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THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

Open channel? GAC to launch diplomat dissent line

BY NEIL MOSS

Canada's foreign ministry will be launching an internal dissent channel for diplomats to raise concerns over the direction of government policy.

The United States State Department has operated a similar channel since 1971, allowing foreign service officers and other bureaucrats to sound the alarm over what they think errs in the American diplomatic blueprint.

"We're about to launch a dissent channel, which will allow people with considered views that run counter to government policy to express those views and have them taken seriously," foreign affairs deputy minister David Morrison told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee during a Nov. 20 appearance.

"This is a thing that the State Department pioneered in the U.S. during

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Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly's, right, department is moving to implement a dissent channel similar to one used by the U.S. State Department, currently led by Secretary of State Antony Blinken. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

'Permanent campaign' of building Canadian links on Capitol Hill begins anew

BY NEIL MOSS

With the United States' 119th Congress set to convene in the new year, the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group will be D.C.-bound to build Canadian connections on Capitol Hill.

While outreach with U.S. president-elect Donald Trump dominates the headlines—forcing reporters to track Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) plane as it made its unannounced way to Florida for a dinner meeting at Mar-a-Lago on Nov. 29—Canadian outreach on Capitol Hill is of equal importance in the U.S.'s diffuse system of governance.

If Trump wants to renegotiate the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) as he pledged to do on the campaign trail, he will have to be granted trade promotion authority—which

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NEWS

Liberal to independent: Jane Cordy looks back on 24 years in the Senate

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Once-active Liberal Party member, recently retired Nova Scotia senator Jane Cordy was

abruptly thrust into independent status amid Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's bid to sever partisan ties in the Senate. While she still sees some downsides—and feels the

transition could've been handled better—she says, overall, the reform has been "great" for the institution.

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NEWS

Grits' ad-buy boost briefly overtakes Tories, but strategists say 'spray-and-pray' tactics will need recalibrating

BY STUART BENSON

The Liberal Party accelerated its digital ad buys last month, catching up and overtaking its Conservative rivals. Yet, with a

vastly smaller war chest to fuel its digital messaging machine, political communications strategists say it will be difficult for the Grits

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Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Ana Poilievre leads the Conservative road show



Ana Poilievre, left, sits down for an interview with Quebec Radio X personality Dominic Maurais. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube/CHOI 98.1 Radio X - Québec

Anaida Poilievre, wife to the official opposition leader, has been taking centre stage for the Conservative Party at a variety of recent events.

The Conservatives' social media has highlighted Poilievre's solo outings and interviews with a mix of diaspora community groups and media outlets.

She sat down with Spanish-language radio station Ondas Canada "to talk about her story of coming to call Canada home 30 years ago and how our common sense Conservative team will build a Canada that works for everyone who does the hard work," according to the party's Nov. 21 social media post.

The Venezuelan-born polyglot also made a visit on Nov. 20 to the Filipino Centre Toronto "for their weekly painting class, where they shared heartfelt immigrant stories and celebrated shared values of faith, family, and common sense," said a CPC HQ post on X. Poilievre's time in Scarborough also included a visit with members of the Let's Dance Live & Enjoy Life organization, and the Filipino Canadian Conservative Council.

Poilievre also recorded interviews with Latino podcasters and hosts **Mauricio Parada** and **Fernando Mendoza**, as well as with ICI Television's *Télé-ritmo V*.

Conservative Party social media posts showcase Poilievre meeting with Filipino community members in the hotly contested Montreal riding of Mount Royal, as well as in Mississauga, Ont., with Tory candidates **Roman Baber**, **Ron Chhinzer**, and **Muhammad Ishaq**.

She also recorded a podcast interview with Quebec Radio X personality **Dominic Maurais**, which was released on Nov. 29, wherein she spoke about her own journey to Canada and politics, immigration, the early days of her courtship with her now-husband, the rising cost of living, and more.

Senator Greene gets his plaudits

With his 75th birthday approaching on Dec. 8, Nova Scotia CSG Senator **Stephen Greene** is bidding adieu to the Red Chamber.

The former diplomat and conservative political staffer joined the Senate in January 2009 after being appointed on the recommendation of then-prime minister **Stephen Harper**. His colleagues took the opportunity to sing his praises on Nov. 27.

"It would be an understatement to say that Senator Greene was a reformer—and not just because he was a candidate for the Reform Party in the 1993 and 1997 elections, and was the chief of staff to **Preston Manning**. He was a small 'r' reformer, too. Whether at the federal level or with the office of the Premier of Nova Scotia, his role was fixing things that needed attention. In his role in the premier's office as principal secretary, he had a significant role in fixing the Atlantic Accord in 2006," CSG Leader **Scott Tannas** said in the Upper Chamber.



CSG Senator Stephen Greene will retire from the Upper Chamber on Dec. 8. *The Hill Times* photograph Kristen Shane

Senators lauded Greene's commitment to Senate modernization and reform. "Our colleague Stephen Greene has been a vocal proponent of making the Senate more transparent, more accountable, and more effective. Senator Greene has consistently argued that the Senate should better reflect the democratic will of Canadians and operate with greater efficiency," said Progressive Senate Leader **Don Plett**.

Greene's "advocacy was never just about theory; it was about practical solutions that made sense for families, businesses, and communities," said PSG Senator **Paul Massicotte**, while PSG Leader **Pierre Dalphond** noted Greene "demonstrated with actions—not just words—that staying true to oneself in service to one's province and country should override partisanship. That's an impressive legacy, and a lesson that he leaves to all of us."

NDP MP Ashton on the mend

NDP MP **Niki Ashton** says she's on the mend following a recent surgery. In a Dec. 2 social media post, Ashton said she was "grateful to the doctors, nurses and health-care staff at Concordia Hospital for the extraordinary care I received for my ACL reconstruction surgery, needed because of my ski accident earlier this year."

She added, alongside a photo of her feet clad in neon-pink Crocs supported by a pair of crutches: "I'm homebound for now but fully active on virtual Parliament and keeping in touch with people across our region on the issues that matter."

Ashton was the subject of media scrutiny earlier this year when it was reported that she had billed the House of Commons for expenses related to travel for her



NDP MP Niki Ashton says she's recovering from ACL reconstruction surgery. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

and her family members from her Manitoba riding to "Ottawa and then Quebec City and Montreal over the holidays to meet with unnamed 'stakeholders' in 2022 and early 2023," despite her then-infrequent in-person attendance in the House. As the CBC reported in January, "Parliamentary travel records indicate NDP MP Niki Ashton was only in Ottawa on one occasion for four days during the fall 2022 sitting."

"I believe in accountability," she told the *National Observer*. "But I also believe that people should be told the full story."

Ashton said the purpose of the travel was to deal with a bedbug infestation in her Ottawa apartment, as well as to meet with language stakeholders in Quebec. She later paid back a portion of the reported \$17,641.12 in expenses, totalling roughly \$2,900.

Senator Muggli joins the ranks of the PSG



Senator Tracy Muggli has joined the Progressive Senate Group. Photograph courtesy of X

One of the newest members of the Red Chamber has found a group to call home. Saskatchewan Senator **Tracy Muggli** recently joined the Progressive Senate Group, bringing their total membership to 14 people.

A registered social worker, senior executive, and former provincial public servant, Muggli was appointed to the Senate this past August.

"Senator Tracy Muggli's achievements prior to her appointment certainly highlight her commitment to public service, social justice, and community. Independent members of [the PSG] look forward to working with her," PSG Leader **Pierre Dalphond** posted on Nov. 20.

Green Party adds to critic roster

The federal Greens have bolstered their critic team with the addition of two new names: **Arvin Singh Dang**, who will serve as the foreign affairs critic, and **Gadfly Stratton**, who is the new fisheries critic.

Singh brings a "truly global lens" to his role, having lived in Thailand, Hong Kong, Singapore, the United Kingdom, Germany, India, Nepal, and Canada, according to a Nov. 28 Green Party press release.

"A champion for bold systems change, Arvin has led Himalayan expeditions and a volunteer wildland firefighting team, is representing a class action lawsuit against the RCMP, and taught the Climate Action Leadership Diploma at Pearson College UWC," the release said.

Stratton, who lives in Halifax, is described as an environmental scientist and social justice advocate with a focus on aquatic ecosystems.

"Gadfly's expertise and passion for both environmental science and equity make him uniquely qualified to address the pressing challenges in fisheries and aquatic ecosystems," said Green Leader **Elizabeth May** in the release.

Singh and Stratton join the 23-member critic roster, which includes Green MP **Mike Morrice**, who covers the housing and disability inclusion files.

Senators honoured for South Korea recognition

The Canada-Korea Society (CKS) recently showed its appreciation for the Senators who made the establishment of a federal Korean Heritage Month a reality.

During its Nov. 27 annual general meeting and gala dinner, the CKS presented plaques to the group of Upper Chamber representatives, led by Conservative Senator **Yonah Martin**, who sponsored a motion to establish October as Korean Heritage Month.

Alongside Martin, the CKS honoured Senators **Amina Gerba**, **Rebecca Patterson**, and **Hassan Yussuf** (who was fêted in absentia).

Motion 187 received unanimous approval in the Senate on June 4, with the inaugural federal acknowledgement this past October. Ontario enacted a similar recognition back in 2017.

The Hill Times

Grits' ad-buy boost briefly overtakes Tories, but strategists say 'spray-and-pray' tactics will need recalibrating

Since the release of their first digital ad on Oct. 31, the Liberals have increased their ad spend in November to match or exceed the Conservatives.

Continued from page 1

to maintain their current momentum or refine their targeting beyond a nationwide "spray-and-pray" strategy.

For the first time since *The Hill Times* began tracking the federal parties' digital advertising purchases this past summer, the Liberals spent a higher combined total on the party's and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau Que.) official Facebook and Instagram pages between Nov. 18 and Nov. 24—the last full week with updated data—compared to the total spent on the official pages of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) and his party.

According to Meta's Ad Library, the only publicly available data on federal parties' current advertising spend, the Liberals spent \$75,376 between the two



GT&Co's Cole Hogan says the Liberals have been utilizing a national 'spray-and-pray' strategy until recently, compared to the Conservatives targeting ads by postal code. *Photograph courtesy of Cole Hogan*

pages, compared to the \$58,237 spent between the two Conservative accounts. The previous week, Nov. 11-17, the Liberals were also shy of the Conservatives' combined total, with \$57,216 and \$58,819 respectively.

While those totals amount to a slight dip from the combined \$66,704 the Conservatives spent from Oct. 28 to Nov. 3, the Liberals' total is a significant jump from the combined \$11,873 it spent during the same period.

The Liberals' increased spending in the final two weeks of November also significantly reduced the gulf between their monthly total expenditures and those of the Conservatives.

Between Oct. 31 and Nov. 29, the Liberals spent a combined \$195,308 on Meta, compared to the Conservatives' \$252,023, a difference of just over \$56,700. That difference is roughly one-sixth of the \$383,360 margin between the Liberals' and Conservatives' October totals when the parties spent a combined \$15,235 and \$398,595, respectively.

GT&Co principal Cole Hogan, who has been tracking the parties' digital ad spends since the beginning of June, said the Liberals' uptick in spending is the largest he has recorded. However, the two-week period represents a small fraction of what the Conservatives have consistently spent each month, which is anywhere from a quarter-million to one-third of a million dollars.

However, Hogan, who has worked on digital ad campaigns for Ontario Premier Doug Ford and former Alberta premier Jason Kenney, said the level of spending and the number of ads being produced for the platform would suffice for what he believes is the actual intended audience: the Liberal caucus and potential donors.

"This is a signal to caucus that 'we're still alive and with some fight in us,'" Hogan explained, adding that the more substantial ad-spend combined with the recently passed GST holiday and proposed \$250 Working Canadians benefit should continue to quell further "grumblings from caucus."

"The party itself and the PMO can now point to what they are actually doing to try and take the fight to Poilievre," Hogan said. "This looks a lot more promising for them than anything else has in the last little while."



The Liberals' new ad-buying effort should at least buy Prime Minister Justin Trudeau a somewhat contented caucus, says a Tory strategist. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

While Hogan said there would be "quibbles about the policy," he added that running ads on the rebate and scrapping the GST was at least a departure from the Liberals' usual "boilerplate message" highlighting previous accomplishments.

However, Hogan noted that it remains to be seen how long the Liberals will be able to maintain even a comparable level of spending to the Conservatives,

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100 BEST BOOKS IN 2024

Keep an eye out for *The Hill Times'* Top 100 Books List in 2024 along with book reviews in this year's special list and section. This one's a keeper and a must read.

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Advertising Deadline: Tuesday, Dec. 10, 2024

News

As fourth province signs on, Families Minister Sudds defends school food program

Adding '184,000 more kids who didn't have food at school before we started is great progress, and it's hardly a bureaucracy,' says Minister Jenna Sudds.

BY STUART BENSON

Conservatives are accusing the Liberals of "misleading Canadians" with a school food program that leaves out more than 90 per cent of schoolchildren as the Liberals welcome a fourth province into the initiative. Yet, with the program already expected to feed an additional 184,000 students this year alone, Families, Children, and Social Development Minister Jenna Sudds says every student who doesn't go to school hungry is progress when the Conservatives would have done nothing.

On Nov. 29, Prince Edward Island became the latest province to sign on to the federal government's National School Food Program, which will provide the province with an initial investment of roughly \$7.1-million over three years.

At a press conference on Nov. 27 alongside Sudds (Kanata-Carleton, Ont.) and Premier Dennis King, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said the direct financial help is crucial at a time when family budgets are being "squeezed" by the high cost of living.

According to a press release accompanying the announcement, the additional funding is expected to provide an extra 1,500 P.E.I. kids with healthy lunches and another 800 more kids with healthy breakfasts and snacks this school year, projected to save the average family an average of \$800 in annual grocery bills. It will also support investments in food transportation and storage, food-preparation equipment, and staff.

The most recent agreement arrived one week after Ontario announced it would be signing on, receiving its \$108.5-million over three years' share of the \$1-billion program first announced in the 2024 budget. Alongside Ontario's \$28.2-million investment in its Student Nutrition Program, and \$4.4-million toward its First Nations Student Nutrition Program, the additional funding is expected to deliver 9.8 million



Families, Children, and Social Development Minister Jenna Sudds, centre, announces \$7.1-million in funding for P.E.I. as part of the National School Food Program on Nov. 29. PMO photograph by Adam Scotti

additional meals to the province's schoolchildren.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Sudds said she is encouraged by the pace of the negotiations, but that some of the progress she had expected to make had to be paused due to the recent provincial elections.

Additionally, Sudds said she has been pleasantly surprised by the level of collaboration and recognition of the program's importance across provincial party lines.

With the addition of Ontario and P.E.I., the program's signees now include two Progressive Conservative, one Liberal, and one NDP provincial government, Sudds noted.

Combined with the \$17-million over three years for Manitoba announced on Oct. 18, and the \$9.1-million for Newfoundland



Conservative families critic Michelle Ferreri says the Liberals are 'misleading Canadians with a photo op program' claiming to be universal while only expecting to feed one in 10 schoolchildren. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

and Labrador on Sept. 4, Sudds said an additional 184,000 kids will be able to access the program this school year.

"In my mind, every child we can help is progress," she said.

However, Conservative MP Michelle Ferreri (Peterborough-Kawartha, Ont.), her party's families, children, and social development critic, accused the Liberals of "misleading Canadians with a photo-op program they falsely claim to be 'universal,'" when, according to provincial data, it will only cover roughly seven per cent of the 22,080 students attending school in P.E.I., with a similar percentage for Ontario's more than two million schoolchildren.

In a statement, Ferreri noted that one in four Canadians currently report experiencing food insecurity, with an increase from 2020 to 2022 of 360,000 more children falling below the poverty line.

A Nov. 19 report by Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty found that the five per cent increase over those two years represented the first increase in Canadian child poverty in a decade. The year-over-year change from 2021-22 was also the largest on record, with more than 110,000 families falling below the poverty line that year.

"Trudeau's photo-op promise will not feed kids; it will feed bureaucracies," Ferreri said in her statement. "While Trudeau builds his food bureaucracy in Ottawa, he simultaneously raised the carbon tax—which he vows to quadruple—by 23 per cent on parents who already can't afford to put food on the table."

Sudds told *The Hill Times* she finds it difficult to understand what part of the program the Conservatives are referring to as a federal bureaucracy, as the funding is a direct investment in pre-existing provincial programs. She also said she finds the criticism that the program won't feed enough students laughable when "the reality is they [the Conservatives] would have done nothing." "First of all, the Conservatives have voted against a school food program at every opportunity," Sudds said, adding, "184,000 more kids who didn't have food at school before we started is great progress, and it's hardly a bureaucracy."

Additionally, while the vast majority of the funding is going towards the food itself, Sudds explained that there is also a need for investments in fridges, facility construction and renovation, and any other necessary resources, including hiring staff to expand those programs and feed more children.

"Building capacity, and setting these programs up for success doesn't just happen overnight," Sudds continued.

Sudds didn't provide a concrete timeline for when she expects to have signed agreements with the remaining provinces and territories, but added that "every day that there's a kid at school in this country without access to school food is taking too long."

Debbie Field, a co-ordinator with the Coalition for Healthy School Food, told *The Hill Times* that she expects British Columbia or New Brunswick to be the next provinces ready to sign on. She

noted that while both provinces were delayed by their respective elections on Oct. 19 and 21, both winning parties—the NDP in B.C., and the Liberals in New Brunswick—ran on promises to increase funding to their respective provincial programs.

Additionally, in her Nov. 26 interview with *The Hill Times* ahead of the Liberals' announcement, Field had also accurately predicted P.E.I. as a province she believed would be signing on soon.

While Field admitted that she had felt nervous when Sudds had initially cited the negotiations over childcare as a model for reaching agreements on school food, the current pace has put those worries to rest.

"I don't think there is another example in recent years of agreements on any theme being signed as quickly between the federal and provincial governments," Field said. "It has been a breath of fresh air considering the country's mood."

Field also said she is even more encouraged to hear the Conservatives respond to that announcement as a "Band-Aid solution," and added she is looking forward to an opportunity to speak with party leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) about what a Conservative program to feed more kids would look like. She said she would also appreciate a chance to explain why Poilievre's analysis of the program as a "bureaucracy" is incorrect.

"Not a single new bureaucratic penny was spent on this," Field said, joking that she isn't counting whatever was spent to have someone sign the cheques.

"To those naysayers that say this is a bureaucracy, and no kids will eat: it's just not true," Field said. "This money is going right into provinces' already-funded and existing programs."

However, Field added that doesn't mean she disagrees with the Conservatives that the current program is a "Band-Aid solution."

An investment of "\$1-billion over five years is not comprehensive enough; it is a Band-Aid," Field said. "So I will work with any party to figure out what universal looks like, and ensure it's well funded and operated so that all children have a healthy meal at school."

sbenson@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



The Coalition for Healthy School Food's Debbie Field says she is willing to work with any party willing to help make the program truly universal. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Don't expect any breaks from Tariff Man

Whatever Donald Trump says about his reasons for slapping tariffs on Canadian imports, it's safe to assume it's only part of the story.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—We're all taking United States president-elect Donald Trump too literally.

Instead of being upset that Canada is being lumped in with Mexico in Trump's threats of huge import tariffs, we should really be concerned that we are being lumped in with China.

The Nov. 25 tweet that most likely spelled at least the temporary end of open Canada-U.S. trade ties—not to mention friendship—specified that Canadians are to be punished economically for not preventing irregular migrants and drugs (mainly fentanyl) from crossing into the U.S. The economically crippling 25 per cent tariffs Trump is saying he will put on all Canadian goods coming into the American market would also be extended to Mexico, with additional higher import taxes on China.

As far it goes, the supposedly lax border is the specific issue that the Republican leader is demanding be fixed by his Canadian and Mexican neighbours. Canada has pointed out vigorously that this is shockingly asymmetrical with regard to Canada and Mexico. But it's not surprising that the Trump team doesn't seem to make a distinction.

Keep in mind that Tom Homan, Trump's newly appointed border and deportation czar, is a former police officer from upstate New York. The man who in 2017 talked Trump into splitting up some 5,000 migrant children from their parents to discourage border crossings, Homan has his boss' ear, and he seems to have a particular axe to grind with his Canadian neighbours.

In an interview shortly after his appointment, Homan was asked about securing the northern U.S. region. "This is home, it'll be on my mind, Day 1" in the White House, Homan told a Watertown, N.Y., TV station. "No one is going to attack my home and get away with it."

Of the U.S.-Canada border, Homan added, "It's an extreme national security vulnerability, and it's one of the things I will tackle in the White House." Canadians need to understand "they can't be a gateway for terrorists coming into the United States," he declared.

Homan has likely ginned up Trump's animosity toward Canada. But the problem—as became obvious after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's surprise dinner with the president-elect in Florida on Nov. 29—is much wider than the alleged Canadian

and Mexican shortcomings on smugglers and migrants.

Faced with probably the worst crisis since the 1995 Quebec referendum, Trudeau has organized what passes for a unified front among the premiers, and taken all the obvious steps to appease the president-elect, including promises of much-increased border surveillance. Doing so may help, but for now, Canada is just another villain in re-elected Tariff Man's plan to make the U.S.'s trading partners pay dearly for their role in what Trump imagines is a worldwide plot to take advantage of American open trade policies.

Trudeau and his aides went to talk to Trump at Mar-a-Lago about migrants and fentanyl smuggling, but Trump appeared unmoved, and his comments afterwards made it clear that he was thinking about Canada in a wider negative context. After the meeting, Trump tweeted that Trudeau had made "a commitment to work with us to end this terrible devastation" in the U.S. from China-supplied fentanyl coming in via the Americans' neighbours. The U.S., he remarked, "will no longer sit idly by as our Citizens become victims to the scourge of this Drug Epidemic." Trump's expressed beefs with Canada also included illegal immigration and the need for "Fair Trade Deals that do not jeopardize American Workers, and the massive Trade Deficit the U.S. has with Canada."

The takeaway is that Trump's many-faceted and mercurial animosity toward the U.S.'s partners is central to his determination to use tariffs to upend the rules-based international trade system in favour of a protectionist framework that would theoretically benefit his own country. China—against which Trump started a trade war in



Canada is just another villain in what U.S. president-elect Donald Trump imagines is a worldwide plot to take advantage of American open trade policies, writes Les Whittington. White House photograph by Andrea Hanks

his first term, and which is now the object of proposed 60 per cent import tariffs—is a long-standing target of Trump's economic vengeance. But he also blames Mexico for undermining American economic strength and unleashing the fentanyl plague in the U.S., with an overdose death toll running close to 100,000 people a year. And Canada, with its greatly beneficial free access to the U.S. market, fits the bill as well.

What's more, tariffs are at the heart of Trump's second-term planning. He is set on using massive tariff funds to pay for his promised income tax cuts without worsening the already out-of-control U.S. government debt. So, whatever Trump says about

his reasons for slapping tariffs on Canadian imports, it's safe to assume the explanation is only part of the story, and subject to change depending on his mood.

Canada will, of course, have to do everything possible to deal with this hydra-headed threat, and effectively improving the irregular migrant and smuggling issues at the Canadian border would be a start. But heading off the Trump tariffs may be out of the question in the short term, with an eventual reversal for Canada probably about the best that can be hoped for at this point.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

YOUR SAFETY BEGINS WITH TWO PILOTS

Don't let it end with one pilot flights.

Would you fly on a plane with just one pilot? Some manufacturers and regulators around the world are trying to remove the second pilot from commercial flights. This means that no second pilot will be able to help in-flight and manage potential emergencies. Keep air travel safe by keeping two pilots on every flight.

ALPA Canada
Air Line Pilots Association, Int'l
Association des Pilotes de Ligne, Internationale

There's a lot riding on our wings.

Opinion

Moving forward on game-changing gun legislation

Despite the recent media debates, misrepresentations, and polarized demands for more or less regulation, C-21 is a critical step forward.

Wendy Cukier

Opinion



Nearly a year has passed since Bill C-21, an Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms), received royal assent, overcoming setbacks and strong opposition from the organized gun lobby. Based on global norms, extensive research, and expert testimony, the legislation directly addresses the Mass Casualty Commission's recommendations after the worst mass shooting in Canada's history in Portapique, N.S.

Laws are only words on paper without solid regulations and implementation, and Canada is on the edge of accomplishing what the Coalition for Gun Control set out to do nearly 35 years ago after the Montreal Massacre on Dec. 6, 1989. While we will doubtlessly have to continue to fight to protect our hard-won gains, and while our battles in court continue, we must support the change-making legislation—not least because the gun lobby will try to use every possible tool to delay, block, or roll back the legislation.

Key measures in Bill C-21 include:

- removing firearms from people who are a risk to themselves or others;
- implementing a ban on the import, transfer, and sale of handguns;
- implementing further restrictions to prohibit military-style semi-automatic firearms; and
- tackling a reduction of firearm diversion and smuggling.

Our work to develop a global ban on military assault weapons revealed the complexity: there is no international standard, and different countries have different definitions, lists, and criteria. And manufacturers move quickly to skirt laws by changing features, names, and models, requiring governments to be able to respond fast. There is massive variation, particularly with military style semi-automatic firearms. Care is needed to not cast the net too narrowly and miss firearms that should be prohibited, or too widely, capturing firearms commonly and “reasonably used” in hunting.

Following the Portapique shootings, the federal government quickly issued orders-in-council to prohibit specific firearms by name—including the Ruger Mini 14, an unrestricted firearm used in the Dec. 6, 1989, Montreal massacre; and the notorious AR-15, a restricted weapon. This approach allows more flexibility, and can be updated quickly compared to legislation. The government also committed to a buy-back program, which is unusual in



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc. Bill C-21 received royal assent on Dec. 15, 2023. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Canada where past practice has been to grandfather existing owners.

Similarly, the government introduced a temporary ban on the import, sale, and transfer of handguns, effective August 2022. Bill C-21 was introduced to strengthen the screening of gun owners and import controls, and to codify aspects of the bans on military-style semi-automatic firearms and handguns with clearer definitions. There were many delays. To build the strongest consensus on a plan forward, there were four different versions of the law which reflected and responded to the recommendations of advocacy groups on both sides of the issue. The policy development process also needed to address legitimate concerns around Indigenous hunting rights. And there were also delays caused by institutions refusing to support the buyback and budget considerations.

The ban on military style semi-automatic firearms delivered on a promise made 25 years ago, and brings Canada into line with most industrialized countries. The buyback program—currently transitioning from gun stores to private owners—delivers on the government's promise following Portapique. Legal challenges against some aspects of the law's constitutionality continue, but we must fight to hang on to these hard-won gains.

Despite the recent media debates, misrepresentations, and polarized demands for more or less regulation, the law is a critical step forward. Besides banning military-style semi-automatic firearms linked to mass shootings worldwide, the legislation effectively bans handguns by extending restrictions on handgun sales, imports, and trade; it's a game changer, critical for ensuring public safety in our communities. Let's not sacrifice the progress we have made in passing this law at such a critical phase in its implementation.

Wendy Cukier is the president of the Coalition for Gun Control, a national organization dedicated to ending gun violence in Canada. Founded in the wake of the Montreal Massacre in 1989, the Coalition is supported by more than 200 health, crime prevention, victims, women's, public safety, and community organizations from across Canada.

The Hill Times

Comment

The riots in Montreal are a sign of growing antisemitism

Since the Hamas attacks in October 2023, there have been more than 400 ugly demonstrations against the war in Gaza on the streets of Montreal.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



MONTREAL—Is this city the capital of Antisemitism in Canada?

That was the accusation in a recent column in the *New York Post* by Dr. Gad Saad, a Montrealer and professor of marketing at Northwood University in Michigan. He has taken a leave from his position at Concordia University because “as a Jewish professor who has weighed in publicly on these difficulties, the situation has gotten so precarious.”

He may have a point. Since the Hamas attacks that killed more than 1,000 Israeli Jews on Oct. 7, 2023, there have been more than 400 ugly demonstrations against the war in Gaza on the streets of Montreal, including the occupation of McGill University's campus.

Soon after the Hamas attacks and Israel's response in Gaza, Imam Adil Charkaoui stood before a demonstration in Montreal. Denouncing “Zionist aggressors,” he called on Allah to “kill the enemies of the people of Gaza and to spare none of them.” Charges were not laid because the prosecutors could not determine “beyond a reasonable doubt” that Charkaoui's comments were an incitement of hatred against an “identifiable group” as specified in the Criminal Code.

Hundreds of demonstrations and antisemitic incidents later, Montreal attracted international attention for a riot last month. Two demonstrations headed towards the downtown Palais des Congrès, where NATO was holding the 70th annual Parliamentary Assembly, welcoming 300 delegates from 57 states.

Delegates gathered in Montreal “to discuss key challenges to Alliance security and NATO's essential role,” notably including Russia's war on Ukraine and its threat to security in Europe. One of the demonstrations was focused on disrupting the NATO meeting. But the second demonstration against the war in Gaza headed there, too. The only common thread the two groups have is Russia and its ally Iran, who are suspected of funding anti-Israel demonstrations in Europe and North America.

Within only a few minutes on Nov. 22, windows were smashed, cars set on fire, and Montreal had an international black eye. In a radio interview last week, Montreal police chief Fady Dagher was quick to defend the force, saying 100 protesters were arrested in the past year, and insisting, “We don't decide to be more tolerant.” He noted changes in the law allow protesters to be masked, and the police can no longer surround rioters. In this case, once the violence began, “it took five to six minutes” before it was contained.

However, very few of the past hundreds of marches could be described as “peaceful.” There has been extensive property damage, and hundreds of screaming mobs. Several Montreal synagogues have been surrounded—despite court injunctions—with elderly members called “baby killers” as they entered for services or ceremonies.

In mid-November, 450—of 10,000—downtown Dawson College students voted to strike to protest “the atrocities and genocide in Gaza.” I was at a conference with Dawson students in attendance, and I offered to express my opinion that, according to the Genocide Convention, this war

did not qualify as there must be an explicit “intent to destroy” a people, as the Germans did six million Jews. I pointed out 45,000 Palestinians—of two million—have been killed in Gaza, in a war begun by Hamas.

One student rudely contradicted me. I asked him if Russia's killing thousands of people in Ukraine or Syria were genocides, and if he had protested conflicts in Sudan or Iran. Might it be antisemitism? In short order, a mob surrounded me, screaming “Free, Free Palestine!!” A week later, an invitation to speak to Dawson's Model United Nations in January was rescinded. I was “cancelled” for my beliefs.

It's a shame. Had I attended, I would have spoken of my years with the World Health Organization and UNICEF, my master's thesis on the United Nations, and the time I spent as an analyst in the UN section of now-Global Affairs Canada. I would have praised it for its accomplishments, such as advances in health, labour, and human rights.

I would have also talked of its role in the creation of Israel, and the current manipulation of the UN against Israel by China, Russia, Iran, and their allies. And I would have said its perpetual anti-Israel resolutions only bring shame on the UN. As do ugly demonstrations in support of a terrorist group—Hamas—and against the only democracy in the Middle East.

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



The Nov. 22 protest-turned-riot in Montreal attracted international attention. *Screenshot courtesy of CBC News*

Can Canada actually defend the Arctic?

The Navy's commander thinks we could stop Russia or China from transiting through the Northwest Passage without official permission

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—A startling headline and sub-head in a recent *National Post* story read as follows: “Canada’s top sailor says he’s sure we could stop Russia or China from trespassing in Arctic: The country’s new Arctic and offshore patrol ships only carry a 25-mm cannon, but Canada’s top sailor says that could quickly be supplemented with other weapons.”

My initial reaction was to presume that this was some sort of “click-bait” gimmick to lure in astounded readers.

However, Vice-Admiral Angus Toppsee, the commander of the Royal Canadian Navy, did indeed tell the *National Post* that he is confident the RCN could stop Russia or China from transiting through the Northwest Passage without official permission. Toppsee is so confident, in fact, that he believes Canada could do it solo.

“We wouldn’t need the allies to come to our aid. We could deal with it ourselves,” said Toppsee. “We have the capacity to deploy our ships up there right now to stop them.”

There is a lot to digest from Toppsee’s claim, and at first glance it would seem ludicrous to think we could deter the Russian or Chinese navies with a 7,000 ton Arctic and Offshore Patrol Ship (AOPS) which mounts a single 25mm cannon.

I believe what Toppsee is suggesting is that with the AOPS, Canada could potentially meet “presence with presence” to confront any Russian or Chinese naval incursion into our waters. If it evolved into a hostile engagement, we would be toast.

It is also needs to be clarified that the AOPS—despite having the word Arctic in its name—has only a limited ice-breaking capability. While the AOPS can operate in ice up to 1.5 metres thick, the heavy Russian and Chinese icebreakers can handle more than two metres of ice.

The Russians are currently conducting sea trials on the newly launched icebreaker Ivan Papanin, which is reportedly capable of carrying cruise missiles. For those not familiar with naval weaponry, a cruise missile easily trumps a 25 mm cannon.

This past September, the People’s Liberation Army Navy of China deployed three heavy icebreakers to the Bering Strait Arctic Ocean approaches. For the record, China and Russia recently participated in a joint naval exercise in the Pacific named Operation Ocean 2024. It involved a combined 400 warships, and 120 aircraft.

At last count, the RCN has taken delivery of five of a total of six AOPS, with the final ship to be complete next year. However, due to a crippling shortage of trained technicians, the Navy can only put one AOPS to sea at a time.

There have also been a lot of significant “teething troubles” with the AOPS. In addition to excessive flooding and contaminated water supplies, the ships still cannot deploy with the planned for Cyclone maritime helicopters. “Right now, it’s got a hangar, it’s got a flight deck—that’s the easy part,” Toppsee told the *National Post*. “The complicated piece is that, in order to be able to land that helicopter on the deck, secure it on the deck and then bring it into the hangar—there’s a couple of changes that have to be made.”

For the record, the AOPS were ordered in 2011. The first of the class, HMCS Harry DeWolf, was launched in 2018, and commissioned in 2021. Three years later, the Navy still cannot operate a helicopter from their flight decks, which was an integral part of the ships’ design from the outset. However, we are to understand from Toppsee that if hostilities were imminent, somehow the dockyard workers in Halifax, N.S., and Esquimalt, B.C., could suddenly transform these AOPS into battle-worthy vessels.

“They’re not intended to be front-line combatants,” Toppsee said of the AOPS. “They have

everything they need for the missions that we anticipate that [they’ll] do. Were we to get into a wartime environment where we felt ... they could come directly under threat, then there’s the capacity to install other weapons in sort of an ad hoc manner—very similar to how you would defend an army forward operating base.”

It was almost exactly one year ago that Toppsee released a very blunt video commentary entitled *The State of the Royal Canadian Navy*. Toppsee acknowledged that the chronic shortfall in personnel—more than 20 per cent of authorized strength—would lead to the Navy failing to meet its readiness objectives in 2024 and beyond. That message was aimed at his own internal RCN audience, but Toppsee’s commentary gained widespread media attention for his brutal honesty.

Now, 12 months later, we are to believe that the Navy stands ready to confront Russia and China in the Arctic without the assistance of our allies? That is one hell of a comeback. If only it were true.

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

The Hill Times

Opinion

Tory charges of bias are unfair: CBC is nobody’s mouthpiece

Pierre Poilievre’s Conservatives have been borrowing from Donald Trump to erode public trust in media, and intimidate media managers, according to Jim Munson.

Jim Munson

Opinion



Like most journalists, employees of CBC-Radio Canada don’t feel comfortable being the subject of any news story, or any public debate. As a result, they don’t respond to any suggestion of bias, or even allegations of slanting content to suit somebody’s agenda, as the Conservatives allege.

But I will.

When I was on camera for CTV News for 22 years, I always regarded my CBC competitors with high professional respect. Later, as communications director in the Prime Minister’s Office, I admired the CBC’s consistent accuracy and fairness.

And throughout it all, I was aware of how onerous the CBC’s professional standards for accuracy and fairness are—so onerous, in fact, that video editors have been required during elections to report the number of seconds given to each political party in clips.

I know CBC newsroom culture and rigorous professional standards well enough to know fairness and objectivity are in CBC-Radio Canada journalists’ DNA. They are nobody’s mouthpiece.

As we are all aware, the Conservatives have been saying for months that CBC news and public affairs is the propaganda arm of the Trudeau government without any examples of pro-government bias, case studies, analysis, or any documentation.

There’s no doubt that discrediting the CBC’s integrity is a first step in getting rid of it.

But then again, that is part of a pattern of blaming “gatekeepers” as the cause of what is wrong with everything from health care to public broadcasting. Blame is a key ingredient of a polarized political culture.

Pierre Poilievre’s Conservatives have been borrowing from United States president-elect Donald Trump’s playbook to demonize the CBC and other media, including *The Canadian Press*, *The Toronto Star*, and—most recently—CTV to erode public trust in media, and intimidate media managers.

In CTV’s case, Poilievre declared a Conservative boycott against any dealing with the network in September. Then he lifted it after two grovelling apologies from the network for what was admittedly a badly botched story, and after the firing of two CTV staffers.

In any news organization, there are lapses in judgment, factual errors, or simple unfairness. But according to the 2023-24 annual report of the ombudsperson for the CBC English service, there were just 62 corrections or alterations resulting from 4,111 complaints.

I also know how much my former competitors—like any

journalist—hate editorial interference, and will resist any attempt to slant a story to suit an agenda.

This is why the collective agreements between the three CBC unions and management contain strict language against management interference with program content in the producer control section. Failure to adhere is subject to grievance.

Except under very limited circumstances, “final authority shall rest with the producer,” says Article 34.3.1 of the collective agreement of the Canadian Media Guild.

Language like this was hard-won by CBC employees in a struggle for editorial independence that goes back to the FLQ crisis of the 1960s.

Defunding the CBC and public broadcasting would remove a gold standard in how Canadians get their public affairs information, and hold their politicians accountable.

This is probably why at least six out of 10 Canadians value it, trust it, and know it is a public institution—not a state mouthpiece—according to several public opinion polls.

As more news outlets go out of business, we’re living in an age of news deserts. The CBC is the only source of information many regions have.

Sure, the CBC is not perfect. But let’s fix it, not nix it.

One place where we could start as Canadians would be to pay our fair share. Canada spends \$33 per capita a year on the CBC, or \$1.4-billion in total. That’s near the bottom among other major countries like the United Kingdom, Germany, or Switzerland, and \$55 below average per capita spending among 20 nations.

In the meantime, according to Environmental Defence, Canada subsidized the fossil fuel industry in 2023 by \$18.6-billion. Instead of defunding the CBC, maybe Conservatives should be talking about defunding this uber-profitable industry.

In *The Bulwark*, American writer William Kristol recently quoted Trump’s hit man Steve Bannon, who said: “The Democrats don’t matter. The real opposition is the media. And the way to deal with them is to flood the zone with shit.”

I beg to differ. Canadians should vigorously defend the CBC. Political interference only turns into a dumpster fire as we have seen in the U.S.

Jim Munson is a retired senator, former CTV reporter, and former aide to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien.

The Hill Times

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Editorial

COVID no longer an excuse for contracting woes

Auditor General Karen Hogan may want to invest in some sort of rubber stamp to more quickly convey the conclusion that seems to be in every report she makes about value for money in this government's procurement processes.

The overarching theme in past audit reports has been a distinct lack of oversight and accountability for projects that were contracted out, and Hogan's most recent tranche of findings are no different.

On Dec. 2, Hogan released five reports, two of which dealt with procurement.

First up was her examination of the Industrial and Technological Benefits policy, which forms part of the bidding process that determines who is awarded major defence contracts. The policy states that an amount equal to an awarded contract's value is to be invested back into the Canadian economy by the contractor, and generally applies to procurements of more than \$100-million.

Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada didn't have clear rules or guidance in applying the policy, "lacked effective ways to measure" its economic benefits and creation of jobs, and failed to track its potential impacts on defence procurements, the AG found.

Additionally, "the audit found that in 10 out of 60 procurements over \$100-million, the policy either was not applied or did not include the full obligation."

In Hogan's study of the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA)

program, her office found "significant weaknesses in EDC's [Export Development Canada] contract management."

"EDC gave too much control to the vendor [Accenture] over key aspects of contracts, such as the scope of work and pricing, and failed to exercise basic controls in contract management, such as monitoring that amounts paid aligned with the work performed. As a result, value for money was compromised," the AG's office said.

Crucially, "the audit also found that the Department of Finance Canada and Global Affairs Canada did not effectively oversee the CEBA program."

Perhaps the consistency of the concerns regarding the lack of oversight for how taxpayers' money is doled out is why ministers were nowhere to be found in the wake of the reports' tabling on Dec. 2. Liberal members of cabinet offered written statements rather than facing reporters.

"While the Auditor General offers some good and useful recommendations, this report fails to properly acknowledge that CEBA was designed and delivered during a global pandemic," read a joint statement from the finance and small business ministers.

Reasonable people can understand that emergency pandemic supports were rolled out very quickly, and ultimately helped many people. But when the rush of the emergency subsided, the ongoing lack of oversight is inexcusable.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor



Trudeau must pass the baton, call an election, or face Liberal wipeout: letter writer

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—having consistently trailed the Conservatives in the polls for the last 18 months by a margin of 15-20 percentage points—has lost legitimacy in the eyes of the Canadian public.

Long dogged by scandals—notorious among them is the blackface incident—he has also been in power for too long. Trudeau has now surpassed former prime minister Stephen Harper's tenure in power, and pollsters consistently reveal how the electorate has become tired of his rule, and thus are ready for new elections and a new governing party.

Back in October, Jagmeet Singh and the NDP ended the supply-and-confidence agreement, effectively leaving the Liberals vulnerable to a non-confidence motion. The Liberals have also bolstered Quebec's sovereignty cause by passing a "Quebec as a nation" motion, thereby emboldening Premier François Legault

to pass Bill 96, which also purports to entrench Quebec in our Constitution as a "nation whose language is French."

United States president-elect Donald Trump's second electoral win has put an even larger burden on Trudeau, and Trump has already threatened Canada with imminent tariffs across the board once inaugurated. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, who shares Trump's right-wing policies in many areas, is better poised to represent our nations' interests by having a better rapport with the incoming president.

With Parliament currently being bogged down due to a privilege issue of Trudeau's making, it's time for Trudeau to either pass the baton and call an early election, or face a 1993-style wipeout of the federal Liberal Party in October 2025

Derek Pressler
 Chicago, Ill.

Letter writers should stop trying to justify Hamas' actions, says Toronto reader

Re: "Netanyahu finally accountable for his conduct: letter writer," (*The Hill Times*, Nov. 27, p. 8).

Morgan Duchesney's most recent letter downplays Hamas' genocidal massacres on Oct. 7, 2023, claiming they were "hardly unprovoked" because of Israeli policies.

What a grotesque rationalization. On Oct. 7, thousands of Hamas terrorists streamed into southern Israel, raping, torturing, murdering, and kidnapping innocent people, including women, children, and the elderly.

Those murderous actions were absolutely "unprovoked," and no gripe about Israeli policies could ever rationalize—let alone justify—such monstrous actions.

By Duchesney's logic, after the Holocaust—an actual genocide—one would have expected huge mobs of Jews trying to murder, kidnap, rape, and torture German, Ukrainian, and Polish civilians throughout Europe.

Hamas terrorists didn't murder Israeli civilians because they were "provoked." Hamas is clear about their ultimate goal: to destroy Israel, and replace it with an Islamic theocracy.

If Hamas doesn't even try to hide their genocidal goals, it's time that some letter writers stop trying to justify their actions, and start condemning them instead.

Jennifer Lawrence
 Toronto, Ont.



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Seeking bluer pastures

In the great social-media migration, Bluesky is offering a respite to users sick of hate.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—When I began using Twitter in 2010, it was a place where users had immediate access to news. I first noticed its potency during an earthquake that rocked (pun intended) Ontario, Quebec, and parts of New York state that June. We felt the building rock back and forth on the 18th floor. Before the official news media reported on what had happened, the administrative assistant gave us updates from Twitter. I was hooked. Those were the days when there was intellect, community building, activism,

and fun. It was the place where you could engage in conversation with celebrities and academics.

Unfortunately—escalated by Elon Musk’s purchase of the platform in 2022—Twitter has deteriorated into a sludge of misinformation, hate, Donald Trump stans, Tru-Anons (insufferable Justin Trudeau sycophants, as coined by CNN anchor Jake Tapper), and Pierre Poilievre. *The Washington Post*-conducted analysis noted it helped Republicans—and their talking points, or just plain meanness—go more viral. As their results indicate, “right-wing tweeters have clearly benefited under Musk’s reign.” In addition, Musk “has been slowing the speed with which users could access links to the *New York Times*, Facebook, and other news organizations.” Journalistic resources, marginalized communities, and the truth have all especially received Musk’s ire. And like Meta’s Threads—another competitor to Twitter—news is treated negatively, de-emphasized through algorithmic wizardry.

Bluesky is at the cusp of combining three factors of an effective social media app:

- **Functionality.** Bluesky looks and functions like 2014 Twitter—achieving both freshness and nostalgia, users can access a reverse chronological, algorithm-free feed (called the Skyline). While Bluesky does have algorithmic activity in its Discovery tab, you can choose to just see your followers and your mutuals (people who follow each other), chronologically. Users have been clamoring for chronological feeds for both Twitter (you don’t think your followers tab is sans algorithm, do you?), Instagram, and Threads. While there is next to no moderation on Twitter, given that Musk laid off most of his moderation team, Bluesky gives you more control. Recently, Twitter changed its blocking policy: for public posts, people you have blocked can still view your tweets but won’t be able to engage. As someone who has been a target of abuse, misogynoir, and harassment, this was a cynical game-changer. Blocking on Bluesky is similar to how Twitter’s blocking features previously worked: those accounts won’t be able to like, reply, mention, or follow you. But, in addition, Bluesky has what users

call the “nuclear block function.” If you block someone, not only do you not see their profile picture or posts, the platform removes all interactions between you and the blocked account.

- **Environment.** I joined Bluesky sometime last year through their initial invitation process when it was still new. At that time, it was a sanctimonious, left-wing site run by a bunch of schoolmarms. However, a significant trans community initiated a coalescence around the app, fleeing Twitter’s hate. I’ve now begun to see a growth of accounts I used to follow on Twitter. It is becoming a fun, informative alcove for progressive voices who are often drowned out in traditional and new media. While Bluesky has approximately one-tenth of Twitter users and a fraction of Threads’, it has a compelling attribute that those platforms have failed to capture: engagement. With that metric, Bluesky is formidable. It’s filled with people who like to chat to other people without the rancid responses.

- **Critical accounts for a successful social media platform.** In order for a social media platform to be good it has to have three main communities: Black people, since we shape culture; journalists who can distribute fact-checked information quickly; and sports. Yes, sports because

that’s where anyone can enter the conversation. Threads lacks all three, and while Twitter still contains them, the heavy hitters are beginning to leave. Journalism outlets such as *The Guardian* and NPR have sacrificed their Twitter accounts to seek refuge from Musk’s ire. As Neiman Lab explains, due to its rejection of news, “Threads users were confronted with a non-chronological feed that made the app borderline unusable on election night.” Users also reported that their feeds were so out-of-date, some didn’t find out who the president was until days later.

For those who complain that Bluesky is an echo chamber, welcome to social media. If you hadn’t noticed, every platform is an echo chamber. However, when progressive voices try to carve out a space on their own without aggression and hate, it’s a problem. Basically, every other platform spits out conservative viewpoints that often lean anti-immigrant, are socially and economically regressive, and hateful towards trans people. Most of us just want a peaceful, relatively safe respite without completely leaving social media. We found it, so leave us alone.

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

Opinion

Implement the special interlocutor’s final report on unmarked graves now for a new path forward

As long as we don’t know for certain what happened to the children who never returned from residential school, Canada is in no position to investigate itself.

Abram Benedict

Opinion



Building on the work of the Truth and Reconciliation

Commission, Kimberly Murray, independent special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked graves and burial sites associated with Indian Residential Schools, recently published her final report that presents 42 obligations to bring healing and closure to the families of those who disappeared at residential schools.

Murray highlights the urgent need to assist families in finding the truth and protecting records, bringing Canada in line with international laws, and providing reparations for the families of disappeared children and all Indigenous people. The obligations include just reparations, an Indigenous Data Sovereignty Act, and preventing residential school denialism.

It is critical that we implement these 42 obligations without delay.

To foster change, we must first reckon with our true history.

This includes using the proper terminology. Our children did not go missing at residential schools. They were deliberately disappeared through the actions of school staff and policymakers. This fact is uncomfortable. But it underlies a necessary shift in our language.

Using the term “disappeared” brings Canada in line with international human rights laws. The enforced disappearance of children is contrary to the Genocide Convention, and many other international human rights instruments. The crime is still ongoing. As long as we don’t know for certain what happened to the children who never returned from residential school, Canada is in no position to investigate itself. A crime of this nature—the systemic and intentional disappearance of children taken from their homes and families—requires an examination by the International Crim-

inal Court. We expect Canada to fully co-operate in this process, including by making all relevant materials available.

Murray’s report contains new information based on previously inaccessible archival records. Even today, communities are still fighting churches, universities, and government entities for access to vital documentary evidence of the crimes committed against our people at residential schools. It is imperative that we identify every single child who attended residential school, and those who never came home so families and communities can have closure. Indigenous Nations must have sovereignty over this sensitive data. Indigenous Nations should be the ones to determine how these records are held, and who has access to them.

Finally, there is the issue of residential school denialism. Make no mistake—denialism is not an omission or a misunderstanding. It is a deliberate campaign of misinformation to deny the true history of residential schools and the enforced disappearance of children. This denialism stems from hatred of Indigenous Peoples.

The Online Harms Act is currently being debated in Parliament. We call on Parliament to amend this bill to include provisions to criminalize residential school denialism. It is not a fringe movement. It is a loosely co-ordinated effort that threatens the progress we have made as a country in walking the path towards reconciliation. Those who ask where the bodies are in-

entionally ignore the evidence that exists today.

Both the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s and Murray’s final reports offer ample and irrefutable evidence of the lives that the system stole. The National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation’s memorial register houses 4,000 deaths linked to residential school attendance. Deniers also ignore the on-the-ground realities First Nations face when reports about possible grave sites surface. In Tk’emlúps te Secwépemc in British Columbia, denialists showed up with shovels and without permission to try and dig. Taken together, denialism has a chilling effect that makes a nation wary of publicizing the work they do.

Despite widespread, systematic attempts to erase who we are, we thrive today. Survivors of the residential school system fought to pass on the traditions, languages, and teachings these institutions sought to destroy. Today, we know who we are, where we come from, and how we got here. Their resilience is a testament to the spirit of our people who have fought—and continue to fight—to heal and restore our communities. We will never give up that spirit.

Reconciliation is an ongoing process. It demands more than words; it requires action from governments, organizations, and society at large. Murray has presented us with the path forward. It’s time we walk it together.

Abram Benedict is the Ontario regional chief. *The Hill Times*

News

Grits' ad-buy boost briefly overtakes Tories, but strategists say 'spray-and-pray' tactics will need recalibrating

Continued from page 3

particularly as the latter's fundraising war chest allows them to commit similar or proportionate levels of resources to every front of the commercial conflict.

In the first three quarters of 2024, the Conservatives have already raised \$28.97-million compared to the \$10.1-million raised by the Liberals in the same period. In third place, the New Democrats had a three-quarter total of \$3.9-million.

While the Liberals attempt to keep pace with the Conservatives' spending, the New Democrats have only just begun to get moving again after a month-long pause.

According to Meta's Ad Library, NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) and his party's official accounts spent \$0 on advertising in October. They began spending again on Nov. 4, expensing \$2,573 over seven days. The NDP spent \$5,792 on Meta ads last month, though the entirety of that spend was from the party's page. Singh's official page has not purchased an ad since the end of September.

Michael Roy, the NDP's former national digital director during the 2015 federal election, told *The Hill Times* that the federal party has a tradition of pausing its national fundraising and advertising campaigns during provincial elections. The British Columbia election wrapped up on Oct. 19, New Brunswick on Oct. 21, Saskatchewan on Oct. 28, and Nova Scotia voters went to the polls on Nov. 26.



Former NDP national digital director Michael Roy says the nominal amount the NDP is spending on ads is just about keeping the engine warm before the next election starts. Photograph courtesy of Michael Roy



The Conservative Party has the money for more targeted ads. Screenshot courtesy of Facebook

However, Roy described the NDP's current level of spending as a "nominal amount" to maintain its usual level of donor engagement and email acquisitions to support fundraising initiatives.

"Realistically, that's about all you can expect," Roy said, noting that the NDP is in the weakest financial position of the three main federal parties.

As far as priming the electorate to the issues the NDP will be looking to run on in the next election, Roy said the current level of spending is "effectively meaningless." Still, it will allow the party to build out the infrastructure and communications expertise its team will need.

"It's effectively just getting the machine warmed up," Roy said.

The difference between the Liberals' and Conservatives' fundraising totals may already be straining the pace of the Grits' accelerated spending. From Nov. 23-29, the Liberals' spending has already dipped back down to \$46,192, while the Conservatives' total has held steady at \$56,900.

Hogan said he has observed another significant difference between the Liberals' and Conservatives' current ad-buy strategy in addition to the longevity of their spending: where and to whom their respective ads are targeted.

Until recently, the Conservatives had been targeting their digital ads by focusing on specific postal codes, whereas the Liberals had been employing a "spray-and-pray" strategy, Hogan said, noting that the majority of

the Grits' spending was nationally focused, with the majority of the spending in Ontario, B.C., Quebec, and Alberta—in that descending order.

However, as of the last week of November, Hogan said the Liberals have begun targeting some of their ads to exclude users from postal codes within the riding of Cloverdale-Langley, B.C., ahead of the upcoming Dec. 16 byelection. Instead, those users will primarily see only those ads the Liberals have produced focused

on their candidate, Madison Fleischer.

Hunter Knifton, Liberal MP Nate Erskine-Smith's (Beaches-East York, Ont.) deputy director of communications and data during his 2023 Ontario Liberal leadership campaign, said that even a momentary boost in fundraising is an "encouraging sign of life" for the federal Liberals.

"They're pretty late to the party, but upping the spend is obviously a good thing," Knifton said, noting that the majority

of the digital ads the Liberals have created since the end of October have focused on "bread-and-butter issues" like housing, health care, childcare, and more recently, the GST holiday and tax rebate.

However, Knifton, now a consultant and data scientist with Crestview Strategy, said the lack of geographic targeting is concerning. With a limited fundraising budget compared to the Conservatives, he said the Liberals may be using these initial ads to test future, more-expansive messaging campaigns.

"These ads will certainly be a test to see which messages work best with which group," Knifton said. "Once they combine that polling, they will hopefully get a little bit more targeted with the arguments they're making to key voter groups as we get closer to an election."

As for how long the Liberals can maintain the current level of spending, Knifton said the party has a "chicken-or-the-egg" problem.

"It's easier to fundraise if you are doing better in the polls, and to do better in the polls, you probably need to advertise, which costs money," Knifton said. He added that, either way, there's no point in sitting on the money the party does have and hoping it will spontaneously turn into a chicken.

"It's the smart play to try to build some momentum now to get up in the polls so you can fundraise from that to fund a really aggressive ad campaign closer to the election," Knifton said, adding that in the meantime, there are some strategies the Liberals can afford to borrow from the Conservatives.

"The Conservatives' top-performing ads are all some sort of voter ID," Knifton said, noting that the highest-performing ad was an appeal for supporters to pre-order lawn signs.

"I think it would be smart for the Liberals to try to be a little bit more tactical in getting ready for the campaign," Knifton said.

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Between Oct. 31 and Nov. 29, the Liberals spent a combined \$195,308 on Meta ads. Screenshot courtesy of Facebook

Open channel? GAC to launch diplomat dissent line

Few details about Global Affairs Canada's plan and how the channel would work have been shared with the Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers, says the union's president.

Continued from page 1

the Vietnam War. We're doing the same thing at Global Affairs Canada," he added.

The U.S. dissent channel has been used infrequently since its creation—123 times from 1971 to 2011, and it is believed that it was used around four to five times a year in the 2010s. More recently, *Politico* reported in 2023 that State Department officials penned a dissent channel memo criticizing the U.S. approach to the Israel-Gaza conflict.

The first report of the Global Affairs Canada's (GAC) Office of the Well-being Ombud and Inspector General, which was released last month, noted that many within the department have advocated for a department-wide dissent channel in which they could suggest "policy advice, personal views, and opinions without fear."

The American channel is reserved for "consideration of dissenting or alternative views on substantive foreign policy matters," and cannot be used for "non-policy issues," such as human resources complaints.

It also allows—in theory—the use of the channel "without fear of pressure or penalty," and discouraging the use of the dissent channel or imposing penalties for using it is "impermissible."

In practice, diplomats have been sanctioned for using the system. Archer Blood was recalled from his post as consul general in Dhaka after his use of the dissent channel in 1971 for what became known as the "Blood Telegram," which protested the "moral bankruptcy" of the Nixon government when it backed Pakistan during the Bangladesh Liberation War and the Bangladesh genocide.

Professional Association of Foreign Service Officers (PAFSO) president Pamela Isfeld said establishing a Canadian line is a positive thing, but more will have to be known about how GAC plans to implement the channel.

"The devil's going to be in the details," she said. "How exactly



Foreign Affairs deputy minister David Morrison says the dissent channel would be used for 'considered views that run counter to government policy.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

will it be run? What kinds of things can go in there?"

PAFSO represents 2,000 diplomats within GAC and at Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada.

Isfeld said when she was at GAC as a deputy director for foreign policy research in the late 2010s, she was working on putting in place a dissent channel, but the idea fell apart over how approvals would be handled within the system.

"I think it was a little bit unclear on the concept," she said.

Isfeld said few details have been shared with the union about the plan for the channel.

GAC didn't respond to questions regarding the implementation of the dissent channel before publication deadline, including about whether the messages would be read by the foreign affairs minister.

In the U.S. system, the cables are distributed to senior members of the State Department, including the secretary of state.

Isfeld said an important question that needs to be answered is how open the government would be in taking in and legitimately considering dissenting views being raised.

"Can the Government of Canada, can current decision-makers, can the current minister really imagine a scenario where something that an employee or a group of employees sends on Middle East policy can change the position of the government?" she said. "If they can't imagine any way that would ever happen, then it's kind of just a lip-service thing."

Isfeld said it is crucial that the channel be kept for substantive policy issues, and not for personal venting.

"If it's known to just be personal venting, I would be cautioning my members to be careful because there's not a culture at GAC to express yourself and you'll just be fine," she said.

She said special attention will have to be paid to ensure reprisals don't occur.

"There's a whole range of things that can be used that may not fit the definition of retaliation, legally, but can make life hard," she said. "I would be pretty cautious about it if it was me."

Isfeld said there are no protections within PAFSO's collective agreement with the government given that a dissent channel hasn't been in place in the past.

"If this does come into play, it might be something ... that we might want something in our collective agreement that says this is how this will be managed and there will be a commitment to no retaliation," she said.

In 1994, four U.S. diplomats who were posted at the American Embassy in Dublin raised their concerns in a dissent channel cable over then-ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith granting a U.S. visa to Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams, a suspected member of the Irish Republic Army's leadership. The State Department inspector general later found that two of those diplomats had been punished because of the cable.

Channel has to be focused on policy, not HR grievances: Boehm

Independent Senator Peter Boehm (Ontario), chair of the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee, said that he thinks implementing a dissent channel is a "good idea."

Boehm, who was a former senior-level diplomat and a past Canadian ambassador to Germany, said in order for the channel to be useful, it needs to be kept to discussing substantive foreign policy matters instead of human resource concerns within the department.

"If you turn it into a HR [complaint] ... then I don't think it fills the function that is envisioned," he

said. "If it turns into a channel for grievances that aren't policy focused, then I am wondering what real purpose it would serve."

Boehm also said the channel needs to be repercussion free.

"In a department that's relatively small—GAC is about a tenth of the size of the State Department—it's pretty easy to figure out who the dissenters are, whether it's constructive criticism or perhaps criticism that is not as constructive," he said.

"People will naturally fear repercussions, and especially if this reverberates to the political leadership of the department, regardless of who is in power," he added, remarking that those people need to be protected.

He added that another issue to consider is whether there would be any aspect of public disclosure within the channel.

During the Foreign Affairs Committee's study on Canada's foreign service, a number of witnesses told Senators that a greater culture of risk-taking and rewarding risk-takers needs to be fostered.

"There is a need for senior leadership—political leadership,

and public service leadership—to constantly give permission and to reward people who actually are willing to speak out ... because if it doesn't happen, there's too much of people reading the room, worried that their careers will be limited if they actually say something that's dissenting. It doesn't help anybody," former foreign affairs deputy minister Morris Rosenberg told the Senate committee in November 2022.

Retired Canadian ambassador Daniel Livermore, who spent three decades in the foreign service, questioned the value of the dissent channel in fostering meaningful changes to government policy.

"It's proven to be meaningless in the State Department, and it would be equally meaningless in the Canadian context," he said.

"It might allow foreign service officers to vent their spleens from now and then at the frustrations they face on a daily basis, but that's about all," he said. "It's unlikely to result in any fundamental change either in Canadian foreign policy, or the way that it's run."

He said decisions on substantial foreign policy matters are taken at the most senior levels with full recognition that there will be dissenters.

"The concept that somebody should dissent from these decisions isn't unusual and the dissent itself will be disregarded," he said.

Livermore said there could be a benefit if the channel is used to voice opposition over the management of the department and how resources are spent, which could be issues that could escape the notice of ministers.

He added that the channel should be made anonymous.

"If you're going to put this into effect—for the small benefit it would create—now would be the time to do it before a possible change of government," he said. "So you can say legitimately to the new incoming government that we have this and that it was in operation during the previous government's tenure. I don't think you can put this into effect at the time a new government is coming into place, then it would look punitive."

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Independent Senator Peter Boehm says the dissent channel must be repercussion free. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

News

'Permanent campaign' of building Canadian links on Capitol Hill begins anew

Discussions are being had about a potential visit of U.S. Senators to Ottawa, says Liberal MP John McKay.

Continued from page 1

expired in 2021—from Congress, which will include Congressional negotiating objectives.

Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), who serves as co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Inter-Parliamentary Group (IPG), will be in Washington, D.C., early next year for the Canadian Embassy's inauguration bash on Jan. 20, 2025.

"I've never been to an inauguration before, so I might as well check it out. It might be the last one I ever go to—first and last," he said. McKay announced this past June he will not reoffer as an MP in the next election.

McKay said he has spoken with his American counterpart to see if there is merit in extending the visit for the purpose of holding meetings with members of Congress, but that is still to be decided.

"That will be Step 1. Step 2 is the likelihood of a February or March visit to see people we should see, which is kind of tradition on our part," he said. "Step 3 will be a Senate visit here."

McKay said he spoke with U.S. Democratic Senator Amy Klobuchar while at the Halifax International Security Forum last month about the prospect of a group of U.S. Senators visiting Ottawa.

"We've talked about it, [but] it hasn't been firmed up yet," he said.

He said there are "always opportunities" to find mutual interests with Congressional counterparts.

McKay mentioned that the co-chair of the IPG in the U.S. House of Representatives, Republican Bill Huizenga, took over the seat vacated when now-U.S. ambassador-designate to Canada Pete Hoekstra left Capitol Hill.

"They have a pretty close relationship," McKay said. "So, what does that mean in the greater scheme of things? I don't know, but it certainly could be a benefit to ongoing issues with the Trump White House."

He said the work all starts with building relationships to find mutual interests.

"I think the point of this association is to deal with the irritant

Liberal MP John McKay, co-chair of the Canada-U.S. IPG, anticipates making a visit to the U.S. in the new year for what could be his first and last presidential inauguration. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



we can deal with and move towards a resolution, so sometimes it is just simply an exchange of information and other times it's actually prodding the people who are in the White House or in the cabinet to do things that need to be done," he said.

Past and current members of the IPG have previously questioned whether the Canadian government appropriately appreciates the relationships and connections that the group has developed in Congress.

Parliamentarians who have been involved in the effort note that their American counterparts are often more willing to speak candidly with politicians who understand the realities of everyday elected life as opposed to career diplomats posted to Canada's mission in Washington.

McKay said he's received some feedback from the Canadian Embassy, as well as from Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.), and International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.), who lead the government's "Team Canada" outreach effort along with Canadian Ambassador to the U.S. Kirsten Hillman.

McKay said the IPG's work with the overall "Team Canada" approach could be enhanced.

"One of the things would be a systematic debriefing. It's a bit haphazard at this point, but in some measure it is always an exchange of information and intel-

ligence, and we need to continue to do that so that we're all as well informed as we can be," he said.

McKay said that would involve briefings being given to the IPG from the ministers, and vice versa.

He said the work of the IPG could be boosted with a bigger budget and more visits to the American capital, but partisan gamesmanship around parliamentary travel have made things difficult, noting that Conservatives only allow travel during non-sittings weeks, which makes it difficult to find time on the calendar when the House isn't sitting and Congress is.

'No permanent friends, no permanent adversaries' in Congress

Unlike the majority of embassies located on or near Embassy Row in northwestern Washington, D.C.—including most of the G7 missions—Canada's is the lone one steps away from Capitol Hill—a strategic vision by then-ambassador Allan Gotlieb.

The Canadian ambassador in Washington during the governments of Pierre Trudeau and Brian Mulroney put a premium on engaging with Congress. He believed the most important part of Canadian diplomacy is access to decision-makers, and that there were no permanent friends nor adversaries in Congress or the White House.

Former Canadian diplomat Colin Robertson, who led the

Congressional outreach section in the embassy, said making links to Congress is a permanent part of the embassy's work in the U.S.

"Congress will matter because Trump will respond in part to what he hears from Congress, just as any president does on any measures," said Robertson, now a senior adviser at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

"So, what I call our permanent campaign continues and is as important if not more so than ever because of the kind of scope of what Trump is talking about in terms of potential changes designed to put America first and make America great again. But in doing so, the neighbours—especially Mexico and Canada—will be particularly affected," he said.

While Canada tries to avert Trump's threat of imposing a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian and Mexican imports, it has one potential recourse with Congress to stop tariffs on oil and gas exports, which totalled around \$160-billion in 2023, representing more than a quarter of all Canadian exports to the U.S.

A Reuters report noted that Trump isn't planning on exempting oil imports from his tariff plan.

Under U.S. customs law, Congress—through a joint resolution of the Senate and the House of Representatives—can pass a "disapproval resolution" that would stop tariffs placed on oil imports on national security grounds.

Trump employed the same Section 232 tariffs under the guise of national security concerns against Canadian steel and aluminum exports during the last trade war. However, the incoming Trump administration could bypass those and opt for Section 301 tariffs that can be used against countries for unfair trade practices, which Trump used to target China's exports during his last term in office.

Carlo Dade, director of trade and trade infrastructure at the Canada West Foundation, said it is an open question as to whether a Republican-led Congress would be willing to confront a Trump White House.

"This would only apply in another lifetime where we didn't have a Congress that was so aligned with the president, and so wary of crossing the president or embarrassing the president," he said. "For all intents and purposes, yes, there is something there, but realistically a snowball has a better chance in hell than this thing being taken up."

Robertson said it is always possible to find members of Congress who have interests with Canada.

"There's always allies on any subject, even within the governing party," he said. "Trump will pay attention to them because he's going to need Congress for whatever he does."

"It goes back to Gotlieb—no permanent friends, no permanent adversaries—you're always looking for allies on any subject," he said.

Robertson said the same member of Congress can be a friend to Canada on a certain issue and an enemy on another, citing the case of former longtime U.S. Democratic Senator Daniel Patrick Moynihan, who was an ally to Canada's efforts in the fight against acid rain and an adversary to Canadian interests in his support for Buy America.

Bilateral deal rhetoric hurting Canada's relationship with Mexico: Dade

As Ontario Premier Doug Ford and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith have indicated support for a bilateral deal with the U.S., which could remove Mexico's place in Canada's North American trade pact, the rhetoric is injuring Canada's international standing, said Dade.

"It's done some damage to our relationship with Mexico," said Dade, who is a member of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations. "It hurt our reputation and damaged our image [in Asia] as a reliable partner, and someone a little too willing to jump when the U.S. suggests we should."

Ford said there is a "clear consensus" among the premiers for separate bilateral trade deals with the U.S. and with Mexico.

But Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey said bilateral deals would only be the contingency plan if the current CUSMA collapsed.

The U.S. has placed Mexico under the spotlight as it says it hasn't addressed restrictions on Chinese imports.

Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) said Canada shares the American concerns about China gaining access to the North American electric vehicle market through Mexico.

Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz (Davenport, Ont.), co-chair of the Canada-Mexico Friendship Group, said it is too early to conclude what Mexico's place will be in the trade deal.

"I don't want to preclude anything. I'm hopeful and I'm open to all options," she said. "Economic security is [the] No. 1 [issue] for us."

What is known is if Canadians want Mexico out of the deal, it won't happen anytime soon.

The only provision in the pact to remove a member would be to end the trade deal, which comes up for review in 2026. To do so, one of the three countries would have to indicate their desire to end it, which would start a 10-year process of annual reviews and potentially lead to the end of the deal in 2036.

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Liberal to independent: Jane Cordy looks back on 24 years in the Senate

‘I think it’ll take a little while to actually slow down,’ says the recently retired senator.

Continued from page 1

“There’s some really good things about the [new] Senate: more independence, not feeling that you have to vote for a piece of legislation because your party brought it in—those are all very positive things. Working across the different groups ... it also brought in some people who were not involved in a political party into the Senate because of great work that they’ve done in their community, that’s also a very positive thing,” said Cordy.

But, on the other hand, she laments the distance that’s been created, and the “camaraderie” that’s been lost with members of the Other Place—though she hopes that will be improved to an extent once the House of Commons and Senate again reside within the same building. Since Centre Block was cleared out for renovations at the end of 2018, the two Chambers have been located in separate buildings: the House in the West Block, and the Senate a roughly 10-minute walk away in the Senate of Canada Building.

Cordy said she thinks the sudden severing of partisan ties also created some confusion—and distance—for Liberal MPs, recalling a story of one such MP who initially believed they weren’t allowed to talk to Cordy as she was no longer a Liberal Senator.

“Some of us have been able to reach out to people that we know to say, ‘can I meet with you about such and such a thing?’ That helps, but if you’re brand new, you may not feel that you’re able to do that. So, I think, yeah, there’s a lot of good, and there’s some bad [to the Senate’s reform],” said Cordy during an interview with *The Hill Times* in her Victoria Building office on Nov. 27.

Cordy marked her last official day as a Senator on Nov. 18.

Retiring ahead of her July 2025 mandatory date, she ended her 24-year-long career as the Red Chamber’s longest-serving member—a distinction that’s now passed to ISG Senator Pierrette Ringuette (New Brunswick).

‘Baptism by fire’

Appointed on the recommendation of then-prime minister Jean Chrétien in June 2000, Cordy’s entrance to the Senate was quite the whirlwind—and not just because she started amid the “silly season” that characterizes



After 24 years, Jane Cordy marked her last day representing Nova Scotia in the Red Chamber on Nov. 18. It’s been ‘an honour and a privilege,’ she says. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Parliament’s final spring sitting weeks.

Though she’d been an active Liberal Party member prior to her appointment—including serving as president of the Nova Scotia Women’s Liberal Commission, and being involved with Chrétien’s 1990 leadership team—Cordy had never before held public office, and she went from teaching Grade 2 to sitting in the Senate in a matter of weeks.

It started with a call from now-CSG Senator Percy Downe (Charlottetown, P.E.I.)—then in charge of appointments in Chrétien’s office—early one evening “out of the blue,” informing her she’d been shortlisted for a Senate appointment. Cordy said she later learned just how short the list was: hers had been the only name on it.

The two met in Halifax the following week—Cordy recalled her school colleagues’ reaction to her more formal attire that day, and having to keep secret the real reason she’d dressed up—and less than a week later, the call came in from Chrétien. The next day marked her final one in the classroom, as the day after—on June 9—her appointment was made official.

“June is a busy month in Ottawa anyway; June is a really busy month when you’re teaching,” she said, recalling her new colleagues wishing her a “relaxing weekend” when, in reality, she needed to go home and finish her students’ report cards.

Cordy remembered phoning her husband after her first week on the job, fearing she’d made a mistake in accepting the appointment: “Everybody was so busy that nobody had time to say, like, ‘you want to have lunch? Or do

you want to have coffee? Or how are you doing?’”

But after the June frenzy, Parliament was dissolved ahead of the November 2000 election, and didn’t return until January 2001.

Cordy said the start of the new Parliament felt like her real beginning as a Senator.

“For me, having the election and coming back to [a] brand-new Speech from the Throne was, ‘yes, I’m going to stay.’ Because it was starting at the beginning for me, and all the committees were all starting new studies, or new legislation,” she said. “It’s hard when you’re sort of dumped in in the middle, and the middle happens to be June.”

Being able to watch the federal legislative process from square one, and to discuss bills and upcoming business during weekly Liberal caucus meetings, “was really helpful to a newbie” learning the ropes of the job, she said. “[As] much as I’d been involved in politics, you didn’t pay close attention to the details of how the Senate or the House of Commons [worked], particularly the Senate” as it wasn’t televised at the time.

Cordy agreed to sponsor her first government bill in the Chamber that summer: Bill C-11, the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act. Soon after, a Conservative friend warned her of the tough waters typical with such bills, advising “never take a bill dealing with immigration.”

“So I said, ‘well, I did, and I’m gonna learn a lot,’” recalled Cordy.

Then 9/11 happened, putting an even brighter spotlight on the bill.

“We were called for media interviews non-stop, which, going from being a teacher to television interviews, radio interviews, it

sort of made me jump into the pond with both feet, but it was definitely baptism by fire for my first Senate bill,” she said.

‘None of us saw it coming’

Fast forward to January 2014 and Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) decision to expel Senators from the Liberal caucus.

“None of us saw it coming because we had been so actively involved, and in fact there were more Liberal Senators at that time than there were MPs,” said Cordy.

It happened on a Wednesday—caucus meeting day. After her Atlantic and Nova Scotia meetings were cancelled, she made her way to the Senate room in Centre Block where regular caucus meetings were then held. Senators arrived to find no MPs present; then entered Trudeau, and his chief of staff, Katie Telford.

“The prime minister said, ‘you will no longer be part of the Liberal caucus, and you will be independent.’ And I forget what else he said, but everybody was struck by the first few sentences,” she said. Trudeau left not long after, while Senators stayed to confer and work out their “path forward,” rebuffing an offer for Telford to stay and answer questions.

Reflecting on the reform that decision brought about, Cordy said “having been there and remembering how we all felt that day, it’s hard to say, ‘oh, that was great.’”

“I think the independence of the Senate is great. Was there a better way of doing it instead of, like, kaboom? I’m not sure,” she said. “But I think if we’d even had some discussions in the caucus ... about a way forward and what

Canadians may want, that would have been helpful, and maybe the same conclusion would have been reached.”

Ex-Liberal Senators went on to form the Senate Liberal Caucus, but come 2019, they dissolved to instead partially form the Progressive Senate Group, which today is the Chamber’s third-largest group. Before the year was out, Cordy had taken over as group leader—a role she held until this past February. Already thinking of retiring early to spend more time with her two daughters and four grandchildren, she said she exited to facilitate a smoother transition for her successor.

“The time goes by so quickly that sometimes it’s like, I can’t believe that I’ve been here for 24 years,” said Cordy. “It’s hard ... if you decide that you’re going to leave before you turn 75, because you’re always in the middle of something.”

Cordy leaves with a bill—S-288, the Inherited Blood Disorders Awareness Day Act—still on the table, which will be taken over by a colleague.

Reflecting on her Senate career, what stands out most to Cordy are the committee studies of which she was a part, with the Senate Social Affairs Committee’s 2006 study on mental health coming first to mind.

At the time, Cordy said mental illness wasn’t talked about with the same openness it is today, and through the course of the committee’s meetings—which took Senators across Canada—she got a sense of just how many people are affected by such challenges. The study led to the report, *Out of the Shadows at Last*, and the subsequent establishment of the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Cordy has also done much to raise awareness of sickle cell disease, including through Bill S-211, which passed in 2017 and designated June 19 as National Sickle Cell Awareness Day.

“There was only one other person in the Senate who knew about sickle cell when I brought forward the bill, and she had been a nurse in her other life,” said Cordy.

More than a week after her official retirement, life had yet to slow down for Cordy, who was still busy packing up her fifth-floor corner office last week. Invitations for her to attend and speak at events continue to roll in. “I think it’ll take a little while to actually slow down,” she said, noting hopes to travel with her husband in January “just to get away totally and relax.”

Through a colleague’s farewell speech in the Chamber on Nov. 5, Cordy learned she was the 848th Canadian Senator appointed since Confederation.

“You know that it’s an honour and a privilege, but to find out that there have been just a little over 1,000 people since 1867 appointed to the Senate, what a true, true honour and privilege that it is to represent the people of your province,” she said.

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Stuart Benson
Party Central

A big donation for the future of Inuit-led education with ITK and GG Simon, and the Irish paint SJAM green with PMJT



Jennifer Brennan, Mastercard Foundation's senior director of Canada programs, left, and ITK president Natan Obed at the Inuit Nunangat University reception, while Irish Ambassador John Concannon, right, delivers remarks at Irish Night on the Hill in SJAM on Nov. 27. *The Hill Times* photographs by Stuart Benson

Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami recently celebrated the Mastercard Foundation's \$50-million gift towards a new university, and the Embassy of Ireland hosted its annual Irish Night on the Hill on Nov. 27.

It was another double booking for **Party Central's** dance card on Nov. 27, with a celebration of a historic investment in Inuit-led education with the Governor General at the Indigenous People's Space, followed by the Embassy of Ireland painting SJAM green for the annual Irish Night on the Hill.

The night started at an event hosted by Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK) inside 100 Wellington Street—the former American embassy dedicated to the Assembly of First Nations, Inuit, Métis National Council in 2017, and shortly after the Algonquin Anishinabeg Nation as well—where the building's ground floor hosts an exhibit of Indigenous history. It was a perfect venue for the night's historic announcement toward a truly “for Inuit, by Inuit” university.

For more than a decade, ITK and the more than 70,000 Inuit it represents have been working towards that goal, and last week took a giant step towards it, thanks to a truly historic donation of \$50-million from the Mastercard Foundation—the largest single private donation not just to Inuit, but to any Indigenous group or nation in Canada's history.

Once it's opened in 2030—a date that may seem far off but which ITK president **Natan Obed** said terrifies him and anyone else involved in the effort—the planned Inuit Nunangat University will address the pressing need for post-secondary opportunities tailored to Inuit priorities, including health, the environment, and social sciences. Adding to that donation, **Aluki Kotierk**, the outgoing president of Nunavut Tunngavik Inc., announced that the organization would be kicking in an additional \$2-million toward the university.

Despite **Party Central** having been misinformed that the menu for the night's event would feature some form of highly anticipated whale meat, the food on offer failed to disappoint. While the caribou meatballs and assorted cured salmon and Arctic char were delicious, the star of the show was the Arctic char cream-cheese spread, which **Party Central** would have preferred to eat with a spoon rather than the cracker schmear provided. There were also some fantastic mini bannock bites, which tasted like a lower-sugar plain Timbit, but were absolutely addicting with the provided blueberry or peanut butter spreads.

Filtering back and forth between the food and non-alcoholic refreshments and touring the exhibits, **Party Central** spotted Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** and Immigration Minister **Marc Miller**; Liberal MP **Jaime Battiste**; NDP MP **Lori Idlout**; Conservative MP **Arnold Viersen**; Senators **Andrew Cardozo**, **Margo Greenwood**, **Pat Duncan**, **Marnie McBean**, and **Lucie Moncion**; **Caroline Dromaguet**, president and CEO of the Canadian Museum of History; **Priscilla**

Continued on page 16



Patricia D'Souza, ITK's director of communications, left, Bluesky Strategy Group's Susan Smith, and NDP MP Lori Idlout.



Liberal MP Jaime Battiste, left, and Don Kelly, Mastercard Foundation.



Senators Margo Greenwood, left, and Andrew Cardozo enjoy a bannock bite with blueberry jam.



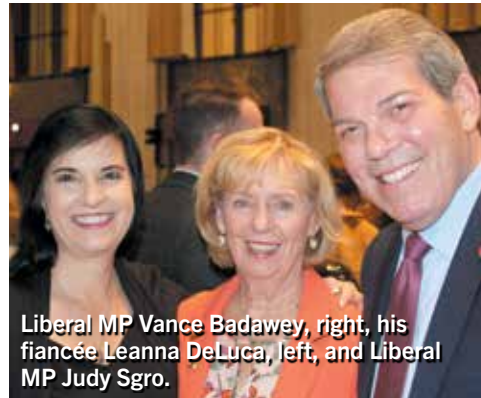
Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal, left, Whit Fraser, and Simon.



Vandal speaks at the event.



Liberal MPs James Maloney, left, and Francesco Sorbara; Irish Ambassador John Concannon; Sussex Strategy Group's Liam Daly; and Crestview Strategy's Avigail Rucker.



Liberal MP Vance Badawey, right, his fiancée Leanna DeLuca, left, and Liberal MP Judy Sgro.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau makes a 'surprise' appearance at the Irish Night on the Hill reception.



European Ambassador Geneviève Tuts, left, Hungary's Ambassador Maria Vass-Salazar, Portugal's Ambassador Antonio Leão Rocha, and Bulgaria's Ambassador Plamen Georgiev.

The Hill Times photographs by Stuart Benson



Maloney, left; Iona Kearns; William Peat, Canada Ireland Foundation; Trudeau; Ken Tracey, host of Toronto's Ceol agus Craic Irish radio program; and Concannon.



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Minister Beech recruits new operations director

Plus, Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc has a new policy adviser on his team.

Citizens' Services Minister **Terry Beech** has found a new director of operations for his office following **Morgan McCullough's** exit at the end of October.

McCullough worked for Beech for roughly a year in all, and was previously a senior policy adviser to Fisheries and Oceans Minister **Diane Lebouthillier**. A former assistant to British Columbia Liberal MP **Patrick Weiler**, McCullough worked for the fisheries minister for a little more than two years in all, starting as a policy and Pacific regional affairs adviser to then-minister **Bernadette Jordan**, and continuing through B.C. Liberal MP **Joyce Murray's** time in the post.

Following McCullough's departure, **Amanda Oliveira** has been hired as Beech's new operations director, and started on the job the week of Nov. 18.

Oliveira comes fresh from Murray's office as the MP for Vancouver Quadra, B.C., where she's worked for just over the last two years. Oliveira is also a former constituency assistant to Vancouver Centre, B.C., Liberal MP **Hedy Fry**, and to then-Liberal MP **Jody Wilson-Raybould**, who represented Vancouver Granville, B.C. In between working for those MPs and for Murray, Oliveira spent a little more than a year and a half as a communications specialist with Canaccord Genuity Wealth Management Canada.



Amanda Oliveira is now director of operations to Minister Beech. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

In another recent director-level change, Beech has officially elevated **Teodor Gaspar** to the title of director of communications.

Gaspar has been acting as the minister's communications lead since **Erik Nosaluk's** exit to become director of communications to Sport and Physical Activity Minister **Carla Qualtrough** in August, and his permanent promotion was made official as of Nov. 25.



Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech has a new director of operations, and an official new director of communications. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Teodor Gaspar is officially director of communications to Minister Beech. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Gaspar was first hired as press secretary to Beech this past January, and before then worked as an assistant to Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault** as the MP for Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que. He's also previously worked part time for Quebec Liberal MNA **Jennifer Maccarone**, has interned in the office of Quebec Liberal MP **Rachel Bendayan**, and for roughly five months in 2022, he worked for Hungarian Member of Parliament **Miklós Hajnal**.



Winnie Lui recently joined Minister Beech's team. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Another fresh face in Beech's office is that of **Winnie Lui**, who had her first day as a special assistant and B.C. regional affairs adviser on Nov. 27.

Lui spent this past summer working in Liberal MP **Wilson Miao's** constituen-

consultant for economics and policy, having started with the company in 2022, not long after completing a master's degree in global affairs at the University of Toronto. That year, Bonifacio-Proietto also served as campaign manager to then-Ontario Liberal candidate **Ryan Madill** in his—ultimately unsuccessful—bid to represent the provincial party in St. Catharines, Ont.



Luca Bonifacio-Proietto is now a policy adviser to Minister LeBlanc. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Along with his master's degree, Bonifacio-Proietto has a bachelor's degree in biology and geography from Queen's University.

In LeBlanc's office, he'll be reporting to **Rebecca Parkinson** as director of policy for intergovernmental affairs, as well as senior adviser **Rob Jamieson**, who's the minister's lead for democratic institutions policy. Also focused on those files are senior policy advisers **Kristina Slodki**, who tackles democratic institutions, and **Jessica Fullerton**, who's focused on intergovernmental affairs.

LeBlanc's policy team otherwise currently includes **Maja Kostic**, director of policy for public safety; **Mary-Liz Power**, director of issues management and senior policy adviser for public safety; and **Miro Froehlich**, policy and senior regional affairs adviser for Quebec.

In another recent staffing change, **Shannon Ablett** left the minister's team as of Nov. 15. Ablett had been executive assistant to **Cory Pike** as LeBlanc's chief of staff for public safety since September 2023, and before then had supported Pike in his role as chief of staff to then-public services and procurement minister **Helena Jaczek**. Both switched offices in the wake of the July 2023 cabinet shuffle that saw Jaczek moved off of the government's front bench.

Ablett is also a former assistant to **Whitby, Ont., Liberal MP Ryan Turnbull**. **Hill Climbers** understands she has left both the minister's office, and the Hill.

While Pike is focused on public safety, **Brandon Rowe** is LeBlanc's chief of staff for democratic institutions and intergovernmental affairs.

Other staff currently on the minister's 23-member team are: **Emilie Simard**, director of parliamentary affairs; **Conor Lewis**, parliamentary affairs adviser; **Ashton Ross**, legislative assistant; **Wallace McLean**, senior adviser for research; **Alex Axiotis-Perez**, director of operations; **Ayesha Khaira**, regional adviser for B.C.; **Annina Plummer**, regional adviser for the Prairies and North; **Gabriel Broderick**, regional adviser for Ontario; **Monica Stella Jaillet**, special assistant for operations; **Jean-Sébastien Comeau**, director of communications; **Gabriel Brunet**, press secretary; **Eve Loignon-Giroux**, communications adviser; **Ariane Mallet**, communications assistant; and **Danielle Racanelli**, issues manager.

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The Hill Times

Policy adviser added to LeBlanc's team



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc recently added to his ministerial team. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister **Dominic LeBlanc** has added some fresh perspective to his policy team with the recent hiring of policy adviser **Luca Bonifacio-Proietto**.

Bonifacio-Proietto started with the minister's office on Oct. 15, and is focused on the minister's democratic institutions and intergovernmental affairs files. He was last working for KPMG Canada in Ottawa as a

Party Central

A big donation for the future of Inuit-led education with ITK and GG Simon, and the Irish pint SJAM green with PMJT

Continued from page 14

Kukshuk, Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada board member; **Janet King**, Polar Knowledge Canada board chair; **Pujuut Kusugak**, Agnico Eagle director of Nunavut affairs; the University of Saskatchewan's vice-provost **Angela Jaime**; Canada Goose senior vice-president **Alex Thomson**; **Rob Wright**, associate deputy minister with Crown-Indigenous Relations Canada; **Marie Wilson**, former commissioner of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada; and TD Bank's **Pheroze Austin**.

Alongside speeches from Obed, Kotierk, Mastercard Foundation senior director of Canada programs **Jennifer Brennan**, and Northern Affairs Minister **Dan Vandal**, there was also a surprise appearance from Governor General **Mary Simon** and her husband **Whit Fraser**. Fun fact: when Obed was first hired by ITK—then known as Inuit Tapirisat of Canada (ITC)—as an environ-

mental policy analyst, Fraser did the hiring as ITC's then-CEO.

Once the speeches were finished, **Party Central** bid a fitting Irish goodbye to ITK and took the short walk over to the Sir John A. Macdonald Building for the Embassy of Ireland's Irish Night on the Hill.

While both events were nominally celebrations, the contrast between the more subdued and intimate ITK reception was staggering as **Party Central** entered the SJAM reception hall. Celtic music and the din of revelry in full swing preceded that entrance all the way to the security screening.

In fairness to the ITK's dry event, things generally get more rambunctious when there's a 10-minute wait for free Guinness, leaving a much shorter line for the complimentary glasses of Glendalough gin and whiskey.

To entertain the hundreds of guests as they imbibed or sampled appetizers



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, centre, Liberal MP James Maloney, second from right, and Ambassador John Concannon pose with the Sue Fay Healy School Irish dancers. Photograph courtesy of the Embassy of Ireland

of fried chicken bites and an assortment of cheeses—including a whiskey and stout-flavoured variety—there were also rousing performances by the Celtic band **Leahy** and the **Sue Fay Healy School of Irish Dancers**.

There were also the obligatory speeches by Liberal MP **James Maloney**, chair of Canada-Ireland Interparliamentary Group, and Ireland's newly minted Ambassador to Canada **John Concannon**. Originally from Sligo, Concannon is the man behind Ireland's "The Gathering," a 2013 initiative by that country's government to mobilize the Irish diaspora to return for clan gatherings.

That initiative would have made Concannon quite familiar with Canada, as this country hosts an estimated 4.5-million Canadians with Irish ancestry, representing nearly 15 per cent of the population—this reporter included, with a maternal pitstop in Glasgow.

As is the common response when entering an Irish home, Concannon said Canada

has always told the diaspora, "you're very welcome" upon arrival.

Concannon also highlighted the deep roots and contributions the Irish have made to the country, their communities, and public office. And of all the Irish descendants who have gone on to lead this country, Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** is definitely one of them.

With apologies to Trudeau, by the time he took the stage, it was approaching the fifth hour of shindig correspondence, and it is incredibly difficult to take photographs, drink a Guinness, and take detailed notes on a speech. Decisions were made.

With that being said, this column is also running long, and **Party Central** still needs to spruce up the moustache before November Canada's month-end reception at the Métropolitain Brasserie.

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The Hill Times

Parliamentary Calendar

AFN Special Chiefs Assembly wraps up three-day meeting on Dec. 5

**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.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 4

Senator McPhedran to Deliver Remarks—Non-affiliated Senator Marilou McPhedran will take part in a discussion on "Youth, Populism, and Conspiracy Theories: Canada and Germany" along with Dr. Daniel Stockemer, Konrad Adenauer Research Chair in Empirical Democracy Studies at the University of Ottawa. Wednesday, Dec. 4, from 6-8:30 p.m. ET at the University of Ottawa's Faculty of Social Sciences, 120 University Priv. Details via Eventbrite.

The Walrus Talks Polarization—The Walrus hosts "The Walrus Talks at Home: Polarization" examining the increasing political, social, and cultural divide. A panel of yet-to-be-announced experts will discuss how and why politicians and public figures have ramped up the use of intense rhetoric to galvanize support and create wedge issues, touching on social media and dis/misinformation. Wednesday, Dec. 4 at 7 p.m. ET happening online. Details: thewalrus.ca.

PIP Anniversary Event—The Parliamentary Internship Programme celebrates its 55th anniversary with an event honouring a trio of PIP alumni including Liberal Justice Minister Arif Virani, Conservative MP Brad Vis, and

former NDP MP Judy Wasylycia-Leis. Details TBA, visit: pip-psp.org.

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.

SATURDAY, DEC. 7

Press Gallery's Children's Christmas Party—The Parliamentary Press Gallery hosts its annual Children's Christmas party for children aged 10 and under. Donations for the Food Bank and for less-fortunate children are encouraged. RSVP by Nov. 22 to philippe.perrier@parl.gc.ca. Saturday, Dec. 7 at 12 p.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building.

SUNDAY, DEC. 8

Minister Holland to Attend Event—Health Minister Mark Holland will attend a pancake breakfast hosted by the Ajax Federal Liberal Association. Sunday, Dec. 8, from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. ET at a location to be confirmed. Contact: event.liberal.ca.

MONDAY, DEC. 9

Minister Martinez Ferrada to Deliver Remarks—Minister of Tourism and Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Canada for the Regions of Quebec Soraya Martinez

Ferrada will deliver remarks on the economic issues shaping Montréal at a breakfast event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Monday, Dec. 9, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Hôtel Bonaventure Montréal, 900 De La Gauchetière St. W. Details: ccm.ca.

TUESDAY, DEC. 10

Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum—The Institute for Peace and Diplomacy hosts the fourth annual Indo-Pacific Strategy Forum. Stakeholders from Canada and across the Indo-Pacific to discuss evolving economic, trade, and geopolitical issues, with a special focus on the role of Canadian energy exports in supporting sustainable development across the region. Tuesday, Dec. 10 from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. ET at the Delta Hotels Ottawa City Centre, 101 Lyon St. N. Details via Eventbrite.

Panel on Infrastructure and Indigenous Partners—The Empire Club hosts a hybrid panel discussion on "Indigenous Partnerships, a New Way Forward to unlock Canadian Infrastructure" featuring Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak; Cherie Brant, partner and national leader of Indigenous law, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP; and Hillary Thatcher with the Canadian Infrastructure Bank's Indigenous Infrastructure team. Tuesday, Dec. 10, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Location to be announced. Details online: empireclubofcanada.com.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 11

Chief of Defence Staff to Speak in Toronto—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe In-

stitute. Wednesday, Dec. 11, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

Chief of Defence Staff to Speak in Ottawa—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carignan will deliver remarks on "The New Geostrategic Environment: Challenges and Opportunities for Canada," hosted by the Canadian International Council. A Q&A session will follow. Wednesday, Dec. 11, at 6 p.m. ET at KPMG, 150 Elgin St., #Suite 1800. Details via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, DEC. 12

OECD Secretary-General to Deliver Remarks—Mathias Cormann, secretary-general of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, will deliver remarks in English and French at the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Dec. 12, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Le Westin Montréal, 270 Saint-Antoine St. W. Details: corim.qc.ca.

OEA Award of Distinction—Former Bank of Canada deputy governor Carolyn Wilkins will receive the Ottawa Economic Association's Award of Distinction. Thursday, Dec. 12, at 6:30 p.m. at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., 15th floor. Details: cabe.ca.

MONDAY, DEC. 16

Bank of Canada Governor to Deliver Remarks—Bank of Canada Governor Tiff Macklem will deliver his annual address to the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Monday, Dec. 16, at 11:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W. Georgia St. Details: boardoftrade.com.

TUESDAY, DEC. 17

Premiers Furey and Smith to Talk Energy—Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, and Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Andrew Furey will take part in a hybrid event, "Canada's Energy, Resource and Climate, A National Discussion," part of the Fall Energy Series hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Tuesday, Dec. 17, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

SUNDAY, DEC. 22

Liberal MP Ali to Attend Fundraiser—Liberal MP Shafiqat Ali will attend a party fundraiser and volunteer appreciation event which will also celebrate Ali's nomination. Sunday, Dec. 22, from 6-9 p.m. at the Capital Banquet Centre, 6435 Dixie Rd., Mississauga, Ont. Details: events.liberal.ca.

**WEDNESDAY, JAN. 29, 2025—
THURSDAY, JAN. 30, 2025**

Crown Corporate Governance Conference—Ethics Commissioner Konrad von Finckenstein is among the speakers at a two-day conference on "Crown Corporate Governance" hosted by the Canadian Institute. Wednesday, Jan. 29, 2025, to Thursday, Jan. 30, 2025, at the Hilton Garden Inn, downtown Ottawa. Details: canadianinstitute.com.

FRIDAY, JAN. 31, 2025

Foreign Interference Commission Reports—The Foreign Interference Commission's final report has been granted an extension, and will be released no later than Friday, Jan. 31, 2025. Details: foreigninterferencecommission.ca.

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line "Parliamentary Calendar" to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.