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It's our last print issue for 2024, but we'll be online daily and back in print on Jan. 13, 2025! Happy Holidays!



THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

Freeland's cabinet exit sets 'off a bomb,' revealing Trudeau's 'inept' leadership: observers



On Dec. 16, Chrystia Freeland announced she was leaving Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's cabinet, after having served as finance minister and deputy prime minister. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The government appears to be 'improvising' as it manages the on-the-fly appointment of a new finance minister, and an economic statement that shows the deficit has grown by more than 50 per cent, says pollster Darrell Bricker.

BY IAN CAMPBELL

Chrystia Freeland was expected to present a fall economic statement, but instead she delivered the most serious rebuke of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's leadership to date.

Early on the morning of Dec. 16, as reporters were already gathering to receive an embargoed copy of the government's latest fiscal document, the now-former finance minister

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ALL POLITICS POLL: The Best & Worst OF POLITICS IN 2024





Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Comeback kid: Tory Jansen returns to the House after B.C. byelection win



Conservative Tamara Jansen is set to retake her seat in the House of Commons after winning the Cloverdale–Langley City, B.C., byelection on Dec. 16. Photograph courtesy of Facebook

Tamara Jansen has won the Dec. 16 byelection in the British Columbia riding of Cloverdale–Langley City, marking a return for the former MP to the House of Commons.

Preliminary results from Elections Canada show Jansen sweeping the contest with a whopping 66.3 per cent of the vote—although only an estimated 16 per cent of voters turned out to cast their ballots. Jansen beat Liberal candidate **Madison Fleischer** by a margin of 50.3 percentage points. NDP candidate **Vanessa Sharma** came in third with 12.5 per cent of the vote, while Green **Patrick McCutcheon** brought in 3.9 per cent. People's Party candidate **Ian Kennedy** earned 133 votes, or 0.9 per cent.

On May 27, incumbent Liberal MP **John Aldag** gave up his seat to run for the provincial New Democrats in the Oct. 19 B.C. election, which he lost. Aldag previously held the seat federally for the Liberals from 2015 to 2019, when he lost to the Conservatives' Jansen who held it for one term until 2021.

NDP MP Gazan receives Doris Anderson Award

Chatelaine magazine has listed NDP MP **Leah Gazan** among

this year's **Doris Anderson** Award recipients.

The annual award is named after the former editor-in-chief of the Canadian women's magazine, and "celebrates Canadian women and gender-diverse people who are working to make the world a better place."



NDP MP Leah Gazan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Gazan is one of eight women whom *Chatelaine* deems to have "hit their stride at 50—and beyond." The magazine singles out Gazan "for creating the Red Dress Alert system to protect Indigenous women and girls."

"Gazan does this work not because she loves politics, but because 'I love justice, because I love Mother Earth and I want to

make sure that everybody is afforded human rights,' she says. 'I'm going to stay here for as long as I can and fight like hell,'" the two-term MP is quoted as saying in the story published online Nov. 28.

Joining the Winnipeg MP on the award list are superstar singer **Céline Dion**, Haida designer **Dorothy Grant**, former Ontario Liberal cabinet minister **Mitzi Hunter**, actor **Pamela Anderson**, centenarian competitive swimmer **Betty Brussel**, author **Jessica Waite**, and health researcher and sociologist **Ingrid Waldron**.

DeBellefeuille hands over Bloc whip role to Perron



Bloc MPs Yves Perron, left, and Claude DeBellefeuille. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Heard on the Hill has a long list of job changes both on and off the Hill to share with you, starting with an update from the Bloc Québécois' shadow cabinet.

After five years as the party's whip, Bloc MP **Claude DeBellefeuille** has handed over the role to her colleague **Yves Perron**, the party announced on Dec. 12—the day before DeBellefeuille's 61st birthday.

According to the press release, DeBellefeuille's new responsibilities will be announced shortly.

While she has represented the riding of Salaberry–Suroît, Que., since 2019, this is her second stint as MP, having first served as Bloc MP for the erstwhile named riding of Beauharnois–Salaberry from 2006 to 2011.

Perron has represented Berthier–Maskinongé, Que., since 2019,

and until recently was the party's agriculture critic.

Canadian Senators Group taps Ross as deputy liaison

In the Red Chamber, the Canadian Senators Group announced it has a new deputy liaison: Senator **Krista Ross**. The CSG shared the news on Dec. 9.

"We also want to extend a heartfelt congratulations to the Hon. **Stephen Greene** on his retirement after more than 15 years of service as a Senator. Thank you for your remarkable contributions," the second-largest group of Senators said in a post on X on Dec. 9. Greene's mandatory retirement was Dec. 8.

Read **Laura Ryckwaert's** interview with the now-former senator about his career in politics starting on page 6.

Singh, McPherson thank Rachel Notley as she quits Alberta politics

Out in Edmonton, former Alberta premier and former Alberta NDP leader **Rachel Notley** made it known on Dec. 12 she would be resigning her seat in the provincial legislature on Dec. 30.

Describing her decision as one of "mixed feelings," Notley said it's been an "indescribable honour to represent the people of my neighbourhood and community [Edmonton Strathcona] for almost 17 years."

Notley was premier of Alberta from 2015 to 2019, and led the provincial wing of the New Democratic Party from 2014 until earlier this year. Former Calgary mayor **Naheed Nenshi** succeeded her as party leader this past June.

In response to Notley's news, federal NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** praised her on X for having shown "us how New Democrats can defeat Conservatives." Federal MP **Heather McPherson**—who represents Edmonton Strathcona in the House of Commons—posted a photo of her and Notley, thanking the former premier on X for her "unwavering dedication to Albertans, your bold leadership, and your fight for fairness, workers' rights, and our environment have inspired so many of us."

Howard Fremeth to join CIJA in new year

Back in Ottawa, **Howard Fremeth** is leaving the Business Council of Canada for a new senior role at the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.

"After nearly six years ... it's bittersweet for me to say goodbye to the Business Council of Canada," he posted on LinkedIn on Dec. 15. Having started at the BCC as director of communica-

tions, Fremeth leaves the council as vice-president of media and stakeholder relations.



Howard Fremeth. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

"In the new year, I'll be joining the The Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs as its Vice President, Communications," he continued. "I know the hill in front of me is steep and there will be many challenges ahead, but it warms my heart to know I have so many friends and allies."

Fremeth's past experience includes working at the Canadian Encyclopedia, as communications director at the Embassy of Israel in Canada, teaching at Carleton University, and directing media relations at National Public Relations.

As noted in **Heard on the Hill** on Dec. 14, CIJA is undergoing some leadership changes of late, with long-time president and CEO **Shimon Koffler Fogel** having stepped down last week. **Noah Shack** is filling in the lead role on an interim basis.

Journalist Patti Sonntag joins Postmedia



Journalist Patti Sonntag. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

And in media moves, **Patti Sonntag** has joined Postmedia's politics bureau.

"Delighted that crackerjack investigative journalist [Patti Sonntag] is joining the powerful, and growing, Postmedia politics bureau. She led the Hill-shaking scoop on **[Randy] Boissonnault's** Indigenous questions. More to come. And we're hiring if you want to join us," **Kevin Libin**, Postmedia's executive editor for politics, posted on X on Dec. 11.

Sonntag's CV includes writing for *The Globe and Mail*, *The New Yorker*, and *The New York Times*, and most recently with Global News. She is also the founding director of the Institute for Investigative Journalism, and has freelanced for publications including *The National Observer*, according to her LinkedIn profile.

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Freeland's chaos-inducing resignation brings ever more uncertainty in the face of Canada's trade emergency

Chrystia Freeland's dramatic move has thrown the ruling Liberals into disarray, and raised new questions about the stability of Trudeau's minority government.

Les
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—The Canadian political scene was plunged into a new era of intense uncertainty after a dispute over Trump-proofing Canada's economy led to the explosive resignation of finance minister Chrystia Freeland.

The glaring disruption of the federal government's budgeting process is the latest sign of upheaval in the aftermath of United States president-elect Donald Trump's plan to slap outsized import tariffs on Canada, which has unleashed a torrent of cascading unknowns about the country's economic, diplomatic, and political future.

Freeland's dramatic move—coupled with a public rebuke of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau over what she called his “costly political gimmicks”—has thrown the ruling Liberals into disarray, and has raised new questions about the stability of Trudeau's minority government in the midst of a national crisis over the U.S. tariff threats.

“The government of Canada is itself spiralling out of control,” Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre told reporters on Dec. 16, repeating calls for an immediate election.

Explaining her resignation in a letter posted on social media, Freeland said she and Trudeau were at odds about “the best path forward for Canada,” and that she decided to quit after the prime minister told her he planned to remove her from the key finance portfolio.

Looking for ways to reverse the Liberals' steep drop in the polls as an election looms, Trudeau had been prompting speculation about Freeland's possible demotion by openly courting high-profile former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney to take over as finance minister.

Facing a new threat from the U.S. after years of trying to steer Canada through COVID, climate change, hyperinflation, and a housing crisis, Freeland has been seeking to find the funds to bolster the economy while coping with Trump's anti-trade foray without making a joke of her promise to keep the federal budget deficit in the \$40-billion range.

Freeland's resignation confirmed reports of a disagreement with the Prime Minister's Office over spending priorities. Confronted by the re-election of a protectionist U.S. president, she said the federal government needs to keep “our fiscal powder dry” to preserve the spending capacity to deal with a possible trade war with the U.S. “That means eschewing costly political gimmicks, which we can ill afford and which make Canadians doubt that we recognize the gravity of the moment,” she wrote.

According to Freeland's letter, the nub of her clash with Trudeau appeared to concern the government's GST holiday and \$250 rebate cheques. The costly program—which has been criticized as political game-playing—was announced four days before Trump's Nov. 25 tariff threat created the need for extensive new federal spending to protect Canada's prosperity.

In fact, the budget deficit outlined in the fall economic statement's far-reaching set of measures has far outshot Freeland's targets. The deficit for 2023-24—which the government finally announced Dec. 16—came in at \$61.9-billion. For 2024-25, it is expected to hit \$48.3-billion.

This lack of fiscal restraint will prompt fall-out on the financial markets, undercut investor confidence, and give Poilievre more ammunition with which to assail Trudeau.

But the Liberal government, despite everything, is still soldiering on in its efforts to deal with the country's challenges. In addition to \$1.3-billion to increase security at the U.S. border, the economic statement included \$24.2-billion in new spending, with \$18.4-billion devoted to igniting AI and other forms of innovative economic growth.

But Trudeau—widely seen as a lame duck leader—seemed more vulnerable than ever after the display of disorder in managing the nation's finances on Dec. 16. Even before that, the government's spending initiatives and attempts to deal with the country's economic, social, and environmental issues were increasingly lacking credibility and locked in a hiatus on concerted national action.

Much of the agenda built up over 10 years of progressive Liberal government will likely be subject to change under a Poilievre-led Conservative government.

And, on the federal-provincial front, the premiers are engaged in full-scale diplomatic sales jobs in the U.S., with Ontario Premier Doug Ford openly conveying his belief that Trudeau is too politically weakened to provide the leadership needed in this emergency. It is clear that retaliatory tariffs against the U.S.—if needed—will entail a chaotic hodge-podge of measures from provinces prioritizing their disparate interests.

Freeland's resignation will make stability and a unified front against Trump that much harder to achieve.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, left, and then-finance minister Chrystia Freeland present the 2024 budget on April 16. Freeland's resignation has wobbled Trudeau's government and his leadership to the point that it might not be redeemable, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Trudeau has lost the room

Chrystia Freeland gave us all a valuable lesson on what happens when you lose the support of your star players.

Tim
Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—There is a saying many coaches in sports know: “When you lose the room, you lose the team.” The room is the dressing room, but in the case of the prime minister, it could be applied to his caucus and cabinet rooms. There are many reasons why Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has lost the room, and those who have been there can speak to the how and why. But once you've lost that room, it is damn near impossible to get it back.

Chrystia Freeland's resignation letter was a political uppercut that struck the prime minister clearly in the face. It has wobbled his government and his leadership to the point that it might not be redeemable, despite whatever unfolds in the next number of days.

When you lead a team, your colleagues watch for how you treat others when they find themselves in difficult circumstances, or have a different perspective. Before Freeland's resignation, there was a catalogue of questionable team management practices that involved people like Jody Wilson-Raybould, Jane Philpott, and the previous finance minister, Bill Morneau.

In all of the above cases—like Freeland's—clearly directed rumours and rumbblings appeared in reputable places claiming the coach had some dissatisfaction with his players. Rather than stand up for the players, or shut down the missives, they were allowed to continue.

Whether it be in sport or politics, when people go to battle for you—whether they err or not—they like to think someone has their back. Good coaches and leaders do;

they often find other ways to deal with challenges their teammates present.

There is an expectation that, despite the power gap between a leader and his minister, some respect exists. This is particularly true if—as in the case of Freeland—the minister is a senior, high-performing team member. Human relations with and about humans matters.

One of the most fascinating things to come to light about how Trudeau supposedly communicated to Freeland that her role was going to change was that it was done in a Zoom call. Respected and top Canadian journalist Bob Fife shared this on our *Tim Powers Show* on VOXM.

To not have the courtesy to make in-person time to tell your serving deputy prime minister that her services are no longer required in the Department of Finance is disrespectful. All the while, some of your team members sharing with the media that you are eyeing a replacement adds a layer of cruelty.

Thereafter assuming that a proud, intelligent person who has been a good, dutiful servant of the team would be fine three days after being told her services were no longer necessary in Finance, and go out and smile for the cameras and deliver a policy document, is absurd. What a total misread of a person, their feelings, and your own team.

Leaders are often admired for their ruthlessness and willingness to do whatever it takes to win. Fair enough. But when you are a leader way down in the polls, isolated, and appear to want to hang on for your own purposes, it isn't going to end well for you if your previously celebrated brutality gets directed at your longest-serving loyal soldiers.

A final word for now on Freeland: I—like many others—derided the former minister for her political acumen. Based on how Dec. 16 unfolded, I owe her an apology. She delivered a master class on how to steal an agenda, and reframe a political narrative with one well-timed letter.

Freeland gave us all a valuable lesson on what happens when you lose the support of the star players in your room.

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

The Hill Times

News

Freeland's cabinet exit sets 'off a bomb,' revealing Trudeau's 'inept' leadership: observers

The government appears to be 'improvising' as it manages the on-the-fly appointment of a new finance minister, and an economic statement that shows the deficit has grown by more than 50 per cent, says pollster Darrell Bricker.

Continued from page 1

released a blistering resignation letter she had delivered to the prime minister that morning.

Patrice Dutil, a professor of politics and public administration at Toronto Metropolitan University who is the co-editor of a forthcoming book on the history of Canadian cabinets, told *The Hill Times* that while there have been rocky departures of past finance ministers, there has never been a case of one resigning on the day a budget or economic update dropped.

In her resignation letter, Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) touched on the tensions between her and Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) that had been reported on the week before.

"For the past number of weeks, you and I have found ourselves at odds about the best path forward for Canada," wrote Freeland in her letter to Trudeau. She pointed to the "grave challenge" posed by United States president-elect Donald Trump's threat to implement a 25 per cent tariff on all Canadian imports.

Freeland, who became finance minister in August 2020, said a serious response involves "keeping our fiscal powder dry" and "eschewing costly political gimmicks"—a likely reference to the government's newly implemented GST holiday, and recently proposed \$250 rebate cheques which now appear to be off the table because the minority government doesn't have another party's support for that measure.

Canadians "know when we are working for them, and they equally know when we are focused on ourselves," wrote Freeland, who had also served as deputy prime minister since November 2019, and previously held other key roles in the government such as serving as foreign affairs minister during much of the first Trump presidency.

Freeland's departure from cabinet—she said she planned to stay on as a Liberal MP—left the government without a finance minister mere hours before the fall economic statement was to be delivered.

'Inept leadership'

Freeland's letter said Trudeau had communicated to her on Dec. 13 that he planned to move her to a different cabinet role but still expected her to deliver the economic update on Dec. 16 before being shuffled. Trudeau's request came amid days of leaks that the PMO was actively courting former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney to be the new finance minister.

Dutil said these circumstances surrounding the split between the prime



Some observers say Chrystia Freeland has 'distanced' herself from Trudeau and positioned herself for a leadership run, while others said she would be 'hard pressed' to present herself as prime ministerial. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

minister and his former top deputy reflect poorly on Trudeau, who faced Liberal MPs during an emergency evening caucus meeting before heading to a party fundraiser.

"I think it speaks volumes to his inept leadership," Dutil said. "This is happening nine years into his tenure. He has not refined the craft of cabinet relations."

Trudeau has faced a number of tumultuous departures from his cabinet during his time in office, such as former ministers Jody Wilson-Raybould and Jane Philpott in 2019.

His first finance minister, Bill Morneau, also left cabinet on seemingly poor terms with Trudeau, one of only a handful of other examples noted by Dutil of falling outs between prime ministers and finance ministers throughout Canadian history.

"By and large, Canada's history is consistent to having an excellent relationship between prime ministers and ministers of finance," he said. "They really have to be two peas in a pod, and that's been a great reason for the success of this country."

"But there are exceptions," said Dutil.

Some of the other examples of nasty fallings out include one involving Canada's first prime minister, John A. Macdonald, and his first finance minister Alexander Galt. Trudeau's father, former prime minister Pierre Trudeau, had a less-than-amicable split with then-finance minister John Turner. And former prime minister Jean Chrétien eventually saw his long-serving finance minister Paul Martin leave cabinet to challenge his leadership.

Dutil said the fact that Trudeau has had a difficult parting of ways with both of his finance ministers is a further poor reflection on him.

Former Liberal staffer Olivier Cullen offered a similar view, saying the approach taken by Trudeau leading up to Freeland's resignation "shows a complete lack of judgment."

Cullen said it is frustrating to see this come "at a time that is critical and needing the best judgment."

He said Freeland's expressed lack of confidence—particularly in "two very significant" policy areas regarding Canada's relationship with the U.S., and the government's approach to spending on affordability measures—is a serious repudiation of the prime minister.

Former Liberal staffer Nick McRoberts said "the most damning part" of Freeland's statement was that she said "the government wasn't listening."

"I think she knew exactly what she was doing," said McRoberts, regarding the impact her statement.

Government resorts to 'improv' as Freeland sets 'off a bomb'

Pollster Darrell Bricker said that Freeland had "set off a bomb underneath the government," and the Trudeau PMO had moved further "into the realm of improvisation" in response.

He noted that Freeland's shocking exit was not the only bad news for the government that day.

The economic statement that Freeland was meant to deliver—which instead was tabled by Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) while longtime Trudeau ally Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) was sworn in on the fly as the new finance minister—saw the deficit balloon to \$61.9-billion for the 2023-24 fiscal year—an increase of more than 50 per cent from the \$40-billion deficit pledged in Budget 2024.

The \$21.8-billion increase in the size of the federal deficit comes as a result of government revenues being \$5.6-billion lower than forecast in Budget 2024, while expenses came in \$16.3-billion higher than what was outlined in the spring fiscal blueprint. The document shows that "new program expenses" account for the majority of the change, but details of that spending will not be known until the government releases its public accounts that are due near the end of the year.

The long-awaited fiscal update came after weeks of delays, which Freeland had pinned on the ongoing parliamentary gridlock—even though the Speaker's office had confirmed to *The Hill Times* that the document could be tabled at any time.

The update shows that the deficit for future fiscal years is also slated to rise. In Budget 2024, the deficit for 2024-25 was set to be \$39.8-billion. That figure has jumped by \$8.5-billion to \$48.3-billion, driven by a \$2.6-billion drop in forecasted revenues alongside a \$5.9-billion increase in spending.

The changes to the deficit for that fiscal year include the government's two-month

GST holiday on select items. The government has forecast a loss of \$1.6-billion in revenues as a result of that measure. The fiscal update does not address the possibility that Ottawa could be on the hook to pay billions more to compensate provinces with a harmonized sales tax that would be forced to drop their provincial sales tax as part of the tax holiday, meaning the fiscal hit could be larger.

The numbers for the coming fiscal year also do not include the \$250 rebate cheques the Liberals proposed at the same time. If the Liberals later return to this proposal, it would have a further impact on the deficit.

Every fiscal year outlined in the document—up to 2028-29—now projects a larger deficit than was signalled in Budget 2024.

The document says the government has—by the narrowest of margins—maintained two other fiscal anchors it set for itself—a declining debt-to-GDP and declining deficit-to-GDP ratio.

However, the economic forecast rests on quicksand in the wake of the American presidential election on Nov. 5, and the subsequent tariff threat levelled by Trump.

The fiscal update states that "the department did not re-survey private sector economists following the U.S. election," though it acknowledges there are "continued high levels of uncertainty surrounding the implications for both the North American and global economies."

Despite that uncertainty, the document uses an economic forecast that includes a \$17-billion increase in nominal GDP in 2024, and further increases in subsequent years.

Based on those assumptions, the government retains the same slight decline in debt-to-GDP ratio that it had forecast in Budget 2024—with that figure set to take a 0.1 per cent drop from 42 per cent to 41.9 per cent from the 2023-24 to the 2024-25 fiscal years.

It will continue to drop in the 2025-26 fiscal year, according to the fall economic statement, but by a smaller amount than forecast this spring. It will fall 0.2 per cent to 41.7—a decline half the size of the one forecast in Budget 2024.

Bricker said the growing deficit, multiple ministerial resignations, and the loss of a Dec. 16 byelection in British Columbia are all being handled by a government where "there doesn't really seem to be a strategy—it's damage control."

Freeland 'distanced herself in an extremely public way'

Now outside of cabinet, Freeland is set up as a serious leadership contender, said Cullen.

"She's better set up as a leadership candidate now than she ever has been because no leadership candidate connected to Justin Trudeau ever had a chance," said Cullen. "But now that she has absolutely distanced herself in an extremely public way, she is probably better suited than anybody at this time to take on some sort of leadership role."

McRoberts also said it "tees her up well for a leadership run."

"I think Freeland saw that there was no political win here for her, there was no policy win either, and, you know, she distanced herself," said McRoberts.

However, Dutil is not convinced the move will alter Freeland's legacy as finance minister—which includes presiding over a series of deficits—or set her up for a run at the top job. It's a position that many former finance ministers have struggled to obtain.

"She's not demonstrated any leadership qualities," said Dutil. "I think she'd be very hard pressed to convince anyone that she's prime ministerial material. She just doesn't have the royal jelly."

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Immigration levels, and the untapped potential of Canadian newcomers

Canada would be better served by refocusing the conversation on how we are going to realize the potential of the immigrants who are already here.

Shamira Madhany

Opinion



Amid a recent debate over immigration levels, Canada finds itself at a crossroads: persistent labour shortages threaten our economy even as we fail to make use of the skills and training of those who have already arrived on our shores.

Canada is a country built on immigration, with roughly one in five people born abroad. In 2023, Canada welcomed 471,808 immigrants, which is 7.8 per cent higher than in 2022. Our government set these ambitious goals in response to our aging population, low birth rates, and the need to fill labour gaps in key sectors. However, the recent announcement of a reduction in immigration levels for 2025—from 500,000 to 465,000 newcomers—has sparked intense debate.

The government argues that this reduction is necessary to address growing concerns about housing affordability, strained health-care systems, and public sentiment. Critics, meanwhile, fear the reduction risks Canada's economic outlook.

But this back and forth about immigration levels overlooks a crucially important question: how well are we utilizing the skills and potential of immigrants who are already here?

The answer, unfortunately, is “not very.” Despite extensive qualifications, many newcomers find themselves underemployed or working in jobs that do not reflect their education and experience.

According to a report from the Canadian Labour Congress, around 40 per cent of internationally trained immigrants are employed in jobs that do not require the skills they possess, particularly in regulated professions. Nearly one in three immigrants to Canada are overqualified for the jobs they hold. This skills gap is not just a loss for the individuals affected, it is also a missed opportunity for the Canadian economy as a whole. Research from the Conference Board of Canada estimates that Canada could increase its GDP by \$22-billion annually if skilled immigrants were better integrated into the labour force.

Much has been said about whether the government can get the levels right, but Canada would be better served by refocusing the conversation on how we are going to realize the potential of the immigrants who are already here.

Polling driving policy

As an immigrant myself, and as managing director of World Education Services—an organization that facilitates the economic and social mobility of immigrants



Immigration Minister Marc Miller. Reducing immigration levels is not an economic growth policy; neither is increasing immigration levels, writes Shamira Madhany. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

in Canada through credential recognition, policy advocacy, philanthropy, and programming—I welcome recent public discourse about immigration, and the role that immigrants play in our society.

It has been refreshing to see more than the same few economists quoted on these issues. Robust debate about the critical role that immigrants play in Canada's economic outlook is healthy—and very much needed if we are to solve the most pressing challenges facing our country.

Much of this conversation has been driven by polling data. A recent poll by Environics indicated that 58 per cent of Canadians believe that immigration levels should be reduced, with concerns centred on the pressure on housing, health care, and job availability.

Canada's immigration consensus—some commentators opine—is broken.

And yet, that same Environics poll found that 68 per cent of Canadians believe immi-

gration has a positive impact on the economy. I look at these numbers, and I look at our public discourse, and I am reminded that we must be very careful not to oversimplify the issues in order to arrive at an expedient remedy that, in fact, is no remedy for the underlying quality of life issues that concern us all.

How we frame the issue matters. With many Canadians losing faith in government and feeling desperate for answers to the affordability crisis, a poll that asks questions about the connection between immigration, housing costs, and affordability is likely to elicit perceived linkages even if the data doesn't support those links. This is called framing bias. Add confirmation bias to the mix, and the result of these polls must be scrutinized accordingly.

In other words, while polling tells us valuable information, it doesn't tell the whole story, and—as we say in the biz—the problem with data is that it gets dated, quickly.

What this polling tells me is that Canadians recognize the value that immigrants bring to this country, and that they are concerned about strains on our already-over-subscribed public services and resources.

What's certain is that these polls underscore the need for a more nuanced approach to immigration policy. Even more important is the need to address public concerns about our economy without losing sight of the clear benefits of immigration.

Leveraging immigrant talent: a path forward

Immigrants are neither the cause nor the solution to our economic woes. Reducing immigration levels is not an economic growth policy; neither is increasing immigration levels.

We need to shift the focus of our current conversation on immigration to include a wider range of policy measures to address housing shortages, skills shortages, record-low productivity, and stagnant growth in this country. A balanced strategy would focus on making better use of immigrant skills, both to fill labour gaps and find solutions. Immigrants like me are ready to contribute. We are innovators, and we come to this country with deep expertise and experience that can help solve these issues.

What we need to do in this moment is resist easy answers. Let's commit to a balanced and focused approach to growing our economy, and begin by harnessing the full potential of our immigrant workforce who are in the country now.

Shamira Madhany is managing director, Canada, and deputy executive director of World Education Services, which she joined in 2018 after more than two decades of public service. She has extensive experience working with licensing bodies, settlement agencies, and higher education and post-secondary sectors in Ontario.

The Hill Times



WPFC President Heather Bakken in a fireside chat with

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News

'The timing is right': Stephen Greene bids farewell to Senate

The now-former senator recently sat down to talk everything from 'herding cats' in his early days as chief of staff to Preston Manning, to 'plotting' Senate modernization.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

A former conservative political staffer and self-proclaimed "party hack," recently retired Nova Scotia senator Stephen Greene evolved into a champion of Senate modernization during his almost 16 years in the Chamber. Today, that work—and the friendships he formed along the way—are highlights from his storied parliamentary career.

Greene sat down with *The Hill Times* in the Senate of Canada Building on Dec. 4—four days before his 75th birthday and official retirement—wearing the King Charles III Coronation Medal he'd received from the Black Rod earlier that morning alongside his red Senator pin.

Though he didn't make it public until 2021, Greene was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease in 2019—a progressive brain disorder he understated as "not a nice thing to have." As a result, he said "the timing is right" for his retirement.

"In my case, 75 [years old] is about right. It would be hard for me to return next spring. Very hard," he said.

Greene developed an interest in politics at a young age, inspired by the patriotism of his mother who had worked as a spy carrying messages between Britain and

the French Resistance during the Second World War. He recalled racing home from school over lunch to watch then-United States president John F. Kennedy's press conferences.

That interest led to jobs working for the Canadian Embassy in Washington, D.C.—back when the embassy was in a "run-down building" in Dupont Circle, before it moved to its current prime digs off Pennsylvania Avenue in 1989—and at the Consulate General in Boston.

By the mid-1980s, Greene began working for seafood company Clearwater Fine Foods, but his interest in politics endured.

Then came the birth of Greene's daughter in 1988. "Canada at the time was in a terrible state financially," he recalled. That year's budget projected future deficits in the tens of billions of dollars, "and if we were going to stay on the same track until my daughter was 21, we'd be a broken country. So I wanted to do something—anything—to fix the situation."

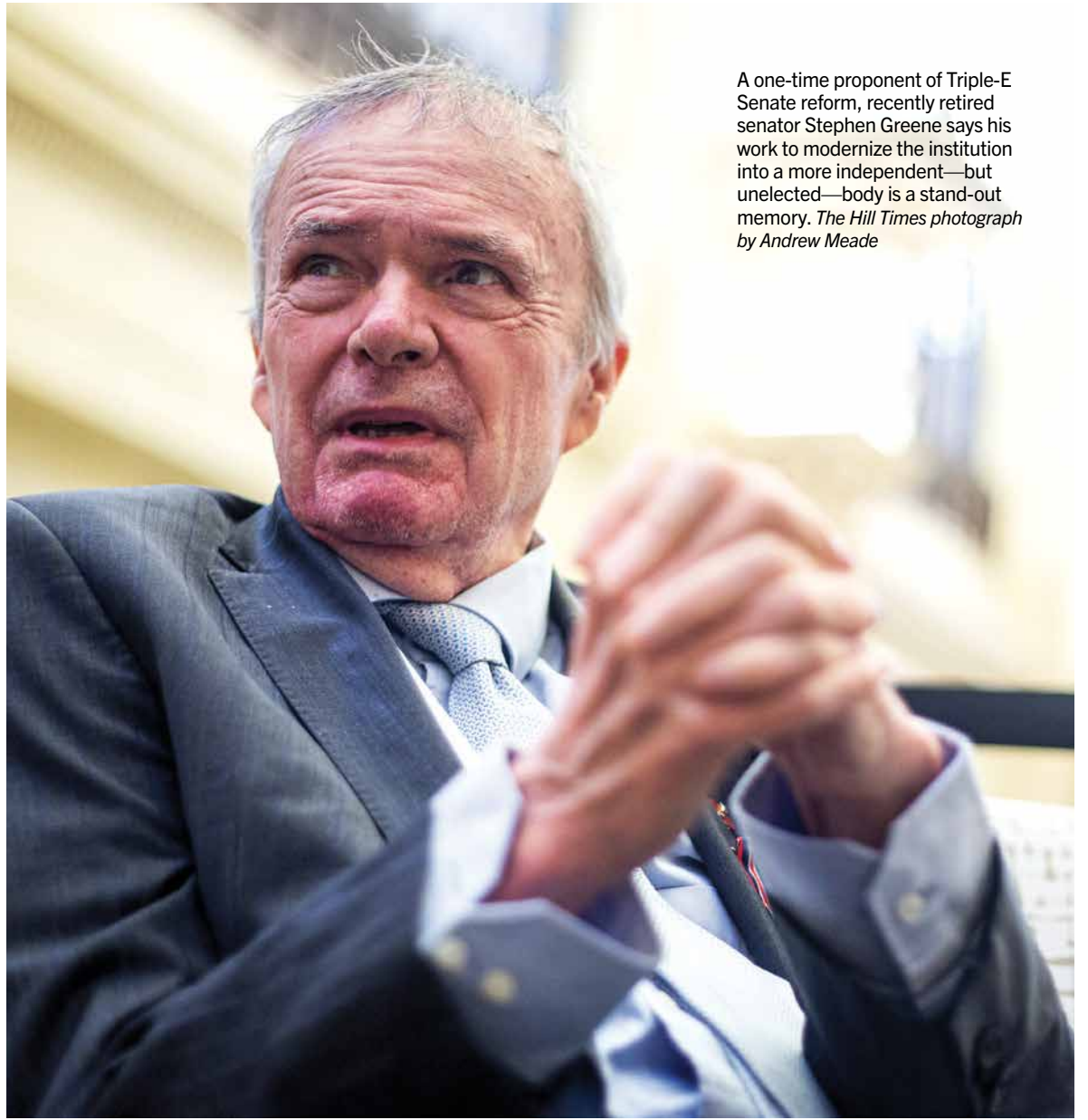
That in mind, the burgeoning Reform Party caught Greene's interest as he said it was the "only political party" at the time "that had a zero-deficit policy."

"So I said, 'well, I'll give these people a shot.'"

Greene threw his hat into the electoral ring for the first time in the subsequent 1993 federal election, running as the Reform Party candidate in Halifax, N.S.

Though he ultimately wasn't elected—with the party having failed to win any seats in Atlantic Canada—his roughly 14.5 per cent vote share was among the highest for the party in the region.

While Greene didn't land a seat in the House of Commons, he did land a job offer post-election when he was asked to serve as chief of staff to then-Reform leader Preston Manning, marking Greene's first-ever job in federal politics.



A one-time proponent of Triple-E Senate reform, recently retired senator Stephen Greene says his work to modernize the institution into a more independent—but unelected—body is a stand-out memory. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"Everybody looked upon that [1993 election result] as a miracle, and so if I could be a miracle there, why not other places?" he told *The Hill Times*.

And so Greene moved to Ottawa, taking charge of some 50-odd staff working in Manning's office as then-third party leader. Of the 52 Reform MPs elected in 1993, "only one of them had ever been to Ottawa before, and that was for a vacation," recalled Greene.

"It was like herding cats," he said of his early days on the Hill.

Among the fledgling caucus was future Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper who'd helped found the Reform party, and whom Greene later encouraged to run for Canadian Alliance leadership.

Greene ran Manning's office from 1993 to 1996, at which point he returned to the private sector. But he remained engaged in politics, and in 1997 made a second bid for elected office, going up against then-NDP leader Alexa McDonough to represent the riding of Halifax. McDonough ultimately won that race, becoming an MP for the first time.

Come 2006, Greene found himself once again working in the political arena, this time provincially as principal secretary and deputy chief of staff to then-Nova Scotia premier Rodney MacDonald.

Two years later—in December 2008—that job brought Greene to Ottawa to meet with Harper

and members of his government. MacDonald's Progressive Conservative government was facing the prospect of an impending election at the time, and Greene and a small contingent of ministers had been dispatched to the capital to try to get a sense of what kind of federal funding they could expect and promise in the upcoming campaign.

The trip came at an interesting time: seeking to oust the Conservatives from power, on Dec. 1, 2008, then-NDP leader Jack Layton, then-Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, and then-Bloc Québécois leader Gilles Duceppe had signed a coalition accord—an episode that prompted Harper to reconsider his reticence to appointing Senators.

A longtime proponent of "Triple-E" Senate reform, during the 2006 campaign that ultimately saw the Conservatives elected to form government for the first time, Harper had pledged to make the Upper Chamber more effective and independent. In its first year in power, his government had introduced legislation—which ultimately failed to pass—seeking to impose eight-year term limits on Senators. Since 2006, Harper had only appointed two Senators, but in the final days of 2008—under the looming threat of the opposition coalition—he moved swiftly to fill all 18 remaining vacancies.

Greene recalled his surprise at the sudden turn in conversa-

tion during his December 2008 meeting with the then-PM: "I was not expecting at all the fact that he would suddenly turn to me and say, 'now we've got four vacancies in Nova Scotia, who should I appoint?'"

Greene responded with a list of about 10 names of possible appointees. "It was time for me to leave—he was standing up by then—and then he said, 'you know, you didn't put your own name forward.'"

"And I said, 'well, I'll do whatever the prime minister asks me to do,'" recalled Greene.

Two weeks later, the offer became official, and on Dec. 22, 2008, Greene's appointment to the Senate was announced.

Controversial dinner invites

Greene entered the Red Chamber in January 2009 with a mind for reform of his own. Like Harper, he'd been a proponent of Triple-E reform to make the Senate equal, elected, and effective. "That made a lot of sense to me," he said.

"I couldn't imagine Canada having no Senate because the Senate fulfills an important role because it puts a stamp of approval on legislation, which gives the governor general confidence that the legislation is half decently put together, rather than [being left to] the sausage factory that is the House of Commons," Greene

Continued on page 20



THE HILL TIMES

HAPPY HOLIDAYS

**IS THERE A PERSON IN YOUR LIFE WHO'S
PREOCCUPIED WITH PARLIAMENT? A FRIEND
WHO'S FIXATED ON THE FEDERAL? A HUBBY
WHO'S HIP TO THE HILL?**

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Editorial

Does 'Team Canada' need a new captain?

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau must think he's politically invulnerable. And who could blame him? He brought the Liberal Party back from the brink when he took over as leader more than a decade ago, and has managed to weather a spate of missteps, own goals, and outside calamities that could have hobbled other politicians.

This overly strong sense of self may help to explain why Dec. 16 played out as dramatically as it did. After years as a loyal Trudeau soldier, former "minister of everything" Chrystia Freeland had finally had enough. The erstwhile deputy prime minister and finance minister resigned in spectacular fashion, mere hours before she was set to finally deliver the government's long-awaited fall economic statement. And who could blame her.

If her resignation letter is to be believed, Freeland was informed three days prior that this fiscal update would be her last and that Trudeau—as a prime minister is wont to do—was giving someone else the finance minister job. What's more, as has been reported, Freeland wasn't even going to get a consolation prize, but rather the ignominious "honour" of being a minister without portfolio just so that the government could continue to use her expertise in handling the returning Trump administration across the border.

It's baffling that the prime minister thought he could tell someone they were losing their job, and expect them to hold their head up—and their nose pinched shut—and carry on. But given past precedent, and all that Trudeau has weathered in his tenure as prime minister, it must have seemed inconceivable to him that things wouldn't just work out.

Freeland isn't the first finance minister to end up on the outs with her boss—but she is the first woman. And while that may have zero bearing on the outcome of this situation, it's hard not to look at it through the lens with which Trudeau himself has sought to craft his image as feminist champion. And then compare that to the exits of former Trudeau team members like Jody Wilson-Raybould, Jane Philpott, and Celina Caesar-Chavannes.

It's giving "some of my best chiefs of staff are women."

The country can't afford to be in a state of chaos as the clock ticks closer to United States president-elect Donald Trump's Jan. 20, 2025, inauguration. Although Trump himself appears to be cheered by Freeland's departure, the current turmoil bodes ill for the unity needed to respond to his tariff threats. It's hard to field a "Team Canada" when everyone is dropping like flies.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Governor General should pull plug on Parliament: Welland, Ont., letter writer

On NBC News on Dec. 8, United States president-elect Donald Trump doubled down on his 25-per-cent tariff threat. In an interview, he reiterated that either Canada—and Mexico—fall in line with his economic policies, or else he would rather have both countries annexed.

Last week, I read a letter to the editor pointing out that one of the advantages Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre wields is better relations with Trump—allegedly on the assumption that both leaders share at least some common values—whereas Trudeau and Trump dislike and grossly disagree with each other. It's common knowledge that Poilievre is leading on Trudeau with a comfortable margin of 20 percentage points, and has been for a very long time.

Trudeau's Nov. 30 trip to Mar-a-Lago to meet Trump was an abject failure. Trump is now mocking Trudeau. Trump's suggestion that Canada join the U.S.

only showcased his obsequious nature, and lack of respect for Trudeau.

The united "Team Canada" approach is clearly not working since both Alberta Premier Danielle Smith and Poilievre have put Trudeau on the spot regarding his failures to address Trump and America's concerns when it comes to border management.

I have a strong sentiment that the only way to rectify the situation and urgently improve Canada-U.S. relations with the soon-incoming administration would be to pull the plug and ask our Governor General to call an early election in order that the Conservative Party would work with Trump as soon as possible. I have a hunch that the only possible way to prevent an annexation or punitive tariffs leads to Poilievre at Sussex Drive before February.

Dennis Watson
 Welland, Ont.

Israel's actions should be judged against standards of international humanitarian law, says American reader

Conservative foreign affairs critic Michael Chong and Conservative deputy leader Melissa Lantsman are outraged that the International Criminal Court (ICC) has issued arrest warrants for Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and former Israeli defence minister Yoav Gallant.

However, in its statement regarding these warrants, the ICC asserts that there is reasonable evidence to conclude that Netanyahu and Gallant "intentionally and knowingly" deprived civilians in Gaza of food, water, and medical supplies, including anesthesia.

Furthermore, according to the ICC, this lack of anesthesia has forced doctors to perform amputations on adults and children with no safe ways to sedate them.

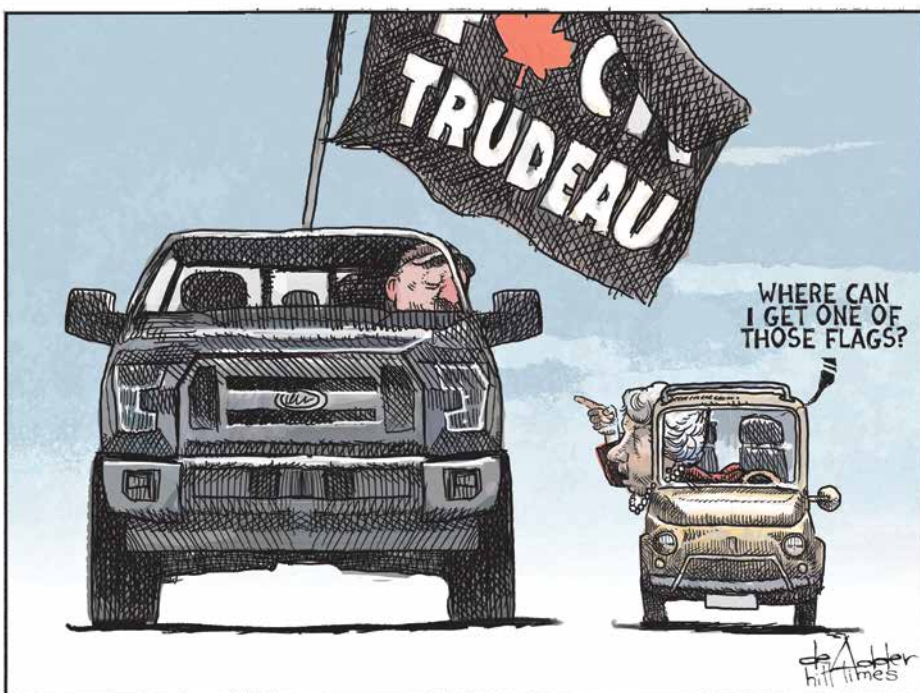
Dr. Mike M. Mallah is a trauma surgeon from Charleston, S.C., who volun-

teered in Gaza. In an interview, Mallah fought back tears as he described "anesthesiologists who don't have anesthesia who are holding people down and singing to them so that they can comfort them and do their surgery."

And according to a doctor from Gaza, "Because of the shortage of painkillers we leave patients to scream for hours and hours."

The ICC, which also issued an arrest warrant for one of the few surviving leaders of Hamas, is not equating Israel with this terror group. Rather, the ICC is evaluating Israel's actions against the standards of international humanitarian law.

Terry Hansen
 Milwaukee, Wis.



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Holiday break unlikely to bring relief for the Trudeau government as election looms large

Expect a revival of the David-and-Goliath narrative to be dusted off and presented to Canadians.

Josie Sabatino

Comment



In Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's mind, the choice between good and evil is playing out before the very eyes of Canadians. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

portunity to send Canadians to the polls to cast their vote in a federal election.

As party leaders kick their outreach into high gear, and ramp up efforts to reach Canadians directly in a bid to secure their vote, the Canada-United States file continues to simmer and distract.

The world order has been thrown into chaos by the re-emergence of U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, whose intimidation tactics and impending tariffs could cripple the Canadian economy with the swish of a pen. What comes next—and the consequences of a tumultuous relationship with the country's biggest and

most important trading partner—poses a direct threat that any seasoned politician would rather avoid.

Since November's U.S. presidential election, there has also been a message battle taking place between Canada's premiers, the federal government, and the incoming Trump administration, creating jurisdictional confusion across the board.

While the president-elect has "joked" about Canada becoming the 51st state due to what he believes is a massive trade imbalance, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has—for the most part—stuck to the script, and vocalized his com-

mitment to maintaining a cordial working relationship with Trump.

That is, until last week, when Trudeau reverted back to his old talking points, and went into full election mode at an Equal Voice event designed to celebrate and inspire female leadership and participation in the political process.

The prime minister took to the microphone to opine about how—instead of making progress—women's rights are backsliding. In his words, "just a few weeks ago, the United States voted for a second time to not elect its first woman president."

In Trudeau's mind, the choice between good and evil, and right and wrong is playing out before the very eyes of Canadians. He managed to boil down a complex debate of ideals and issues in the U.S. election to a contrived choice over gender.

The prime minister has never had any issue lumping Canada's Conservatives in with the antics of the Trump administration, or seizing on the opportunity to present himself as the paradigm of progressivism.

Earlier this year, after Trump won the Iowa Republican caucus, Trudeau stated that: "in two years here in Canada, we'll have a similar choice [compared to America]. Do we move forward, to defend democracy, our principles? Do we continue to fight climate change, defend individual rights, defend minorities? Or do we go backwards because we're too angry about everything that's going on in the world around us?"

This message is eerily similar to the framing Vice-President Kamala Harris made in her final pitch to voters against the backdrop of Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C. In her words, she noted that: "[Trump] is full of grievances. He is full of dark language that is about retribution or revenge, and so the American people have a choice. It's either going to be that, or it'll be me there, focused on my to-do list, focused on the American people, and getting through that list of goals and plans to improve the lives of the American people."

This type of 50,000-foot pontification didn't secure Harris the votes she needed to take the presidency, and it's likely to fall flat for Trudeau in 2025 as Canadians increasingly look to park their votes with anyone but the Liberal Party.

As the holidays draw near and an election looms ever closer, expect a revival of the David-and-Goliath narrative to be dusted off and presented to Canadians. Logic need not apply to the conversation, nor any questions about what the Trudeau government has actually achieved on the litany of issues they continue to brand their legacy on.

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

The Hill Times

Opinion

Christmas reminiscences

In a time of political and societal turmoil, take a moment to reflect on the family traditions that make the season worthwhile.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



While Quebec is nominally a secular society, it is hard to ignore the Christmas iconography in small towns like Kamouraska, writes Andrew Caddell. *Photograph courtesy of Andrew Caddell*

where the church is still the tallest building, despite many being deconsecrated. And while the lights, holly, trees, and cedar wreaths recall winter solstice traditions of the Druids of the fifth century BCE, it is Christmastime in the stores, in the media, and our homes.

My first Christmas memories are of staying overnight at my grandparents' old house in Westmount. At the time, our family of six lived in veterans housing, so having one night of luxury was a thrill. Upon arrival, on each of our beds was laid out new pyjamas for the year.

Once dinner was finished, we children were sent to bed, and the réveillon—the traditional French-Canadian all-night Christmas party—would follow. All night, dozens of friends and family would

come and go, eating and drinking until the last guest departed at 4 a.m. Then my father would take out the toys, and assemble them on the floor of the living room for the next two hours.

At 7 a.m., we children would invade my parents' bedroom with the stockings we found under our beds. My father—having enjoyed an hour of sleep—was not in the cheeriest of Christmas moods.

At 9:30 a.m., we were allowed to descend the long staircase down to the living room to discover the toys "assembled by Santa" on the living room floor. We were not allowed to open any other presents until we watched the Queen's Christmas message—something my Québécois friends find hard to believe. After presents, we would have Christmas dinner, which was

inevitably an enormous turkey, with relatives struggling through post-réveillon hangovers.

Then we would pack up the car on what was inevitably the snowiest night of the year, and head to Lachine about 15 km away, where we would join my paternal grandmother, my uncle, and his family in their tiny post-war home for more turkey. On Boxing Day, we were still full. As it was not a holiday, my sleep-deprived father went to work.

While these memories are instilled in my mind, the tradition didn't really last that long. I was a teenager when the réveillons ended as my grandparents no longer had the stamina to host them. What followed were Christmases at my parents' house, and then I began to travel and work. Christmas meant serving someone else dinner at a hotel or restaurant, or getting up at 4 a.m. to work the morning news shift in radio. And for five years in the late 1990s, our family celebrated Christmas on our posting in Geneva, Switzerland.

When it was time to return to Ottawa, I convinced my own children—then eight and six years old—we should go to Kamouraska for our first Christmas back. It was the first Christmas in the house since 1884, when my great-grandparents purchased the house as a summer home. The children worried Santa might not find them,

but he came down the chimney through the old wood stove, and delivered the presents that were well-hidden in our van.

The holiday could have been a disaster: we had a new puppy, who needed to be walked in -30 C weather. The windows and doors leaked, and the stove and electric heat barely kept us warm. But we played shinny on the local outdoor rink, read books, visited with neighbours, and marvelled at the difference between a green Kamouraska summer and a white Christmas.

That "one-off" celebration in 2000 continues to this day, and has replaced the traditions of the past. Where I once dreamed of Kamouraska in the winter as a child, it is now my reality. And when we attend the Christmas Eve mass at the old church down the road, the choir will sing the traditional hymn, "Il est né le divin enfant," and we will wish each other "Joyeux Noël."

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, happy holidays, and happy 2025 to all my readers.

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 pipsn52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

Comment

Soldiers shouldn't put up with squalid living conditions

Those serving in uniform in a G7 country's military should expect no less than affordable, clean, livable accommodations.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Over the past few months, there has been a trend on social media for serving members of the Canadian Armed Forces to upload their personal photographs, which reveal some pretty horrific living conditions in the barracks on military bases across Canada.

A compilation of these photos was subsequently published by *Esprit de Corps* magazine in an effort to publicize the often substandard living conditions in these government-owned and -managed facilities.

It is not a case of the senior leadership simply being unaware of this situation. In fact, the CAF chaplain service submitted an Oct. 29 briefing to Chief of the Defence Staff General Jennie Carignan. The briefing outlines a summary of assessments by military chaplains about the current welfare of the military.

It contains this paragraph: "The poor conditions of many Singles Quarters (SQs) at Bases and Wings have led to significant discomfort and dissatisfaction among personnel. This situation negatively impacts morale, as inadequate living conditions can diminish overall well-being and motivation."

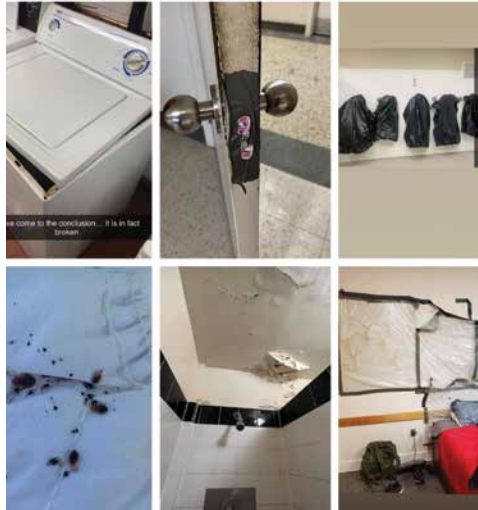
Given the fact that the Armed Forces currently faces an existential threat due to a recruiting and retention crisis—which has resulted in a crippling personnel shortfall—one would think that such issues affecting morale would be priority No. 1 for the military brass. Think again.

This has been an ongoing problem for years, and it is not limited to the shoddy state of the Singles Quarters.

An internal military report from June 2023 acknowledged that CAF personnel were increasingly leaving the ranks rather than moving to a new military base where they couldn't afford housing. Brig.-Gen. Virginia Tattersall commented in a briefing note that in some locations, the "average cost to purchase or rent housing now exceeds incomes of several CAF working rank levels."

Just before Christmas 2023, the *Chronicle Herald* ran a series of stories about CAF members in Halifax either living in tents or couch-surfing due to the lack of available, affordable housing in that city.

The matter was addressed to members of Nova Scotia's legislative assembly by Erica Fleck, director of emergency management for the municipality of Halifax. Fleck, herself a veteran of the CAF, told MLAs that she has identified an increase in the number of active-duty members who are unhoused or who have only precarious housing.



Serving members of the Armed Forces have been documenting their living conditions in military barracks across the country. Photographs courtesy of *Esprit de Corps*

"We have active serving regular force members who are still couch surfing, that were posted here in the summer, [because] they cannot find a place to live. They're regularly now going to food banks," said Fleck.

Her comments were echoed by Craig Hood, executive director of the Royal Canadian Legion Nova Scotia/Nunavut Command. He told the MLAs he has heard "startling stories of serving CAF members posted to Nova Scotia who are living rough in tents, living in their vehicles, couch surfing, and even entering into relationships to secure housing that have put them at risk of domestic violence. Hood went so far as to call the military housing crisis in Halifax an "epidemic."

There is a limited amount of subsidized housing available through the Canadian Forces Housing Agency. The rents for these National Defence housing units are generally below the local market value.

However, there is a perpetual shortage of these units, and it is usually those who can least afford to pay the higher civilian rents that find themselves on a lengthy wait list for a military housing unit.

While the Liberal government's most recent defence policy update sets aside some money for new housing down the road, there are builds scheduled in the next two years.

That means that this is actually a leadership crisis rather than a housing crisis for the CAF.

Those serving in uniform in a G7 country's military should expect no less than affordable, clean, livable accommodations. This is a no-brainer. While former CDS General Wayne Eyre had ample time to address these shortcomings—yet failed to do so—newly minted CDS Carignan can cut her teeth on this issue.

Shore up the housing situation, and you will boost morale. Boost morale and you will attract more recruits. More importantly, no politician or Canadian citizen would raise an objection to constructing better living quarters for our military personnel.

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

The Hill Times

A people pushed will push back

A system of exploitation results in anger and a rejection of democracy and capitalism.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—I hear CEOs are in short supply. This year's season finale of *America* is fire.

On Dec. 4, an unknown gunman murdered UnitedHealthcare CEO Brian Thompson, who was on his way to an investors event. The hooded gunman was caught on camera shooting Thompson outside of his New York City office before escaping on a bicycle. He eventually dismounted in Central Park where he disappeared. Police released photos of a suspect in the shooting, Luigi Mangione. A couple of days later, the New York Police Department (NYPD) found the alleged shooter's backpack, which was filled with Monopoly money. He was believed to have left New York City by bus. On Dec. 9, a McDonald's employee, Nancy Parker, called 911 after other patrons recognized Mangione in the restaurant.

Americans pay the most for health care compared to residents of any other country, and receive the least level of coverage than other G7 countries. Co-payments + insurance payments + out-of-pocket fees + medications + hospital service fees = obscene medical bills. About 100 million Americans—nearly a third of the population—and 41 per cent of adults are drowning in medical debt. The *Texas Tribune* found that "one in seven people with debt said they've been denied access to a hospital, a doctor or another provider because of unpaid bills," and two-thirds "have put off care they or a family member needs because of cost." This pushes people to the economic brink where this burden forces Americans to cut back on spending on food, gas, and other necessities. Medical debt prevents people from retiring, investing in education, or finding housing as the payment of the debt is part of your credit score. And the costs are only rising.

UnitedHealth dubiously distinguishes itself even in an industry known for its rapacious executives whose only concerns are the stock price and their bonuses. As reported by CBS News, former beneficiaries of the company's policies filed a

lawsuit "alleging it knowingly used a faulty artificial intelligence algorithm to deny elderly patients coverage for extended care deemed necessary by their doctors." Last year, an investigation by health-care reporting publication *STAT* revealed that the insurance company "pressured its medical staff to cut off payments for seriously ill patients in lockstep with a computer algorithm's calculations, denying rehabilitation care for older and disabled Americans as profits soared."

That is a level of evil I cannot comprehend. And this is the allure of the masked shooter: he has restored a sense of power to the powerless who continue to suffer and lose loved ones due to rejection of insurance claims.

UnitedHealth removed biographies, pictures, and names of their C-suite executives from their corporate websites; they are also closing offices temporarily, increasing security measures, and, ironically, reinstating work from home and video conferencing. Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield, another major health-care provider in the United States, recently "unilaterally declared it will no longer pay for anesthesia care if the surgery or procedure goes beyond an arbitrary time limit, regardless of how long the surgical procedure takes." American Society of Anesthesiologists president Dr. Donald E. Arnold called out Anthem Blue Cross Blue Shield: "This is just the latest in a long line of appalling behaviour by commercial health insurers looking to drive their profits up at the expense of patients and physicians providing essential care."

Post-shooting, Blue Cross Blue Shield reversed its policy. North Carolina's Atrium Health announced that it is forgiving the medical debts of 11,500 people. Interestingly, this was a 180-degree turn from their former practice of aggressively pursuing collections of patients' medical bills.

Who says violence doesn't solve anything?

Mangione's popularity has the establishment—or ruling class—shook. Many in establishment media, politicians, celebrities, and corporate shills have denounced the glee of the public over Thompson's killing. As such, the public has turned their ire on those in power who dictate morality while simultaneously exploiting labour to make profits for their shareholders. And since government has been systematically transferring public money to private enterprise through deregulation and outsourcing public services, it can't be trusted either.

Mememes, fancams, investigations into what the shooter was wearing, comparisons between the arrested suspect and the shooter, even inmate reports on Luigi's jail

Continued on page 11

A people pushed will push back



The public's seeming adoration of shooting suspect Luigi Mangione is a marker of the class revolt currently underway, writes Erica Ifill. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube/Today

change to the status quo, yet the establishment continues to use and abuse the proletariat. A lot of people are fed up with barely making ends meet, the economic anxiety of stable employment—which impacts the stability of ongoing benefits—and the degradation of public services and the environment all to line shareholders' Hermès silk pockets.

Forget identity politics, we are in the age of class politics—shout-out Bernie Sanders.

In our Dickensian environment there is a tale of two existences: the haves and have-nots—the latter becoming more and more desperate for change. A system of exploitation that takes more and more away from the average worker, results in anger and a rejection of democracy and capitalism. It is why democracy's value is debated openly and capitalism scorned faithfully. Resorting to violence doesn't just happen, it comes about after working within a system that harms you, and through peaceful demonstrations that are treated to police violence. It demoralizes, disempowers, and removes hope for the future. Understand that violence is power, and those who are at the brink will resort to it when nothing else works.

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

The Hill Times

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conditions have been shared vociferously across the internet—#FreeLuigi has been trending. In contrast, those who represent the establishment status quo have been dragged through the online streets. Check any mainstream news media posts on any social media platform. The comments are full of praise for Mangione, and ire for those who attempt to oppress everyone with useless dictums about civility and the rot

of society. Even U.S. conservative political commentator Ben Shapiro's believers ate him up on his YouTube comments section. Wanted posters of CEOs litter New York; a traffic sign in Seattle was manipulated to read "one less CEO many more to go"; and supporters have launched a legal defence fund. The public is enamoured.

It only took a murder to unite the country.

What we are witnessing is class revolt. Mangione has been anointed a working-class hero—even though he's not working class—by the general public whose

hatred towards not only health insurance companies specifically, but also corporate America generally, is seething and palpable. The result of decades of neoliberal economic policies and corporate-leaning politics has left so many people destitute, despite demographic, racial, and gender differences. Gone is left and right, gone is the nebulous notion of identity politics, the political framework that has been developed by the masses is anti-establishment versus establishment. For years, many groups of people have been clamouring for

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Feature: All Politics Poll

ALL POLITICS POLL: The Best & Worst OF POLITICS IN 2024



The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia and photo illustration by Joey Sabourin



Always leave them wanting more: Fraser tops All Politics Poll as he exits Liberal cabinet

The results of *The Hill Times*' 2024 year-end poll are in. Liberal MP Sean Fraser scores a hat trick and takes the 'Most Valuable Politician' title for the second year in a row, while Tory Leader Pierre Poilievre divides respondents.

BY SOPHALL DUCH

Parliament has wrapped up its sitting for the year on a chaot-

ic note, following a nearly three months-long filibuster and high-profile cabinet resignations. While it was a slog for politicians to get to the 2024 finish line, one MP finished out the year ahead of the rest and is leaving cabinet with a bang.

Before we get into the meat of things, let's get something out of the way: this poll was conducted and the results were compiled before the ground-shaking resignations and movements that rocked the political world on Dec. 16. So take the results in accordingly.

Sean Fraser was chosen as MVP—"Most Valuable Politician"—in *The Hill Times*' 26th annual All Politics Poll. In partnership with Forum Research Inc., the year-end online survey saw 91 people weigh in between Nov. 13 and Dec. 9 on the best and worst in federal politics. The outgoing housing minister took the top spot for a second year

in a row. Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) also scored the titles of 2024's "Best Cabinet Minister" and "Up-and-comer in the House," earning the Maritimer a hat trick in this year's results. Fraser has been in his housing era since last year—a major portfolio for the Liberals given housing was voted one of the top three important issues for 2024.

These accolades were compiled mere days before Fraser announced he was resigning from cabinet and would not seek re-election.

"I advised the prime minister earlier this fall that I will not be seeking re-election as a member of parliament for Central Nova in the next campaign in order to spend more time with my family," said Fraser at his Dec. 16 morning news conference.

The Hill Times caught up with Fraser after his presser to get his

reaction to the results of the All Politics Poll.

"I think the work that I've tried to do has always been on the people that I've been elected to serve," he said. "It's very flattering. But hopefully that's a reflection of the fact that the work we've been able to do has made a difference along the way. It's wonderful to earn the respect of your colleagues, and I hope people at home feel the same way."

Multiple survey respondents noted Fraser's handling of the housing file as a reason they voted for him as "Most Valuable Politician." Another reason respondents cited was his ability to go head-to-head with Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) in the House. It will be interesting to see how the Liberals will fare now against Poilievre during Question Period after losing Fraser as an asset.

Runner-up Poilievre lost the MVP title to Fraser last year by eight percentage points. This year, less than four percentage points separated the two—Fraser received 24.2 per cent of the vote to Poilievre's 20.9 per cent.

If Poilievre is upset about losing out again to Fraser in *The Hill Times*' All Politics Poll, the opposition leader can take solace that his Conservative Party has consistently continued to lead in national polls by double digits throughout this past year. Poilievre's boost to CPC polling numbers is one reason why multiple respondents voted in favour of him, with one survey respondent saying he "put up good polling

numbers, avoided most of the traps laid out for him."

What Fraser and Poilievre have in common is that many respondents applauded their communication skills. One voter wrote Poilievre "uses effective messaging that speaks to the issues Canadians are facing in their daily lives while actively working on solutions." Another highlighted Fraser's East Coast communication style, with another person saying he's an "excellent communicator on the very critical and high-interest housing file after years of a very high-level approach that wasn't connecting with people."

After failing to make the top three last year, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) managed to snag the bronze for MVP with only 5.5 per cent of the survey vote. Trudeau had a cruel summer in 2024. He bookended the summer with some high-profile byelection losses in Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., and Montreal's LaSalle-Émard-Verdun. The PM lost his dance partner in the New Democrats when NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) "ripped up" the supply-and-confidence agreement back in September. He also faced very public calls for a leadership review from some members of his own caucus. These leadership questions were not helped when United States President Joe Biden dropped out of his presidential race this past July for the alleged betterment of the Democratic Party's election prospects. Spoiler alert: it didn't help.

A notable snub in the MVP category goes to now-former dep-

Feature: All Politics Poll

Most Valuable POLITICIAN



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, top left, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, outgoing Housing Minister Sean Fraser, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

uty prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.). Freeland has made the All Politics Poll's MVP medal podium for the past three years, however she was shut out of the finals in 2024 getting zero votes from respondents in that category. Probably unrelated to the MVP shutout, but Freeland also announced her resignation from cabinet Dec. 16 on the morning she was supposed to deliver the fall economic statement.

In a letter to the PM, Freeland said that the "only honest and viable path is for me to resign from cabinet." According to Freeland's letter, Trudeau wanted to shuffle her out as finance minister following weeks of being "at odds about the best path forward for Canada."

Good luck (next year), babe!

Despite narrowly losing out on the MVP title, Poilievre scored gold in the "Least Valuable Politician" category—an indication of just how

divided respondents were on the Conservative leader. One respondent put it plainly: "he is divisive."

While some respondents lauded Poilievre's ability to "dominate the agenda" and control "the narrative all year," others have criticized the CPC leader for always "saying slogans," and making everything "a game."

Tied for second for LVP are Trudeau and Singh—fitting given the two leaders' parties have been neck-and-neck in national polls well behind the Conservatives. One respondent wrote Trudeau was "dragging his party towards epic defeat," while another wrote that Singh was "invisible and irrelevant, especially after ending [the supply-and-confidence agreement]."

Coming in third for the "least valuable" category is Liberal MP Randy Boissonnault (Edmonton Centre, Alta.) who stepped away from cabinet while the survey was in the field on Nov. 20 after multiple controversies emerged over his former business, including

allegations that his former company falsely claimed Indigenous status to better secure government contracts. Ironically, Boissonnault was previously an asset to the Liberals as he came in third in last year's "Most Approachable Cabinet Minister" category. Now respondents are saying that Boissonnault's repeated scandals have done "more harm than good for the Liberal Party." Sidenote: there was no "other Randy" voted on in this category.

Simply the best

Fraser also takes the "Best Cabinet Minister" prize for the second year in a row. During his tenure as housing minister, the federal government made a noticeable shift towards addressing housing issues. The Liberals even went on a pre-budget promotional tour highlighting their housing agenda, mostly spoiling any scoops that typically get leaked out ahead of the federal budget's tabling. Whoever takes the housing portfolio following Fraser's resignation from cabinet will have big shoes to fill.

The silver goes to Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) who led the government's pivot on the immigration file. This year, the government announced a reduction in Canada's immigration targets, a cap on international student and temporary foreign worker visas, a pause to most private refugee sponsorships, and reinstated the visa requirement for travellers from Mexico.

Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) rounds out the top three in this category. This was a year in which Champagne announced a number of auto plant deals for electric vehicle parts, as well as stewarded the government's artificial intelligence strategy. It also saw all major Canadian grocers sign on

to Champagne's grocery code of conduct.

Shut out of the top three is Treasury Board President and Transport Minister Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.). Anand previously won the "Best Cabinet Minister" title in 2021 and 2022 when she was public services and procurement minister and defence minister. She came in second in 2023, the year she was shuffled to Treasury Board. She was tasked to take on the transport file in September after Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Que.) left the Liberal benches to run in the Quebec Liberal leadership race.

Somebody that I used to know

Former employment, workforce development, and official languages minister Boissonnault had few wins this year, but he did win the title of "Weakest Cabinet Minister" in the All Politics Poll.

Freeland came in second. While the deputy PM and finance minister spent the year touting the country's triple-A credit rating and that Canada has the "lowest debt to GDP ratio and the lowest deficit in the G7," her messaging had trouble connecting to the masses. One survey respondent wrote that Freeland was "unable to communicate anything to anyone." Unfortunately for Freeland, she'll end her "minister era" with the silver for "Weakest Cabinet Minister" amid her resignation from cabinet this week.

Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) comes in third as 2024 was another turbulent year for the globe: the continuation of Russia's war on Ukraine, a crisis in Sudan, and a state of emergency in Haiti. Joly also had to navigate deteriorating relations with India following Canada's accusations that the Indian government had ties to the murder of a prominent Canadian Sikh leader. But it was Joly's handling of the conflicts in the Middle East—namely the Israel-Palestine conflict—that had multiple respondents voting for her in the "Weakest Minister" category. While it's still early, it will be interesting to see how Joly handles the incoming Donald

Trump administration in the White House—she became the top diplomat in 2021 during the Biden administration.

Champagne supernova

Champagne landed gold in the 'Most Approachable Cabinet Minister' list. *The Hill Times* approached Champagne on a frigid, windy December day and asked the industry minister what makes him so approachable.

"I like people, and I treat everyone with respect. When you treat everyone with respect, it creates the right kind of atmosphere that you want. I treat colleagues as I'd like them to treat me," said Champagne.

Public Safety, Democratic Institutions, and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) came second in this category. As of Dec. 16, LeBlanc also answered to the title of finance minister, filling the vacancy left behind by Freeland. Fraser rounded out the category in third place.

Don't stop me now

Fraser—who's been a Liberal MP since 2015, and a cabinet minister since 2021—barely eked out the title of "Favourite Up-and-Comer." Next in a three-way tie for second, losing out to Fraser by two votes, are: Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.); Conservative MP Jamil Jivani (Durham, Ont.); as well as environment and climate change, and sport and physical activity parliamentary secretary Adam van Koeverden (Milton, Ont.).

It was a significant year for Gould, who gave birth to her daughter in January. The Government House leader was also voted "Minister Who Most Respects Parliament."

This was the year Jivani became an MP—he won a March byelection in former CPC leader Erin O'Toole's seat. Expect the spotlight on Jivani to grow in the coming year as his friendship with U.S. vice-president-elect J.D. Vance could continue to boost his profile. They met at law school at Yale University, and Jivani did a Bible reading at Vance's wedding.

Continued on page 14

Best Cabinet MINISTER



Immigration Minister Marc Miller, top left, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne, Fraser, and Treasury Board President and Transport Minister Anita Anand. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Weakest Cabinet MINISTER



Foreign Minister Mélanie Joly, left, former employment minister Randy Boissonnault, and former deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Feature: All Politics Poll



Rona Ambrose, top left, Christy Clark, Mark Carney, Peter MacKay, and Rick Hillier. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Jake Wright

Continued from page 13

As for van Koeverden, the Olympian got to cheer on Team Canada and tap *les trois coups* at the 2024 Paris Summer Olympics.

Wish you were here

For the fourth year in a row, former Bank of Canada governor Mark Carney tops the category for “Public Figure Who Should Have Run for Office.” Carney has

long been rumoured to be tapped as a Liberal candidate or even the next Liberal leader. The speculation went into overdrive this year as Trudeau faced very public leadership questions from within his caucus, and again in the last couple of weeks with rumours of tensions between the PMO and Freeland’s Finance Department. In September, Carney joined the Liberal Party of Canada as chair of the leader’s task force on economic growth. This move did

not go unnoticed by the Conservatives who asked the lobbying commissioner to review his role as special adviser for potential conflict of interest violations.

A number of public figures tied for a very distant second after Carney. A handful of votes each were given to former interim Conservative leader Rona Ambrose and former deputy leader Peter MacKay, former British Columbia premier Christy Clark, former chief of defence staff Rick

Hillier, comedian Rick Mercer, and U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders.

Back in the U.S.A.

It should be no surprise that U.S. president-elect Donald Trump has won the category for “Biggest Political Comeback.” Trump beat out runner-up Liberal MP Marco Mendicino (Eglinton–Lawrence, Ont.), and third place finisher Fraser, Gould, and former House Speaker Anthony Rota (Nipissing–Timiskaming, Ont.).

The world watched this year’s U.S. presidential election with bated breath. The Republican first went head-to-head with President Biden, and then against Vice-President Kamala Harris once Biden dropped out of the race. Trump managed to get re-elected after bouncing back from an assassination attempt, being convicted on 34 felony counts in a hush-money trial, being ordered to pay US\$83-million in a defamation suit, and more. The rollercoaster ride that was the consequential U.S. election also meant All Politics Poll voters chose it as the “Biggest News Story” of 2024.

Foreign interference was voted the second biggest news story of 2024. The year saw the Foreign Interference Commission kick off its public hearings on alleged election meddling. The issue erupted to new levels after a bombshell report from the National Security and Intelligence Committee of Parliamentarians (NSICOP) alleged that some MPs “wittingly” collaborated with foreign state actors. These allegations would ultimately lead to a debate over party leaders getting security clearance to be able to read the unredacted NSICOP report.

The third biggest news story was the ongoing conflict in the Middle East/Israel/Palestine.

Hard-knock life

The affordability/cost-of-living crisis overtook housing as the year’s “Most Important Issue.” After housing, the economy came in third. The Bank of Canada began cutting its key interest rate this past June—this year it went from five per cent to 3.25 per cent. Inflation also fell into the central bank’s inflation range of one to three per cent. Despite these economic figures, Canadians still felt pain in their pocketbooks. Statistics Canada has found that the unemployment rate hit 6.8 per cent in November. Food Banks Canada also found that monthly visits to food banks hit their highest number in history, with more than two million total visits in 2024.

In an effort to address the affordability crisis, this year, the government rolled out the national dental care program, passed pharmacare legislation, announced a national school food program, and other measures. The feds capped off the year by passing a temporary GST/HST holiday break. Whether these measures will turn the public’s pessimism over the economy—especially in light of Trump’s recent tariff threats—remains to be seen as survey respondents also voted the affordability/cost-of-living crisis as the “Most Important Issue Federal Politicians Aren’t Addressing.”

The carbon tax was picked the “Issue Most Shamelessly Exploited for Political Gain,” while climate targets were voted “Political Promise Least Likely to be Kept in 2025.”

Decorum and respect for Parliament was voted the “Biggest Problem Facing Parliament Itself,” fittingly since the year was capped by a two-months-long-and-counting filibuster and tit-for-tat allegations of intimidation and drunkenness in the House.

New York state of mind

When it comes to committees, there was a tie for gold in the “Best House Committee” category between Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO) and Public Safety and National Security (SECU).

OGGO was the stage for the House’s investigation into the ArriveCan controversy, and it was where Canadians were introduced to GC Strategies’ Kristian Firth. He would be later found in contempt for refusing to answer questions at OGGO, and was summoned to the bar of the House to be admonished. Firth was not the only one to face the OGGO heat. Canadian Consul General to New York Tom Clark was questioned by this committee over the government’s purchase of a \$9-million condo residence in New York City.

Meanwhile, the SECU committee was where MPs investigated the growing number of car thefts, alleged Russian and Indian government interference, and a foiled terror attack on Toronto from a father-and-son duo with ties to ISIS.

When it comes to the “Best Senate Committee,” more than 80 per cent of survey respondents either picked “Didn’t know” or “None/Not applicable.” Perhaps the Senate will ask Santa for better PR to turn ratings around.

Talk of the town

Chantal Hébert continues to reign supreme as Canada’s “Favourite Talking Head.” The columnist and panellist who appears in *L’actualité*, *Toronto Star*, *CBC/Radio-Canada*, and *SiriusXM* has won this category for the fourth year in a row. Respondents described Hébert as fair, nuanced, interesting, and an “angel sent from heaven.” One person wrote: “I don’t always agree with her but she tells it like she sees it. I appreciate her honesty.”

Coming in second is CTV News’ Vassy Kapelos. Because one show is not enough, she hosts both CTV’s *Power Play* and *Question Period*, as well as iHeart Radio Canada’s *The Vassy Kapelos Show*.

Bronze goes to David Cochrane, the host of CBC’s daily two-hour show *Power & Politics*.

As for the results for least favourite talking head, survey respondents voted for Tory leader Poilievre as the “Talking Head Who Should Find a New Hobby.” He was followed by a more traditional pundit, Postmedia’s Brian Lilley.

Cheers (drink to that)

One win PM Trudeau can claim this year was that *The Hill Times*’ All Politics Poll voters awarded him the “Most Desirable Dinner Guest” prize. Despite poor polling numbers throughout the year, respondents



Back on top: U.S. president-elect Donald Trump, centre. Also mounting comebacks were Liberal MPs Marco Mendicino, top left, former housing minister Sean Fraser, Government House Leader Karina Gould, and Liberal MP Anthony Rota. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia and courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

Feature: All Politics Poll



still picked Trudeau as the one they would want to have dinner with. Some respondents voted for Trudeau because of his personality, writing that he was personable, funny, and smart. Others picked the PM because they wanted the dirt: “so many stories to share,” and “want to learn about the specifics on the day-to-day of the most powerful man in the country.” Another respondent said that they “would love to see how he handles my family at the typical Thanksgiving dinner political talk.”

Another win for Trudeau: managing to avoid a snap election. Other world leaders had a more disappointing 2024: we saw former United Kingdom prime minister Rishi Sunak and U.S. President Biden defeated electorally, while French President Emmanuel Macron’s election gamble has left his government in a precarious position.

NDP MP Charlie Angus (Timmins–James Bay, Ont.) came in second for desirable dinner guest. This was the year the longtime MP announced he was not seeking re-election. One respondent voted in favour of inviting the former punk rocker to dinner because they wanted to “play some guitar.”

Fraser, LeBlanc, and former prime minister Jean Chrétien tied for third place. The Liberal prime minister from 1993 to 2003, Chrétien was also voted “Most Admired Former Prime Minister.” The PM from Shawinigan, Que., beat out Pierre Elliott Trudeau and Stephen Harper in the category.

Meet me at our spot

If a voter did score a dinner date with their most desirable dinner guest or fave prime minister,

respondents could take them to D’Arcy McGee’s beforehand as the bar was voted this year’s “Favourite Happy Hour Spot.” Fittingly, a sculpture for winners is located right out front: the Stanley Cup commemorative monument. Just a couple blocks away on Sparks Street is second place Brixton’s British Pub, and third place 3 Brasseurs. Also tied for third was the Ottawa International Airport—meaning some of the most fun one could have in Ottawa is when one is leaving the city. Special shout out to the multiple homebodies who voted for “Home” as their favourite happy-hour location.

And if respondents run out of topics to discuss during happy hour, then they could talk about this year’s “Best Political Book.” *The Prince* by Stephen Maher was chosen as No. 1 by voters. Maher’s book, which takes a deep dive into Justin Trudeau’s time as prime minister, had multiple voters describe it as “insightful.”

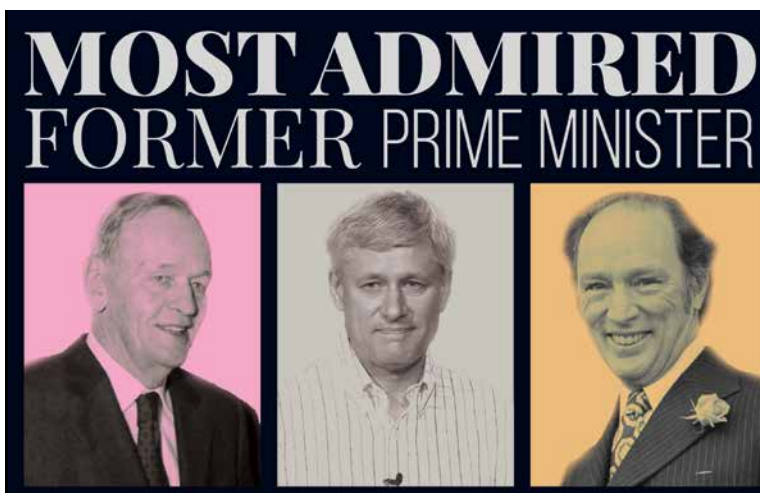
“Insight” was also the reason other voters awarded silver to *Pierre Poilievre: A Political Life* by Andrew Lawton. One respondent wrote: “A much-needed biography that goes a long way to explaining how Poilievre ticks now.” After publishing the book on the Conservative leader, Lawton has since won the CPC nomination for the Ontario riding of Elgin–St. Thomas–London South, one of the rejigged federal ridings set to come into play in the next election.

Fifty-two years after the Watergate scandal, famed *Washington Post* reporter Bob Woodward’s new book *War* came in third.

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The Hill Times

All Politics Poll: Best & Worst of Politics in 2024:

Who was the most valuable politician of 2023?	Sean Fraser (24.2%)	Pierre Poilievre (20.9%)	Justin Trudeau (5.5%)
Who was the least valuable politician in 2024?	Pierre Poilievre (29.7%)	Justin Trudeau, Jagmeet Singh (12.1%, each)	Randy Boissonnault (6.7%)
Which public figure should have run in 2024?	Mark Carney (16.5%)	Rona Ambrose, Christy Clark, Rick Hillier, Peter MacKay, Rick Mercer, Bernie Sanders (2.2%, each)	
Who is your favourite up-and-comer in the House?	Sean Fraser (7.7%)	Karina Gould, Jamil Jivani, Adam van Koevorden (5.5%, each)	Peter Fragiskatos (4.4%)
Who made the biggest political comeback in 2024?	Donald Trump (13.2%)	Marco Mendicino (4.4%)	Sean Fraser, Karina Gould, Jagmeet Singh, Kevin Vuong (3.3%, each)
Who should have made a comeback?	Justin Trudeau (12.1%)	Jagmeet Singh (6.6%)	Marco Mendicino, Anthony Rota (3.3%, each)
What issues have been shamelessly exploited by federal politicians?	Carbon tax (14.3%)	Abortion (9.9%)	Immigrants/Immigration; Housing; Climate/Climate change (6.6%, each)
What were the most important issues in 2024?	Affordability/Cost of living (28.6%)	Housing (18.7%)	Economy (8.8%)
Who was the year’s biggest self-promoter?	Pierre Poilievre (54.9%)	Justin Trudeau (11%)	Garnett Genuis, Jagmeet Singh, Donald Trump (2.2%, each)
What issues were not addressed by federal politicians?	Affordability/Cost of living (12.1%)	Climate/Climate change (5.5%)	Housing; Water/Water security/ Drinking water for First Nations/ Indigenous communities (4.4%, each)
Which political promises are least likely to be kept in 2025?	Climate targets/Emissions targets (8.8%)	Promises by Pierre Poilievre/ The Conservative Party of Canada (7.7%)	Housing/Build more homes; ‘Axe the tax’ (6.6%, each)
Who is your favourite talking head?	Chantal Hébert (12.1%)	Vassy Kapelos (4.4%)	David Cochrane (3.3%)
What talking head should find a new hobby?	Pierre Poilievre (8.8%)	Brian Lilley (4.4%)	Michelle Ferrari, Garnett Genuis, Melissa Lantsman, Tom Mulcair (3.3%, each)
Which former prime minister do you most admire?	Jean Chrétien (27.5%)	Pierre Elliott Trudeau (16.5%)	Stephen Harper (14.3%)
Who was the best cabinet minister in 2024?	Sean Fraser (27.5%)	Marc Miller (12.1%)	François-Philippe Champagne (7.7%)
Who was the weakest cabinet minister in 2024?	Randy Boissonnault (16.5%)	Chrystia Freeland (9.9%)	Mélanie Joly (6.6%)
Which cabinet minister most respects Parliament?	Karina Gould (20.9%)	Lawrence MacAulay (7.7%)	Dominic LeBlanc (6.6%)
Who is the most approachable cabinet minister?	François-Philippe Champagne (14.3%)	Dominic LeBlanc (8.8%)	Sean Fraser (7.7%)
What are the biggest problems facing Parliament itself?	Decorum/respect (20.9%)	Conservative Party of Canada (8.8%)	Polarization (7.7%)
What was the biggest news story in 2024?	Donald Trump’s presidential election victory/the U.S. election (37.4%)	Foreign interference (7.7%)	Conflict in the Middle East/Israel/Palestine (6.6%)
What was the best House committee?	Government Operations and Estimates (OGGO); Public Safety and National Security (SECU) (6.6%, each)	Human Resources, Skills and Social Development, and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA) (5.5%)	
What was the best Senate committee?	None/Not applicable/Don’t know (83.6%)	National Finance, Not interested/Nobody watches (3.3% each)	Legal and Constitutional Affairs; Agriculture and Forestry (2.2%, each)
Which Senate or House committee was a waste of time?	OGGO; Canadian Heritage; Most/All of them (5.5%, each)	Procedure and House Affairs (4.4%)	Joint Committee on the Library of Parliament (3.3%)
Who would be your favourite dinner guest?	Justin Trudeau (8.8%)	Charlie Angus (5.5%)	Jean Chrétien, Sean Fraser, Dominic LeBlanc (3.3%, each)
What’s your favourite happy-hour place in Ottawa?	D’Arcy McGee’s (12.1%)	Brixton’s British Pub (6.6%)	3 Brasseurs, Ottawa International Airport (4.4%, each)
What was the best political book of the year?	<i>The Prince</i> , by Stephen Maher (7.7%)	<i>Pierre Poilievre: A Political Life</i> , by Andrew Lawton (4.4%)	<i>War</i> , by Bob Woodward (3.3%)



Former Liberal PM Jean Chrétien, left, has the most goodwill from survey respondents, followed by former Conservative leader Stephen Harper, and Liberal Pierre Elliott Trudeau. *The Hill Times* photographs by Jake Wright and Andrew Meade, and photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

News



African Union Commission Chair Moussa Faki, left, meets with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in Ottawa on Oct. 26, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Feds say Africa strategy ready ‘very soon,’ but no date offered

The wait for Canada’s long-anticipated strategy grows longer as African envoys lament Ottawa’s absence on the continent.

BY NEIL MOSS

A senior Global Affairs Canada official told a Senate committee last week that the long-awaited African strategy will be finalized “very soon,” but a date for its release has yet to be picked.

African envoys appearing before the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on Dec. 11 noted their eagerness to see the document released, and implored for increased investment in Canada’s relationship with the continent.

The development of an African strategy has been in the works for more than two years. What started as a strategy became a framework, and later an approach, before not being given a name whatsoever. It was once again dubbed a strategy by Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) last month.

“We are at the end of the strategy preparations,” Global Affairs Canada’s (GAC) international development deputy minister Christopher MacLennan told the Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs on Dec. 12.

“To my knowledge, there is no specific date yet, but it will be very soon,” MacLennan said in French.

Joly previously said in August that the strategy would be unveiled by the end of the year, according to a *Globe and Mail* report.

MacLennan appeared in front of the committee for its study on Canada’s engagement with Africa in place of International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen

(York South-Weston, Ont.) who was initially scheduled to appear, but cancelled due to an illness. Joly and International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) had also been invited to appear as part of the committee’s study.

“Unfortunately, these ministers did not make themselves available to appear over the course of the study,” said Independent Senator and committee chair Peter Boehm (Ontario) at the Dec. 12 meeting.

The Senate committee has been studying engagement with Africa over 21 meetings since November 2023.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee released a 27-recommendation report last month, which included a call for Canada to publish a wide-ranging, “comprehensive strategy for Africa.” None of GAC’s three cabinet ministers appeared before the House committee for that study.

The same day that the House report was released on Nov. 7, Joly announced a series of more than \$230-million Africa-focused initiatives, including the creation of special envoys for Africa and the Sahel.

MacLennan confirmed to the Senate committee that those initiatives will be included within Canada’s Africa strategy.

GAC’s assistant deputy minister of Africa and pan-geographic affairs Cheryl Urban offered some details about the roles that the two special envoys will play, noting that they will engage diplomatically and with stakeholders, as well as provide advice to the government.

Urban said the special envoy for Africa will have a role that includes engaging with Canadians, and that the special envoy for the Sahel will work with regional co-ordinating bodies.

Increase Africa-focused resources, says South African envoy

University of Fraser Valley professor Edward Akuffo, an expert on the Canada-Africa relationship, said news that the strategy would be released shortly is “music to my ears.”



South African High Commissioner to Canada Rieaz Shaik says Canada doesn’t fully appreciate the goodwill it has in Africa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“It seriously means that the government really wants to re-energize its relationship with Africa,” he said, remarking that there is still a little uncertainty due to the lack of timeline.

“I will only be hopeful that ‘very soon’ would be very soon indeed—not more than a month or two months,” he said, adding that it will allow the government to have a clear path to engage the continent during its G7 presidency.

Akuffo said at this time he doesn’t see a situation where the plan isn’t released even if there is a change in government, as not releasing it at this point would come with reputational harm.

South African High Commissioner Rieaz Shaik told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee that Canada needs to increase resources given to African-focused diplomats at GAC.

“We have in our foreign policy set the ambitious goal of having an embassy in every country in Africa,” he told the committee on Dec. 11. “No one is expecting Canada to do that, but having people on the ground either on a cluster

basis or on a group basis will be the first and most important thing.”

“This is why I have argued that you should increase the resources that you put into your Africa branch in Global Affairs Canada. Africa is very fast moving, and it requires deep knowledge which you can only get from your missions on the ground that will be able to inform the kind

of approaches that will develop, especially in regard to trade and finance,” he said.

Shaik said there is a lack of Canadian understanding of the role the country can play in Africa.

“Canada has in Africa enormous goodwill as a trusted partner. Often, I lament at the lack of Canada’s appreciation of its own endowment in Africa,” he told the committee.

“I submit that for Canada to achieve transformative success in Africa, the first and most important step is to ensure that the Africa branch of Global Affairs Canada in its diplomatic trade and development form has the requisite resources—both human and financial—to do so. I implore you to be bold, courageous, and relentless in this pursuit,” he remarked.

Rwandan High Commissioner to Canada Prosper Higiroy told the committee that Canada has retreated from its history of in-depth involvement in Africa.

“In the past, Canada was much more present in Africa compared to what we are seeing

today, whether it is in terms of the embassies, the countries covered, and also in terms of co-operation [such as] when AIDS was raging in Africa,” Higiroy told the committee on Dec. 11.

“For some years now, I think there has been some withdrawal. We can’t really see an explanation for this partial withdrawal from Africa. We also have an impression that Canada—in terms of trade and investment—is much more interested in certain, more traditional markets,” he said.

He said the government should be leading on projects that would drive private sector investment in the continent, given views that the African market is “very risky.”

“There have been no initiatives—big-shock initiatives, or innovative bold ideas—that would encourage the private sectors, such as Canadian banks, to actually set up shop on the African continent,” Higiroy added.

Canada’s African absence brings opportunity for authoritarian influence

As some Western nations like Canada have withdrawn from engaging with Africa, China has increasingly been active on the continent.

The House Foreign Affairs Committee’s report on engaging Africa noted that Canada can provide a third option for those African nations looking at Russia and China as options to break their colonial links to Europe.

Progressive Senator Andrew Cardozo (Ontario) told the Senate Foreign Affairs Committee on Dec. 11 there is a worry that China and Russia are increasing their presence in Africa compared to Canada.

“My concern is that there is a sense amongst some that they are galloping ahead in the way they are moving into African countries, and we are not in terms of building relationships and helping building the countries,” he said.

Moroccan Ambassador to Canada Souriya Otmani said that if Canada does not come to Africa, other countries will take its place.

“When there’s a vacuum, there’s others that will fill it,” she said. “That is why we have this desire [and] we are making this appeal to Canada. We want Canada to take up its rightful place in Africa because Canada has expertise. Canada has a very good reputation and very good standing in Africa, but Canada is absent. So, you understand, other powers step in—that could be China, Russia, or other countries that carry out transactions with Africa.”

MacLennan told the Senate committee that Canada does not necessarily agree with the Chinese government’s strategy in Africa.

“The Chinese approach is not necessarily in the best interest of the African countries in my opinion,” he said.

“Partnership with African countries should also have in mind the African people, and that should be top of mind. I don’t see that as always being the case [with China],” said MacLennan.

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Feds' attempt to codify hate still not salvageable despite C-63 division, say Conservatives, civil society groups

The decision to cleave online harms from hate crimes in Bill C-63 is 'a step in the right direction,' but the outstanding punishment proposals are 'irrational,' says the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

BY STUART BENSON

Despite recent recommendations from the federal ombudsperson for the victims of crime, the Liberals' attempt to codify hate as a standalone criminal offence may be unfixable, even after splitting it in two, says the Canadian Civil Liberties Association.

On Dec. 10, the Office of the Federal Ombudsperson for Victims of Crime (OFOVC) released its latest report highlighting gaps in Canada's response to hate crimes, including a lack of resources and training for police hate crime units, and failures in prosecution or deterrence by the legal system, all of which lead to hesitancy by victims to report in the first place.

Between May and July of 2024, the OFOVC conducted consultations with police and victims services, discussing the impact of hate on Indigenous, Black, Asian, and LGBTQ+ Canadians, as well as gender-based violence and hate crimes motivated by religion, age, disability, economic status, or that targets the unhoused.

In 2023, the total number of police-reported hate crimes rose by 32 per cent to 4,777 incidents, up from 3,612 the previous year. Of those, there were 2,128 instances in which a person was targeted for their race or ethnicity, including 784 instances targeting Black Canadians.

Of the 1,284 religiously motivated hate crimes—a 67-per-cent increase compared to 2022—900 targeted Canadians of the Jewish faith (an increase of 71 per cent), followed by 211 targeting Muslims (94 per cent increase), and 49 targeting Catholics (a decrease of six per cent).



Benjamin Roebuck, Canada's ombudsperson for victims of crime, centre, holds a news conference to present his office's study on Canada's response to hate crimes on Dec. 10. Screenshots courtesy of CPAC

An additional 860 hate crimes targeted victims based on sexual orientation; followed by 325 targeting victims based on their mental or physical abilities, language, gender, sex, age, or political beliefs; with a further 180 wherein the motivation is unknown.

In the first two quarters of 2024, the total number of police-reported hate crimes had already reached 2,384, including 1,067 motivated by race or ethnicity, 637 by religion, and 296 motivated by the victim's sexual orientation.

In its report, the OFOVC found that 72 per cent of police officers said their service still needed a dedicated hate crime unit. Of those departments where one exists, 44 per cent have only one officer assigned to the unit, and most had been created in the past four years. The report also found that third-party victim services struggle with a lack of resources, with 44 per cent staffed by fewer than five paid employees, and more than two-thirds—77 per cent—cited that lack of resources as a significant barrier to providing adequate support to victims.

At a Dec. 10 press conference presenting the report, ombudsperson Benjamin Roebuck said the justice system's consistent failures have made victims feel left behind, and further validated "hate and feelings of exclusion."

Roebuck said the report is a "call to action" for Canada in the face of rising hate crimes, particularly following the Oct. 7, 2023, Hamas terrorist attack in Israel and the responding war in Gaza, which has caused an increase in antisemitism and Islamophobia on Canadian streets.

"Everyone in Canada deserves to be safe and have access to justice no matter who they love, how they look, where they come from, the language they speak, or the faith they follow," Roebuck said.

The report also provides 13 recommendations, including invest-

ing in police training and victim services, strengthening existing complaint mechanisms, establishing "accountability" for online hate speech and "algorithmic discrimination," and implementing the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls' Calls for Justice. It also calls for the consideration of legal mechanisms to counter Indian residential school denialism, as well as the introduction of a standalone offence for hate crimes and femicide under the Criminal Code.

The vast majority of consultation respondents—77 per cent of police officers and 82 per cent of victim services workers—told the OFOVC that they believed the standalone hate crime offence contained in the Liberals' Bill C-63, the Online Harms Bill, would be helpful or very helpful. Nearly half—47 per cent—of police officers said the proposed peace bond for hate propaganda and hate-motivated crimes would help combat them.

Justice Minister Arif Virani (Parkdale-High Park, Ont.) told re-



Justice Minister Arif Virani says splitting the bill will allow time to find all-party support for both parts of the legislation, but the Conservatives are already telling him to 'give up.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

porters earlier this month that he would split the bill in two to separate the online regulations from the proposals on policing hate.

C-63 aims to better protect Canadians—particularly children—from specific types of harmful online content, including material used to cyberbully, encourage self-harm, or sexualize children or victims of sexual violence. The legislation also proposes to punish sexual content shared without consent, hate speech, and content that incites violence or terrorism. The bill would create new obligations for social media platforms, live streaming, and sites providing adult content to reduce users' exposure to harmful content and improve their abilities to flag and remove the offending material.

Additionally, the legislation would amend the Criminal Code to create a standalone offence for hate crimes, as well as increase sentences for spreading hate online, including the liability for life imprisonment for those found guilty of advocating or promoting genocide. It would also reintroduce Section 13 of the Canadian Human Rights Act, which was amended to allow complaints over online speech to be filed with the Canadian Human Rights Commission.

Currently, the Criminal Code contains provisions against advocating for genocide, as well as the public or willful incitement of hate and antisemitism, among others, but those currently require the attorney general's consent to proceed.

Virani said the decision for the split was made based on the continued freeze on the House of Commons' agenda due to the Conservatives' ongoing privilege debate in which they are demanding documents related to the green infrastructure fund.

As the bill has only achieved its second reading since being introduced last February, Virani said the government decided to split the bill to allow the less controversial portions related to online regulation to move forward while working to seek "consensus and ... all-party support" on how to move forward on the more controversial regulations on hate crimes.

Virani's office did not respond to *The Hill Times'* request for comment by publication deadline.

However, the Conservatives have long said they oppose the legislation in its entirety—particularly the creation of a new digital safety commission—and that the Liberals should instead focus on modernizing existing laws and leave online harms to be handled by police rather than "pushed off to a new bureaucracy."

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, Conservative MP Larry Brock (Brantford-Brant, Ont.), his party's justice critic, called the splitting of the bill a desperate attempt to salvage the Liberals' "deeply flawed legislation," which he said a government led by his party would repeal if it were to receive royal assent.

"[Virani] should give up on creating his massive, \$200-million censorship bureaucracy and instead adopt our superior common sense Bill C-412 that has been widely well-received," Brock wrote, referring to his colleague

MP Michelle Rempel Garner's (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) alternative legislation.

But for those who support the goal of the legislation and the new division, C-63 may not be fixable even with more time to debate the more-controversial aspects.

The Canadian Civil Liberties Association (CCLA) is one of 15 civil society groups that have been urging the government to divide the bill since this past May when they signed a letter to Virani with the request.

Anais Bussièrès McNicoll, director of the CCLA's fundamental freedoms program, told *The Hill Times* the decision was "a step in the right direction" since it would allow the first part—which includes regulating online content—to be fixed without distracting from the more controversial second part.

"Amendments are needed, but this part of the bill is fixable," McNicoll said. "That should be the priority right now."

However, McNicoll said she's not convinced the same can be said for the second half of the legislation, which the CCLA believes shouldn't be enacted even with extensive amendments.

While McNicoll said the CCLA doesn't necessarily oppose the creation of a standalone hate crime



The CCLA's Anais Bussièrès McNicoll says fixing the first part of Bill C-63 should be the priority, but that even with amendments, Part 2 may not be salvageable. *Photograph courtesy of the CCLA*

offence or any of the similar suggestions on a femicide definition or residential school denialism, she said the proposed punishments—including a potential life sentence—are "simply irrational."

That sentencing level would create a "chilling effect" on free speech, and an unwarranted and disproportionate increase in sentencing and plea bargaining from innocent and vulnerable defendants who can't afford to take the risk of a court case, McNicoll said.

She added that the proposed peace bonds—which would allow judges to limit the freedom and expression of individuals when there is a reasonable suspicion they may commit a hate crime in the future—is "highly problematic" in a free and democratic society where "the presumption of innocence is central."

"Criminal law is a very blunt instrument, and whenever we think of creating a new offence we should be extremely careful," McNicoll said. "We have to make sure to properly balance legitimate security needs with the freedom of expression and Charter-protected rights."

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Feature

Dramatic day on the Hill after Freeland's resignation

The Hill Times photographs by Andrew Meade



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau referenced his 'eventful' day while speaking to Laurier Club Liberal supporters on Dec. 16 following Chrystia Freeland's surprise resignation from cabinet the morning she was set to present her fall economic statement as finance minister.



In the wake of the news, Liberal MP Francis Drouin was one of the first in caucus to say on Monday that Trudeau should step down. 'I think he needs to go,' he said.



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh used his press conference to call on Trudeau to resign.



Government House Leader Karina Gould tabled the fall economic statement with no accompanying speech or opportunity for a debate, as is typical practice.



Treasury Board President Anita Anand called Freeland a 'good friend' with whom she worked closely. 'This news has hit me really hard.'



National Revenue Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau, who previously announced plans not to run in the next election, said whether Trudeau stays is 'his decision.'



In an afternoon press conference, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre said Canadians are seeing the government 'spiralling out of control right before our eyes, and at the very worst time.'



Liberal Members of Parliament meet in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building for an emergency caucus meeting on Dec. 16.



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc was sworn in as finance minister late Monday afternoon after the fiscal update had been tabled in the House of Commons.

New tech and ‘people, people, and more people’ on CBSA’s border wish list



In the first three quarters of 2024, the Canada Border Services Agency seized more than 25,000 kilograms of illicit drugs, 15,000 weapons, and 800 guns, according to the agency's year-end report. *Unsplash photograph by Hermes Rivera*

Beefing up border security will require a ‘team effort’ with the RCMP and U.S. agencies in response to American tariff threats, says a CBSA VP.

BY STUART BENSON

Canada's border enforcement agencies are looking for the feds to grant their wish list of high-tech surveillance and detection equipment, vehicles, and “people, people, and more people” to help secure the border and protect Canada's economy from getting Scrooged by tariff threats.

The political debate over securing the Canada-United States border against the flow of drugs, weapons, stolen goods, and irregular migration is deepening concerns for the federal Liberal government, premiers, and Canadian businesses faced with U.S. president-elect Donald Trump's threat to impose a blanket 25 per cent tariff on all imports from his continental neighbours. However, a recent report from the Canada Border Service Agency (CBSA) shows that while the U.S. remains a source of much of the illicit drugs and guns entering Canada, this country is increasingly a source and intermediary for smugglers.

On Dec. 9, the CBSA released its *2024 Year in review* report detailing its work intercepting irregular migration and seizing drugs, weapons, and contraband or stolen goods while processing roughly 4.5 million commercial vehicles, 110 million courier deliveries, 1.5 million marine containers, and more than 80.5 million travellers through 1,200 ports of entry along the Canadian-U.S. border and internationally.

The agency reports that between Jan. 1 and Oct. 31, it confiscated more than 15,600 weapons and 850 firearms—50 more firearms than 2023—from approximately 7,700 seizures at ports of entry. Of those, 1,274 weapons and 750 firearms were seized at U.S. ports of entry. This work was carried out in collaboration with the RCMP, and American agencies like U.S. Customs and Border Protection, Homeland Security, the Coast Guard, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, and the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms, and Explosives.

The CBSA also seized more than 25,600 kilograms of illegal drugs—both inbound and out—including 4.9 kilograms of fentanyl—a 775 per cent year-over-year increase—of which 4.1 kg was intercepted before it could be smuggled to the Netherlands. Additionally, the CBSA seized 3,995 kg of cocaine (a 168 per cent increase); 37 kg of heroin; 237 kg of opioids like opium, morphine, and methadone; as well as 21,457 kg of other drugs and narcotics or precursor chemicals. Additionally, the CBSA said it intercepted more than 15,000 kg of cannabis and 547,000 kg of undeclared tobacco, as well as 2,070 stolen vehicles before they were shipped abroad—an increase of more than 500 vehicles compared to 2023.

As for the flow of travellers in and out of Canada, the CBSA says it identified nearly 34,000 inadmissible foreign nationals seeking to enter the country at a port of entry along the land border with the U.S.—a 30 per cent increase from 2023—and removed more than 14,000 people from Canada, including 4,100 who were returned to the U.S., of which 460 were citizens of that country.

In a Dec. 13 interview, Aaron McCrorie, CBSA's vice-president of intelligence and enforcement, told *The Hill Times* that this year's numbers demonstrate the agency's success in “separating the wheat from the chaff” at the border.

McCrorie said that while the “vast majority” of the goods and travellers that enter



The CBSA's Aaron McCrorie says the agency shares its U.S. counterpart's concern with irregular migration and drug smuggling, but the ‘vast majority’ of travellers and goods that cross the shared border are legitimate. *Photograph courtesy of the CBSA*

Canada are “legitimate ... and essential to the Canadian economy,” the CBSA shares its U.S. counterpart's increasing concern with irregular migration and the flow of drugs—particularly fentanyl—across the border.

“All of this is a shared concern,” McCrorie said. “It's not a uniquely Canadian problem.”

While Canada is both a source of drugs and contraband into the U.S.—particularly cannabis and alcohol—and a destination—including 1.5 tonnes of cocaine intercepted at the Port of Halifax in March—it is also a point of transit for those drugs, McCrorie said. Alongside the fentanyl seized on its way to the Netherlands, he also pointed to the seizure of more than 1,270 litres of liquid methamphetamine bound for Australia in September, representing approximately four million individual doses with an estimated street value of \$2-million. In October, the CBSA announced it had made more than 60 individual methamphetamine seizures bound for Australia, primarily from Vancouver between March and August of this year.

Though McCrorie said the majority of traffic into Canada is legitimate, recent comments from the CBSA's union president suggest the agency can't find what it isn't looking for.

Appearing on a Dec. 8 episode of *Global News' The West Block*, Mark Weber, national president of the Customs and Immigration Union, said that border agents search “less than one per cent” of the goods coming into Canada.

McCrorie told *The Hill Times* that given the flow of travel and goods, the CBSA's “job is to take a risk-based approach and look for the needles in those haystacks,” and that the year-end results demonstrate its success. He also added that the CBSA is equipped with “intelligence functions” to help it better understand those risks and focus its efforts.

In addition to targeting centres that monitor both inbound and outbound marine and air passengers, and “very experienced and well-trained” officers patrolling ports of entry, the CBSA also has criminal investigators and intelligence officers “in the field” actively monitoring those entry points, McCrorie said.

McCrorie said that many of the CBSA's seizures have been the result of “intelligence and targeting,” both internally sourced and shared from its U.S. partners, including the Halifax cocaine seizure.

“That was the result of us working with our U.S. partners to identify the ship and seize it,” McCrorie said. “We're doing that

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News

New tech and ‘people, people, and more people’ on CBSA’s border wish list

Continued from page 19

everyday, and we’re successful by focusing on the areas of highest risk.”

While the CBSA is responsible for ports of entry, the RCMP patrols the remainder of the border. Recent American legislation could expand its responsibilities by air up to 50 km south, and vice versa for its U.S. counterparts.



RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme says the force’s wish list includes more human resources, modernization, and technology like helicopters and drones. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Congressional Bill S. 4294, the Cross Border Aerial Law Enforcement Operations Act, would create a bilateral agreement between the U.S. and Canada for an “integrated cross-border aerial law enforcement program,” allowing aerial patrols by both countries’ border agencies within 50 km of either side of the border. The program would be modelled on the pre-existing Integrated Cross-Border Maritime Law Enforcement Operations program—or “Shiprider”—which sees the RCMP and Coast Guard collaborate to patrol, intercept, and board marine vessels to make arrests on the Great Lakes and both coasts.

The Hill Times asked RCMP Commissioner Mike Duheme about the bill after a Dec. 12 House Public Safety and National Security Committee meeting. He said he hadn’t been briefed on the program, but there were pre-existing discussions about a similar “Landrider” program, and that the existing Shiprider is a “good program.”

While the CBSA isn’t responsible for patrolling the border beyond points of entry, it would support both new programs as that will improve the two’s collaborations and the cross-border “team effort” as well, McCrorie said.

“In my experience, very few issues or problems are solved by a single organization,” McCrorie said. “You need to work with others to be effective.”

On Dec. 9, *The Hill Times* reported Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) could be willing to spend up to \$1-billion on new helicopters, surveillance drones, and hiring additional officers for the CBSA and RCMP to unwrap.

On Dec. 16, the Federal Economic Statement proposed a \$1.3-billion border security package that would provide additional resources to the CBSA, RCMP, as well as Public Safety Canada and the Communications Security Establishment.

Speaking with reporters on Dec. 11 following a meeting with the premiers, LeBlanc said that the border plan to respond to Trump’s tariff threat would “roll out when it rolls out,” adding that while some of the plan may require legislation, there would be “a number of exciting moments coming up in the next few days” related to increased investment in the RCMP and CBSA.

The following day, Duheme did not comment on the total amount he believes the government is planning to spend, nor did he indicate how much the RCMP’s “ask” represented. However, he said the RCMP’s wish list includes more human resources, modernization, and technology like helicopters and drones, which the police force uses to patrol areas inaccessible by land.

Duheme said the investments the RCMP has requested will allow it to take action “now.”

“I don’t want to purchase something that’s going to come in five months or three years down the road,” Duheme said. “We want something that we can use right now.”



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc said the government’s border plan will ‘roll out when it rolls out.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

McCrorie was similarly vague regarding the CBSA’s expected price tag, noting it will be “for the government to decide” which requested additional resources will be granted. However, he added that the CBSA is “well positioned ... to build on the successes we’ve had to date” with whatever it does receive.

As for what resources the CBSA needs to do that, McCrorie said that the wish list includes new detection equipment to search vehicles and shipping containers. Still, it primarily requires “people, people, and [more] people.”

“It can be people that assist with the removals ... people to assist in doing searches ... [and] people to process foreign nationals,” McCrorie said. “Those new investments would allow us to do more and build on that success to continue to make a difference for Canadians.”

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‘The timing is right’: Stephen Greene bids farewell to Senate

Continued from page 6

said. Yet he felt the institution needed to change.

But after getting a first-hand look at how the Chamber operated, Greene’s outlook on Senate reform began to evolve and turn against the idea of an elected Upper House. “There is room for a Senate, but a Senate which is elected thinks it’s bigger than only being confined to quality control ... it just wouldn’t work” in the Canadian parliamentary system, he said.

Though his views shifted, Greene’s appetite for change wasn’t dampened. Instead, he set his sights on the rules of the institution itself, and the partisanship that had it in its grasp.

“To be just an arm of the PMO, which has been so often the case in our history ... to have it around just to rubber-stamp legislation coming out of the House of Commons, and to vote the way the PMO wants you to, the OLO [official opposition leader’s office] wants you to—why have it?”

In his maiden speech in the Chamber in February 2009, Greene singled out the Senate’s Question Period as an example of “needless party divisions,” and called for its abolition—an opinion he still holds today.

Greene watched with interest when now-Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) swiftly kicked Senators out of the Liberal caucus in 2014 after taking over as party leader in 2013, and in so doing, forced change upon the institution. “I thought what he did ... was just plain brilliant,” said Greene.

In 2015, he began attending dinners hosted by former Liberal-turned-independent Senator Paul Massicotte (De Lanaudière, Que.)—despite his own caucus’ opposition. Greene said his friendship with Massicotte “took off from there.”

“We were opposites in many ways, but we came together on this point,” he said.

The two bonded over their ideas for Senate modernization, and together organized working sessions on the subject. That summer, they circulated a questionnaire to all Senators seeking views on how to go about it, which led to the formation of the Special Committee on Senate Modernization—a body Greene later chaired.

Greene said his time “plotting” with Massicotte and others—often over oysters and martinis at the Westin Hotel’s Shore Club in downtown Ottawa—on how to modernize the institution stands out as a top memory from his Senate career.

“It was a real project, which came to success, although its future is unwritten ... and it was fun,” he said.

In a recent speech marking his upcoming retirement from the Chamber, Greene gave thanks to the “several thousand oysters” that “lost their lives in the cause of an independent Senate.”

While his views had turned against partisanship in the Senate, Greene remained with the Conservative caucus up until 2017 when his exit was prompted by a different kind of dinner invite.

In the fall of 2016, Greene agreed to sponsor Bill S-4, aimed at addressing double taxation and preventing income tax evasion. The Liberal bill was the “exact same” as one he’d sponsored in the final days of the Harper Conservative government, said Greene. “Even the commas were in the same places.”

Nonetheless, the move ruffled feathers within the Tory caucus. Bill S-4 was passed into law that December, and in the new year, Greene was among a group of “40 people or so” invited to dinner by Trudeau as thanks for taking on sponsorship of government bills. “It didn’t dawn on me that it was not something that I should do,” he said.

For the Conservatives, accepting that invitation “crossed a line.” Greene was told by then-Senate Conservative leader Larry Smith (Saurel, Que.) to either reject it, or accept and leave caucus. Faced with an ultimatum, Greene made his choice, and subsequently severed his partisan ties.



Greene, left, speaks with former prime minister Joe Clark before a Senate Foreign Affairs Committee meeting on the foreign service in March 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

“I thought it was ridiculous,” said Greene. “It never occurred to me that I had done anything wrong ... the prime minister is the prime minister. I would have accepted a dinner invitation from Elizabeth May or even Mr. [Jagmeet] Singh. They’re the prime minister after all, why wouldn’t you?”

Greene joined the Independent Senators Group later that year, but two years later left to help found the Canadian Senators Group alongside some of his ex-Tory peers, as well as former Liberals. Today, Smith is among the group’s members. Until his retirement, Greene was deputy liaison of the CSG.

In addition to a long list of committee memberships, Green is a past vice-chair of the Senate Transport and Communications Committee.

Beyond his efforts on Senate modernization, another headline-grabbing moment from Greene’s career was his 2012 joint proposal alongside fellow then-Atlantic senators John Wallace and Mike Duffy reviving the idea of a Maritime union to make New Brunswick, Nova Scotia, and Prince Edward Island a single province.

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Pooling streams of kindness, and strengthening China-Canada co-operation

By working together in local communities and broader global initiatives, Canada and China can help tackle food insecurity.

Wang Di

Opinion



I have been in Ottawa for more than seven months as the 17th Chinese ambassador to Canada. Though seven months may seem brief, the friendly people of this beautiful city have left an indelible impression on me. The staff members of the embassy work and live here, harbouring deep feelings of affection for the Canadian people.

This explains why I felt heartbroken when I learnt that the Ottawa Food Bank appealed for



Diplomats from the Chinese Embassy make a donation to the Ottawa Food Bank on Dec. 13. The 'C' gesture represents both China and Canada. Photograph courtesy of the Chinese Embassy

help to support the underprivileged through the winter season due to a shortage of donations. During China's three-year natural disaster in the 1960s, the wheat Canada sold to my country was a much-needed and invaluable support. This prompted me to ponder what we could do for the kind-hearted Canadian people who had once brought warmth to us.

On the morning of Dec. 13, the Chinese Embassy in Canada

donated a batch of food to the Ottawa Food Bank. Although the number of supplies may be modest, our goodwill and best wishes are boundless.

As an old Chinese saying goes, food is the first necessity of the people. We Chinese people know only too well the hardship of experiencing hunger. That's why China believes ensuring people's livelihood is of paramount importance in governance, making an all-out effort to eradicate absolute

poverty. Since China launched the reform and opening-up policy more than 40 years ago, it has lifted 800 million people out of poverty, contributing 70 per cent to global poverty-alleviation efforts. China has generally met peoples' needs for adequate food and clothing.

As a Chinese aphorism goes, "Caught in difficulties, one should still hold himself to a high standard; when illustrious and influential, one should contribute to the well-being of all." China's economic takeoff has convinced us that our experience addressing people's basic needs is worth sharing. We also aspire to make our own contributions to maintaining global food security. A Global Alliance Against Hunger and Poverty was established at this year's G20 Summit. China immediately responded by joining the Alliance, and took tangible measures to support international co-operation in poverty reduction and food security.

Meanwhile, at the Chinese Embassy, we have been thinking about what we can do for the Canadian people. Over the past six

months, we donated food to food banks to address urgent needs. We carried out volunteer activities in charitable organizations, bringing joy to vulnerable groups. The children of the embassy diplomats performed for nursing home residents. These activities reflect not only the enduring legacy of our traditional friendship, but also express our heartfelt support for local communities and our earnest gratitude towards the Canadian people.

In the upcoming new year, we will continue to make contributions to the local community. We call on the broader public to rally their compassion and actively support the Ottawa Food Bank. We also hope that China and Canada will co-operate closely in global food security and other sectors in which both nations share a broad spectrum of common interests, so as to contribute more to the world's development.

Wang Di is the ambassador of the People's Republic of China to Canada.

The Hill Times

Parliament gridlock must end to tackle Canada's biodiversity crisis

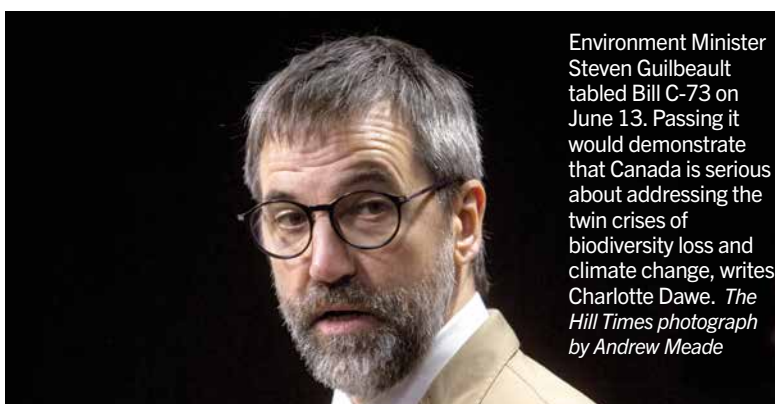
Critical legislation to combat the biodiversity crisis is being sidelined as MPs bicker.

Charlotte Dawe

Opinion



Canada is losing ground in the global fight against biodiversity loss. The stakes couldn't be higher: the biodiversity crisis is a threat to ecosystems, wildlife, food security, and public health. There are 875 species across the country that are facing risk of extinction—including indicator species like the Spotted Owl. Biodiversity loss has been identified as the second-greatest risk to Canadian society by the independent government body that advises on future policy development.



Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault tabled Bill C-73 on June 13. Passing it would demonstrate that Canada is serious about addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change, writes Charlotte Dawe. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Bill C-73, the Nature Accountability Act, is a law that could protect biodiversity—but it's been stalled for months by political gridlock in Parliament.

The legislation seeks to hold Canada accountable to the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, a landmark global agreement signed by 195 countries and the European Union to halt and reverse nature loss by 2030. If strengthened, the Act could mandate concrete targets, including protecting 30 per cent of Canada's land and oceans, and restoring 30

per cent of degraded ecosystems by 2030.

Last week, the House of Commons Standing Committee on Environment held a pre-study of Bill C-73. But with Parliament in gridlock, this critical step risks falling by the wayside. Since September, a filibuster over procedural motions has frozen other House business. Alongside the Nature Accountability Act, bills addressing clean drinking water for First Nations and citizenship rights for Canadians born abroad remain on hold.

Canada's biodiversity is at breaking point

A recent Natural Resources Defense Council report identified the alarming negative trend of biodiversity loss across Canada. Habitat destruction, climate change, and pollution are driving a crisis so severe that it's being called the sixth mass extinction. Globally, one million species are at risk.

This isn't only an ecological issue—it's a human crisis. Biodiversity underpins the stability of food systems, water supplies, and the economy. This is as much about protecting a butterfly as it is about protecting the food you eat and water you drink. A collapse in biodiversity could exacerbate global hunger, spark migration crises, and cause economic instability. Colombian President Gustavo Petro captured the urgency at the recent United Nations Biodiversity Conference, warning: "We are beginning the era of human extinction."

Canada's record on biodiversity is nothing to celebrate. Previous international targets, such as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, were missed. The Nature Accountability Act aims to break this pattern by

introducing mandatory planning, monitoring, and reporting mechanisms to ensure Canada meets its commitments. Environmental organizations have praised the bill but emphasize it needs strengthening.

What's clear is that the bill cannot wait. Every delay means more species lost, more habitat destroyed, and more risk to human communities. Passing this legislation would demonstrate that Canada is serious about addressing the twin crises of biodiversity loss and climate change.

There's no excuse for inaction. Parliament has proven capable of bipartisan co-operation, passing measures like the GST suspension. MPs must now apply that same urgency and work across party lines to end the deadlock.

Canadians deserve Members of Parliament who are principled enough to put the needs of the public ahead of their personal political ambitions, and these last few months have shone a spotlight on those who are unwilling to do so.

The Nature Accountability Act represents a chance to leave a legacy of action on one of the most pressing issues of our time.

Failure to act will be remembered not only by voters, but also by future generations who will bear the cost of today's inaction.

Charlotte Dawe is the Eco-justice government relations and campaign specialist.

The Hill Times



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Fisheries Minister Lebouthillier names a deputy chief of staff

Plus, Innovation Minister François-Philippe Champagne is down a senior policy adviser.

Fisheries, Oceans, and Canadian Coast Guard Minister **Diane Lebouthillier** recently promoted a new deputy chief of staff from within her office, with director of policy **Jessica Morrison** having taken on the added role as of Oct. 28.

Morrison has been leading policy for Lebouthillier since early 2021, starting in Lebouthillier's office as then-national revenue minister. She followed her boss after Lebouthillier was shuffled into the fisheries portfolio in July 2023.



Jessica Morrison is now deputy chief of staff and director of policy. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Prior to being hired to the national revenue team, Morrison had most recently spent about a year as a policy and research analyst with the office of the federal privacy commissioner. That post came after roughly four years spent working for the Trudeau government, starting in February 2016 as an issues manager for the West and Prairies to then-public safety minister **Ralph Goodale**. Morrison went on to work as a policy adviser to both then-heritage and official languages minister **Mélanie Joly**, and to then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister **Carolyn Bennett**.

A former page at Manitoba's provincial legislature, Morrison worked as a national field organizer for the Liberal Party in Manitoba in the year leading up to the 2015 election, amongst other past experience. She holds a bachelor's degree in political science and government from the University of Manitoba.

Faizel Gulamhussein remains chief of staff to Lebouthillier, as he's been since early 2021, having first been promoted to the title while working for Lebouthillier as then-revenue minister. Previously, Gulamhussein had been director of policy to Lebouthillier; when he was promoted to chief of staff, it was Morrison who replaced him.

Two staff joined Lebouthillier's team earlier this fall: **Alex Kondakov**, who's been hired as a regional adviser for Ontario and



Fisheries Minister Diane Lebouthillier recently promoted a deputy chief of staff within her office, among other changes. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

the Prairies, and special assistant for policy; and **Selena McCuaig**, who's been hired as assistant to the minister's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Mike Kelloway**.

Kondakov takes over two of the three regional desks previously overseen by **Evan Sambasivam** who exited Lebouthillier's office as an Ontario, Prairies, and North regional affairs and Indigenous outreach adviser this past July to run for Toronto city council. Sambasivam was ultimately unsuccessful in the November race to represent Ward 15, and in a recent LinkedIn post noted he's taking time to decide his next steps.



Alex Kondakov is a recent addition to the fisheries minister's team. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Kondakov has spent the past seven years—roughly—working for Brampton South, Ont., Liberal MP **Sonia Sidhu**, starting in Sidhu's constituency office in 2017 before transitioning to Ottawa for the start of 2022. Like Morrison, he has past experience at the Manitoba legislature, in his case as a research and policy intern with the provincial Liberal caucus, and is a University of Manitoba alumnus, having earned a master's degree in political science and government from the school.

For her part, McCuaig was until recently working as a constituency assistant to Ontario Liberal MPP **Mary-Margaret McMahon**, who represents the provincial riding of Beaches-East York in Toronto.

Daniel Jennings, who was previously assistant to the parliamentary secretary for fisheries and oceans, is now a parliamentary affairs adviser and issues manager.

Jennings has been working for Lebouthillier since October 2023, and before then was a special assistant for communications and issues management to then-veterans affairs minister **Lawrence MacAulay** for roughly six months. Jennings is also a former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP **Anita Vandenberg**.



Selena McCuaig is the new assistant to Minister Lebouthillier's parliamentary secretary. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

In other office news, policy adviser **Fares Al Soud** has left Lebouthillier's team after roughly eight months.



Fares Al Soud has left the fisheries minister's office. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

A former donor relations specialist with the Canadian Red Cross, prior to joining the fisheries team this past April, Al Soud had spent roughly six months working in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office as a special assistant for tour and strategic planning. He's also previously spent a little more than

a year and a half working for then-transport minister **Omar Alghabra**, starting in January 2022 as special assistant for operations and ending in August 2023 as an issues manager and special assistant for operations.

Also no longer with the fisheries team is Atlantic regional affairs adviser **Ty Bradley**, who made his exit in September after a little more than a year on the job.

Bradley has since returned to work for Ontario Liberal MPP **Lucille Collard**, for whom he worked for about a year and a half before first landing a job on the Hill as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs and issues management in Lebouthillier's office as then-national revenue minister in April 2023. A former House of Commons page, Bradley followed Lebouthillier to the fisheries portfolio after the July 2023 cabinet shuffle, at which point he took on his most recent role.

Aside from those already mentioned, Lebouthillier's current 15-member team also includes: **Andrew Richardson**, director of parliamentary affairs and issues management, and acting director of communications; **Kevin McHarg**, director of operations; **Paul Carrigan**, special adviser; **Dylan Bissonnette**, senior policy adviser; **Josh Lindner**, senior B.C. regional affairs adviser; **Alex Gagné**, Quebec regional adviser; **Nick Penner**, operations adviser; **Jérémy Savard**, special assistant for communications; and **Vinciane Museru**, executive assistant to the minister and chief of staff.

Meanwhile, Innovation, Science, and Industry Minister **François-Philippe Champagne** has bade farewell to a staffer of his own, with senior policy adviser **Amitpal Singh** having called an end to his time working for the minister at the end of November.

Singh had been working for Champagne for a little more than a year in all. He first landed on the Hill in the spring of 2017 for a summer internship tackling policy work in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office, after which he was hired as a special assistant for policy. Singh worked in the PMO for almost a year and a half in all. In 2018, he moved over to then-finance minister **Bill Morneau**'s office; starting as a special assistant for policy, he was later promoted to policy adviser and then to senior policy adviser after Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister **Chrystia Freeland** took over the portfolio in August 2020.



Amitpal Singh has left Minister Champagne's team. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Singh left Freeland's office over the summer of 2021—ahead of that year's election—and worked off the Hill, including as a senior associate with Deloitte Canada, before returning to work for Champagne in the fall of 2023.

Bronwen Jervis is director of policy to Champagne, and currently oversees senior policy adviser **Sarah MacDonald**, senior policy and Quebec regional adviser **Malia Chenaoui**, and policy advisers **Matthew O'Connell** and **Tim Logan**. There's also **Laurel Chester**, senior adviser for economic security.

Ian Foucher is chief of staff to the innovation minister.

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Parliamentarians head home for the holidays



The halls of Parliament will fall quiet for the next few weeks as MPs and Senators return to their home ridings for the winter break. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and lead both domestically and globally. Confirmed speakers include former chief trade negotiator Steve Verheul, and Canadian Chamber of Commerce president and CEO Candace Laing. Full agenda to follow. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7:30 a.m. ET, at the Rogers Centre Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Contact admin@fbc-abc.com.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9, 2025—SATURDAY, APRIL 12, 2025

CSFN 25 Conference—The Canada Strong and Free Network hosts its annual conference in Ottawa. This year's theme is "From Ideas to Action." Conservatives in Canada must be ready on day one to follow through on our ideas and put them into action. This applies to leaders in the conservative movement no matter where they sit, as conservative activists, journalists, thinkers, politicians, or leaders. Wednesday, April 9, to Saturday, April 12, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: canadastrongandfree.network.

WEDNESDAY, DEC. 18

House Not Sitting—The House has adjourned for the Christmas holidays and break. It's scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 27, 2025, and will sit for 25 weeks over the year. It will sit Jan. 27-Feb. 14; Feb. 24-28; March 17-21; March 31-April 11; April 28-June 20 (not sitting May 19, and is scheduled to sit late nights from June 9-June 20); Sept. 15-Sept. 26; Oct. 1-Oct. 10; Oct. 20-Nov. 7; Nov. 17-Dec. 12.

THURSDAY, DEC. 19

MP Boissonnault to Host Holiday Social—Liberal MP Randy Boissonnault will join Liberals in Edmonton for a Holiday Social. Thursday, Dec. 19, from 7-10 p.m. MT, at Belgravia Hub, 7609-115 St. NW, Edmonton. Details: liberal.ca.

SUNDAY, DEC. 22

Liberal MP Ali to Attend Fundraiser—Liberal MP Shafqat 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. ET at the Capital Banquet Centre, 6435 Dixie Rd., Mississauga, Ont. Details: events.liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, JAN. 7, 2025

Book Launch: *Hand in Hand?*—The Balsillie School of International Affairs hosts a hybrid event to launch of the new book, *Hand in Hand? Canada at the Human Rights and Peacebuilding Nexus*, featuring authors from civil society and academic backgrounds exploring how foreign policy actors develop and implement policy, undertake advocacy and diplomacy, and contribute to peace and justice efforts at the nexus. Tuesday, Jan. 7, at 12 p.m. ET happening online and in person at 67 Erb St. W., Waterloo, Ont. Details: balsillieschool.ca.

THURSDAY, JAN. 16, 2025

Hybrid Lecture: 'Unpredictable America'—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts a hybrid lecture titled "Unpredictable America: Donald Trump and the Future of American Foreign Policy" featuring political science professor Thomas A. Schwartz from Vanderbilt University. Thursday, Jan. 16, at 4 p.m. ET. via Zoom and in person at the Campbell Conference Facility, 1 Devonshire Place, Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

MONDAY, JAN. 20, 2025

Donald Trump Gets Sworn In—Donald Trump will be sworn in as president of the United States on Monday, Jan. 20, 2025.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 22, 2025

Hybrid Event: 'The Quest for Medicare in Canada'—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts the hybrid launch of the new book, *Tommy Douglas and the Quest for Medicare in Canada*, by Gregory P. Marchildon. Wednesday, Jan. 22, at 4 p.m. ET via Zoom and in person at the Munk School's Boardroom and Library, 315 Bloor St. West, Toronto. Details: billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

Fireside Chat with Carol Off—World Press Freedom Canada is hosting a fireside chat with CBC journalist and author Carol Off about her new book, *At a Loss for Words: Conversation in an Age of Rage*. Join us for a discussion and Q&A about one of the most important press freedom issues today. Wednesday, Jan. 22, 5:30-7:30 p.m. ET, at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., 15th Floor. To register, visit worldpressfreedomcanada.ca.

MONDAY, JAN. 27, 2025

House Returns—The House of Commons is scheduled to return on Monday, Jan. 27 and will sit every weekday from Jan. 27-Feb. 14.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 29—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.

TUESDAY, FEB. 4, 2025

Deputy Trade Minister Morrison to Deliver Remarks—David Morrison, deputy minister of international trade, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Feb. 4, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

TUESDAY, FEB. 11, 2025

Food and Beverage Canada's Policy Breakfast—Food and Beverage Canada hosts its annual policy breakfast to kick-

off Canadian Ag Day featuring a panel discussion titled "Boosting Competitiveness and Productivity in Food and Beverage Manufacturing" on this industry's critical needs to thrive, compete,

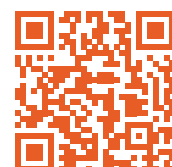


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The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday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

Westinghouse and Aecon agree to collaborate on the development and deployment of advanced nuclear new-build projects in Canada and globally.



Westinghouse Electric Company and Aecon announced a significant collaboration to bring AP1000® technology to Canada by signing two major agreements. These agreements create a cooperative framework for the development and deployment of advanced nuclear projects in Canada and around the world.

Our Collaboration to Build Proven Technology

Westinghouse and Aecon will work together for the construction of AP1000 power plants in markets throughout Canada, generating \$28.7 billion Canadian dollars in gross domestic product (GDP) for each AP1000 project.

Aecon will build on its leading experience of supplying AP1000 components to expand its manufacturing of key AP1000 and advanced reactor components to projects in Canada and abroad.

The Westinghouse partnership with Aecon underscores a deep commitment that these projects will benefit the Canadian economy by employing local trades and creating jobs in Canada.

Commitment to Canada

A four-unit AP1000 electrical plant would bring nearly 8,000 full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs, with ongoing operations creating approximately 12,000 FTEs and generating \$1.7 billion in salaries for Canadians.

By working together, Westinghouse and Aecon will spur the economy by employing Canadians and creating thousands of jobs while delivering safe energy to the grid within a decade.



Learn more at

www.westinghousenuclear.com/canada

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