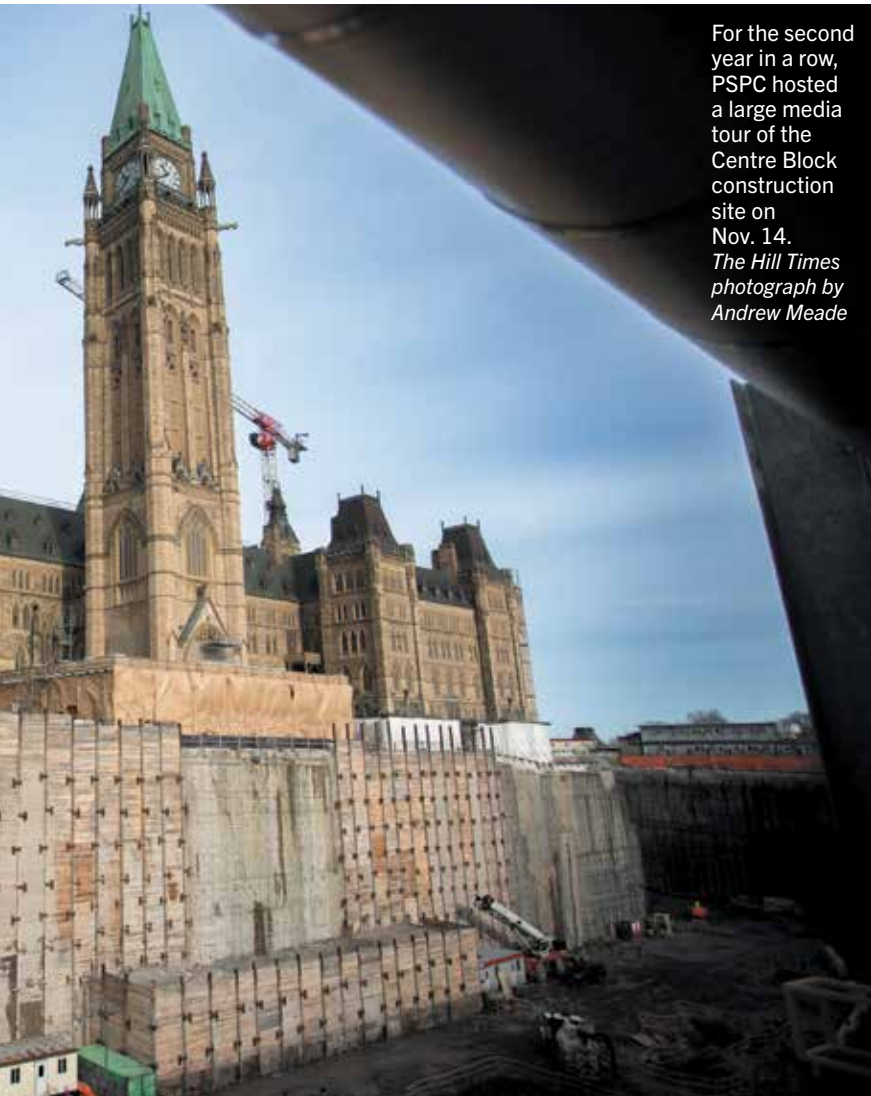
Unlike the welcome centre pit—where workers were able to blast through roughly 220,000 cubic metres of bedrock—digging under Centre Block will be a more delicate operation, and will involve use of remote-operated machines.

Centre Block: By the Numbers



The *Hill Times* graphic by Naomi Wildeboer

Centre Block offers up new details



For the second year in a row, PSPC hosted a large media tour of the Centre Block construction site on Nov. 14. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

have to access it through scaffold stairs, which have already been installed.

The PWC will be the new public entrance to the Hill, and will also serve as a connection hub for the rest of the parliamentary campus, including buildings south of Wellington Street.

The three-storey underground structure will offer up roughly 32,600 square metres of new space. Along with tunnel connections to precinct buildings and new meeting space for parliamentarians, the PWC will feature security screening for visitors, a café, a gift shop, and an expanded suite of visitors' services on its first floor.

"You'll have spaces like classrooms, a multimedia theatre, exhibition spaces," explained the Library of Parliament's Kali Prostebby. "The Parliament Welcome Centre will become a destination in and of itself, including for people who don't actually go to Centre Block," if guided tours are full, for example, or if public access is suspended during a state visit.

With expanded security capacity and more sights to see, Prostebby said the PWC is expected to roughly double the number of annual visitors to Parliament, from an average of 350,000 to 700,000 people per year.

Detailed design plans for inside the space—including the kinds of materials that will be used—are still being finalized.

As part of the broad concept that has been set out, visitors will move around the rounded base of the Peace Tower—the otherwise unremarkable rock of which will be covered in some type of stone-cladding—to enter Centre Block through either its west or east courtyards, and will be able to peek up at the looming tower through skylights as they go.

New Senate viewing option to be offered

The Nov. 14 tour featured slightly less scaffolding than visits past, most notably in the



The base of one of three tower cranes that will be installed for construction of the underground Parliament Welcome Centre. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Senate Chamber where scaffolding previously erected to allow workers to access and investigate the state of the ceiling has been dismantled.

Currently stripped back to bare bricks, when it reopens, the Senate Chamber will have a few new features, including broadcast capability—something it didn't have pre-closure—and a new glass-enclosed viewing deck that will be accessible from Centre Block's fourth floor.

"We have numerous visitors from school groups to visiting dignitaries," said the Senate's Louise Cowley. The "glazed enclosure" will offer an opportunity to "look into the Chamber, hear about the proceedings, but not actually interrupt Parliament."

"This was something that we saw in various Parliaments around the world and decided to add here as well," said Cowley.

Previously, the Senate Chamber's interpretation booth sat in the space where the enclosure will be built, but that's been pulled out in light of plans to create a centralized simultaneous

interpretation space on Parliament Hill.

The Hill Times confirmed there are currently no plans for a similar enclosure in the House of Commons Chamber where interpretation booths pre-closure were situated at ground level.

As reported back in February, plans for the Red Chamber also include installation of new stained glass clerestory windows.

Scaffolding will have to return to the Senate Chamber down the road for the actual restoration of its gilded ceiling on site. Mohajer explained that it was taken down in the interim as it was determined to be cheaper to take down and put back up than to keep paying rental costs.

Restoration of the House Chamber's painted linen ceiling is a different undertaking altogether.

Brothers David and John Legris, second-generation painting conservators with Legris Conservation, talked reporters through the work that's gone into restoring the Lower Chamber's ceiling,

Continued on page 14



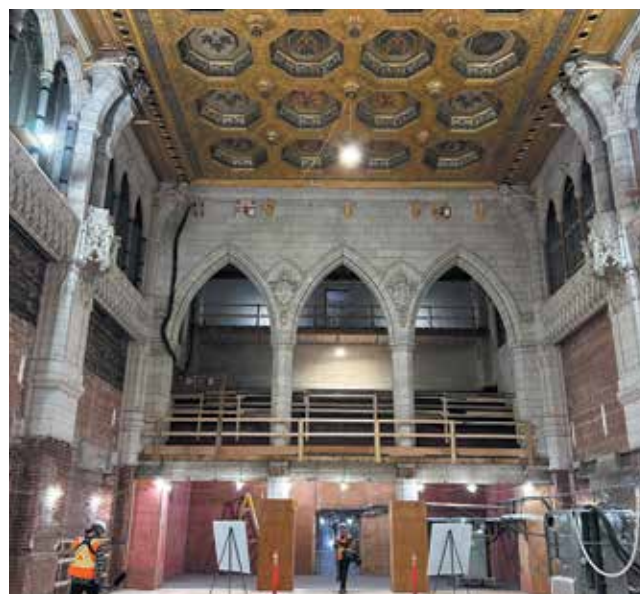
movement, and in some areas one millimetre, which is very, very hard to do but we have the best of the best helping us do this," said Coleman.

First tower crane coming soon for PWC

Excavation of the PWC pit—which started back in 2020—finished earlier this year, and the concrete base for the first of three tower cranes that will be installed to facilitate construction of the underground structure has now been poured.

The first crane is expected to go up within the next month, and will be used to lift materials and equipment in and out of the pit. Actual construction of the PWC is expected to start this fall, and will begin in the west.

Once the second tower crane is installed in the middle of the site, the ramp that's currently being used to access the pit will be removed, and workers will instead



A new glazed enclosure will be installed in the Senate Chamber, above its southern viewing galleries. *The Hill Times* photograph by Laura Ryckewaert



John Legris holds up a cross-section showing the different layers of the House Chamber's painted canvas ceiling. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"We've got to be very careful and meticulous on how we remove the bedrock," Bill Coleman, the structural lead for construction manager PCL/EllisDon, told the tour.

Multiple systems are in place to track the building's movement during this work, including liquid and laser level monitoring systems, a vibration monitoring system that helps to identify the source of vibrations, and temperature monitors to establish a baseline of the building's natural expansion and contraction and help differentiate movement caused by construction, he explained.

"We're trying to keep it under three millimetres of vertical

News

Rebuild underway: fresh peek inside Centre Block offers up new details

Continued from page 13

which has been removed and is currently being stored offsite in advance of conservation.

Removal of its painted linen panels happened in the midst of demolition of hazardous material abatement work inside the building, and presented hazards of its own. The ceiling itself is made up of multiple layers, with painted canvas stretched over wood straps mounted onto plaster, and with a layer of horsehair to help with sound absorption in between.

"It was about six-foot sections [that] we lowered to the table, and we could actually clean the back of the canvas [before rolling it up for removal], which had some kind of gross things falling from the ceiling," shared David Legris. "There was insect droppings, mice droppings, things like that—a lot of debris coming from the horse hair and upper plaster."

Restoration will also involve fixing the many water stains that mark the painted canvas.

While the heritage aspects of the old ceiling won't be altered, some new materials will be used as part of restoration work, namely replacing the old horse hair with "modern materials that follow fire safety" standards.

"The next step is doing that, and then eventually reinstallation," said David Legris.

What's old is new

Water damage is something that's affected spaces throughout Centre Block, including the House Speaker's dining room—a new stop on the tour.



The House Speaker's dining room as it looked before renovations. Photograph courtesy of the House of Commons of Canada

One of roughly 50 high-heritage spaces throughout Centre Block—and one of a suite of rooms designated for the Speaker's use, which is usually out-of-bounds to all but invited guests—the space offered a good example of the depth of heritage restoration being done in Centre Block alongside modernization.

Prior to renovations, the room featured wood and cream fabric panels along its walls, and a white ceiling with a decorative border.

But it didn't always look that way. Originally, the room's walls featured a painted design—a mixture of dark green, browns, and gold—and its ceiling had a gilded gold finish.

As PSPC heritage management officer Kate Westbury explained, "100 years worth of water damage

that occurred due to a flat roof condition that's above" prompted renovations in the 1960s that saw the wall paneling installed and the ceiling painted white.

Through renovations, the room's original details will be restored, including its gilded gold ceiling and stencil patterns that were previously painted over on its curving vaulted walls and have since been uncovered.

Speaking in "defence of those who came before us," Westbury noted that this is the first time since its construction that Centre Block has been fully cleared out for renovations, and previously, "small piecemeal changes had to occur because they needed to be done" during summer recesses or other sitting breaks.

"We're now given the luxury of being able to step back and make coherent design choices and decisions without having those types of pressures or constraints," she said.

Similar decisions to restore original details have been made throughout the building, and the list includes the restoration of natural light to certain spaces, including the second-floor Senate and House foyers. Both foyers feature laylight glass ceilings, which have been lit artificially since being covered over as a result of roof leaks decades ago.

Fill in the blanks?

Masonry restoration is another huge component of the Centre

Block project for both the building's stone walls and its decorative stonework.

As part of the Nov. 14 tour, reporters were introduced to Danny Barber, a stone carver and sculptor with PSPC's decorative arts team. He showcased a buffalo he spent the summer carefully carving, which will replace one from Centre Block's west wall that was too damaged for re-use after more than 100 years of Ottawa's freeze-thaw cycles, and wind and water erosion.

Barber showcased the different tools he used in sculpting the creature from a single block, ranging from "traditional calipers" to chisels, mallets, and other hand tools, as well as modern pneumatic tools.

"I'm very proud to have worked on this stone," he said. "This isn't the sort of thing that we get on our workbenches very often. We were born 100 years too late for that."

Almost 200 blank stone blocks were left throughout Centre Block prior to renovations as part of the original architects' desire to have the building be a living space upon which future generations could leave their mark.

Many of those blanks sit high on the walls of the House of Commons Chamber, and in turn, the current renovation project offers a unique opportunity to access and carve those stones.

PSPC has confirmed plans to carve up those blanks—with those in the House Chamber being eyed, in particular—but just how many will be carved and what the designs will feature is still to be determined.

Though a number has previously been floated, Mohajer said one idea currently on the table is to carve all 188 remaining blanks in Centre Block and instead leave the PWC as an area that can be added to by future generations.

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An area with particularly bad water damage in the House Speaker's dining room. The Hill Times photograph by Laura Ryckewaert



A close-up of the original painted finish on the walls of the House Speaker's dining room. Above are some of the stencil motifs that have been uncovered. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Danny Barber stands beside a buffalo he carved for Centre Block's west wall. The Hill Times photograph by Laura Ryckewaert

DEFENCE

With Donald Trump's return to the White House on the horizon, Canada's defence budget has been put under a harsher spotlight.

See inside for analysis of what the American president-elect means for the government's timeline to hit NATO's two-per-cent target.

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Defence Policy Briefing

Trump adds pressure to increase defence spending, but MPs and others consider U.S. NATO withdrawal unlikely

‘There’s no question’ Trump’s return as U.S. president puts more focus on Canada to reach a NATO defence spending target, says Liberal MP John McKay.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

With Donald Trump returning as the United States president in January, Canada will face pressure to increase its defence spending, which may include threats of America’s withdrawal from NATO, although MPs and experts on defence doubt the U.S. would actually go that far.

“[Trump] will proceed in his own fashion. I don’t know that it’s effective, but still, it’s loud,” said Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough–Guildwood, Ont.), chair of the House National Defence Committee. “Whether or not he does [withdraw from NATO], I still think that Canada increasing its military presence and commitment will auger well for improving our influence around the world.”

Trump will be sworn in as president of the U.S. on Jan. 20, 2025, and begin his second, non-consecutive term in the White House. When asked if Trump’s return will add pressure



In July, National Defence Minister Bill Blair issued a joint statement with the prime minister that Canada expects to reach a target of spending two per cent of GDP on defence by 2032. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

for Canada to increase defence spending, McKay said, “there’s no question about it.”

Canada has yet to reach a target of spending two per cent of GDP on defence—a commitment Canada originally made along with all other North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) members in 2014. The president-elect has previously referred to NATO members—including Canada—that haven’t met the spending target as “freeloaders,” and at a Feb. 11 rally said he wouldn’t defend NATO allies from Russia if they failed to pay their bills as part of the Western military alliance.

McKay told *The Hill Times* that it is absolutely valid for

Canada to be expected to “pick up its game,” and also be seen to be “more of a player in the international sphere.”

“I think it’s a real opportunity for Canada to play the role that it is inevitably destined to play, which is that of a middle power with respect from a great number of countries,” he said. “I think the cry by others for Canada’s presence is an absolute legitimate thing.”

During a NATO summit in July, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and National Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) issued a joint statement that Canada expects to reach the two per cent of GDP spending target by 2032.

However, reaching that target would require almost doubling defence spending, from \$41-billion on defence in the current fiscal year, to \$81.9-billion by 2032, according to a report from the parliamentary budget officer, published on Oct. 30.

When asked whether he has concerns about Trump’s commitment to NATO, McKay said the incoming president has “been saying a lot of things since 2016, and a lot of them don’t make a heck of a lot of sense.”

He added that the U.S. “can’t do it alone,” and that “they need us as much as we need them.”

“If NATO didn’t exist, you’d just have to invent it, because even with the military might of the United States—which is unparalleled—they need allies,” said McKay. “I think that the hard reality of allies and alliances will

meet the rhetoric, and the rhetoric will lose.”

In regard to Canada’s defence minister, McKay said Blair has “shaken things up” at the Department of National Defence, and cited actions such as launching the process for purchasing 12 under-ice capable submarines, which was announced in July.

“I think [Blair is] a real advocate in cabinet for defence spending, and I tend to think he might be a lonely voice, but still I do think he does really advocate hard,” said McKay. “I think the election of Mr. Trump has—in a perverse sort of way—worked to the benefit of the minister.”

NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen (London–Fanshawe, Ont.), her party’s national defence critic, argued that pressure for Canada to increase defence spending already existed regardless of Trump, and said she isn’t sure that more pressure has been added by his re-election. She added that Canada “needs to diversify its friendships far more.”

“I think that Canada ... we’re often really dependent upon the States, and Canada, as a middle power, I don’t think that we adequately use our soft power in the way that we should. But there’s a huge role there to play, and we need to start to focus on what we do very well, and we need to make stronger those allyships with others,” said Mathyssen. “We can’t change whether Trump becomes dictatorial in terms of NATO, or leaves NATO altogether. We’ll just have to rely upon those strengthened relationships as we go forward to do what we can.”

Erika Simpson, an associate professor of international politics at Western University in London, Ont., and president of the Canadian Peace Research Association, said Trump will likely push the NATO members to drastically increase their military spending, which could strain internal relationships within the alliance.

“We might see European members becoming more self-reliant, maybe setting up more regional alliances outside of NATO. But I doubt it, because NATO is the most powerful military alliance in world history. Ukraine, Sweden, Finland—they all want NATO membership due to the Russian threat. The big question, rather, is whether the U.S. would still uphold Article 5: an attack against one of us is an attack against all. If there’s any doubt there, NATO’s credibility as a military alliance could take a big hit,” she said in an emailed statement on Nov. 12. “Trump is going to push Canada to spend more on the military—spending that would primarily benefit cities like Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, and Esquimalt [B.C]. The rest of Canada wouldn’t see as much impact from increased

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Liberal MP John McKay says there is ‘a real opportunity for Canada’ to play its role as a middle power. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen says Canada doesn’t ‘adequately use our soft power in the way that we should.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



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Defence Policy Briefing

Trump adds pressure to increase defence spending, but MPs and others consider U.S. NATO withdrawal unlikely

Continued from page 16

spending on fighter jets, frigates, submarines, and high-technology equipment for the Armed Forces, like drones.”

Simpson said in the email that if Trump were to actually pull the U.S. out of NATO, that would be like a football team losing its quarterback.

If the U.S. were to withdraw from NATO, Canada and Europe might need to step up defence spending to levels comparable to Turkey, Greece, and Saudi Arabia—which each spend three per cent to 10 per cent of GDP—because of the threats posed by Russia and China, according to Simpson.

“Trump’s relationship with NATO has always been rocky. He’s openly critical, calling NATO ‘obsolete’ and keeps saying the United States pays too much. But he’s made the same sorts of complaints about other international deals, too—like NAFTA, and the Iran nuclear agreement,” she said in the email.

Simpson said that Trump’s bargaining style is to push until he gets what he wants, but diplomats around the world have caught on, and are better prepared for this “bullying approach.”

“In his last term as president, he even questioned the core commitment to NATO’s collective defence principle called Article 5. He criticized our prime minister, Justin Trudeau, in front of the world press for not putting up enough funding for NATO. So, given Trump’s track record, it’s not a stretch to think he could seriously consider pulling the U.S. out, especially if he feels NATO doesn’t align with his ‘America First’ stance,” she said in the email. “I think he’d likely start by threatening to pull out [of the alliance]—just to pressure the other 30 NATO allies, warning that if they don’t pay more, the U.S. might not defend them. That’s probably the real outcome here.”

David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and host of its *Defence Deconstructed* podcast, told *The Hill Times* that Canada is going to be in for significant pressure to increase defence spending irrespective of the outcome of the U.S. presidential election in November.

“During [Trump’s] first administration, he publicly called out Canada on defence spending, which is not something that is entirely unique. When [then-U.S. president] Barack Obama came and spoke to the Canadian Parliament, he exhorted Canadian parliamentarians for us to step up and said the world ‘needed more Canada,’ which is a polite call for us to invest more in our international policy instruments, including defence,” said Perry. “Trump



President-elect Donald Trump is ‘purely transactional,’ and Canada should ramp up investment, says professor Alistair Edgar. *White House photograph by Joyce N. Boghosian*

just removed the politeness and removed any of the ambiguity.”

Perry said that Trump has previously expressed criticism that too many NATO allies weren’t carrying their share of the burden, but “the facts on the ground have changed” since then, such as NATO allies increasing their own defence spending.

A total of 23 NATO members are expected to reach or exceed the two per cent of GDP target by the end of 2024, compared to seven in 2022 and just three in 2014, according to defence expenditure data released by NATO on June 17.

“Predicting what President Trump will do has proven to be highly dubious, but I would expect [changes in defence spending] to at least warrant some different appreciation or consideration,” he said. “The incoming president Trump is coming back to office amidst an alliance that is on a different investment and different burden sharing trajectory than when he left.”

CSG Senator Jean-Guy Dagenais (Victoria, Que.), deputy chair of the Senate’s National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs Committee, told *The Hill Times* that with Trump’s re-election, Canada should expect to be asked to do its part and respect the two per cent of GDP target.

“President Trump already mentioned during his first term that he was tired of playing the role of the world policeman alone. He’s not entirely wrong,” said Dagenais. “Canada must find a way to increase our co-operation with the Americans in monitoring the Arctic, particularly when

relationship with the United States. It’s time to respect this and make a special effort.”

Alistair Edgar, an associate professor in the department of political science at Wilfrid Laurier University in Waterloo, Ont., told *The Hill Times* that regardless of whether it was Trump or Vice-President Kamala Harris who’d won the Nov. 5 election, Canada was going to be under pressure to increase its defence spending going forward. But he said now that pressure will be “more visible and more vocal and less diplomatic.”

“It’s pretty hard to motivate people to come into a [Canadian Armed Forces] that is seen to be—in many instances—decrepit. That sense of being valued is not there,” he said. “It’s across the board. New equipment, new training, better salaries, better living standards, better housing. Some of these things have been improved on. Many of them haven’t.”

When asked about Trump’s NATO commitment, Edgar said the president-elect is “purely transactional.” He said it is clear Canada should ramp up investment toward ensuring Arctic sovereignty, no matter what.

“I think there’s a lot of strategic uncertainty about [Trump’s] commitment to the value of NATO as an institution. Canada needs to be aware of that,” said Edgar. “I don’t expect Trump to withdraw from NATO. I expect Trump to disparage NATO, to disparage the European allies to make the credibility of the NATO alliance far more questioned.”

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modernizing our radar stations in collaboration with NORAD.”

Dagenais said “it’s time for negotiation” in regard to a second Trump administration.

“It’s most hard to have a negotiation with our American neighbours, but I’m not afraid by this, and we don’t have a choice. We must make a negotiation with the administration of Trump,” said Dagenais. “We have a special re-

Canada defence spending and NATO data

- Slightly more than half of Canadians (53 per cent) say the country should increase its spending level on defence to two per cent of GDP or beyond, while 30 per cent would maintain the spending level at 1.38 per cent of GDP, and 16 per cent would reduce spending even further.
- Prior to his re-election as U.S. president on Nov. 5, Donald Trump said his government would not defend underspending NATO allies from Russian aggression. Overall, support for spending two per cent of GDP on defence rises from 53 to 65 per cent when Trump’s hypothetical is considered. This includes a two-fold increase among women between the ages of 18 and 34—from 22 to 47 per cent—and double-digit jumps among most age and gender groups.
- At least half of Canadians say that the country is “falling behind” with respect to its military power (58 per cent), diplomatic influence (57 per cent), and trade competitiveness (50 per cent). One area where Canadians largely feel Canada is “keeping up” is in foreign aid (48 per cent).

—Source: As NATO calls on allies to increase defence spending, Canadians prioritize importance of military readiness, released by the Angus Reid Institute on March 5.



Image courtesy of Rawpixel

- Among current Conservative Party of Canada supporters, roughly equal numbers say the country’s focus should be on improving trade ties (48 per cent) and military preparedness (46 per cent), while few care to focus on foreign aid (six per cent). Those who support the Liberals are divided equally between prioritizing aid (38 per cent) versus trade (38 per cent), while would-be NDP voters lean toward improving foreign aid delivery (48 per cent).

Trump 2.0 means Canada needs to get serious about spending two per cent of GDP on defence

Our NATO statistics have been tracking in the wrong direction since Donald Trump left the White House in 2021.

David Perry

Opinion



Donald Trump’s re-election as the United States president along with Republican majorities in the Senate and House of Representatives will put an acute emphasis on western allies’ share of the western defence burden. American focus on allied contributions to collective defence—and the NATO alliance’s investment pledge targets of spending at least two per cent of GDP on defence, and allocating 20 per cent of that expenditure to equipment purchases and related research and development (R&D)—has been pointed under Republican and Democratic administrations alike.

But none of this pressure was quite as acute as Trump’s during his first administration, during which he made a number of threats about the implications of allies not living up to their commitments, and was willing to call out Canada specifically and repeatedly on the issue. For a president who did not always convey a detailed grasp of some issues, he demonstrated a particular ability to focus on the share of GDP Canada was spending on defence, pointedly asking Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in a 2019 press conference, “What are you at, what is your number?” The president then leveraged that acute interest in the renegotiation of the North American Free Trade Agreement, with the successor Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement up for review in 2026.

Unfortunately for Canada, our NATO statistics are tracking

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Trump, China, Russia and national security threats to Canada

The election of Donald Trump as America's next president may finally shake Canadians out of their complacency.

David Pratt

Opinion



Why is that? Probably the best answer is that 90 per cent of Canadians live within 160 kilometres of the United States border, and justifiably feel quite safe knowing that the country next door spends well over \$800-billion on defence. Our shared border is described as the longest undefended border in the world. It might be said that Canadians have unofficially adopted the motto of Alfred E. Neuman, the principal cartoon character from *MAD* magazine, which was: "What, me worry?"

Should Canadians be more concerned? The answer is an emphatic "Yes!"

The election of Donald Trump as America's next president may finally shake Canadians out of their complacency on issues of war and peace, alliances, tariffs, and border issues. It is too early to speculate exactly which of Trump's pronouncements during the election campaign will make their way onto the White House and congressional agendas. At this point, however, there is every reason to believe that Trump

meant what he said during his election campaign.

A good bet is that the Russians and the Chinese are watching events unfold with an intense interest. Russia is likely pleased that Trump looks like he may pull the plug on U.S. military and financial support for Ukraine. The fact that he is no fan of alliances—NATO in particular—will also be welcomed by Russian President Vladimir Putin. If the U.S., under "America First," retreats into isolationism, there will be profound implications for NATO, and Euro-Atlantic security. Canada will have some decisions to make which will be neither easy, nor inexpensive.

Conversely, China is likely alarmed at the prospect of 60 per cent tariffs on all goods shipped to the U.S. In 2023, the value of Chinese exports to that country was just over half a trillion American dollars out of a total export trade of US\$3.38-trillion. If there is any doubt that trade policies can cause conflict, one need look no

further than the series of harsh economic measures taken by the Roosevelt administration against Japan in response to its aggression in China prior to the attack on Pearl Harbor on Dec. 7, 1941. These measures included a robust sanctions regime, embargoes of oil and steel, the freezing of Japanese assets in the U.S., and shutting the Panama Canal to Japanese shipping.

Russia and China were already national security threats to Canada, NATO, and the West prior to the U.S. election. Their authoritarian regimes, their disdain for democracy, their revanchist policies regarding Ukraine and Taiwan, their aggressive cybersecurity operations, their election interference and disinformation campaigns, and their desire to displace the U.S. as the pre-eminent world power qualify them as bona fide national security threats.

The unpredictability and the strategic ambiguity that Trump's victory has introduced sharpen the potential threat from both Russia and China. In such circumstances, and with such uncertainty, the chances of strategic miscalculations rise along with potentially catastrophic consequences.

The phrase "personnel is policy" originated with the administration of then-U.S. president Ronald Reagan. The people Trump either has appointed or is in the process of appointing to key positions are providing a strong indication of the direction his administration intends to follow. These key positions include his chief of staff, secretary of state, defense secretary, national security adviser, his United Nations ambassador, homeland security secretary, CIA director, and trade representative.

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Defence Policy Briefing

NATO spending targets, and the government's credibility gap

After successive unrealistic Liberal promises, there is no indication that the government will suddenly become interested in our Armed Forces.

Bloc MP
Christine
Normandin

Opinion



Achieving Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's pledge to meet the NATO defence spending target by 2032 is a project that will likely never come to fruition, writes Christine Normandin. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

On Oct. 30, the parliamentary budget officer revealed that the government would need to double its military spending by 2032 to meet its NATO commitment of allocating two per cent of GDP to defence. This would amount to an additional annual investment of \$41-billion.

Let's be clear: the government is far from meeting this target. A review of recent events highlights the government's credibility gap on this issue.

It might be tempting to start this retrospective by examining the embarrassing defence record

of the last Liberal decade, or even go as far as the earlier Conservative cuts that reduced military spending to around one per cent of GDP. To save time, let's begin with the release of the updated defence policy, *Our North, Strong and Free*, in April 2024.

This policy outlined a plan to reach spending 1.76 per cent of GDP on defence by 2029-30. However, most of the increase was deferred to the last years of the five-year outlook, allowing the current government to avoid funding efforts during its own term, which is nearing its end. Moreover, the policy offered no strategy to achieve the two per cent GDP target, falling short of allies' expectations and of the gov-

ernment's own 2014 commitment. Worse still, the parliamentary budget officer (PBO) revealed a few weeks later that using its own outlook for nominal GDP—which is broadly similar to the Finance Department's—rather than the growth projection used by the Department of National Defence in order to calculate the defence-to-GDP ratio, military spending would instead stand below 1.5 per cent for the five years to come.

In July, the prime minister attended the NATO summit in Washington, D.C. Pressed to commit to the alliance's two-per-cent target, he seemingly had no choice but to announce something. His solution? Nothing less than reaching the two-per-cent

goal by 2032. How will this target be met? It was—and still is—unclear. Why 2032? No reason, apparently.

What stands out about this announcement is that a serious government would have included this commitment in *Our North, Strong and Free*—released just three months prior—instead of capping spending at 1.76 per cent. This incongruity underscores the government's improvised approach to defence.

It is against this backdrop that the PBO conducted the new, deeper study released in October. Its first conclusion was that the government arrived at the 1.76 per cent figure comprised in *Our North, Strong and Free* by using exceptionally low economic growth forecasts, anticipating four years of economic recession, thus artificially inflating the defence-to-GDP ratio. Indeed, the PBO, using more realistic economic growth projections, concluded that military spending would instead stand below 1.58 per cent.

The second conclusion had to do with the government's July promise to reach the two-per-cent target. The PBO revealed that in order to achieve this target, the government has eight years to double the national defence budget. Of course, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau learned this at the same time as everyone else, hav-

ing made this promise on a whim. Doubling the budget over the next eight years is a colossal—yet clearly necessary—project.

Unfortunately, it's also a project that will likely never come to fruition. After successive unrealistic Liberal promises, and nine years of political inertia, there is no indication that the government will suddenly become interested in our Armed Forces. One just needs to remember that DND announced \$900-million in budget cuts in September 2023. This is the height of Liberal irony. Seven months before—unknowingly—promising to double the defence budget, nearly \$1-billion had to be diverted to cover a government budget shortfall. What better way to fuel public cynicism than with promises that no one believes anymore?

We will, therefore, have to be patient in achieving the two per cent target. Unfortunately, any future government interested in doing so will face a grim reality: our procurement system is—as former Liberal MP and retired General Andrew Leslie stated on Nov. 7—“arguably amongst the very worst in the world for the purchase of big stuff like combat equipment, aircraft, ships, submarines.” In fact, the system is so cumbersome and slow that it prevents us from spending the funds we laboriously manage to budget. The system must be completely overhauled. This will be a double challenge, and it will take more than off-the-cuff promises for us to succeed.

Bloc Québécois MP Christine Normandin is the vice-chair of the House Standing Committee on National Defence.

The Hill Times

Trump 2.0 means Canada needs to get serious about spending two per cent of GDP on defence

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in the wrong direction as the share of Canadian GDP devoted to defence has actually declined since Trump left the White House in 2021. In the fall of 2020, NATO data showed Canada expecting to spend 1.45 per cent of GDP on defence that year. For 2024, NATO documents are estimating we'll spend just 1.37 per cent of GDP on defence. Perhaps more troubling, NATO data shows that Canada is one of only two allies estimated to fall short of the other NATO target of spending 20 per cent of our defence budget on equipment purchases and R&D.

Notably, these statistics don't just look bad in their own right, but also in comparison to our European NATO allies. Four years ago, only eight members of the alliance were estimating they'd



During his first term as U.S. president, Donald Trump was willing to call out Canada specifically and repeatedly on the issue, writes David Perry. *Flickr* photograph by Gage Skidmore

spend two per cent of GDP on defence, and 11—including Canada—were falling short of both targets. This year, 18 countries are estimating they'll reach two per cent in 2024. Canada's ongoing

failure to live up to these commitments once had a lot of company, but today has almost none.

Bizarrely, all of this comes after successive announcements promising to ramp up spending

on the Canadian military. The last of these came this past July when Trudeau stated his expectation that Canada would reach the two per cent of GDP mark on defence spending by 2032. This was only a political statement—as yet unmatched by a commitment of the money needed to realize it—but it was nonetheless an important one as it was the first time a Canadian prime minister had done so since the 2014 Wales Summit. Obviously, a commitment of money will be needed for Canada to live up to its commitments.

But in making his statement about reaching two per cent by 2032, Trudeau also noted that his government had already committed \$175-billion in new money to defence following the release of *Strong, Secure, Engaged*, the government's plan for NORAD modernization, and the defence

policy update *Our North, Strong and Free*. So how—with such a massive commitment of funding—have our NATO statistics actually gotten worse?

The easiest explanation for why the commitment of funding hasn't translated into actual spending increases is that mindsets in Ottawa haven't changed. It's difficult to point to any tangible indicator that defence has increased in priority or that there is any more urgency to move quickly on defence issues. A review of our defence procurement system was initiated more than a year ago, but the results are still pending. So, too, is meaningful action to quickly grow the military's ranks. Bureaucracy appears to continue as normal.

This mindset needs to change, fast. A Canadian prime minister should expect to have Trump ask them what our new number is before long. That person better hope it's bigger than the last time he posed the same question.

Dr. David Perry is the president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, and host of the Defence Deconstructed podcast. He is also a co-director of the Triple Helix MINDs Collaborate Network.

The Hill Times

Trump, China, Russia and national security threats to Canada



A good bet is that Russian President Vladimir Putin, left, and Chinese President Xi Jinping are watching events unfold with an intense interest, writes David Pratt. *Photograph courtesy of the Kremlin*

ship with a focus on trade and security. U.S. isolationism and protectionism may force Canada to forge stronger security and trade links with its European NATO partners rather than relying solely on the Americans for global leadership on trade and security. Canada must also take on a role in support of alliance solidarity.

Tariffs could have disastrous implications for both the U.S. economy and international trade. Existing agreements, including Canada's, and others negotiated through the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade or the jurisdiction of the World Trade Organization have all been targets of Trump election rhetoric. U.S. isolationism could see the country abandon its role as a guarantor of Euro-Atlantic security—a role that it has played with astounding success in the nearly 80 years since the end of the Second World War. Russia and China are watching closely. The world holds its breath as it waits to see what Trump has in store for U.S. foreign and domestic policy. Right now, the prospects are not uplifting.

David Pratt is a former federal defence minister, and the principal of David Pratt & Associates. His consulting firm supports large and small companies in the defence and security sector with government relations, marketing, and communications.

The Hill Times

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Those appointed so far are hard core Trump loyalists—MAGA and “America First” people—who

are giving us a strong indication of the shape of things to come. A sharp right turn is in the offing. People like retired generals John Kelly, former chief of staff, and

James Mattis, former defense secretary, who were able to restrain Trump's worst impulses are nowhere to be seen. The guardrails have apparently vanished.

As these and other positions are filled, the Trudeau government will get a better sense of what it needs to do to address the future of the bi-national relation-

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Defence Policy Briefing

In a dramatically shifting landscape, it's time to highlight Canada's strengths in security and defence

Military threats have increased as a result of President Vladimir Putin's buildup of Russian forces and infrastructure in Russia's Arctic, writes Sen. Tony Dean. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*



We have smart business leaders, valuable resources, advanced technological and security capacity, and experience in the fields of defence and security.

ISG Senator
Tony Dean

Opinion



The election of Donald Trump to a second run as president of the United States is perceived in some quarters as potentially complicating—or even undermining—NATO's efforts to stand up to increasing military and economic belligerence on the part of Russia and China. It's timely to revisit those threats, and the extent to which Canada must reconsider both its place and its strategic advantages in a context of potentially shifting geopolitical alliances.

Canada's North is militarily exposed, economically underdeveloped, and threatened by climate change. Military threats have increased as a result of the

buildup of Russian forces and infrastructure in Russia's Arctic. This includes new runways and deep-water bases housing nuclear-powered submarines, which are submersible for long periods under Arctic ice and have ballistic missile capacity.

Russia—and presumably China—has developed new generations of hypersonic and hyperkinetic missiles which move faster than their predecessors, and assume erratic trajectories making them harder to target. There is consensus among military strategists and defence experts that Russia's missiles are likely designed to move through the Arctic to key U.S. targets, making early detection by new generations of Canadian ground and space-based sensors critical for continental security. This will require Canada's upgraded "over-the-horizon" ground-based sensors to be relocated further north to improve response time, with analytics being supplemented with artificial intelligence capacity—a field in which Canada is increasingly regarded as a leader.

There is also joint interest on the part of Russia and China in rare earth minerals and natural gas in the Arctic—materials that are of equal interest to Canada's allies including (and perhaps predominantly) the U.S.

As members of the Senate's National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs Committee heard in 2023, the Arctic is at an inflection point where the region has taken on essential strategic importance.

Canada's historical economic and defence partnerships with the U.S. remain strong, co-dependant, and unequal, but the alliance has held together. Committee members observed this first-hand at NORAD's headquarters in Colorado Springs, Col., in seeing a seamless shift from U.S. to Canadian operational command in this globally unique joint command structure. Trump's photo ops with Russian President Vladimir Putin are unlikely to change this. But Canada can't take anything for granted right now.

It is good news that our NATO allies see Canada's upgraded Arctic defence and security investments as part of its required two per cent of GDP commitment to defence spending, but that's unlikely to impress the incoming U.S. president. As pointed out in a recent *Globe and Mail* opinion column by Edward Greenspon, Janice Gross Stein, and Drew Fagan, the president-elect might be interested in maintaining Canada's dependable supply of uranium and potash, and joint ventures in the exploration and development of its critical minerals. This and a fast-tracked two per cent contribution to NATO might add up to a productive partnership, and reduce the threat of harmful tariffs and other belligerent measures.

Alongside Russia's war with Ukraine and its alliances with China in the Arctic, these two countries are among the most active in the realm of cybercrime, cyberinterference, and disinformation. At a more granular

level, the war in Ukraine has seen the ubiquitous deployment of cyberinterference, not only tracking cell phone movement, but also relaying propaganda and scam calls from loved ones about throwing in the towel and coming home.

Russian operatives are also implicated in broad-based disinformation campaigns—predominantly through social media—designed to undermine public confidence in democratic institutions. In this realm, Canada is regarded by its major allies as a leader in tracking and understanding these insidious activities, as well as in biting back through countermeasures. The government's Communications Security Establishment is regarded as at the forefront by its counterparts in the U.S., the United Kingdom, and Australia for its proficiency in cybersecurity and in combatting cyberinterference and cybercrime.

Canada might be under threat, but it has smart business leaders, valuable resources, advanced technological and security capacity, and experience and impact in the fields of defence and security. We are also blessed with a system of democratic governance. We will have to work hard to keep it that way.

In the interim, Canada remains a sound and reliable ally.

Independent Senator Tony Dean chaired the Senate's National Security, Defence, and Veterans Affairs Committee from December 2021 to November 2024.

The Hill Times

Canada's defence spending: the free ride is over

Building defence industrial capacity at home, and supporting Canadian firms to export that expertise to the world must become a strategic priority rather than an afterthought.

Christyn
Cianfarani

Opinion



"You're riding a first-class carriage with a third-class ticket," France's Ambassador to Canada Michel Miraillet once said of this country's approach to defence spending. That ride is about to come to a screeching halt.

If Washington's patience with vague commitments from Canada to spend two per cent of its GDP on defence annually hadn't already worn paper-thin, recent events on both sides of the border are likely to reduce it to zero.

One week before a majority of Americans opted to return Donald Trump to the White House, Canada's parliamentary budget officer (PBO) concluded that our government had relied on an economic forecast of unknown origin to project that defence spending as a percentage of GDP would rise to 1.76 per cent over the next five years. That projection was made public in April's defence policy update. Even at the time, some questioned how it could add up.

We now know the answer: It doesn't. Not even close.

According to the PBO, the economic growth projections used by the Department of National Defence (DND) assumed the economy would be in recession for the next four years. That hasn't happened in Canada since the Great Depression. For Canadians paying attention, it must have come as a shock since they are being told by the government that our economy is doing well and poised for solid growth. The projections must have caused an earthquake in the Finance Department, as they are completely at odds with their own forecasts. They also fly in the face of private sector forecasts, and

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Policy Briefing **Defence**

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those of both the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, and the International Monetary Fund.

PBO Yves Giroux acknowledged that “we couldn’t find anything even remotely that resembled the numbers for nominal GDP that DND was using.” So, the PBO corrected DND’s “erroneous” assumptions, which led to the conclusion that Canada’s defence spending will reach a peak of 1.58 per cent in five years. The difference between 1.76 per cent and 1.58 per cent of GDP might sound trivial, but in fact it is enormous. It equals about \$6.5-billion per year of defence funding.

One has to wonder if this was a case of misdirection, so that instead of focusing on Canada’s dwindling credibility as a nation, those of us paying attention would hone in on an obscure forecasting dispute.

Let’s not do that. Let’s talk about what’s really going on. Relying on dubious—or worse—devious economic growth assumptions reconfirms the views of many of our closest allies who think Canada doesn’t understand that having a credible plan to rapidly increase spending isn’t optional anymore, it is imperative. It may even suggest to them that Ottawa is playing games with numbers at the expense of our own national security and that of our allies.

Defence Minister Bill Blair. The mind boggles at ongoing and planned cuts to DND’s budgets which amount to \$800- to \$900-million per year, writes Christyn Cianfarani. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



By all accounts, the second Trump administration won’t hesitate to call our bluff. When he takes office in January, the former and incoming president has pledged to shame NATO laggards, and to move swiftly to jolt them

out of their complacency. That could start with his much-touted tariffs, and quickly escalate into highly unpalatable demands of Canada at the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement renegotiation table, withholding U.S.

funding for NATO, or—in Trump’s own chilling words—“I would encourage [Russia] to do whatever the hell they want.”

Even assuming a best-case scenario in which we don’t face immediate economic and national

security consequences, it’s time for the Canadian government to come clean. The world is more dangerous, and defence and deterrence are expensive. The PBO estimates Canada would need to increase current annual defence investment by \$15- to \$20-billion to reach two per cent of GDP by 2032-33.

In the meantime, the mind boggles at ongoing and planned cuts to DND’s budgets which amount to \$800- to \$900-million per year. Beyond a “commitment” to meeting NATO’s target, we need a transparent, year-over-year fiscal track that sets out how we get there—starting in 2025’s federal budget. In tandem, building defence industrial capacity at home, and supporting Canadian firms to export that expertise to the world must become a strategic priority rather than an afterthought. This is how every one of our allies operates in the defence market: defending themselves, contributing to collective deterrence, and boosting their own defence industries, which is now an official NATO priority.

Canada’s free ride is over. Maybe it’s time to extinguish the gaslight.

Christyn Cianfarani is the president and CEO of the Canadian Association of Defence and Security Industries, which represents more than 700 defence, security, and emerging technology companies across Canada.

The Hill Times

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Defence Policy Briefing

Defence spending in Canada has always been a precarious policy challenge for both Liberal and Conservative governments, often dominated by hesitation and inaction, write Jackson Walling and Mathieu Landriault. DND photograph by Corporal Kastleen Strome



Telling the whole story about boosting Canada's defence spending

Current polling should be viewed with a level of skepticism when questions relating to defence spending are not constructed with tradeoffs in mind.

Jackson Walling & Mathieu Landriault

Opinion



The election of Donald Trump as the American president will surely reactivate the debate about defence spending in Canada. While Canadians have overall been increasingly supportive of additional defence investments since 2022, reluctance persists. This resistance will be felt as the investments necessary to reach the infamous two-per-cent target are important.

On the eve of Halloween, the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) released its report on the fiscal implications concerning Canada's ability to meet NATO's two-per-cent defence spending target by 2032-33. The PBO report outlined a hypothetical scenario where Canada meets NATO's two-per-cent target in its current state. The scenario emphasized that for Canadian defence spending to reach the target, Ottawa would have to spend \$81.4-billion—close to double the amount spent in 2024-25. These projections were defined in *Our North, Strong and Free*, the Liberal government's newly touted defence policy document delineating that Canadian defence spending will reach 1.76 per cent of GDP by 2029-30. The support of the Canadian population is mixed: while we observed an increase in support for such measures recently, other priorities drag this support down, calling into question how much Canadians desire more defence spending.

Defence spending in Canada has always been a precarious policy challenge for both Liberal and Conservative governments, often dominated by hesitation and inaction. This pattern was somewhat alleviated with the election of the Stephen Harper Conservatives in

2006. However, reflecting Canada's defence spending history, the Harper government later introduced defence spending cuts, resulting in Canada's defence spending reverting back to one per cent of the country's GDP.

Today, Canadian defence has risen as a key ministerial portfolio for the Trudeau government as the security of the world continues to be unstable. The international environment remains persistently tense, with war transpiring in Ukraine and the Middle East, all while the geopolitical environment gears towards competition and conflict, rather than co-operation and peace.

Amidst this context, the Canadian media, political pundits, members of the opposition, and the Government of Canada itself have articulated that the country's populace endorses the idea of increasing defence spending to NATO's two-per-cent target. A number of surveys produced by domestic commercial polling firms have all articulated to a certain degree that Canadians are in favour of increasing our defence spending. The Russian invasion of Ukraine radically changed the prevalent level of support for defence spending, which had been stalled at about 20 per cent since

2012. On average, polls after the invasion reported an increase by 21 per cent in respondents' support for increased defence spending compared to the average from 2011 to 2021. Furthermore, support for such a policy option continued to increase in 2023-24 vis-à-vis 2022. Hence, the continuation of the Russia-Ukraine war—far from stabilizing after the initial shock of the invasion—has exacerbated this preference.

Although recent public opinion polls have shown Canadians are in favour of increasing defence spending, most of these surveys overlook other priorities people have articulated. Hence, support is lower by 27 per cent on average in polls conducted since February 2022 when defence spending is juxtaposed with other priorities. In other words, when Canadians are presented with other priorities—dental care, green technologies, housing—defence spending takes a back seat.

Overall, it is important to contextualize Canadian support for defence spending. It has risen as of late, but current polling should be viewed with a level of skepticism when questions relating to defence spending are not constructed with tradeoffs in mind. Moreover, the data shows that

when defence spending is put alongside other contemporary Canadian issues such as health care, housing, climate change, and immigration, defence spending takes a back seat. Defence spending is an important policy that any Canadian government should look at bolstering as we progress further into an insecure geopolitical environment. However, it is also important for Canadians to know that defence spending will lead to other ministerial mandates and portfolios having less attention with future governments. Thus, defence spending is important for our international relations, but so is telling the whole story, and informing Canadians of what defence spending may do to other issues they care about.

Jackson Walling is a PhD student at Trent University's Frost Centre for the Study of Canada. He holds a honours bachelor of arts in political science from Laurentian University, and a master's of social science in international relations from the University of Glasgow. His studies focus on public opinion and Canadian defence, particularly public opinion concerning Arctic security, Canadian foreign policy, and defence spending. Dr. Mathieu Landriault is director of the Arctic Policy and Security Observatory, and associate professor at the National School of Public Administration. He also teaches at the School of Political Studies and the Graduate School of Public and International Affairs at the University of Ottawa, as well as at the School of Conflict Studies at Saint Paul University. In addition, Landriault serves as network co-ordinator at the North American and Arctic Defence and Security Network.

The Hill Times

National Defence is in a deep hole, and we need to stop digging—fast

It seems that things have actually gotten worse in defence procurement with the tightening of rules, additional heavy oversight, and lack of trust with industry partners.

Guy Thibault

Opinion



Defence Minister Bill Blair. Current policies and practices are wholly inadequate and failing to ensure quick delivery of military capabilities, writes Guy Thibault. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The best way to get out of a hole is to stop digging. The government's recently released defence policy update, *Our North Strong and Free*, will not fix all the issues that have been identified with our Armed Forces, but the problems have been acknowledged, and we need to get on with the long and hard work ahead.

As the minister of national defence, Bill Blair, has repeatedly said, "absolutely more needs to be done." The question is: where is the sense of urgency?

While there are many very positive elements to highlight in the government's plans—including protecting our sovereignty in Canada's Arctic, a commitment to replace our submarine capabilities, and to pursue integrated air and missile defence—the fact remains that Canada is currently well behind our closest allies

in adapting to the deterioration in the international security situation. The good news is that the government knows that our military personnel strength, defence team institutional capacity, defence industry, operational capabilities, force posture, and readiness are not at the levels needed.

The not-so-good news is that after the initial fanfare of the release of the defence policy update that the Government of Canada needed to get defence investments to at least two per cent of GDP, it does not appear as if much has changed. We need to take out the proverbial jackhammer to the risk-adverse industrial-age bureaucracy and our many "penny-wise, pound-foolish" policies.

Sadly, when it comes to defence procurement, it seems that

things have actually gotten worse with the tightening of rules, additional heavy oversight, and lack of trust with defence industry partners in the aftermath of the ArriveCan debacle.

It took more than two years to deliver a supposedly "urgently needed" policy update, and while additional funds were committed over 20 years, most are back-end loaded to well into the future. We still have not heard anything about a Treasury Board Secretariat-led procurement review that was announced in April, and National Defence's budget continues to be squeezed as a part of the government-wide refocusing of departmental spending.

If the federal government wants to stop the "death spiral" that Blair has described, a good place to start would be the reinstatement of funding that has been

cut, and a massive "leaning forward" with operational, training, and sustainment budgets in order to get all hands on deck focused on military readiness and delivering on the policy implementation, rather than having staff looking under rocks to find savings in an institution that has been starved of resources for far too long.

While there were some welcome announcements to bring in new capabilities for the Royal Canadian Navy and Royal Canadian Air Force, as well as in areas of cyber, intelligence, and space, many other critical capability decisions appear to have been kicked well down the road as the government continues to "explore its options."

It is most concerning to see a lack of clear vision for the Army and virtually nothing said about the reserves.

Thanks to a number of urgent operational acquisitions, our NATO brigade commitment in Latvia will be moderately well-equipped, but the rest of the regular and reserve field forces are in a very poor state of equipment, sustainment, and personnel. It will be hard to attract, and—perhaps more importantly—retain talent in the Army if our soldiers do not see things getting better in their brigade units in terms of equipment and training.

While the government deserves credit for having increased defence budgets since 2015, given a historic dismal track record for actually spending the defence appropriation, we will never get to two per cent of GDP without fundamental changes to the risk-aversion and procurement processes involved in delivering on defence commitments. Experience has repeatedly demonstrated that current policies and practices are wholly inadequate and failing to ensure expeditious delivery of military capabilities.

Canada was not the only country to reap a "peace dividend" at the end of the Cold War, however, our underinvestments in defence have been deeper and longer than most.

It is time to stop digging, and significantly pick up the pace in rebuilding our Armed Forces as a whole-of-government priority—starting with fixing military procurement. The security of our nation, and future prosperity depend on it.

Lieutenant-General (retired) Guy Thibault serves as the chair of the CDA Institute-Canada's "Defence Think Tank," and president of the Conference of Defence Associations, a national not-for-profit advocacy organization representing 40-plus member associations with interests in strengthening national security and defence. He served as the Canadian Forces vice-chief of the defence staff from 2013-2016.
The Hill Times



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Many provinces say no details from feds on striking pharmacare deals over a month after law passes

Legislation was only ‘the tip of the iceberg’ because it was ‘really light on details,’ says former Ontario PC staffer Carly Bergamini. ‘Now all of the hard work begins.’

BY IAN CAMPBELL

More than a month after the government’s pharmacare legislation received royal assent, multiple provinces and territories say they haven’t yet been engaged in formal negotiations or received substantive details from Ottawa.

The Hill Times reached out to every provincial and territorial government asking about the status of their pharmacare talks with Ottawa.

As of Nov. 15, at least four jurisdictions said there have not been any formal discussions with the Liberal government about deals stemming from the new legislation, while another two said there have only been “preliminary discussions.” One province said Ottawa has been “coming to the table” for talks, and British Columbia—which remains in caretaker mode following its recent provincial election—signed a memorandum of understanding with Ottawa days before its fall campaign.

Michael Law, Canada research chair in access to medicines at UBC’s School of Population and Public Health, described the government’s pharmacare act, which received royal assent on Oct. 10, as “vague,” leaving a large amount of detail to be fleshed out in negotiations with each province. The patchwork of different programs across Canada complicates the picture, which he said means the federal program must build upon very different scaffolding in each jurisdiction.

He expects Ottawa would be able to reach agreements before the next election with a few friendlier provinces, but the amount of work required makes it unlikely a majority of agreements will be signed.

Ontario ‘yet to receive any details’

Canada’s largest province told *The Hill Times* it has been waiting for months to have “substantive conversations” about concrete details.

“Ontario, like many provinces, has yet to receive any details on the federal government’s proposal since they tabled their bill in



On Oct. 10, Health Minister Mark Holland’s Pharmacare Act received royal assent, but many provinces say they haven’t yet heard from Ottawa about signing a deal. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

February,” said a spokesperson for Ontario PC Health Minister Sylvia Jones in an email.

Jones’ office said it is “prepared to work collaboratively with the federal government to reach a deal,” but pointed to the key hurdle identified by many policy experts and political players: a lack of detail in Ottawa’s pharmacare act.

“The legislation alone does not provide enough detail,” said the spokesperson. “Our hope is that we can begin substantive conversations as soon as possible [to] reach that goal.”

A spokesperson for the Saskatchewan government, led by Premier Scott Moe’s Saskatchewan Party, offered a similar view.

The province is “open to discussions,” but “the federal government has not yet formally engaged with Saskatchewan on these details,” said the spokesperson.

A spokesperson for Nunavut’s Department of Health, led by Minister John Main, also said that

negotiations on a deal are not yet underway, but that it is “committed to working through implementation details to understand how such a program could best serve Nunavut’s unique health-care needs.”

“The Government of Nunavut has yet to engage in formal talks regarding a pharmacare agreement specific to Bill C-64,” said the spokesperson. “However, Nunavut is interested in collaborative discussions to ensure alignment with existing programs.”

Alberta UCP Health Minister Adriana LaGrange had initially stated in February that her province would opt out of the program, before Premier Danielle Smith appeared to open the door to some compromise in March.

A statement from a spokesperson for LaGrange indicated that may still be the case, but the province is looking for something substantively different from what Ottawa has in the window right now.

“Alberta is willing to work with, and discuss ways, that the

federal government can invest in Alberta’s existing comprehensive pharmacare programs and help us expand coverage to those who need it most,” said the spokesperson.

“Unfortunately, the federal government has yet to share its vision for the future of national pharmacare beyond coverage for contraceptives and diabetes medications, and how pharmacare will be financially supported in the long term while respecting Alberta’s current offerings.”

Until Ottawa makes such a proposal, the spokesperson called instead for increased health-care funding. “Without meaningful consultation and true collaboration, Alberta will continue to call on the federal government to provide predictable, sustainable, unconditional health funding,” said the spokesperson.

‘Preliminary discussions’

A spokesperson for Prince Edward Island’s department of Health and Wellness—which is led by PC Health Minister Mark McLane—said there have been “preliminary discussions” but “P.E.I. is awaiting more detailed information from Health Canada on agreement parameters, including key concerns like provincial/territorial funding allocations.”

The spokesperson added it would be important to “determine how the federal program will interact with existing provincial drug programs.” P.E.I. is one of the provinces that already has a provincial pharmacare plan in place.

In New Brunswick, newly elected Liberal Premier Susan Holt met with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) on Nov. 12. According to CBC News, in remarks following the meeting Holt expressed interest

in several federal programs—including the school food program and pharmacare—but said pharmacare will require more detailed discussions, meaning that it may take more time.

A spokesperson for the New Brunswick health ministry told *The Hill Times* there have been “preliminary discussions” on pharmacare.

Law said that reports like these indicate the Liberals face a tough road ahead to get most deals done before the next election.

“The fact that they’ve not even started discussions [in some provinces] doesn’t bode well for coming to a conclusion,” said Law.

He said it’s not uncommon for budget items requiring bilateral agreements to remain on the shelf for years. As an example, he pointed to the federal government’s drugs for rare diseases programs—launched in early 2023—which also requires bilateral deals. To date, B.C. is the only province to reach an agreement with Ottawa.

British Columbia and Manitoba lead the pack

Only two provinces appear to have been actively working with Ottawa to date—both led by Western NDP governments.

A spokesperson for Manitoba NDP Health Minister Uzoma Asagwara said that province is speaking with federal counterparts.

The passage of the pharmacare legislation is “good news for Manitobans, and we’ve been discussing this initiative with the federal government,” said the spokesperson. “Our government has been working hard to provide better access to healthcare in Manitoba and are happy that the federal government is coming to the table.”

Meanwhile, the B.C. government is in post-election caretaker mode until Nov. 18, meaning it cannot offer a substantive comment until that time. However, on Sept. 13—just days prior to entering B.C.’s writ period and before the pharmacare legislation became law—the NDP government entered into a memorandum of understanding with Ottawa to proceed with a pharmacare deal.

The governments for Yukon, Northwest Territories, Quebec, and Newfoundland and Labrador did not reply with comments to *The Hill Times*. Nova Scotia is presently in a provincial election campaign. The three political parties offered a range of responses, with the governing PCs, who are leading in the polls, stating that they “won’t rush this” if returned to government.

Holland’s office provides multiple statements on status of talks

In response to questions from *The Hill Times* about the status of talks, a spokesperson for Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.) said in a Nov. 14 statement provided prior to publication that the government has been “clear in



A spokesperson with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith’s government says the federal government ‘has yet to share its vision for the future of national pharmacare.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

News

Not if, but when: Foreign Affairs Committee keys in on question of Palestinian statehood

The House Foreign Affairs Committee has held four meetings looking into the recognition of a Palestinian state.

Continued from page 1

Francesca Albanese was initially called to speak in front of the committee, but that invitation was later rescinded.

Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) legal adviser Louis-Martin Aumais told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Nov. 7 that recognizing a Palestinian state is a political decision, and wouldn't be a legal one.

"Where Canada decides to recognize an entity as a state, it does so clearly and expressly. The manner of the recognition is a political decision and can take a variety of forms, such as the exchange of diplomatic communication, or an official statement by the government, and other forms," said Aumais, who remarked that recognizing a state is done to remove, and not to create, uncertainty.

More than three-quarters of UN member nations recognize the State of Palestine. On May 28, Ireland, Norway, and Spain announced their recognition, which was followed by Slovenia on June 4, and Armenia on June 21.

"The decision by Canada—as a state—to recognize another state is a matter that can be taken now at the moment of the government's choosing," Aumais said.

Historically, Canada has taken a position that recognizing Palestine could only come after a peace process that led to a two-state solution, but Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said in May that stance could be altered, and recognition could come before the end of a two-state solution process.

NDP MP Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), her party's foreign affairs critic, said on Nov. 7 that all the government needs to recognize Palestine is a letter and a microphone, citing the speed at which Canada recognized Kosovo as an independent state.

"We know that Canada was among the first to recognize Kosovo. Canada at the time cited human rights violations, stability, and the principle of self-determination," she said, questioning why the government hasn't applied the same principles to recognize Palestine.

When the committee passed a motion to conduct its study,



Officials from Global Affairs Canada, led by Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee that recognizing a state is a political decision, and not a legal one. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

it agreed that the committee supports the "recognition of a viable and independent state of Palestine," as well as supporting "Israel's right to exist."

Conservative MP Michael Chong (Wellington-Halton Hills, Ont.), his party's foreign affairs critic, noted on Nov. 7 that Canada's recognition of Kosovo came after its G7 partners did so. Canada and Japan recognized Kosovo on the same day on March 18, 2008—France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the United States had already done so the month before.

"Currently, none of Canada's closest allies, and none of our G7 partners have recognized Palestinian statehood," he said.

Alexandre Lévêque, GAC assistant deputy minister for Europe, the Middle East, and the Arctic, told the committee the issue of recognizing Palestine is "very live" among Canada's closest allies.

"What I can say, however, is that this issue is very live, not just in our capital, but discussed in a very intense way in the capitals of the very countries ... [like] France, the United Kingdom, Germany, a few European partners, Australia, New Zealand. These are very live conversations," he said during the same Nov. 7 meeting.

"We're comparing notes. We're talking to each other, and we're weighing the considerations as a group of very like-minded countries," he said.

He said it is a "fair statement" to remark that "what others are doing and how they are planning their pronouncements on this is an important consideration."

Lévêque hinted that there will be thought given to the changes expected out of the new Trump administration.

"I don't know the kind of conversations that are taking place among the transition team that is being formed in Washington. We can expect a number of changes to the United States' policy towards the Middle East," he said.

U.S. president-elect Donald Trump named former Arkansas

governor Mike Huckabee, an ardent supporter of Israel, as his ambassador to the country, whose appointment was enthusiastically welcomed by members of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government.

Albanese appearance cancelled

After inviting Albanese to appear, the House Foreign Affairs Committee decided in a closed-door meeting on Oct. 24 to cancel that invitation, instead offering the opportunity for the special rapporteur to submit a written response.

Critics have alleged that some of Albanese's comments concerning Israel are antisemitic as she has drawn parallels between Israel and Nazi Germany.

"Because of their history, one might have thought Germans [and] Italians would be at the forefront of the opposition to the Netanyahu-driven assault on Gaza, which is now metastasizing across the region," she wrote in an Oct. 14 post on X. "Our collective obliviousness to what led, 100 years ago, to the Third Reich's expansionism and the genocide of people not in conformity with the 'pure race' is asinine. And it is leading to the commission of yet another genocide, yet another regional war and potentially yet another global one."

Deborah Lyons, Canada's special envoy for Holocaust remembrance and combatting antisemitism, wrote in an Oct. 23 post on X that she was "horrified" to see Albanese engage in "Holocaust distortion and inversion." Canada's diplomatic mission in Geneva called Albanese's remarks "unacceptable and incompatible with her duty of impartiality, probity, and good faith as an independent special rapporteur."

Albanese has denied charges of antisemitism. In an Oct. 25 post on X, she wrote that "critique of Israel's actions and policies does not render one antisemitic, especially as Israel continues to commit atrocities without respite."

While in Ottawa on Nov. 5, Albanese said that government officials refused to meet with her.

Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, Que.), vice-chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, put forward a motion for the group to meet with Albanese informally, but it was voted down.

"Everyone knows that this person may have made highly controversial remarks. That said, she represents the United Nations and certainly has information about human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories. She is definitely able to provide us with relevant information," he said during a Oct. 29 committee meeting.

Liberal MP Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.), parliamentary secretary to Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.), was among those who rejected the idea.

"We requested that she submit any comments she had in writing, which I think would then go into evidence, whereas an informal meeting would not," he said, describing any information that Albanese could submit as "helpful."

During her visit to Ottawa, Albanese met with 11 members of the Canada-Palestine Friendship Group, which included Liberal, Bloc, and NDP MPs.

"I work with my NDP colleagues to push Canada to take a stronger position for ceasefire, human rights and aid to end the deliberate starvation," NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.) posted to X following a Nov. 5 meeting with Albanese.

She also met with a group of Senators, including some who sit on the Upper Chamber's Foreign Affairs Committee, including Independent Senator Yuen Pau Woo (British Columbia), who questioned Senate government representative Marc Gold (Stadacona, Que.) about why no members of the government had met with her.

"Why is this government—which claims to uphold human rights and the rule of law—not willing to hear from a UN official who has arguably the most detailed understanding of historic human rights abusers in Palestine?" Woo asked in the Chamber on Nov. 5.

In response, Gold reiterated comments made by Lyons and Canada's mission in Geneva.

Former Canadian envoy backs Palestinian recognition

Former ambassador Jon Allen, who served as Canada's top dip-

lomati in Israel from 2006 to 2010, told the House Foreign Affairs Committee on Oct. 29 that "two states for two people" is the only way to end the conflict.

"Recognizing a Palestinian state now is about sending a message of hope and commitment to Palestinians, and sending a clear message to Israel and others that simply managing the conflict—Israel's policy for the last 17 years—is not an option and never was," he said.

He said the Hamas-led attacks on Israel on Oct. 7 show the dire consequence of not creating a pathway to end the conflict.

Allen said recognition won't resolve final status issues between Israel and Palestine, but it will send a "clear message" of where Canada and the international community want to go, and that Israel and Palestine must move in that direction.

Eylon Levy, a former spokesperson for the Israeli government, told the House committee that recognizing Palestine would be a "terrible mistake"

"When Norway, Ireland, and Spain took that step, they were effectively telling Palestinians, 'Burn more Jewish families alive, and we will reward you,'" he told the committee on Oct. 31.

McPherson refused to question Levy and another pro-Israel witness whom she said was invited to the committee by the Conservatives, calling them "extremist Netanyahu apologists." Instead, McPherson read a statement honouring Canadian-Israeli peace advocate Judih Weinstein who was killed in the Oct. 7 attack.

"Our job is to find a pathway to peace. Our job is to learn from peace builders, not warmongers, not those who defend atrocities. This must end," McPherson told the committee.

Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs president and CEO Shimon Koffler Fogel told MPs a two-state solution has to come through direct negotiations.

"Statehood cannot be treated as an entitlement; it must come with the obligations of responsible governance. Recognizing a Palestinian state without first establishing structures for effective governance would risk creating a failed state from the outset," he said on Nov. 5.

Oliphant told the committee that the question it is exploring is not whether to recognize a Palestinian state, but when to do so.

"The question is not if we will, or whether we will or not; we will. Canada will. I am convinced of that, so the question is about when we do it," he said. "We have talked about a negotiated recognition. I'm not a student of history, but I don't believe that recognition of states is always negotiated. Canada will unilaterally, as we have always done, recognize states. We did that with Kosovo, and we've done it with a number of places."

The committee met in camera on Nov. 19 to discuss drafting instructions for its final report.

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NDP won't be 'baited' as Tories attack Singh amid Liberal labour moves, says MP Green

NDP labour critic Matthew Green says his party won't be pushed to vote down the Liberal government by Conservatives who 'hide when workers are in a fight.'

Continued from page 1

economy over \$1-billion every day. But sending the issue to binding arbitration is taking the "weasel route," attempting to "pit workers against workers," says NDP MP Matthew Green.

On Nov. 12, Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) ordered an end to the work stoppages at Canada's largest ports in British Columbia and Quebec, and ordered the negotiating parties to binding arbitration to impose a resolution on the years-long disputes.

On Nov. 4, the B.C. Maritime Employers Association locked out 1,200 International Longshore and Warehouse Union workers—effectively halting all West Coast port activity—after union members voted down what the employer said was a final contract offer.

Out east at the Port of Montreal, there have been seven strike notices and three employer actions—including a lockout—since Sept. 30, with negotiations stretching back more than a year to the beginning of September 2023.

The longest of the three disputes, at the Port of Quebec, has been ongoing for more than two years. Since the work stoppage began in 2022, the employer has used replacement workers to maintain near-normal operations.

During his press conference announcing the move, MacKinnon said the negotiating parties across the three disputes had demonstrated "an alarming lack of urgency" with negotiations not progressing towards new agreements.

"These work stoppages ... are impacting our supply chains, millions of Canadian jobs, our economy, and our reputation as a reliable and international trading partner," MacKinnon said, noting that the stoppages cost the Canadian economy more than \$1.3-billion in trade every day.

While MacKinnon reiterated his government's commitment



NDP MP Matthew Green says the Liberals have 'cut workers out at the knees' by sending the port disputes to binding arbitration. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to fair collective bargaining, he added that "there is a limit to the economic self-destruction that Canadians are prepared to accept."

"The best deals are always the ones that are negotiated. But when deals are delayed or never happen ... there is an obligation to intervene," MacKinnon said, noting it is his "duty and responsibility" as minister to "secure industrial peace ... the national interest of all Canadians, and to promote conditions favourable to the settlement of the parties' disputes."

That particular language mirrors Section 107 of the Canada Labour Code, which MacKinnon invoked to refer the disputes to the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB), order the resumption of operation at all three ports, and settle their collective agreements by imposing final and binding arbitration.

Noting that this marks the second use of those powers this year following the first invocation to deal with the national rail strike between CN Rail and the Teamsters this past summer, MacKinnon said he expects and welcomes debate on its use.

However, since the announcement, that debate has been particularly one-sided, at least in the political arena.

While neither Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) nor his party's labour critic, MP Kyle Seeback (Dufferin-Caledon, Ont.), have released a statement on the decision, they've instead taken shots at NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) on social media for his party's support of the Liberal government.

Neither Poilievre nor Seeback's office responded to *The Hill Times*' request for comment.

In Singh's own statement, released shortly after MacKinnon's press conference, he accused the Liberals of "overriding union rights," adding that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) had again made it clear "to the ports CEOs and all big corporations—being a bad boss pays off."

"The Liberal government will always cave to corporate greed and always step in to make sure the unions have no power," Singh's statement continues. "Unlike the Conservatives and Pierre Poilievre, who hides when workers are in a fight, the NDP will always stand shoulder-to-shoulder with working people and unions."

Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.), his party's labour critic, told *The Hill Times* the Liberals have taken the "weasel route," attempting to "pit workers against workers."

"Whether it's grain or potash handlers, they all know that if the Liberal government does that to people working on the ports and rails, they will absolutely do it to them, too," Green said. "This is about a Liberal government that will continue to tip the scales in corporate interest away from the working class."

Green said the primary issue with forced arbitration is that it leaves tensions unresolved and ongoing while creating a culture where "management doesn't feel like they have to negotiate."

"[Employers] know they've got a weak Liberal government that's going to buckle every time there's even a little pressure on the economy," Green said. "Why would they bother actually bargain-

ing when you can just have the Liberals cut the workers out the knees and send them into forced arbitration?"

While Green said the NDP won't be "baited" by the Conservatives into bringing down the government, he added that the Liberals' decision won't do them any favours if they are looking for support to end the current logjam in the House of Commons, much less anything else beyond that.

"This was the trouble that we were having coming out of the summer," Green said. "We knew that over the last couple of months that they were dragging their heels, and they just weren't adhering to the spirit of the agreement."

Green said the Liberals have once again demonstrated that "in the struggle between working-class people and corporate bosses, CEOs, big corporations, the Liberals will always take the side of management."

"They can talk about the middle class all they want, but [the NDP] know[s] that the only way for people to actually get into the middle class is with unionized support, collective bargaining, and democratic workplaces," Green said.

Chan, a senior director for the transportation sector at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, told *The Hill Times* that, considering how long the federal government had allowed the stoppages to continue, MacKinnon had given the parties plenty of time to reach their own agreements.

"The strike action in Montreal began on Oct. 31, [and] at the ports of British Columbia on Nov. 4, but the government didn't intervene until Nov. 12," Chan

explained. "That is a pretty long time to let things go on, and to let that trade be disrupted."

Chan added that similar to the rail strikes, which cost an estimated \$341-million per day to the Canadian economy, it was imperative for MacKinnon to "step in to protect the public interest."

"We're talking about a massive amount of trade disruption; it really was a perfect storm," Chan said, referring to the more than \$1-billion in trade being lost per day across the three port disputes.

Chan also said that the Liberals' decision isn't dissimilar to the previous use of back-to-work legislation to resolve other large labour disputes, but noted that isn't likely to happen given the current situation in the House of Commons.

"The government had to intervene using one tool or another to protect the Canadian national interest, and this is the tool that they had at their disposal," Chan said, noting that there have also been many more disputes that have been resolved on their own, without government intervention.

However, he said that in the past few years, the chamber has observed the negotiation process becoming more complicated and contentious, with a large spike in work stoppages beginning in 2023.

According to Employment and Social Development Canada data, there were 778 work stoppages last year across the public and private sectors, involving 540,951 workers, with an average duration of 25 days, for a total of more than 6.5-million lost work days. Of those stoppages, only 174 were terminated during the 2023 calendar year.

In comparison, there were only 176 work stoppages in 2022, averaging 58 days in duration across 206,649 works and 1.89-million lost work days.

Chan said that despite those complications and the increased instances of work stoppages, the vast majority can still be resolved at the negotiating table without government intervention.

Of the 729 work stoppages in effect between January and August of this year—including those not resolved in 2022, but not inclusive of this summer's rail strike—625 of those have been resolved. Additionally, the average duration of those stoppages has been reduced to eight days, with 974,659 work days lost between 418,345 striking workers.

"We really want to see these negotiations come to an agreement, and when they do, we're thrilled because that's the best outcome for everybody," Chan said. "But with a country like Canada that is so dependent on trade, you can't let these things go on and let massive disruptions shut down the economy and risk Canadian businesses, jobs, and communities."

Canadian Labour Congress president Bea Bruske told *The Hill Times* that while she appreciates the economic and business impact of the port strikes, "the reality is that we are training

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News

Review of solitary confinement law a year late as report finds prisoners' rights still violated

The 2019 law creating Structured Intervention Units said a review must begin in June 2023, but efforts by Senators and advocates to get government accountability has resulted in 'non-answers,' says Senator Salma Ataullahjan.



Senators who studied human rights in federal prisons recently accused Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc and his government of 'indifference to the continued use of solitary confinement.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 1

Senators on the Human Rights Committee have redoubled their calls on the Liberal government and Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) to answer for the system's failures, and to address outstanding recommendations outlined in their 2021 report on prisons.

The Oct. 24 missive said the federal government continues to permit practices that courts have called "cruel and unusual," and said the Senators are "profoundly disturbed" by the "apparent indifference to the continued use of solitary confinement."

The June 2019 law—created in response to rulings that found Canada's "administrative segregation" violated prisoner rights—instead put in place Structured Intervention Units (SIUs). The legislation outlined in what circumstances people could be placed in SIUs, intending to limit their use, and included strict monitoring requirements and rules to guarantee inmates time outside of these cells.

The Senators pointed to the latest report from LeBlanc's independent advisory panel on the new system, which came to the "same conclusions" as its six previous studies: SIUs "are not addressing the problems they were designed to address."

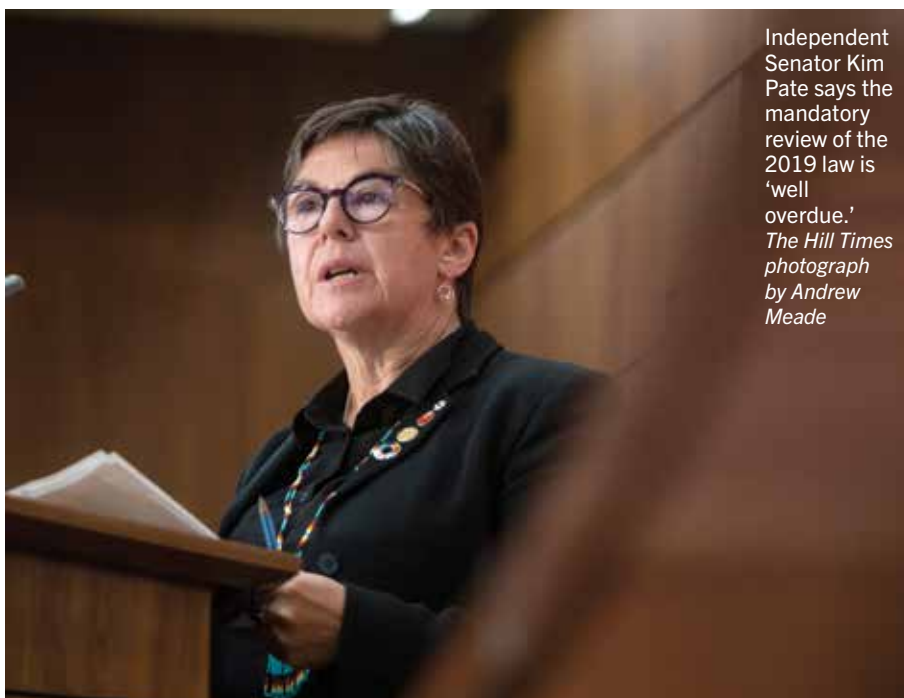
Most inmates aren't receiving the four hours outside of cells, which is supposed to be "a key feature" separating SIUs from administrative segregation. In those cases, inmates "typically experience one of the key negative features of the practice of solitary confinement—less than two hours out of cell," said the July report, which found "no meaningful or

consistent improvements in operations over four years."

SIUs "are not working as intended, and ... they are also not improving. The problems are fundamental, not peripheral," the report concludes.

ISG Senator Kim Pate (Ontario) described the government's actions on prisons as "negligence."

"We see the practice of solitary confinement is actually continuing in our prisons, and the very behaviour that gave rise to court cases that challenged the use of segregations ... actually persist in our prisons," Pate said in an interview with *The Hill Times*, adding the government's response to the Senate committee failed to address "a single recommendation" on SIUs.



Independent Senator Kim Pate says the mandatory review of the 2019 law is 'well overdue.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Mandatory review 'well overdue'

The 2019 law also requires a "comprehensive review" by a committee "at the start of the legislation's fifth year in force"—June 2023—with a report due within one year of the review, which would have been this past June had the review been launched on time.

Catherine Latimer, the John Howard Society's executive director, has been asking MPs about the delay for months, trying to understand how parliamentarians could avoid conducting a review that's written into law.

"It is very concerning when Parliament itself decides not

to respect the laws that it has passed that bind them. That's very strange to me," said Latimer, who leads the charity that advocates for "just, effective, and humane corrections and criminal justice."

"They have a lot of procedural qualms about how to actually get going. But it seems to me when you pass a law that has that as a binding requirement, it isn't an option."

While Latimer expressed frustration with Parliament, Pate noted that by convention, it's typically the responsible minister who triggers such a review. But the language in the law is sufficiently vague that it's not clear who is ultimately responsible for launching the review, or which committee. It doesn't say it has

to be the committee that originally studied the law, and notes it could be a Senate or House committee, or both.

Still, Pate said the buck should stop with LeBlanc to kick off the review of the law governing the SIUs under his jurisdiction, and put that question to the government in the Red Chamber on Oct. 31.

"We are now well overdue. When will the government be taking steps to meet this statutory obligation, and which parliamentary body?" she asked.

Senator Marc Gold (Stadacona, Que.), the government representative

in the Upper Chamber, said he did not "have a specific timeline," but would bring it to LeBlanc's attention.

Procedural runaround

LeBlanc's press secretary did not answer questions from *The Hill Times* about the review, and instead sent questions to Public Safety Canada, whose spokesperson said it was in Parliament's hands.

"The fifth-year review is an integral and valued component of Bill C-83. The timing of this review will be dictated by Parliament," Noémie Allard said in a Nov. 6 statement.

The language in the bill says the committee "may be designated or established," which suggests some body—or some person—should be doing the designating. But the law is silent on that responsibility.

The Hill Times contacted both the chair and vice-chairs of the House Public Safety and National Security Committee—which studied Bill C-83 in fall 2018—but did not receive a response.

Latimer wrote to House Speaker Greg Fergus (Hull-Aylmer, Que.) on April 26, as the review neared the year-late mark, noting her organization's understanding that it is "the Speaker's responsibility to ensure that Parliament's legal obligations are met."

In a May 16 letter, Fergus rebuffed that assessment, and told Latimer, "It is not the Speaker's role to determine the business of committees."

Instead, he said the rules outline that only committees or the House of Commons—through the adoption of a motion—"can decide to undertake a study, including a study to conduct a parliamentary review."

He noted Latimer's contact with both LeBlanc and Justice Minister and Attorney General Arif Virani (Parkdale-High Park, Ont.), and advised she could also reach out to the members of a committee—unspecified in the letter—"which may eventually study the legislation."

Latimer said it would make sense for that work to fall on the House Public Safety Committee, and proactively reached out to a Liberal MP to get clarity. In a June 18 email seen by *The Hill Times*, the MP replied that the committee's "chair wrote back to me to say that the legislation speaks to a committee that 'may be designated' but has not been so. He [the chair] does not assume it will be [the Public Safety Committee]."

Conservative Senator Salma Ataullahjan (Toronto, Ont.) said Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) and his cabinet have abdicated their responsibilities, and instead offered "glib and incomplete responses" to the Senate committee's 71 recommendations, several of which addressed SIUs.

Ataullahjan, who chairs the committee, said the Oct. 24 letter could have used stronger wording. It accused the government of

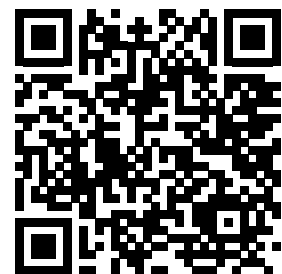
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News

Many provinces say no details from feds on striking pharmacare deals over a month after law passes

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its intention to reach agreements with all provinces and territories as soon as possible." He did not provide specifics about timelines or which governments Ottawa was presently engaging to formally reach a deal.

The spokesperson said levels of funding and types of medications would be key points in the discussions. He pointed to the lists of contraceptives and diabetes medications that were released in February when the pharmacare legislation was tabled, saying these lists would serve as "a starting point for discussions and represent a minimum coverage level."

The legislation also required the government to name an expert panel within 30 days of the bill becoming law. On Nov. 14, Holland's office announced the panel members, tasked with delivering a report by Oct. 10, 2025.

Following publication, Holland's office sent an additional comment on Nov. 15, saying "there have been conversations between the federal government and every province and territory on pharmacare. These meetings are productive and the work is ongoing to sign deals with each province and territory."

As an example, the statement pointed to recent meetings "with health ministers across Atlantic Canada to talk about collaboration on health care, including pharmacare."

Those comments were added to the story. Following publication of that update, Holland's office reached out requesting a further update. It provided a third statement that said, "To be clear, we have initiated formal talks with all provinces and territories—a claim that was not made in the first two statements, and is in stark contrast to comments provided by several jurisdictions."

Before updating, *The Hill Times* pressed the issue. It asked how the federal government accounted for the differences between its newest statement and the remarks in the story from multiple provinces and territories explicitly stating they have not received "any details," there are no "formal" talks, they are awaiting "substantive conversations," or there are only "preliminary discussions."

Holland's office then provided a fourth statement that dropped the word "formal," stating, "The federal government is in talks with every province and territory on pharmacare."

It said the federal government needs to "respect the confidentiality of our negotiations with provinces and territories," but that "Minister Holland has discussed pharmacare with each of his provincial and territorial counterparts and is in the process of meeting with each province and territory specifically to discuss pharmacare."

The statement added that Health Canada is in "direct contact" with each jurisdiction, and "has held detailed information sessions in which all provinces and territories were invited."

'Start getting to the table': Richer

Former NDP staffer Mélanie Richer said it is "incredibly disappointing" to hear that detailed outreach to provinces like Ontario has not yet happened.

"They need to start getting to the table and having those conversations," said Richer, who is now a principal at Earnescliffe Strategies.

However, she said "it's not totally surprising" that most negotiations are not yet underway because the Liberals have shown a "total lack of understanding" of the day-to-day challenges Canadians face.

Richer said the messaging in recent Liberal ads focused strongly on health care, including pharmacare. She said it's politically vital for the Liberals to deliver on pharmacare deals before the next campaign, otherwise "it's just empty words."

As for the NDP, Richer said the party is likely "paying attention to" the status of these deals because it's important to their base and potential NDP voters, too. But she said it's not likely to be "the one issue that's either going to keep [the government in power] or not."

Former Ontario PC staffer Carly Bergamini, who worked in the provincial health minister's office, said the Liberal government appears to be a long way off from reaching many of the deals.

The legislation was only "the tip of the iceberg," she said, because it was "really light on details," and "now all of the hard work begins."

Bergamini, who is now director of EnterpriseHealth, said the Ontario government has been left with "no further direction or feedback or details that the [federal] government's providing." She added Holland appears to be using the matter as a "partisan wedge," which will make it harder to get a deal done.

Bergamini also said the government's recent ads make it vulnerable to criticism that it is not delivering on the messaging. "It's a federal government that has continued to make promises, make commitments that they're not fulfilling," she said.

However, former Liberal staffer Carlene Variyan said it is a sound strategy for the government to focus first on provinces more likely to strike a deal, and use that to build momentum—an approach previously applied on other federal-provincial negotiations.

"They need to get a couple of deals signed with key provinces to start things off with some real momentum," said Variyan, who is now associate vice-president at Summa Strategies.

Variyan said the government has been "very successful" when opting to "knock off a few big ones" first with the provinces.

"You sort of start to see other provinces who then don't want to be left behind, and it creates additional pressure for the rest fall in line."

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Liberals proving to be 'a government of non-answers,' says Sen. Ataullahjan

Continued from page 30

"perpetuating practices that actively impede rehabilitation," and said "community integration constitutes a real risk to public safety."

"Most of these people who are incarcerated will be released back into society," she told *The Hill Times*, pointing to the panel's finding that prisoners with mental illness are more likely to end up in these cells, representing almost 20 per cent of the prison population, and 37 per cent of those placed in SIUs.

"So we need for them to be functioning ... to be able to ease back into society. It's going to be very hard if people have been in solitary confinement for days and days on end."

Without a review, "it means that things continue as they are, and there's no change coming," said Ataullahjan.

The delayed legislative review—which Pate said should include changes to the law—also raises concerns over "lack of effective oversight and accountability," the Independent Senator told the Red Chamber on Oct. 31, with the ministerial advisory panel finding there have been "no external mental health advocates" hired, and issues with the existing independent external decision makers (IEDM) overseeing SIU stays.

Allard said the new law "strengthened the federal corrections system in many ways" when the sections governing the SIUs—"used when offenders cannot be managed safely within the general inmate population"—came into force in November 2019.

"The elimination of solitary confinement and the creation of SIUs represents a transformative change to federal corrections," she said.

"Independent oversight and investigation of SIU operations will continue to be provided through other entities, including the [IEDMs], and through the authorities already available to the Office of the Correctional Investigator."

But Latimer said Pate's assessment is "spot on. Review and accountability is

becoming more and more restricted and less visible."

Two members of the minister's advisory panel, Anthony Doob and Jane Spott, joined Latimer in writing a September op-ed in *The Globe and Mail* urging for the review and raising concerns about SIU conditions, but she said efforts to date have fallen on deaf ears.

"We know from the data in [the panel's] 10 reports on the new solitary confinement regime that there are problems with the law, that it is not being administered properly and, importantly, that the intent of the law is not being achieved," the op-ed states.

The panel's mandate ends in December. Its recent report also raised the alarm that SIUs disproportionately hold inmates who are Black, Indigenous, and have mental illness; and that 40 per cent stay for longer than one month.

Ataullahjan said these issues raise important questions, and expressed frustration that on Sept. 19, LeBlanc promised the Red Chamber he would appear before their committee, only to back out later.

Allard said LeBlanc's schedule "did not permit his attendance" to appear before the committee.

Ataullahjan said politicians "should never be afraid of difficult conversations," and the government's September 2023 response to the committee's report did not address the issues with the system.

"This seems to be a government of non-answers," she said. "We're getting the run around."

Correctional Investigator Ivan Zinger told the committee in March that the Liberals' response has not been "proportionate to the gravity of the findings" made in the report.

In an Oct. 7 letter to the committee, LeBlanc said he "remains satisfied with the government's response," and recommendations will be "duly considered in the analysis of future policy, program, and legislative initiatives."

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Conservative Senator Salma Ataullahjan says keeping inmates in solitary confinement conditions creates a public safety risk for when they are released from the prisons. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Albert Muchanga, the African Union's commissioner for economic development, trade, tourism, industry, and minerals, left, and International Trade Minister Mary Ng at the Lester B. Pearson Building on May 17, 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and development program, the Pan-African Trade Hub, and the special envoys for Africa and the Sahel. Furthermore, key sectors of mutual alignment such as agriculture, climate resilience, mining, and manufacturing received only cursory mention. Infrastructure and engineering—a key priority for Africa's development where Canada can play a unique role—was notably absent from the announcements. Details on how Canada plans to engage in these sectors must be featured in the upcoming strategy.

The road ahead

Canada's renewed commitment to Africa shows promise, but this must only be viewed as the first step. With this strong tailwind, 2025 has the potential to be a landmark year for Canada-Africa relations. Following the release of its Africa strategy, Canada will take the G7 presidency in 2025 alongside South Africa, who will hold the G20 presidency. This perfect storm presents an ideal moment to demonstrate an unwavering commitment to African partnerships, particularly in infrastructure development. South Africa's renewed focus on infrastructure development, and the momentum of the G7-led Partnerships for Global Infrastructure Initiative set the perfect stage.

Progress towards partnership: Canada taking strides on African engagement

It is imperative that these announcements are just the opening note and not the crescendo of Canada's approach to engaging with the continent.

David Boroto

Opinion



reflections and vision for strengthening Canada-Africa relations.

Following the Dialogue, Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, Trade Minister Mary Ng, and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen unveiled several initiatives aimed at strengthening Canada-Africa ties. Joly committed \$54.4-million for peace, governance, and diplomatic initiatives, including a special envoy for Africa, a high commission in Zambia, and an embassy in Benin. Hussen followed with \$176.6-million in funding to promote social and economic empowerment, climate resilience, and skill development. Finally, Ng announced the launch of a Pan-African Trade Hub and forthcoming Air Transport Agreements with Nigeria and Ghana.

Moving the needle

These announcements—backed by more than \$200-million in funding commitments—highlight Canada's recognition of Africa as a valuable partner. After years of stagnation following the initial promise of an Africa strategy in 2021, and several rounds of public consultations, Canada is finally taking substantive action to strengthen its economic partnerships on the continent of growing global significance. The new embassy and high commission will bolster support for Canadians abroad while strengthening ties with key African governments, especially in

strategic locations such as Zambia, whose significant mineral reserves—critical for the energy transition—present a compelling opportunity for Canadian expertise in sustainable resource development and renewable energy. Similarly, the upcoming Air Transport Agreements are a practical step in facilitating travel and trade with Ghana and Nigeria, two West African nations whose relative geographic proximity to Canada, economic significance, and cultural importance within Africa make them natural strategic partners. Importantly, the diaspora engagement mechanism recognizes the latent knowledge, experience, and energy within Canada's diverse African diaspora—comprising more than 1.5 million people—and serves as an important step to harness their expertise.

Progress towards a comprehensive strategy

Despite this progress, it is important to recognize that these announcements are just "some of the first deliverables" in a planned new Africa strategy the government intends to announce by the end of the year. Therefore, it is imperative that these announcements are just the opening note and not the crescendo of Canada's approach to engaging with the continent.

While the funding commitments are a promising start, these will need to increase to the order of billions of dollars to match the scale of the continent's opportunities and challenges. For reference, our Indo-Pacific strategy committed \$2.3-billion over five years to advance our strategic objectives in the region.

The details and implementation of the announced initiatives must also be closely monitored, specifically the operationalization of the diaspora engagement mechanism, the Global Affairs Canada trade

“
With this strong tailwind, 2025 has the potential to be a landmark year for Canada-Africa relations.”

These recent steps made by our government are encouraging. But for Canada to be a trusted partner to African nations, these commitments must continue to grow to reflect the continent's growing importance in the global economy. There is still much work to be done on this file. But the needle has been moved.

Born in South Africa to Congolese parents, David Boroto is a third-culture kid Canadian with a global outlook. He resides in Toronto where he works as an infrastructure advisory consultant with Mott MacDonald Canada, and serves as the chair of the board of directors at Engineers Without Borders Canada. David holds a bachelor's in engineering science, specializing in infrastructure engineering, from the University of Toronto, and a master of philosophy in engineering for sustainable development from the University of Cambridge.

The Hill Times

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Opinion



Despite the fact that polls indicate 65 per cent of Americans are concerned by planetary warming, climate change was not amongst the top 10 concerns of voters, writes Joseph Ingram. *Unsplash photograph by Li-An Lim*

A missed opportunity in the U.S. election

The existential threat of the climate emergency got short shrift during the American presidential race.

Joseph
Ingram



Opinion

The armchair quarterbacks are out in droves, with television screens for the past several days filled with pundits from both the right and left of the political spectrum. Voters for both United States president-elect Donald Trump and Vice-President Kamala Harris, as well as international observers and academics, are expounding their views on why Trump won so resoundingly, and why Harris lost. What comes through from virtually all of them—especially from the sympathetic voices on Fox News and Breitbart—is that Trump won because he was able to rhetorically respond to the fears and economic insecurities generated by high grocery and gasoline prices, and

to the perception of job insecurity and rising crime supposedly resulting from an uncontrolled influx of immigrants largely made up of criminals, murderers, and fentanyl traffickers “poisoning the blood of our country.”

On the left side of the political spectrum, we are hearing that Harris was faced with the insurmountable task of having only slightly more than three-and-a-half months to sell herself to the American public, without distancing her policy priorities from an unpopular President Joe Biden and what was perceived as his weak policy agenda, especially in relation to foreign policy.

Then there are those who contend that America is still too misogynistic and racist to elect a multi-racial woman—apparently more so than Muslim majority Pakistan and Bangladesh, or India, all three of which have had women national leaders. And despite the fact that Barack Obama, a two-term president with a father of Kenyan origin, remains one of America’s most popular presidents.

While there is truth to what pundits say drove voters to support Trump, little attention is given to the fact that—through what were often blatant lies or exaggeration—the Trump campaign was able to effectively manufacture the public’s perception of the major threats to the financial well-being of the average Amer-

ican family, its pocketbook, and to its security from the threat of crime and social unrest. Spicing up Trump’s threat cake even more was his frequent allusion to transgender people taking prizes away from female athletes, thereby upsetting the gender and social fabric of American society. Despite futile attempts by the Harris campaign and Biden to demonstrate that inflation, immigration, and crime are down in the U.S., while jobs and wages are up, the average working-class family feels that they were less well-off than they were four years ago. Indeed many are, and Trump succeeded in magnifying the threats and selling the need for “strong” policy responses, while elevating the fear that a Harris presidency would make working-class families even less well-off. Hence, the majority voted for the candidate who would more forcefully address the two threats to their lives and well-being.

And yet, despite the rapidly growing financial cost and the overwhelming scientific evidence that the real and imminent existential threat comes from a rapidly warming planet—two days following the election the World Meteorological Organization announced that 2024 will be the warmest on record surpassing the 2023 record temperature—and the fact that polls indicate 65 per

cent of Americans are concerned by planetary warming, climate change was not amongst voters’ top 10 concerns. Indeed, Trump considers climate change a scam and a hoax, and therefore chose not to address it all.

Harris should have. She could have elevated it into the view of millions more people as the real threat that it is by revealing the projected financial costs to the average American household, and to the economy as a whole through both the elementary science and the recent actuarial data on this year’s damage from the devastating and more-frequent hurricanes, wildfires, and drought. Moreover, she could have added that warming and increased drought conditions are already rapidly reducing agricultural production globally, thereby pushing food costs up, forcing tens of millions of desperate rural dwellers to emigrate from countries in the Global South, and creating an increasingly unmanageable dilemma, especially for governments in North America and Europe.

Harris could also have highlighted the effect of extreme weather events on America’s insurance and reinsurance industries, producing prohibitively expensive and limited access to both housing and crop risk insurance, and driving several major insurance companies out of business while elevating systemic

risks to the financial sector as a whole. The Harris campaign failed—indeed they didn’t even try—to create the fear amongst voters of what constitutes the real existential threat to American and to planetary well-being. By failing to effectively piggyback the very real threat from warming onto Trump’s threats from inflation and immigration, it allowed the Trump campaign to mendaciously define the key issues and lay out its new, ostensibly strong policy solutions.

Harris could have added the icing to the threat cake created by Trump and his MAGA party by educating the American public on the existential nature of the threat from planetary warming, and on the specifics of how it will affect food, commodity prices, and migratory flows while also acknowledging the suffering America’s working class has felt from both high consumer costs and an imperfect immigration system.

As is said: nothing ventured, nothing gained.

For Canadians, and for whom ever leads the government into the next election against Canada’s fossil fuel lobby led by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, there is surely an important object lesson here: the one who most effectively defines the threat to our economic well-being and projects strength in dealing with that threat—whether real or manufactured—will win.

Joseph Ingram is chair of GreenTech Investment Holdings/Labs, a fellow of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, a former president of the North-South Institute, and a former special representative of the World Bank to the United Nations and the World Trade Organization.

The Hill Times



A public inquiry into the federal COVID-19 response would only bring up divisive and unpopular issues that neither the Liberal Party nor the Conservative Party wish to revisit, writes Kevin Quigley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

A reluctance for post-pandemic learning

To date, there has been little initiative in Canada to conduct a far-reaching public inquiry that examines pandemic response with a broader lens.

Kevin Quigley



Opinion

The recently released Walport Report commissioned by Health Canada focuses on science advice and research co-ordination during the pandemic. It is a helpful reminder that those unable to

learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them.

While its lessons are welcome, the report is illustrative of another problem: our optimism that we can anticipate and control such uncertain threats.

While the expert panellists on the report are drawn largely from the health sciences, the document notes that emergency health response requires more disciplines and expertise to appreciate fully the scope of the challenge and the complexity of the response. In this sense, the report's focus on pandemic response largely through a health lens is helpful, but incomplete.

To date, there has been little initiative in Canada to conduct a far-reaching public inquiry that examines pandemic response with a broader lens, as the United Kingdom is doing. Its inquiry includes 10 modules focusing on—for example—health, economics, different demographics, society, and governance issues.

There is almost no political incentive for such an inquiry in Canada. It would only bring up divisive and unpopular issues that neither the Liberal Party nor the Conservative Party wish to revisit, despite the magnitude of the challenge for the country.

Many of the problems the government currently faces can be traced back—in part—to the pandemic and government response, from inflation, to mismanaging immigration and temporary foreign workers, fumbling in government procurement, the housing crisis, and ballooning debt. Many policies privileged the privileged, as evidenced by the spike in property values, the correlation between work from home and income levels, and the boom in the stock market. The government's precautionary approach to managing down the COVID case count with a health-care system on "the verge of collapse"—according to Katharine Smart, the

president of the Canadian Medical Association—neglected other risks in health care and beyond it. As the pandemic went on, government was unable to explain how it addressed trade-offs between the pandemic and other threats. Expensive economic programs were never justified by economic analysis from the Department of Finance, but rather by what the Prime Minister's Office believed of the moment demanded, according to Bill Morneau, the finance minister at the time.

Inquiries are a start, but not the entire solution. As the Walport report rightly notes, there have been several reports for more than 30-plus years highlighting weaknesses in government response to national health crises that do not generate appropriate responses. Gathering information is only one step; adapting standards and encouraging, monitoring, and enforcing organizational change are also crucial to managing any complex system. While emergency response secures funds easily during a crisis, there is inadequate attention paid to it in other times.

Learning is a tough gig. Anthropologists warn that organizations will only learn lessons that reinforce the organizational culture, not challenge it. Increasing

the pool of expertise from other disciplines and sectors will not lead to a holistic and integrated response, but rather will expose awkward and incompatible truths, and may very well lead to professional biases and turf wars.

It's not simply that different people hold different degrees of risk tolerance in such events, but also that the same people can hold at the same time different and incompatible views of risk. People are not skilled at deliberating over risk trade-offs and future costs of policy decisions. To take one example in light of the PMO's concern over public opinion, research showed that the same people held different views about lockdowns depending on whether public health communications described them positively, with reference to protecting health, or negatively, with reference to economic costs. There are many such examples. The general public—just like their politicians—are motivated by the immediate problems in front of them, and can be manipulated by those who frame those issues.

Ultimately policy decisions are taken by those who have power, which is one reason why the elected government's reluctance to have an inquiry is so consequential.

If there were another similar pandemic in the next decade, when the proportion of elderly people is even larger, the cost of a precautionary stance would be greater. If the burden continues to fall in such a haphazard—if not clandestine—manner on selected members of society, then we have to accept the inadequacy of our democratic institutions, instability inherent in our governance, and the threat to confidence in the system that is required to ensure a successful response during a national emergency.

Kevin Quigley is the scholarly director of the MacEachen Institute for Public Policy and Governance at Dalhousie University, a non-partisan research institute designed to support the development of progressive public policy and encourage greater citizen engagement. He is the co-author of *Seized by Uncertainty: the Markets, Media, and Special Interests that Shaped Canada's Response to COVID-19*, available now from McGill-Queens University Press. *The Hill Times*

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News

NDP won't be 'baited' as Tories attack Singh amid Liberal labour moves, says MP Green

Continued from page 29

employers not to take the bargaining table seriously."

"It's important to note that all three of these were lockouts in which the employer locked out their workers," Bruske said. "Workers didn't choose to walk the picket line."

Additionally, Bruske said that in the case of the Quebec City port, the employer had been using replacement workers for the duration of the job action, which had severely reduced its incentive to negotiate a fair deal.

Bruske said that the Liberals' "biggest misstep" was "allowing that situation to fester for 26 months," rather than its decision to send it to the CIRB.

"[They] could have notified the employer through the [CIRB] that scabs were no longer welcome, and that would have forced the employer to get back to the bargaining table and get serious," Bruske said. "That would have signalled to the other ports that they would not have a government willing to bail them out."

While Bruske said she understands the economic argument, she added that "the whole point of a strike is to have an impact so you can get to a resolution quicker."

"There's no value in having a strike when there's no impact because then there's no pressure to get back to the bargaining table," Bruske said, noting that the same criticisms have already begun to be levelled at striking Canada Post workers who walked off the job Nov. 15.

The Canadian Union of Postal Workers issued a 72-hour strike notice on Nov. 12—

the same day as MacKinnon's announcement—for both its Rural Suburban Mail Carriers and Urban Operations bargaining units to begin a nationwide strike on 12:01 a.m. on Nov. 15.

The union is demanding wage increases in line with inflation, cost of living adjustments, increased short-term disability payments, additional paid medical days, and several other improvements to benefits and conditions, including those specific to their rural and urban workers.

Bruske said that while the strike will pose a challenge to businesses and Canadians looking to do some online holiday shopping, "there's still a lot of runway between now and Christmas."

"The parties have an obligation to get back to a bargaining table and to get a fair deal, but the only way that unions can do that is by withdrawing their labour," Bruske said. "This is what unions do to stand up for their workers, we don't have another mechanism."

Bruske said that an arbitrated settlement is unlikely to fully resolve the majority of the issues in contention between the port strikes, nor would it resolve the challenges faced by Canada Post and the "massive concessions" it is demanding of its workers.

"Arbitrated settlements basically put a Band-Aid on a festering situation," Bruske said. "When you don't actually force the parties to sit down and meaningfully address the challenges at the table, it just amplifies them at the next time round of bargaining."

sbenson@thehilltimes.com
The Hill Times



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, right, and MP Matthew Green arrive with Tim Hortons donuts to show support to striking CUPW workers in Hamilton, Ont., on Nov. 16. Photograph courtesy of the CUPW

Opinion

It's not promises that build the economy—it's construction

Construction is housing. Construction is infrastructure. Construction is at the heart of trade and a healthy Canadian economy.

Rodrigue Gilbert

Opinion



Ottawa is aswirl with rumours, as it often is. A part of the Liberal caucus is said to be in revolt. Cabinet ministers are in message-control mode. Will these rumours trigger an election call, and send candidates out knocking on doors? And if they do, what will the outcome be? Who is to say.

What is certain is that there will be an election within the next year, and that candidates will be hitting doorsteps no matter what. What will they hear from Canadians about what matters to them? That, at least, is easy to predict. According to recent surveys from Ipsos, Abacus Data, and the Angus Reid Institute, as James Carville famously quipped, "it's the economy, stupid," with a significant emphasis on concerns about inflation, cost of living, and housing. In fact, that recent Ipsos survey asking what Canada's elected officials should focus on had housing—access to it and building it—showing up twice in the top five issues.

All politicians had best be ready with some answers. One answer is obvious: construction. The construction industry is an economic powerhouse. The industry contributes about \$162-billion to the economy annually, accounting for 7.2 per cent of Canada's gross domestic product and employing more than 1.6 million people in the country. Moreover, growth in construction creates a strong ripple effect into other sectors like engineering, manufacturing, technology, and retail. So, a strong construction sector catalyzes the economy.

But more than that, a strong construction sector delivers on the other priorities; those that keep Canadians awake at night—affordable housing—and those that irritate them in waking hours—the state of our roads and deteriorating infrastructure. Plus, construction is also the answer to where those two issues intersect: needed housing must rest on supporting infrastructure, connected to roads, bridges, clean water, electricity, waste management, hospitals and schools, civic and recreational facilities, and public transit.

Moreover, the same roads and bridges that connect new homes to their communities, and those communities to others,

are also the trade corridors that connect our country to the global marketplace. And considering that two-thirds of Canada's GDP relies on trade, we're back to construction as the answer to the big priority: the economy.

So, practically speaking, what can politicians do to maximize all that potential economic upside? To solve housing? To ensure that Canada has the infrastructure it needs to succeed socially and economically, domestically and internationally, today and in the future? A good starting place would be consulting with the industry that can help deliver on all of that, for a change.

The construction industry has spent a lot of time considering how to advance these interconnected issues and has practical advice on what needs to happen. For example, we know that while—of course—investment is one of the important answers, it needs to be based on a good plan, not a patchwork, siloed approach. The sector has long been advocating for a National Infrastructure Assessment, a 25-year plan for infrastructure investment—including housing, trade-enabling infrastructure, maintenance infrastructure, and other essential infrastructure—developed in collaboration with industry and aligned with municipal, provincial, and federal priorities. This kind of big-picture approach is what provides certainty so that private investments can be made, workers recruited and retained, and projects planned and—most importantly to Canadians—delivered.

And speaking of big-picture approaches, here is another broad, interconnected policy issue that may come up on the doorstep: immigration. Throwing the doors open and then slamming them shut is not a plan. The fact is we need modernized immigration policies that better align with the needs of the Canadian economy. There are critical labour shortages in construction. Without streamlined processes that allow for the faster integration of skilled trades and construction workers, there simply won't be enough construction workers available—houses and infrastructure won't build themselves.

Construction and Canadians' priorities for their government are inextricably linked. Construction is housing. Construction is infrastructure. Construction is at the heart of trade and a healthy Canadian economy. We can't predict when the next election will be. We can't predict whom Canadians will decide should lead the country. What we can predict is that, without consulting and partnering with the construction industry, whomever forms Canada's next government simply won't be able to deliver on Canadians' priorities. Let's work together to build a stronger Canada.

Rodrigue Gilbert is the president of the Canadian Construction Association, the national voice for the construction industry in Canada, representing more than 18,000 member firms in an integrated structure of 64 local and provincial construction associations.

The Hill Times

Spanish Embassy parties at the Westin

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



Liberal MP Francesco Sorbara, left, and Spanish Ambassador Alfredo Martinez Serrano attend Spain's national day party at the Westin Hotel on Oct. 9.



Tanya Bou Jaoudeh, wife of the Lebanese ambassador, left, and Maria Rosa Paneda Usunariz, wife of the Spanish ambassador.



House Speaker Greg Fergus, far left, delivers remarks while Martinez Serrano, second left, International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen, and Liberal MP Robert Oliphant look on.



A student string quartet from the University of Ottawa's School of Music, with violinists Justin Azerrad and Mariana De la Cruz, violist Sarah Als, and cellist Clair Cho.



Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, left, and Martinez Serrano.



Serbian Ambassador Dejan Ralevic, left, then-Kuwait ambassador Reem Al Khaled, Greek Ambassador Ekaterini Dimakis, Armenian Ambassador Anahit Harutyunyan, and Serge Belet, National Gallery of Canada senior manager of public affairs and partnerships.

South Korea marks national day



South Korean Ambassador Woongsoon Lim, left, and Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne celebrate Korea and its Armed Forces Day at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building on Oct. 7.



Guests were entertained by the Y-eon Dance Company.



Lim, left, his wife Eun Sun Lee, International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen, and Conservative Senator Yonah Martin.



Indonesian Ambassador Daniel Tumpal Sumurung Simanjuntak, left, Japanese Ambassador Kanji Yamamoto, and Lithuanian Ambassador Darius Skusevicius.



Korean Defence Attaché Colonel Dongwon Lee, left, and his wife Kyunghye Lee



Ina Ozolina, wife of the Latvian ambassador, left; Carine Kjelsen, wife of the Swiss ambassador; and Eun Sun Lee.



Laura Rycckewaert
Hill Climbers

Diversity Minister Khera adds new Atlantic, Ontario advisers



Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities Minister Kamal Khera has a couple of new faces on her team. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Plus, there are staffing updates for Sport Minister Carla Qualtrough's office, including Dilys Fernandes' return from leave.

Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities Minister **Kamal Khera** has two new regional advisers on her team, including **Wendy Wu**, who's been hired to cover Ontario.



Wendy Wu is now an Ontario regional affairs adviser to Minister Khera. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Wu had her first day on the job with Khera's team on Oct. 15. She spent roughly the last two years working as an outreach adviser in the Liberal research bureau (LRB), which supports the caucus, and helps provide research and communications products, among other things. Wu was specifically focused on outreach related to women, and the East Asian and

Latin American communities. She's also a former constituency assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Jean Yip**, and to International Trade Minister **Mary Ng** as the MP for Markham-Thornhill, Ont.

Last year, Wu ranked third on *The Hill Times*' annual Terrific 25 Staffers list, and came in first place in the Best All-Round Terrific Staffer and Most Discreet Staffer categories.

Hanna Batool was previously an adviser for both outreach and Ontario regional affairs in Khera's office. She remains with the minister's team, but has dropped responsibility for Ontario. Batool has been working for Khera since the minister's time in charge of the seniors portfolio, having first been hired to that office as a special assistant for West and North regional affairs in the fall of 2022 after completing a summer internship.

Along with Wu, **Pirinda Perazhakan** recently joined Khera's team as a special assistant for Atlantic regional affairs.

Perazhakan interned in the minister's office this past summer, and over the summer



Pirinda Perazhakan is covering the Atlantic desk for Minister Khera. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

of 2023, she was an intern in Khera's constituency office as the MP for Brampton West, Ont. She is currently in her last year of studies working towards a bachelor's degree in political science from the University of Guelph, and is set to graduate next spring. Perazhakan currently also serves as policy director for the Guelph Young Liberals association.

Previously, **Callum Haney** was an Atlantic regional affairs and outreach adviser in the diversity and inclusion minister's office, but as recently reported by *Hill Climbers*, he left to become press secretary and issues management to Mental Health and Addictions Minister **Ya'ara Saks** as of Oct. 10.

Also currently covering regional affairs for Khera are **Darren Choi**, policy and West and North regional affairs adviser; and **Veronica Dhindsa**, who covers Quebec along with serving as a parliamentary affairs assistant and assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Sameer Zuberi**.



Sport Minister Carla Qualtrough has a new director of policy in her office. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Helen Gao is chief of staff to Khera.

Catching up with Sport and Physical Activity Minister **Carla Qualtrough**'s team, the minister promoted senior policy adviser **Eric Gustavson** to the title of director of policy back in June.



Eric Gustavson is now director of policy to Minister Qualtrough. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Prior to Gustavson's promotion, no one had held the title of policy director in Qualtrough's office as sport minister since she was shuffled into the portfolio in July 2023.

Before following Qualtrough to the sport office post-shuffle, Gustavson had worked in her office as then-employment, workforce development, and disability inclusion minister, starting as a policy adviser in January 2022. He was promoted to senior policy adviser in the employment office roughly a year later.

An ex-constituency assistant to Emergency Preparedness Minister **Harjit Sajjan** as the MP for Vancouver South, B.C., Gustavson is also a former special assistant

for Western and Northern regional affairs to then-immigration minister **Marco Mendicino**, and has worked as an MLA's assistant at British Columbia's legislative assembly, amongst other past experience.

Also currently tackling policy in Qualtrough's office are **Miles Wu**, senior policy and Ontario regional affairs adviser; and **Eamonn Schwartz**, policy and Atlantic regional affairs adviser.

In another summer change, **Jonathan Robinson** has joined Qualtrough's office as director of parliamentary affairs.

Robinson previously did the same for then-labour and seniors minister **Seamus O'Regan**, and briefly stepped in as acting communications director for O'Regan earlier this year.



Jonathan Robinson is director of parliamentary affairs to Minister Qualtrough. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Active with the Canadian Armed Forces, Robinson has also previously been director of parliamentary affairs to then-fisheries and oceans minister **Joyce Murray**, a West and North regional affairs adviser with the LRB, and an assistant to both Murray as the MP for Vancouver Quadra, B.C., and to fellow B.C. Liberal MP **Hedy Fry**, among other things.

Robinson is also currently helping cover press secretary duties in Qualtrough's office, as the minister remains without someone permanently in that role. **Renée LeBlanc Proctor** was the last to fill that role in Qualtrough's office—albeit under the title of senior communications adviser—but, as reported by *Climbers*, she left in mid-August to become press secretary to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister **Marc Miller**.

Erik Nosaluk is director of communications to Qualtrough.

In more recent office news, **Dilys Fernandes**, who went on leave from her role as deputy chief of staff and director of operations to the sport minister this past June, has returned. Fernandes has worked for Qualtrough since her time as employment minister. In turn, acting operations director **Fadi El Masry** has bade farewell to the minister's team.

Prior to filling in for Fernandes, El Masry had been acting operations director to Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario Minister **Filomena Tassi**. According to his LinkedIn profile, he's now a survey pilot with aerial technology company clearGRID. El Masry is a licensed pilot, and his past jobs include time spent as director of external relations for the Canadian Owners and Pilots Association, and as a staffer to Ontario Liberal MPP **John Fraser** for roughly eight years in all, among other things.

Kelly Bryant is chief of staff to Qualtrough.

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The Hill Times

Parliamentary Calendar

Ex-Grit minister Lloyd Axworthy launches new memoir in Ottawa on Nov. 21



Library and Archives Canada hosts a discussion with former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy for the launch of his new memoir, *My Life in Politics*, on Nov. 21 at 7 p.m. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

TUESDAY, NOV. 19—WEDNESDAY, NOV. 20

2024 North American Manufacturing Conference—Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters hosts the invitation-only North American Manufacturing Conference. Manufacturers, key government representatives and decision makers from Canada, the United States, and Mexico will for keynote speeches and panels on topics including “Political forces shaping manufacturing and trade policy,” and “Trade agreement renewal.” Tuesday, Nov. 19, to Wednesday, Nov. 20, at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: cme-mec.ca.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 20

House Sitting—The House is sitting this week and is scheduled to sit every week until Dec. 17.

Via Rail Parliamentary Reception—Via Rail hosts its signature parliamentary reception, a great occasion to meet Via’s board of directors and executive team to discuss our services and our projects to improve comfort, accessibility, and sustainability for our passengers. Wednesday, Nov. 20, at 5:30 p.m. at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. RSVP: viarailcanada@viarail.ca.

RMHC Canada Lobby Day Reception—To mark National Child Day, Ronald McDonald House Charities’ president and CEO Kate Horton, McDonalds’ Canada owner/operators, RMHC families, and corporate partners host a reception including McDonald’s menu favourites. Wednesday, Nov. 20, at 5:30 p.m. at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. Details: joseph.naim@ca.mcd.com.

Panel: ‘Protecting Democracy in the Modern Age’—Carleton University hosts a panel discussion “Protecting Democracy in the Modern Age” featuring former Quebec premier and former federal minister Jean Charest, former Liberal cabinet minister Maryam Monsef, former NDP MP Megan Leslie, and Jonathan Malloy, associate dean at Carleton’s Faculty of Global and Public Affairs. Wednesday, Nov. 20, at 6 p.m. at the Richcraft Hall, 2nd Floor Atrium and Lecture Theatre, Carleton University. Details: carleton.ca.

THURSDAY, NOV. 21

EngageParlDiplo Day for Diplomats—The Parliamentary Centre and Carleton University’s EngageParlDiplo program hosts its 14th annual Day for Diplomats. Learn about the program where decision-makers and diplomats engage in dialogue about crucial issues affecting Canada’s governance and global influence. Thursday, Nov. 21, from 8 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Richcraft Hall, Carleton University Campus. For info: carleton.ca/engageparldiplo.

Panel: ‘U.S. Election’s Impact on Canada’s Future’—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a panel, “Navigating Uncertainty: The U.S. Election’s Impact on Canada’s Future,” a debrief of the U.S. presidential election results, and how the outcome will likely influence aspects of Canada’s economic landscape, political environment, and trade relations with the United States. Thursday, Nov. 21, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto, 145 Richmond St. W., Toronto. Details: economicclub.ca.

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Attend Fundraiser—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will attend a party fundraiser. Thursday, Nov. 21, at 5:30 p.m. ET at 365 Bay St., Toronto. Details: conservative.ca/events.

Lloyd Axworthy Book Launch—Library and Archives Canada hosts a discussion with former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy for the launch of his new memoir, *My Life in Politics*. Thursday, Nov. 21, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, NOV. 22

Ambassador Hillman to Deliver Remarks—Canada’s Ambassador to the United States Kirsten Hillman will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Friday, Nov. 22, at 11:30 a.m. AT the Halifax Marriott Harbourfront Hotel, 1919 Upper Water St., Halifax. Details: business.halifaxchamber.com.

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Attend Fundraiser—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will attend a party fundraiser. Friday, Nov. 22, at 3 p.m. ET at a private residence in Toronto. Details: conservative.ca/events.

SATURDAY, NOV. 23

Minister Miller to Deliver Remarks—Immigration Minister Marc Miller will take part in an open discussion hosted by the National Women’s Liberal Commission (BC). Saturday, Nov. 23, at 5 p.m. ET happening online. Details: liberal.ca.

MONDAY, NOV. 25

Conference: ‘What Procurement Processes to Reach Two Per Cent?’—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a conference on “What Procurement Processes to Reach Two Per Cent?” examining the work necessary to support the government’s commitment to reach two per cent of GDP in defence spending. Monday, Nov. 25 at The Westin Ottawa Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

Forum: ‘Solutions for Canadian Digital Policy and Legislation’—The Canadian Internet Society hosts a policy forum, “Solutions for Canadian Digital Policy and Legislation,” featuring voices from government, industry, and academia addressing Canada’s digital landscape and influence on the future of internet governance, accessibility, and security. Monday, Nov. 25, at 5 p.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, NOV. 26

Toyota Canada’s 11-Millionth Vehicle—Toyota Canada is showing off the 11-millionth vehicle to be assembled in Canada by Toyota: a RAV4 Hybrid. Learn about Toyota’s 36 years of manufacturing operations and 60 years of sales operations in Canada. Tuesday, Nov. 26, from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET at the corner of Sparks and O’Connor streets. Call 905-802-0961.

The David Laidler Lecture—Former Bank of Canada deputy governor Timothy Lane will deliver the David Laidler lecture hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Nov. 26 at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

Webinar: ‘Confronting Censorship and Defending Free Speech’—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a panel discussion on “Confronting Censorship and Defending Free Speech,” exploring a recent MLI publication, *The*

New Censorship, reviewing the broader legal frameworks governing free speech in Canada, and how these principles intersect with the responsibilities of professional bodies. Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 2 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

Association of Canadian Port Authorities’ Reception—The Association of Canadian Port Authorities invites Members of Parliament, Senators, and their staff to a holiday parliamentary reception. Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 5:30 p.m. at Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. RSVP: rsvp@strategycorp.com.

Allan Rock and Fen Hampson Talk Corruption—The Canadian International Council’s Vancouver Branch hosts “Wholesale Corruption: A Threat to World Order” featuring Fen Hampson, president of World Refugee and Migration Council; and former Canadian ambassador to the UN Allan Rock. Tuesday, Nov. 26, at 5 p.m. PT at YWCA Hotel, downtown Vancouver. Details: thecic.org.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 27

Mark Carney and Raymond de Souza in Conversation—Former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney will join Cardus senior fellow and *National Post* columnist Fr. Raymond de Souza to ask the pressing question: can Canada afford to uphold its cherished values in the face of economic challenges. Wednesday, Nov. 27, 1 p.m. ET at Cardus, 45 Rideau St., 8th Floor. Register at cardus.ca.

Panel: ‘U.S. Election results for Europe and Canada’—The Canadian International Council’s national capital branch hosts a panel discussion, “What U.S. Election results may mean for both Europe and Canada,” featuring Germany’s Ambassador to Canada Tjorven Bellmann, and Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, the 2024 Konrad Adenauer Visiting Scholar on Transatlantic Relations at Carleton University and a member of the European Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, Nov. 27, at 5:30 p.m. ET at KPMG, 150 Elgin St., Suite 1800. Register via Eventbrite.

Lecture: ‘Lifecycle Costing for Defence Purchases’—Former Conservative staffer Ian Brodie, now a political science professor at the University of Calgary, will deliver remarks on “Lifecycle costing for defence purchases is nonsense, makes us dumb, and helps our enemies.” Wednesday, Nov. 27, at 6 p.m. MT at the Military Museums, 4520 Crowchild Trail S.W., Calgary. Details: events.ucalgary.ca.

THURSDAY, NOV. 28

Indigenous Defence Conference 2024—The Department of National Defence and OneHoop Indigenous Advisory Services host the National Indigenous Defence Conference 2024. This year’s theme is “Strengthening Reconciliation in Defence.” Thursday, Nov. 28, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Pl. Details via Eventbrite.

Talk: ‘Canada’s Energy Transition’—The National Electricity Roundtable hosts a discussion “Canada’s Energy Transition: Politics as partner or spoiler?” Industry leaders, policymakers, and advocates will explore issues regarding economic security, environmental responsibility, and citizens’ needs. Thursday, Nov. 28 at 8:15 a.m. ET at Gowling WLG, 160 Elgin St., Suite 2600. Details via Eventbrite.

Economic Club of Canada Health Summit—Health Minister Mark Holland will deliver the keynote address at the Economic Club of Canada’s annual health summit, featuring a morning of panel discussions on topics including artificial intelligence in medicine, and the ethics of drug repurposing, as well as a keynote address. Thursday, Nov. 28, 8:15 a.m. to 12 p.m. ET. Details online: economicclub.ca.

PBO Giroux to Deliver Remarks—Parliamentary Budget Officer Yves Giroux will deliver remarks on “Path to Net Zero Series: PBO’s Distributional Analysis of the Federal Fuel Charge,” a lunch event hosted by the Toronto Association for Business Economics. Thursday, Nov. 28, at 11:30 a.m. ET at CMHC’s Toronto office, 11th Floor, 70 York St., Toronto. Details: cabc.ca.

Minister Champagne to Attend Fundraiser—Minister François-Philippe Champagne will join Liberal MP Brenda Shanahan at a fundraiser hosted by the Châteauguay—Les Jardins-de-Napierville Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, Nov. 28, at 5 p.m. ET at Le Reggiano 333 Rue Saint-Joseph, Sainte-Martine, Que. Details: liberal.ca.

November on the Hill—November hosts a reception and panel discussion on the health issues facing Canadian men with Dr. John Olliffe from UBC’s Men’s Health Research Program. Thursday, Nov. 28. Doors open at 5:30 p.m., event starts at 6:15 p.m. at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. RSVP: Drew.Maharaj@november.com.

A Discussion on Politics and Hope—The Feminist Conversations hosts “We don’t give up: A discussion on politics and hope.” Chat with folks who have been attached to politics in different ways, both in Canada and south of the border. Thursday, Nov. 28, at 6:30 p.m. ET at Happy Goat Coffee Co. (Hopewell), 1124 Bank St. Details via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 29

Webinar: ‘Fundamental Rights and the Notwithstanding Clause’—PSG Senator Peter Harder will take part in a day-long bilingual webinar, “A Call to Action: Fundamental Rights and the Notwithstanding Clause,” hosted by the University of Ottawa, University of Alberta, Université de Montréal, and the International Commission of Jurists Canada. Friday, Nov. 29, from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m. ET online. Details: pdinstitute.uottawa.ca.

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 30

Greens’ Holiday Party—The Green Party of Canada and Green Party of Ontario in the Ottawa-Gatineau region host a celebration for the holiday season. All Green Party members and friends are welcome! This evening include networking, games, fundraising, and information on the current strategic direction of the Ottawa Centre riding and beyond. Saturday, Nov. 30 at 6 p.m. ET at First United Church, 347 Richmond Rd. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, DEC. 3

Panel: ‘What Next for Canada-U.S. Relations?’—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a panel discussion on “What next for Canada-U.S. relations?” Christopher Sands, director of the Wilson Center’s Canada Institute; and Jennifer Welsh, incoming chair of McGill’s Max Bell School of Public Policy, will examine the tools that Canada and the United States have to manage the relationship through the opportunities and challenges that lie ahead. Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 5 p.m. ET at the Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1470 Peel St., #200, Montreal. Details: irpp.org.

National Chief’s Parliamentary Reception—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the “National Chief’s Parliamentary Reception,” an evening of music, refreshments, and conversations with many valued friends and colleagues. Tuesday, Dec. 3, at 5:30 p.m. at the Twenty-Two Room, Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, DEC. 3—THURSDAY, DEC. 5

AFN Special Chiefs’ Assembly—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the Special Chiefs Assembly on the unceded, unsurrendered territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin People, in Ottawa. Tuesday, Dec. 3, to Thursday, Dec. 5. Details: afn.ca.

THURSDAY, DEC. 5

Former CDS Rick Hillier to Deliver Remarks—Former chief of defence staff Rick Hillier will take part in a roundtable luncheon titled “Time to Step Up: Why Corporate Canada Must Advocate for Higher Defence Spending” hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, Dec. 5, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge Street, Suite 300. Details: cdhowe.org.

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

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