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THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2194

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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**NEWS**

## 'Divide and conquer': Canada and Mexico offer unco-ordinated tariff response after premiers' slights



Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum, left, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, right, gained a 30-day reprieve from punishing American tariffs after calls with U.S. President Donald Trump. Photographs courtesy of Eneas De Troya, Gage Skidmore, and The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

'What we did to Mexico was almost Trumpian in the way we threw them under the bus,' says Carlo Dade, a member of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations.

BY NEIL MOSS

As Canada and Mexico gained a momentary reprieve from United States President Donald Trump's planned tariffs, a lack of co-ordination between the two nations reveals mistrust

in the relationship, say observers.

While Canadian and Mexican officials have been in contact as Trump has threatened devastating tariffs on imports from their respective countries, the proposed retaliation plan isn't a co-ordinated

effort, according to a senior Canadian government official.

Carlo Dade, a member of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations, said that is because Canada has thrown Mexico under the bus.

Last November, Ontario Premier Doug

Ford suggested that Canada reach separate bilateral pacts with the U.S. and Mexico as opposed to the current trilateral deal, raising concerns over Chinese investment in Mexico. He has also

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**NEWS**

### anchors away? Grits to keep Freeland-era fiscal guardrails as Ottawa faces tariff shock: LeBlanc

BY IAN CAMPBELL

As Ottawa considers COVID-style spending to address looming U.S. tariffs, the Liberal government's "appalling" debt and deficit position—combined with

a failure to bring its post-pandemic fiscal house back in order—leaves Canada in a precarious position to deal with another fiscal shock, say public finance experts.

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**NEWS**

### NDP look to 'meet the moment' with Trump response, but fail to shift story from Tories: Holmstrom

BY STUART BENSON

NDP MP Matthew Green says a proposal to pass tariff relief through Parliament is about "meeting the moment" for Canadians under threat from the American president's pro-

posed tariffs, and a lack of confidence in the Liberal government's ability to do so alone.

But while the Liberals begin to trend upwards in the polls and the New Democrats

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By Christina Leadlay

# Heard on the Hill

## Coal, the last of the Parliament Hill feral cats, needs a little help



Coal, the last remaining member of the old Parliament Hill cat colony, visits with Housing Minister Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, left, and Government Whip Mona Fortier. There is a fundraising effort to help pay for the 16-year-old cat's health treatments. Photographs courtesy of Daniel Taurozzi

The last of Parliament Hill's feral cats—a gentle black feline with yellow eyes named Coal—is in need of a little love and support during his twilight years.

His human caregiver, Daniel Taurozzi, has set up a GoFundMe page to help cover the costs of Coal's increased health-care needs.

The 16-year-old kitty has kidney disease as well as cancer.

It's been just over 10 years since the cat sanctuary on Parliament Hill was officially shut down. First established in the 1920s to help deal with the Hill's rodents, the cat colony remained a fixture behind West Block, housed in a bespoke wooden shelter and watched over by a team of volunteers including Taurozzi.

When the volunteers agreed to shut down the colony in 2013—"It was becoming unsafe for them"

due to the presence of heavy construction equipment on the Hill, Taurozzi recalls in an email to **Heard on the Hill**—Taurozzi adopted Coal, who is described as a "sweet, gentle boy" who gets along well with felines and humans alike.

Over the years, Taurozzi has helped Coal build a social media presence. "This is by no means a cute cat photos social media endeavour," explains Taurozzi, who has been chronicling Coal's health journey as a way to share



Coal with his human owner Daniel Taurozzi in 2021. Photograph courtesy of Daniel Taurozzi

news about veterinary medical care and different options available to cat parents.

"It's just a different way of informing about animal medical care, animal welfare/rights issues, and occasional commentary on things happening in the human world," including social

justice and animal welfare, said Taurozzi, who also enjoys the creative outlet it provides.

Back when he was in better health, Coal and Taurozzi would return to the Hill to say hello, stopping for photo ops with MPs including now-housing minister Nathaniel Erskine-Smith and Ottawa Liberal MP Mona Fortier. Coal counts Green Leader Elizabeth May as a staunch supporter: "It's the only coal phase-out I don't support," May is quoted as saying. "We should keep supporting the last survivor of what was a fixture on Parliament Hill."

Back in 2015, Coal even campaigned to be prime minister with posters along Sparks Street which read: "Vote Coal, a feline leader from Parliament Hill."

These days, the only visits Coal is making are to the vet for various check-ups, therapies, transfusions, and surgeries, all of which are not covered by pharmacare. He even has his own oncologist, and hasn't ruled out travelling abroad for treatment.

"I already renewed my passport in case we find a promising advanced new treatment or clinical trial that could benefit Coal. I am willing to travel anywhere with Coal, in Canada or the United States," said Taurozzi.

## Ex-MP Ouellette becomes CAF Indigenous Knowledge Keeper

Last week, former Liberal MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette became the Canadian Armed Forces' first Indigenous Knowledge Keeper.

The ceremony promoting Ouellette from the rank of warrant officer to captain took place on Jan. 30 in Winnipeg.

According to The Canadian Press, this new position "is part of its effort to embrace Indigenous spirituality" through the Royal Canadian Chaplain Services. "This is the first time someone has been designated to provide spiritual teachings from an Indigenous point of view instead of a Christian one," reported Brittany Hobson.



Former Liberal MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette is the Armed Forces' first Indigenous Knowledge Keeper. The Hill Times photograph by Aidan Chamandy

"In the living memory of many, it was against the law in Canada for the practice of indigenous spiritual beliefs. Today we are taking real steps for Reconciliation," Ouellette posted on X on Jan. 31.

Ouellette is a fourth-generation military member. He started with the Navy League and Sea Cadet program, and is currently with the Royal Winnipeg Rifles unit.

Currently an associate professor of education at the University of Ottawa, Ouellette represented the Liberals in the Manitoba riding of Winnipeg Centre from 2015 to 2019.

## PM's national security adviser Drouin to speak Feb. 11

Nathalie Drouin, the prime minister's national security and intelligence adviser, will be speaking at a book launch next week hosted by Carleton University.

Drouin is expected to deliver keynote remarks at the launch of *Canada Among Nations: Twenty-First*



Nathalie Drouin will speak at a book launch in Ottawa on Feb. 11. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

*Century National Security*, "a timely exploration of the challenges and priorities shaping Canada's national security in an evolving global landscape," according to the event invitation. The book launch will take place at the Westin Hotel on Feb. 11 at 5:30 p.m.

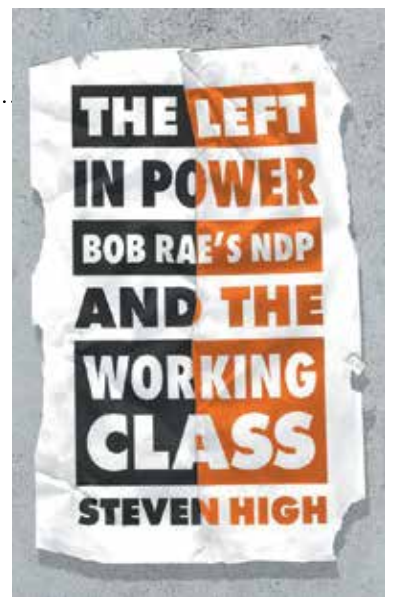
## New book on Bob Rae's government out Feb. 11

Speaking of book launches, there is a new book out on Feb. 11 about Bob Rae's time as Ontario NDP premier in the early 1990s.

Titled *The Left in Power: Bob Rae's NDP and the Working Class* (published by Between the Lines), this 488-pager by Steven High "revisits the heartbreaking years of Bob Rae's Ontario NDP government—from their historic and unexpected 1990 victory, to their policy shifts that left working-class voters feeling betrayed, to their landslide defeat in 1995—to uncover what we can learn from one social democratic party's mistakes about how to govern from the Left," reads the promotional blurb. The book is based on vast archival research and interviews with NDP politicians, senior economic policy advisors, and trade unionists. It will be available on Feb. 11.

High is an award-winning historian, author of many books, and a professor of history at Concordia University's Centre for Oral History and Digital Storytelling.

Rae is currently Canada's ambassador to the United Nations



*The Left in Power* by Steven High is published by Between the Lines. Book art courtesy of Between the Lines

based in New York. Prior to his one term as Ontario premier, he sat in the House of Commons as an NDP MP from 1979 to 1982. He returned to the House 25 years later as a federal Liberal MP from 2008 to 2013, the last two years of which he was the party's interim leader.

## Flavio Volpe loves *The Hill Times*



Flavio Volpe has framed copies of *The Hill Times* on the walls behind him. Screenshot courtesy of CTV

Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association president Flavio Volpe is a popular guy on Canadian political shows lately, and he's been indirectly giving *The Hill Times* a boost.

During one of Volpe's recent appearances on Vassy Kapelos' *Power Play* show, our eagle-eyed editor-in-chief Kate Malloy spotted a few copies of *The Hill Times* framed and mounted on the walls behind Volpe as he was

doing his TV hit. They appear to be past issues of our popular Top 100 Lobbyists list, on which Volpe also regularly appears.

Volpe's opinions have been in hot demand recently as a trade war between Canada and the United States heats up.

Of note, the next edition of the *The Hill Times*' Top 100 Lobbyists is scheduled for March 10.

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# ‘We work for Canadians’: Dagenais recalls his Senate career

Appointed as a Conservative in 2012, Jean-Guy Dagenais retired as a member of the Canadian Senators Group and as a proponent of an independent Senate.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Former Conservative-turned-independent senator Jean-Guy Dagenais has left the Red Chamber, but he says he'll be keeping an eye on the institution to see whether the promise of independence lives on if a new party forms government after the next election.

From his much-warmer home in Florida, Dagenais celebrated his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on Feb. 2, marking his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

Prior to his appointment in January 2012, Dagenais served with the Sûreté du Québec police force for almost 40 years—from 1972 to 2011—and spent his last seven as president of the provincial police union, the Association des policières et policiers provinciaux du Québec.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* by Zoom on Jan. 28, Dagenais said his time as union head was the start of his political career as it led to clashes with the Quebec government of then-premier Jean Charest—someone he now considers a “good friend.”

As Dagenais' colleague Canadian Senators Group Leader Scott Tannas (Alberta) recounted in his tribute to the departing Senator on Dec. 12: “[F]ormer premier Jean Charest told us when we met him on the start that he dreaded meeting with Jean-Guy because he knew the gathering would mean many more concessions that would cost the government much money.”

Dagenais had his first brush with federal politics in 2008. Amid that year's election, he was contacted by then-prime minister Stephen Harper's press secretary at the time, Dimitri Soudas, seeking his support for Harper's proposed Youth Criminal Justice Act reforms, which would see tougher sentences for youth aged 14 years and older who were found guilty of certain serious crimes. Dagenais agreed with the idea, and said as much publicly going into that October's leaders' debates. Following an initial thank-you call from Soudas, after the Harper Conservatives were re-elected to a minority government, Dagenais said Soudas reached out to set up a thank-you meeting with the prime minister.

That meeting came about in April 2009, and Dagenais said it

Recently retired senator Jean-Guy Dagenais marked an end to a 13-year parliamentary career with his 75<sup>th</sup> birthday on Feb. 2. Photograph courtesy of the Senate of Canada



was not only his first time meeting Harper, but also his first time in Ottawa. He recalls being “a little bit nervous.”

“I’ll remember this for the rest of my life when he opened the door: ‘Thank you so much Jean-Guy for your support,’” recounted Dagenais.

After that meeting came more calls from Soudas, and in time, from Quebec Conservative Senators Claude Carignan (Mille Isles) and Leo Housakos (Wellington), leading to Dagenais' decision to take on a “new challenge” and run for seat in the House of Commons as the Conservative candidate for Saint-Hyacinthe-Bagot, Que., in 2011. Previously held by the Bloc Québécois, the seat ultimately flipped to the NDP amid the Orange Wave that swept the province that election.

At that point, Dagenais said his plan was to take his pension, retire, and spend the rest of his winters with his wife in Florida at the home they've owned for the last 32 years.

But then came another call from Carignan, this time alerting Dagenais to the fact he was on a list for consideration for Senate appointment. Dagenais said he initially didn't believe it, including two days later when Harper's then-Quebec adviser André Bachand called to let Dagenais know the prime minister would be reaching out the following week to ask him to join the Upper Chamber. “I told my wife, ‘that’s a joke.’” But the call did come.

Dagenais said accepting the appointment was “a great honour,” and “a great privilege.”

After surmounting his first hurdle of finding a new property in downtown Montreal—as his existing home in the city was outside the bounds of his official Senate district—Dagenais said he faced the challenge of learning the ropes of the unique institution that is the Senate, with its many rules and procedures. He said he

saw the Red Chamber in person for the first time the day he took his seat.

Dagenais' first year saw the start of the Senate expense scandal, something that he said was “not easy” to see unfold as a former police officer.

Come 2015, Dagenais was among 30 Senators whose expenses were flagged by the auditor general following a forensic audit of all Senators' expenses, in his case in relation to staff travel claims. Dagenais challenged the finding, saying in his view the expenses were in line, and that there were no clear rules. He was among those who subsequently sought arbitration, and ultimately saw the amount he was required to reimburse reduced by almost half.

Speaking on Jan. 28, Dagenais maintained that there were no clear expense rules, and that the “full time [he was in the Senate he] followed the rules.”

That year brought other changes to the institution. After the Liberals under Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) formed government for the first time that fall, a new independent Senate advisory board was set up to oversee the appointment process. Earlier, in 2014, Trudeau had severed ties with Liberal Senators, removing them from the party caucus. Since then, all new Senators appointed on Trudeau's recommendation have started as non-affiliated.

Dagenais started in the Chamber amid Harper's efforts to pass a reform bill that would introduce nine-year term limits for Senators, for which Dagenais voiced his support. The bill ultimately failed to pass after being challenged in court, with the Supreme Court ruling that such a change to the Upper Chamber, and thereby the Constitution, would require the sign-on of seven provinces representing at least half of the country's population.

Today, Dagenais speaks with praise of the Senate's increased independence, and the fact it's “not the service of [a] political party.”

“We work for Canadians,” he said.

However, he also expressed some skepticism of the true independence of today's Senate, noting that “many independent Senators appointed by Trudeau” have a “Liberal background.”

“But in this group now, they are more independent, and it is better because the political game is for the Commons Chamber; in the Senate, again, it is for the Canadians,” he said.

Dagenais said he'll be watching what happens after the next election—which the Conservatives led by Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) are currently widely expected to win—to see whether there's “real” independence or if Liberal backgrounds will re-emerge. Conservative Senators are today the only ones still part of a political party caucus.

As Dagenais said in his farewell speech on Dec. 12, “I believe in the independence of Senators, and I will continue to believe in it provided that it does not become diluted by the political values of a select few with every change of government.”

## Severing Tory ties

Brought to Ottawa by Harper, Dagenais was a loyal supporter of the then-prime minister, for whom he has “great respect.”

Among Dagenais' Senate career highlights was his sponsorship of Bill C-377, a Conservative private member's bill that required unions to disclose certain financial information, and eventually passed—after being resurrected—in 2015 despite strong opposition. Dagenais said taking on “this special experience” came at Harper's request, and

was something he supported as a former union leader.

It was a “great experience” as a new Senator, but not an “easy” one, said Dagenais.

Harper's exit as leader after the 2015 election marked the beginning of Dagenais' departure from the Conservative caucus, and ultimately, from the party, he said.

Dagenais left the caucus in November 2019, and in his statement announcing the decision at the time, he pointed to concerns over then-Conservative leader Andrew Scheer's (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) socially conservative views on abortion and same-sex marriage.

Speaking last week, Dagenais said that while Scheer “is a good person,” it was learning of Scheer's use of party funds to pay for his children's private school tuition—news of which broke publicly weeks after Dagenais' caucus exit—that made him decide to leave.

“I supported four or five candidates in Quebec [in the 2019 election], and they don't have money to run for the election. And [in] my opinion, the Conservative Fund is there to help the candidates. I didn't like this,” said Dagenais.

Dagenais subsequently joined the Canadian Senators Group. As part of that group, Dagenais said he had “total liberty.”

Though he left caucus, Dagenais remained a member of the Conservative Party until 2022. Dagenais endorsed Charest during that year's leadership race, and in interviews compared Poilievre to Russian President Vladimir Putin and U.S. President Donald Trump, and disagreed with Poilievre's pledges to defund the CBC and fire the Bank of Canada governor, as well as his support for the 2021 convoy in Ottawa. Dagenais ended his membership the same month Poilievre took the party helm.

“After this, I'm not comfortable with this new leadership, especially—but I respect Mr. Poilievre, but that's not my value for myself,” he said.

Dagenais said after the two leaders and two interim leaders who followed Harper, the party was not the same. “It's not the same climate,” he said.

Looking back on his Senate career, Dagenais also made particular mention of the decades that he spent as a member of the Senate National Security and Defence Committee, largely as vice-chair. Dagenais said the military's equipment and personnel “deficit[s]” are “clear” challenges for Canada, along with Arctic security “with the geopolitical situation we are experiencing” today.

“General [Jennie] Carignan, I'm sure she will [do] a good job, but it's so important to respect the relationship with the NATO,” and the U.S., he said.

Now officially retired from the Senate, Dagenais said he plans to take a break, and “take full advantage” of his home in Florida before embarking on “a few” projects he has in mind.

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## NEWS

# More money, more options: Tories' record 2024 fundraising provides 'ultimate advantage' in election, say pundits

Raising \$41-million in 2024, the Conservatives broke the all-time Canadian fundraising record for the second year in a row, and outpaced their rivals' combined totals.

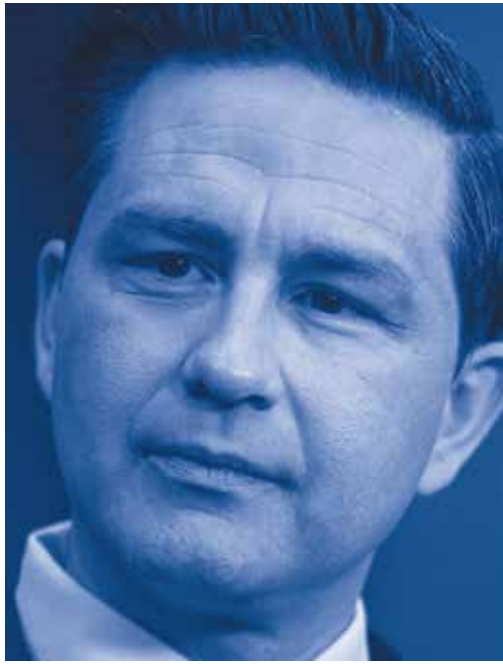
BY STUART BENSON

The Conservative Party closed out 2024 with another historic fundraising total of \$41.7-million, which is over \$6.4-million more than their previous record set just last year, and more than double that of the haul brought in by the governing Liberals. Yet, while that fundraising advantage will allow the Conservatives to spend more on everything as the party prepares for the next election, pundits say it may only be weeks until that advantage no longer matters.

The \$12.7-million the Conservatives raised from Oct. 1 to Dec. 31, 2024, surpassed the previous year's fourth-quarter total by nearly \$1-million, and was over \$2.7-million more than all other federal parties in the same period this year, according to the fundraising data released by Elections Canada on Jan. 30.

In a Jan. 31 press release, the Conservative Party said that despite the Canada Post strike that lasted much of December, it raised \$7.6-million of its fourth-quarter total in that month alone.

"The incredible generosity of hardworking Canadians to the Conservative Party of Canada is directly correlated to the growing movement and resonance of



Pierre Poilievre's common sense message and promise to put Canada first," wrote Sarah Fischer, the Conservative Party's director of communications.

The Conservatives' total individual contribution count dropped by roughly seven per cent to 62,264 compared to the fourth quarter of 2023, for an average contribution of \$205. But its yearly total contributions were up by more than 11,000 to 211,255 contributions, for a yearly average of \$198. Of its fourth-quarter fundraising, \$3.75-million was received in contributions of less than \$200.

In second place, the governing Liberals' fundraising total dropped compared to the same quarter in 2023, down nearly 15 per cent in the last three months of 2024 to just over \$5-million from 33,609 individual donations for a yearly total of \$15.19-million. The Grits' average donation in the fourth quarter—\$149—was the second lowest of the six main



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's, left, second full year as leader set another historic fundraising record in 2024, more than doubling the \$15.1-million raised by the governing Liberals in what would be Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's last year as leader. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

parties. The 26,797 contributions the party brought in that were less than \$200 each totalled \$1.4-million.

The New Democrats' fourth quarter—and yearly total—also dropped slightly compared to the year prior in both dollars and individual contributions. They brought in \$2.36-million—an 11 per cent decrease—from 17,039 individual contributions in the final three months of 2024, for a grand total of \$6.279-million, which is nine per cent less than 2023's total. The NDP had the lowest average donation this quarter—\$139—and 14,016 contributions of less than \$200, totalling \$976,356.

In fourth place, the Green Party raised just over \$2.2-million from 6,266 individual contributions, followed by the Bloc Québécois with just over \$2-million from 12,764 contributions, and the People's Party with \$582,189 from 10,686 contributions. The Greens had the second-highest

average contribution—\$167—followed by the PPC at \$165, and the Bloc in fourth with \$152.

Former Conservative campaign staffer Dan Mader told *The Hill Times* that while the Conservatives have already raised more than enough to run a fully funded campaign once the writ drops, the more money they raise now, the more options they will have until then.

Mader, who led the development of the party's 2021 campaign platform and oversaw policy and speechwriting during the election, said that alongside the consistent and increasing advertising budget, the party could also begin spending even more money on hiring organizers and campaign staffers, technology and database infrastructure, and a larger, better-funded road team for leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.).

"Instead of having one field organizer responsible for 20 ridings, it can be 10 ... and you

can start spending more money in the ridings they're hoping to pick up seats," said Mader, now a founding partner with Loyalist Public Affairs. "It gives you a lot of options."

While campaign workers are generally motivated and willing to donate their time for free to help their chosen candidate or party win, it's always a lot easier when you can pay them, Mader said.

"You're relying on people giving up their evenings and weekends to do that hard work of preparing for the election campaign, so it's nice if you can pay some folks to do that," Mader said, speaking from personal experience from both sides of that equation.

Yet, Mader said he also believes that campaign readiness includes the party's advertising budget, even if the fruits of that labour are yet to be revealed.

"[I] keep hearing rumours that they have ads ready to go for whoever wins the [Liberal] leadership," Mader told *The Hill Times*, noting the Conservatives had more than enough money to produce multiple ads that could be released "immediately" following the election of that new leader.

Five names remain in the race to succeed Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.): former Bank of Canada and Bank of England governor Mark Carney, former deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), former government House leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.), and former Liberal MPs Frank Baylis and Ruby Dhalla. Liberal MP Jaime Battiste (Sydney-Victoria, N.S.) announced his exit from the race ahead of the second registration-fee deadline on Jan. 30.

"They can be ready to go to immediately define whoever wins because they may be in an election against them in a matter of weeks," Mader said. "[The Conservatives] want to get out early to get ahead of things, and it's a lot easier to do that when you have a lot of money."

Yet, the Conservatives also seem to have enough money to target each frontrunner. A day after Trudeau announced his resignation on Jan. 6, Poilievre posted on social media that all potential contenders are "just like Justin." The day Carney announced his official entrance into the race on Jan. 16, the Conservatives also released a *Carbon Tax Carney* ad on YouTube, which included a clip from his appearance on *The Daily Show* three days prior.

Cole Hogan, a Conservative digital ad strategist and principal at the firm GT&Co., said the Conservatives' fundraising for the past two years since Poilievre became leader—\$86.67-million since the fourth quarter of 2022, his first full quarter as leader—gives the party the "ultimate advantage."

Hogan said that until a new Liberal leader is chosen on March 9, the Conservatives have "more than enough ammo to fire on multiple targets," noting that their current library includes Meta ads

## Quarterly Fundraising, 2024

2024 Fundraising	Q1	Contributions	Q2	Contributions	Q3	Contributions	Q4	Contributions	Total \$	Total Contributions
Conservative Party of Canada	\$10,697,111	51,031	\$9,832,051	52,519	\$8,449,288	45,441	\$12,769,834	62,264	\$41,748,283	211,255
Liberal Party of Canada	\$3,098,432	27,661	\$3,774,567	28,523	\$3,321,634	28,445	\$5,005,238	33,609	\$15,199,870	118,238
New Democratic Party	\$1,349,484	14,699	\$1,294,197	14,063	\$1,271,463	14,082	\$2,364,154	17,039	\$6,279,297	59,883
Green Party of Canada	\$401,000	4,456	\$376,076	4,210	\$379,850	4,242	\$1,044,106	6,266	\$2,201,032	19,174
Bloc Québécois	\$342,998	2,149	\$321,806	1,841	\$356,397	2,229	\$993,436	6,545	\$2,014,637	12,764
People's Party	\$240,026	3,024	\$140,057	1,850	\$202,106	2,278	\$581,444	3,534	\$582,189	10,686

Source: Elections Canada

Continued on page 5

## NEWS

Continued from page 4

targeting “Carbon Tax Chrystia” and “Carbon Tax Karina,” just like the ones targeting Carney.

According to Meta’s Ad Library data, the Conservatives have spent \$217,165 as of Jan. 26 across Poilievre’s and the official party’s Facebook and Instagram pages, adding to the more than \$1.74 million spent on the platform’s ads it purchased from Sept. 1 through Dec. 29, 2024. In comparison, the Liberals spent \$49,593 in January on their official page and that of Trudeau. The NDP spent \$13,143 on their page and that of Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.). The Grits spent \$405,207 last fall, while the NDP spent \$6,184.

The Conservatives are “running ads on all of them, and will continue to do so to hammer away like they did to Trudeau for the last two-and-a-half years,” Hogan predicted. “They have the money to do so, so it’s not wasted to define all three of the major contenders as they’ve done with Trudeau.”

Former Liberal staffer Kait LaForce told *The Hill Times* that while she doesn’t see anything surprising or view the decrease in Liberals’ fundraising as “severe,” she noted there is “clearly a connection between the Liberal Party turmoil and donation numbers.”

Since forming government in 2015, 2024 is the Liberals’ lowest fourth-quarter fundraising total outside of 2019 and 2021, which followed higher-than-average donation periods related to those years’ federal elections.

Despite the dip, LaForce noted that the Liberal yearly totals have remained relatively stable since 2015, and suggested that last fall’s postal strike could have also adversely affected the year-end totals of other parties. Still, LaForce said she would be particularly interested in the party’s total in the first quarter of 2025, and after completion of the leadership race.

LaForce said that beyond the registration fees, with the five remaining candidates collectively submitting an additional \$250,000 on Jan. 30, she also believes the leadership race will reinvigorate party donors who may have withheld their contributions until the time was right.

“I think the leadership race will encourage the everyday Liberal to go into the new election maybe enticed to support the party again,” LaForce predicted. “We saw that with the Democrats when [Kamala Harris] took over for [Joe Biden], so I would be surprised if a little bit of that isn’t happening—on a smaller scale—in Canada right now.”

The leadership campaigns were required to submit the first refundable \$50,000 portion of the \$350,000 registration fee on Jan. 23, an additional non-refundable \$50,000 portion by Jan. 30, \$125,000 by Feb. 7, and the remainder by Feb. 17.

The Liberal Party will also take a cut of the donations raised by each leadership



Summa Strategies’ Kait LaForce says the Liberal Party turmoil has ‘clearly’ impacted fundraising, but she expects the leadership race may entice wary donors to renew their financial support. Photograph courtesy of Kait LaForce



Crestview Strategy’s Hunter Knifton says that despite the Conservative fundraising difference, they might only have weeks left to spend it before the writ drops and election spending limits nullify that advantage. Photograph courtesy of Crestview Strategy

campaign, applying a 25-per-cent tithe after the first \$500,000. On Jan. 14, the party also announced its spending and debt limits for the campaigns, capping expenditures to a maximum of \$5-million, and debt at \$200,000 at any time during the race.

As of Jan. 1, Canadians can donate a maximum of \$1,750 to each registered party, an additional \$1,750 to registered associations or nomination contests, and all leadership contestants in a single race for a maximum total donation of \$5,250. The Canada Elections Act also permits a leadership candidate to give their campaign \$25,000 in contributions, loans, and loan guarantees, and an additional \$1,750 to other leadership contestants.

Hunter Knifton, a consultant and data scientist with Crestview Strategy, said he still views the Liberals’ fundraising—combined with recent polling numbers—as a “really strong” indicator that the party may finally be gaining momentum.

While polling varies and the level of momentum remains to be seen, *The Writ’s* Eric Grenier pronounced on Feb. 3 that recent polling from Léger, Abacus Data, and Nanos Research “corroborated” the Liberals’ positive trend while refuting Ekos Research’s purported “surge.”

Polling aggregator 338Canada currently reports the Conservatives down two points at 43 per cent, reducing its lead over the Liberals to 19 points.

“It remains to be seen how big of a jump the Liberals are going to get, both in polling and fundraising, but I think it’s a pretty compelling and competitive leadership race that we’re seeing right now that is probably going to continue contributing to these positive numbers,” Knifton said, adding that while the Conservatives may be dominating in fundraising, “if money dictated elections, we wouldn’t have [U.S.] President Donald Trump.”

Additionally, he said that difference between the Tories and Grits will soon disappear if an election occurs quickly after a new Liberal leader is chosen next month.

Knifton, who served as data director and deputy director of communications for now-Housing Minister Nathaniel Erskine-Smith’s (Beaches–East York, Ont.) 2023 Ontario Liberal Party leadership campaign, said that once the federal election is called and spending limits are applied, “that massive difference” in fundraising “will become less and less of a major factor.”

“I assume all parties will run fully funded campaigns, so they’re going to be spending very similar amounts on advertising, and that’s when folks tune in,” Knifton said. “The cash they have on hand obviously makes a huge difference, but they may only have eight or so weeks left to spend it.”

sbenson@hilltimes.com  
The Hill Times

## COMMENT

# Ugly efforts at cutting off access-to-information requests



The pursuit of federal records can be consequential, but can also lead to unexpected consequences, and questionable claims and repression. Unsplash photograph by FlyD

## False claims about a lack of records, and painting requesters as vexatious mar the transparency regime.

Ken Rubin



Opinion

In these days of grave threats, we need to be reminded that our basic rights are under threat, too.

There are increasingly dark corners hindering the public and requesters from getting access to government information.

Highlighted here are three ways used to do that dirty work.

### False claims that no records exist

Departments have the right to claim—after a thorough and complete search—that a request cannot be responded to as they cannot locate records. But is this always the case?

False claims by departments that they do not hold relevant records appear to be growing, if recent replies I have received are representative. While such “no record” claims may be a matter of the wording used in requests, they usually are more likely a case of not helping users and a ruse used to hide government records.

Departments like National Defence make a practice of pretending their records are not even there.

Three times in the last year, DND has said to me that records sought do not exist where they obviously did: one in the case of stolen DND lost property; second, on obesity problems in the Armed Forces; and third, on their responses to a critical Defence Committee report and information commissioner orders against them. The department’s claims simply are not credible, yet they shy away from really responding unless one is very persistent.

A recent Department of Finance response claimed that they did not hold records on Mark Carney’s special economic adviser role with the Liberal Party, or have records on his exchanges with them in his corporate capacity at Bloomberg or at Brookfield.

Another whooper came from Procurement Canada, which claimed it held no records about middleperson contractors who play the contracting system like GC Strategies of ArriveCan notoriety did.

One last example comes out of Canadian Heritage. The department claims no records exist for the minister’s mandate letter, for their review of the “Defund CBC” campaign, or for the expert panel report to the minister that they commissioned on CBC modernization.

### Claims about vexatious users

A 2019 amendment through Bill C-58 added a frivolous and vexatious clause to the Access to Information Act, giving departments the right to try and bar access users if the information commissioner agreed with them. This amendment was heralded as being necessary, but is rarely used. At times, the commissioner has found a user abusive by, for instance, continually making similar requests that are frivolous.

But think of users trying to get embarrassing records, and then—in some cases—being accused of being vexatious and frivolous.

Such was the case in 2022 when DND tried to get the Information Commissioner of Canada to declare access requests from ex-soldier Daniel Abboud as vexatious. Abboud—as *Ottawa Citizen* stories by David Pugliese showed—was seeking records about the questionable acts and behaviour in special forces units in which he had been employed.

Had Abboud not shared his concerns and treatment with Pugliese, his plight and DND’s unsuccessful attempts to declare him an unfit user would never have surfaced.

But the information commissioner, who never names affected individuals, did not publicly report on this DND attempt.

Continued on page 13

# OPINION

## Canada's internal trade barriers are suffocating its cultural economy

Museums, galleries, and collectors face logistical nightmares due to inconsistent provincial rules.

Zainub Verjee

Opinion



Canada's internal trade barriers have become an invisible wall choking its cultural and creative industries. Broadcasting, wineries, museums, art galleries, and publishing—pillars of the nation's identity and economy—are entangled in outdated regulations and fragmented provincial policies that stifle growth and reinforce protectionism.

Internal Trade Minister Anita Anand recently highlighted the shortcomings of the Canadian Free Trade Agreement (CFTA), a 2017 pact meant to dismantle such barriers. While the agreement has made modest progress, much of Canada's cultural economy remains mired in provincial red tape, costing billions of dollars in lost potential each year. Nowhere is this more evident than in art transportation—an essential means of sharing cultural wealth. Museums, galleries, and collectors face logistical nightmares due to inconsistent provincial rules, driving up costs and limiting access, particularly for smaller institutions and Indigenous communities.

The situation has worsened since the federal government shuttered Exhibition Transport Services (ETS) in 2007. For more than 30 years, ETS was the backbone of Canada's art transportation network, ensuring fragile works moved safely between museums and galleries. In many remote regions, it was the only viable option. In Atlantic Canada alone, ETS delivered 65 per cent of exhibitions. Without it, smaller galleries are stranded, artists lose national exposure, and institutions struggle to share collections.

The numbers tell a stark story. According to the Canadian Museums Association, an average cross-provincial art exhibition incurs 25- to 30-per-cent higher costs than one within a single province. These expenses stem from navigating varied provincial transportation, insurance, and storage standards, discouraging collaboration between institutions.

Ottawa's scrapping of ETS drew immediate protests from arts professionals who foresaw dire consequences. Private carriers, driven by profit, refuse to service unprofitable routes, deepening cultural inequities. By eliminating ETS, Ottawa didn't just cut a program. It cut Canada off from itself.

Beyond logistics, Canada's cultural institutions are more than economic

drivers; they are engines of education, dialogue, and inclusivity. Museums and galleries attract tourism, support creative industries, and foster national identity. According to the Canadian Museums Association, every dollar spent at a museum generates four more in the local economy. Cultural tourism accounts for 12 per cent of domestic travel, with museums and galleries as key attractions.

Yet Canada continues to undervalue this sector, failing to recognize the broader impact of arts and culture. Unlike traditional industries, cultural institutions produce positive externalities—benefits the market does not account for. Public galleries and museums enrich communities by educating youth, preserving heritage, and fostering civic engagement.

Wine Growers Canada says interprovincial barriers cost the industry \$1-billion annually. Restrictions, some dating back to Prohibition-era laws, prevent wineries from shipping directly to consumers in other provinces, stifling revenue and limiting national recognition.

Despite years of negotiations, little has changed. The 335-page CFTA, which replaced the Agreement on Internal Trade, is riddled with exceptions, loopholes, and asymmetrical commitments. It promises regulatory co-operation, but maintains countless exemptions. It seeks to liberalize services, but imposes local licensing and residency requirements. Even as Canada opens its markets to foreign partners, it continues to impose artificial barriers within its borders.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's directive for Anand to address interprovincial trade barriers signals a potential turning point. However, Canada needs more than incremental reforms—it requires a fundamental shift in how it perceives internal trade, not as a bureaucratic technicality, but as a cultural and economic imperative. Until then, artists, institutions, and audiences will remain trapped in a system that stifles creativity and limits their reach.

Will highlighting the economic and cultural costs of inaction—such as the \$130-billion annual loss from trade barriers—build momentum for reform?

The urgency to address these barriers is not just economic, but cultural. Removing these barriers would unlock economic potential and strengthen national unity. In a world increasingly defined by global competition and cultural homogenization, Canada's ability to celebrate and share its unique stories has never been more critical. As Anand reminded us, the CFTA provides a foundation—it has yet to live up to its promise, especially for sectors like culture and the arts.

Zainub Verjee is an artist, writer, and public intellectual, a member of the Order of Canada, and a recipient of the Governor General's Visual and Media Arts Award. A former Mentor to Action Canada, she is currently the executive director of Galleries Ontario Galleries.

The Hill Times

# COMMENT

## Breaking down barriers

Reducing interprovincial trade barriers is a long-term solution, and not likely to pick up the short-term slack from any potential tariffs.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre's plan includes increasing economic activity among the provinces, but it requires putting a finger on the markets to distort economic gains, writes Erica Ifill. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

CALGARY—Internal provincial trade has been lauded as an approach to counter United States President Donald Trump's imposition of tariffs on Canadian goods. Internal Trade Minister Anita Anand claims that removing these interprovincial barriers would boost the domestic economy by \$200-billion.

I have questions since that number seems high, and comes from a Canadian Federation of Independent Businesses report that has yet to provide evidence beyond vibes.

On Feb. 1, Trump signed off on a 25-per-cent tariff on Canadian goods. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, America imports more from Canada than it exports, hence Trump's consternation. In 2023, Canada exported \$594-billion to the U.S., compared to the nearly \$374-billion imported from America.

In response, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has put forth a plan that includes increasing economic activity among the provinces.

In 2019, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) released a report on internal trade barriers in Canada. Although it makes a case for reducing trade barriers—which, ostensibly, is laudable—there are major caveats in this paper. For example, trade barriers are heavily dependent on geography. Canada is a large country, and therefore the transportation and warehousing costs increase with the number of kilometres goods travel. This paper acknowledges that distance “accounts for 57 per cent of total trading barriers across all regions and trading routes.” This is particularly the case with agriculture, food products, and electricity.

The IMF model shows a gain in productivity where goods are cheaper, as employment and jobs shift to where productivity is greatest. Look at the Alberta oil rush. Many people moved to the province, especially from Newfoundland and Labrador, to take advantage of the higher pay and employment. However, these job opportunities did not last, and were subject to fluctuating world oil prices.

Ever met Quebec? Good luck reducing barriers to interprovincial trade with that province. As reported by CBC News, the Bloc Québécois' previous Bill C-282 “would prohibit Canadian trade negotiators from making future concessions opening up protected dairy, egg and poultry markets.” It's highly unlikely the province will make concessions to reduce trade barriers, given its love of supply management.

Poilievre also wants to give “a ‘free trade bonus’ to provinces who drop trade barriers.” Why does the champion of free trade

and small government—how American—want the government to put its finger on the markets to distort economic gains? This is how I know this man doesn't know what he's talking about, and exists on hashtags, memes, and Trudeau-laced vitriol.

Even if these interprovincial trade barriers can be reduced, it is a long-term solution, and not likely to pick up the slack for the loss of economic activity arising from U.S. tariffs in the short term. Holding meetings with provinces and nationalizing a “standard for trucking rules to encourage east-west shipping over north-south shipping” ain't gonna do it. And as economist John Maynard Keynes said, “in the long run we are all dead.”

Another one of Poilievre's brilliant ideas to address Trump's concerns is to increase a police presence, in the form of more Canada Border Services Agency agents, at the border. This is akin to building a wall to keep out migrants crossing over into Canada from the U.S. We already have the Canada-United States Safe Third Country Agreement, and the 2024 fall economic statement proposed investing \$1.3-billion in border security. The overall border plan the Liberals have submitted includes the RCMP deploying “a new Aerial Intelligence Task Force comprised of helicopters, drones, and mobile surveillance towers. Counter-drone technology will support RCMP officers and provide 24/7 surveillance between ports of entry.” What more does Poilievre want? He wants to spend more to get similar results. I have questions about this man's fiscal management.

As it turns out, Trump has decided to temper his tariff policy for 30 days. His response is similar to that of the TikTok ban. The president's *modus operandi* is to threaten first, see the response, and then back down if the response represents strength. That's the only language he understands, meaning the best response is to threaten and impose retaliation—as the Department of Finance did.

Poilievre's response to the impending trade war has more smoke for Trudeau than it does for Trump. His flogging of the carbon tax continues like an overplayed fashion trend, which has nothing to do with nothing. While Poilievre barks and blusters, that bark has no bite since he refuses to stand with Trudeau on an issue that threatens the sovereignty of Canada.

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

The Hill Times

## COMMENT

# Losing the battle of the bulge

Having a worse fitness record than the general population should be an embarrassment to the Canadian Armed Forces.

Scott Taylor



Inside Defence

OTTAWA—As a combat formation, the Canadian Armed Forces are woefully understrength.

Due to a lengthy period of recruitment failing to keep pace with the number of personnel releasing from the CAF, there

are currently 16,500 vacancies from a combined regular and reserve authorized strength of 105,000 personnel. This phenomenon has been called a “death spiral” for the CAF by none other than Defence Minister Bill Blair.

Now comes word that for those personnel remaining in uniform, those uniforms are getting a little tight. A recent *Ottawa Citizen* headline read “Almost three-quarters of Canadian Troops are overweight or obese: documents.” That is a staggering statistic, and one which defies logic. One would think that the very nature of the occupation would require a high level of physical fitness.

Yet, according to a series of briefings presented to senior military leaders in June 2024, 44 per cent of personnel in the CAF are overweight, and another 28 per cent are classified as obese.

For those of you thinking that this simply reflects Canadian

society, think again. The CAF statistics are actually worse than that of the general population. Roughly 78 per cent of military men are considered overweight or obese, while only 68 per cent of Canadian civilian males are in that category.

Canadian military women did better than their male comrades with 57 per cent considered to be overweight or obese. However, the national average among Canadian civilian women is only 53 per cent in the overweight or obese category.

This was not always the case. Back in 1989, a CAF survey recorded that 22 per cent of military members were considered overweight or obese at a time when more than 30 per cent of the Canadian public was in that category. However, back in that era, 22 per cent of service personnel being overweight and obese was considered unacceptable. Should any service-member fail to pass an annual

fitness test, it would result in a strictly enforced six-month stint on remedial physical training. Any subsequent failure to meet the standards could result in administrative action being taken to have the individual released from the CAF.

That is no longer the case. In her response to *Citizen* reporter David Pugliese, DND spokesperson Andrée-Anne Poulin said the Canadian Forces does not track data “on the number of members who have been subject to administrative action or release in relation to physical fitness issues that may cause medical employment limitations.”

And therein lies the rub. With the current existential threat of the “death spiral” shortage of personnel, the CAF cannot exacerbate that shortage by releasing, or threatening to release, members who have lapsed into obesity.

For those who want to heap all blame for the CAF’s current

shortcomings on the “toxic leadership,” and lack of political will, I’m afraid that the state of physical fitness among service members is the responsibility of those service members. Peer support and encouragement would also work better than the threat of career termination.

One could argue that the recent experiment in relaxing the CAF’s regulations on hairstyles, facial hair, hair colour, tattoos, and piercings may have eroded the *esprit de corps* of the institution. However, when it comes to a member’s personal fitness, there is no excuse for relaxing standards.

To have a worse fitness record than the general population should be an embarrassment to the CAF.

Unlike the failure of the government to purchase new equipment and weapons, this latest CAF media crap-storm is on the members themselves.

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

The Hill Times

## OPINION

# Don’t overlook productivity in bid to return resilience to Western Canada’s supply chains

Addressing inefficiencies, improving productivity, and strengthening resilience are not just sectoral goals—they are national imperatives.

Marzia Rizvi



Opinion

Western Canada’s supply chains are under pressure. The past year exposed vulnerabilities across the system, from climate events to collective bargaining disputes and infrastructure failures. These disruptions have compounded inefficiencies, threatening Canada’s competitiveness and global reputation as a reliable trading partner. Now, with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s pending resignation and United States President Donald Trump’s return to office, political shifts are adding another layer of uncertainty to Canada’s economic landscape.

The *Compass 2025 Report*, an annual publication by the Western Transportation Advisory Council (WESTAC), provides critical insights into these challenges. Based on a survey conducted between Oct. 15 and Nov. 8, 2024, it captures the perspectives of transportation leaders from across Canada on the systemic issues facing supply chains. This year’s report highlights urgent concerns about productivity gaps, reputational risks, and the need for targeted solutions. Without action, vulnerabilities will worsen, making recovery harder and more expensive.

### The productivity problem we can’t ignore

According to the *Compass 2025 Report*, 69 per cent of transportation leaders agree that productivity is critical for improving reliability and competitiveness. This overwhelming consensus underscores the sector’s recognition of productivity as a cornerstone for resilience. Addressing this issue is no longer optional—it is essential for ensuring Western Canada’s supply chains remain competitive in an increasingly challenging global environment.

The urgency of addressing productivity gaps is magnified by both international and domestic challenges. Trump’s repeated declaration of 25-per-cent tariffs on Canadian goods further destabilizes cross-border trade. Cana-

da’s political landscape, already marked by uncertainty, faces additional complications with Trudeau’s resignation. Combined, these developments amplify the need for decisive action including a solid economic and transportation infrastructure plan to address inefficiencies and strengthen Canada’s supply chains.

These inefficiencies are not just operational obstacles. They erode trust in Canada’s supply chain system. Persistent disruptions, aging infrastructure, and regulatory delays compound the sector’s ability to meet growing demand. Failing to address these issues will jeopardize Canada’s standing as a reliable trading partner and reduce its capacity to navigate future uncertainties effectively.

### Reputation at risk: global partners demand reliability

Canada’s reputation as a reliable trading partner is deteriorating. The report reveals that 61 per cent of respondents believe the country’s reputation has worsened over the last 12 months due to supply chain instability. Persistent disruptions, whether from collective bargaining disputes, infrastructure failures, or extreme weather, create cascading effects that weaken trust among global buyers.

For international customers, reliability is paramount. When Canada fails to deliver, buyers are

forced to shop elsewhere. Once alternatives are found, winning back business becomes increasingly difficult. In today’s competitive global market, maintaining trust with existing customers and diversifying export markets has never been more important for sustaining Canada’s economic position.

### What needs to change: a collaborative path forward

Improving productivity and resilience requires more than quick fixes. It demands structural change. Drawing on insights from the *Compass 2025 Report*, key themes emerge that highlight what must change to strengthen Canada’s supply chains and enhance resilience:

- 1. Infrastructure modernization:** Strategic investments in both urban and rural corridors are essential to address bottlenecks and ensure goods move efficiently across the network.
- 2. Regulatory efficiency:** Accelerating project approvals is critical to prevent delays in expanding essential infrastructure.
- 3. Workforce stability:** Proactively engaging in labour relations, and shifting away from reactive crisis management will help reduce disruptions.
- 4. Technology adoption:** Real-time data-sharing and digital tools—including investments in

cybersecurity—are necessary to reduce inefficiencies, improve co-ordination, and protect our supply chains.

**5. Cross-sector collaboration:** Success hinges on partnerships—not just between industry and government, but also across sectors and regions.

By embracing these structural changes, Canada’s supply chains can move beyond vulnerability and build the reliability needed to maintain a competitive edge.

### Building resilience requires bold action

Canada’s supply chains are at a crossroads. Addressing inefficiencies, improving productivity, and strengthening resilience are not just sectoral goals—they are national imperatives. The *Compass 2025 Report* makes the challenges clear, but so are the solutions. What’s needed now is collective commitment and decisive action to modernize infrastructure, streamline regulations, adopt technology, and foster collaboration. The cost of inaction is too high. Canada’s reputation, competitiveness, and economic stability depend on rebuilding trust, and adapting to a rapidly changing world.

Marzia Rizvi is the manager of program development and communications at WESTAC, and the lead for the annual *Compass Report*.

The Hill Times

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# Editorial

## Editorial

# The glass onion trade war

With the stroke of a pen, United States President Donald Trump succeeded in angering his country's closest ally on Feb. 1 by signing off on an executive order that would impose 25-per-cent tariffs on Canadian exports to the U.S., and 10-per-cent tariffs on the country's energy.

The reaction was swift and immediate, ranging from boos raining down on hapless anthem singers at major sporting events, to hard-nosed statements from Canadian politicians promising fulsome retaliation.

A palpable swell of Canadian nationalism swept the airwaves and social media, with maple leaves flown aloft in AI-generated snowy mountains majesty, and pledges to cull American goods and streaming services from local households.

The tariff threat, scheduled to come into effect on Feb. 4, was also levied against Mexico. And North America's southernmost continental player—after coming out with a strong rebuke of the tariffs—was the first to strike a “deal” (quotation marks courtesy of Trump himself) on Feb. 3 to delay the tax on their country's goods for a month after promising to send more troops to the border. It's a wonder how former U.S. president Joe Biden secured a similar agreement without inciting a trade war.

Trump doesn't seem to know what he wants. His claims to make America great again are at odds with his actions to make Americans poorer again, and make the world less peaceful again.

Yes, the executive order focused on drugs and the border. It does no one any good to pretend that even though the amount of deadly opioids crossing

the border from Canada into the U.S. is a minuscule fraction of what comes from Mexico, there isn't room for improvement.

But Trump has seemingly made it his mission to cast this dispute with Canada as about almost everything else, including the trade balance, the ability for American banks to operate in Canada, reviving the U.S. manufacturing sector, simply generating revenue to fill the American coffers, and fulfilling manifest destiny by annexing Canada.

In unraveling the mystery at the heart of *Glass Onion: A Knives Out Mystery*, detective Benoit Blanc reacts to the suggestion that the scheme by the movie's villain is “so dumb, it's brilliant,” by exclaiming: “No! It's just dumb.”

As has been proven time and again, Trump is a man who does things simply because they suit his fancy. There doesn't have to be a grand plan. If he can garner a “win” of some kind, it doesn't matter who he hurts in the process. Canadians are now among those caught in his whims. Unfortunately, his delusions of grandeur have been indulged, and he holds the most powerful office in the world for the second time.

There are steps Canada can take to improve its own situation, and it's unfortunate that it has taken these threats from Trump to finally push our politicians to act. But let's not pretend that there's an easy way to “comply” with his shifting demands. Once this Trump-initiated crisis is dealt with, another will be around the corner requiring a united response. Don't let him divide and conquer.

The Hill Times

## Letters to the Editor

# Notwithstanding clause a pro, not a con, says Speer

Re: “Willkommen, bien-venue, welcome,” (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 22, p. 6).

In Erica Ifill's column, she likens the notwithstanding clause to the constitution of Germany's Weimar Republic, flawed because of the inclusion of Article 48 which permitted the president to assume dictatorial powers. According to Ifill, the notwithstanding clause is a “loophole” that allows a prime minister to “subvert legislative power and judicial independence” in Trumpian fashion.

One wonders what Ifill makes of the United Kingdom where nothing akin to the Charter of Rights exists as part of its constitution, and thus there is no need for a notwithstanding clause to provide for imposing limitations upon fundamental rights. Ordinary acts of Parliament have always been enough. Presumably, on Ifill's account, Britain—the source of many of the rights at issue—has existed in a Weimar-like state for centuries, which is to say it is but one step from descent into Nazi tyranny. Oddly, it has not yet happened.

In reality, the notwithstanding clause is nothing

like Article 48. The notwithstanding clause does not permit exceptional action by the executive, but protects parliamentary sovereignty. It is, in the end, legislatures and not courts that are the ultimate guardians of our freedom. Courts have their place, but judges are, after all, appointed by the very executive that they are supposed to oversee. One only has to look south to see how giving the last word to the judiciary can backfire. Those who consider the notwithstanding clause a mistake are asking for a Constitution more like that, and less like the Westminster tradition of the Commonwealth, which has produced the longest records of liberal rights in the world and degrees of social stability and equality almost without precedent.

Majoritarian democracy remains the only real safeguard ordinary people have from domination by their elites. Judging by the present discourse, that lesson is sure to have to be relearned too late, and through painful experience.

Ross Speer  
 Gatineau, Que.

# Farmers can't be left out of supply management conversation: Toronto reader

Re: “Canada holds a valuable bargaining chip in trade talks with Trump,” (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 29).

The article by Alex Whalen and Jake Fuss suggests that Canada should bargain away its supply management system in an attempt to appease the voracious appetite of the United States government. Of course, the first paragraph signalled where this advice is coming from: the Fraser Institute (Canada's answer to Project 2025?).

Let's be clear about the basics of public policy here. Public policy has a goal—what we are trying to achieve/accomplish—and an array of instruments—the tools gov-

ernments will choose in order to try to achieve the goal. Canada's supply management system is an instrument. But what goal was it—or is it—trying to achieve?

The fact that authors peddling policy advice can manage to get through a whole opinion column without ever mentioning any kind of goal—and without ever mentioning Canada's farmers, whose well-being actually figures prominently in the goal—is just shocking, and a really good example of why we should not accord the random right-wing advice of the Fraser Institute much credibility.

Neil R. Thomlinson, PhD  
 Toronto, Ont.





## COMMENT

# Trump forcing Canadians to look more closely at what our country is all about

Canadians need to grab this moment to redefine our internal and external relations.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



The work by Internal Trade Minister Anita Anand to overhaul the country's internal trade blockages is the most obvious way to bolster the economy, writes Les Whittington. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—Canadians will likely need years to get a handle on where this country lands in the aftermath of President Donald Trump's threat to destroy Canada's alliance with the United States.

However the clash initiated by the U.S. president evolves after the 30-day pause in tariff action, no one is expecting the once-friendly bilateral ties to be restored anytime soon. British Columbia Premier David Eby said on Feb. 1 that the two countries' relationship will never be the same after Trump's economic pressure on his northern neighbour.

As many people have said in the last few days, Canadians need to grab this moment to redefine our internal and external relations; put aside provincial and

regional differences in favour of economic, social, and political co-operation; and work together to build an outward-looking economy that will not be so beholden to the U.S.

Nothing is more obvious in the current emergency than Canada's vulnerability to U.S. policy shifts as a result of sending 75 per cent of our exports south of the border. Canadians must make a major, sustained push to tap into new overseas markets, and take advantage of our international trade pacts to radically realign our export markets away from the U.S. on a permanent basis.

Decades later and many millions of dollars' worth of government efforts to assist Canadian businesses to do just that are certain to take on new urgency after Trump's moves. While exporting

to other countries aside from the U.S. has always been more difficult because of language and regulatory issues, the opportunities have long been obvious. Canada has 15 trade agreements with countries around the world, including in Europe and with major growing countries in the Asia-Pacific region—all of which can provide valuable prospects for Canadian energy, raw materials, services, agri-food, and environmental technology.

"Over the long run, emerging economies will continue to gain prominence in global economic activity, with their gross domestic product (GDP) expected to overtake that of advanced economies by 2040," Export Development Canada said in *Markets of Opportunity for Canadian Exporters*.

"Many of the fastest-growing countries are in the Asia-Pacific, including China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, and Vietnam," the study notes. "As such, we find that Asia and Oceania countries' share of Canada's exports is likely to nearly double (up from 12% before the pandemic to 21% by 2050), as the share of exports destined to North America and Europe falls."

Perhaps the current emergency will also finally open the way for obviously needed improvements on such issues as labour mobility, recognition of immigrants' professional criteria, over-burdensome regulation at all levels of government, and reducing interprovincial trade barriers.

Overhauling the country's internal trade blockages is the most obvious way to bolster the economy. Minister of Internal Trade Anita Anand, who is heading up federal-provincial talks to address these trade barriers, said the upside of chipping away at them has always been clear—with the potential to lower prices, increase productivity and foreign investment, and add up to \$200-billion to the Canadian economy.

Quipping that "our new top trading partner will be ... Canada," Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre released a plan to eliminate long-standing internal trade hindrances to reduce the impact

of trade unknowns with the U.S. He promised if he becomes prime minister to hold an urgent meeting with the premiers to agree on removing as many provincial trade exemptions as possible, and to prioritize an agreement on a standard set of trucking rules to provide transport efficiencies. He also said he would offer the provinces a "free trade bonus" to persuade them to drop trade barriers. Poilievre said the bonus would be funded out of the revenues realized by increased trade activity that would take place once trade barriers are dropped.

Many of these initiatives are already being worked on by federal and provincial ministers. And it's the kind of thing that will likely shape up as the central issue in the upcoming election as federal leaders lay out their plans to help Canadians chart a way forward in the wake of the clash with the Trump administration.

"We need to find ways over the longer term to make our country less reliant, less vulnerable, and less prone to abuse by the Americans," Peter Donolo, communications director for former prime minister Jean Chrétien, told the CBC. "And we're going to have to find a way to preserve our independence and reduce our dependence on the Americans."

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

## This is a time for introspection

Our historic reliance on the U.S. in defence, the economy, and culture is now a liability.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—Almost 48 years ago this month, I was in Washington, D.C., as a junior member of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. As a student reporter with Radio Carleton, I watched in awe as then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau spoke to a joint session of Congress.

Here is how he described the Canada-United States relationship: "The friendship between our two countries is so basic, so non-negotiable, that it has been regarded by others as the standard for enlightened inter-

national relations. No Canadian leader would be permitted by his electorate consciously to weaken it. Indeed, no Canadian leader would wish to, and certainly not this one."

Trudeau was there to reassure American politicians Canada was not on the verge of a breakup, as three months before, Quebecers elected René Lévesque's separatist Parti Québécois government.

On Feb. 1, I listened as his son spoke to Canadians—but most importantly, to Americans—in the wake of U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs on our exports. I believe they amount to the most serious threat to Canadian sovereignty since Quebec's two failed referendums in 1980 and 1995.

Citing moments in history when Canadians worked alongside Americans, the prime minister aligned his pitch with that of *Trudeau-père* in 1977. "Together, we've built the most successful economic, military, and security partnership the world has ever seen; a relationship that has been the envy of the world."

In 1977, the underpinning of Canada's economy was the Cana-

da-U.S. Auto Pact, cheap Alberta oil and gas, mining and forestry, and multinational branch plants. Most countries in the world tend to trade with their neighbour, and Canada was no exception. The economic quest of the Pierre Trudeau government was the "third option": an escape from our dependency on the Americans.

When Brian Mulroney first ran for the Progressive Conservative leadership in 1976, his platform instead emphasized greater trade with the U.S. A decade later, prime minister Mulroney campaigned for free trade. While his opponents argued it would undermine our sovereignty, no one envisaged a rogue American president overturning the agreement the way Trump did last week.

As the decades passed, and our economies became more integrated, our diplomats and trade representatives focused on opportunities in the U.S., but signed free trade agreements with virtually everyone in the world, with the notable exceptions of China and India.

As a trade officer in the forestry sector, I travelled to

meet Canadian businesspeople to encourage them to consider alternative markets. With the internet's role in commerce, and access to better international shipping, it seemed like a no-brainer. But it was difficult to convince some manufacturers they could sign contracts, and ship their goods abroad as easily as to Iowa.

The forest industry had gone into a tailspin with the drop in American construction due to the 2008 mortgage crisis, and the market for newspapers and books shrank due to the internet. In this crisis, the industry had come forward with some 21<sup>st</sup> century innovations: the capacity to make super plastics with nanocellulose materials, and using wood beams instead of steel to build tall buildings.

But industry leaders were stymied by their own hubris—each said they would be the "last man standing" in the industry—and their reluctance to think beyond the American border, so neither innovation made much headway. Soon, the market for two-by-fours in the U.S. picked

up, and they were back to their old ways.

Now it is no longer "business as usual." By applying 25-per-cent tariffs as a pretext to reduce fentanyl and immigration, Trump and his people are turning the economic screws on us. Trade experts tell me we could take this dispute to panels through the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement or World Trade Organization, but the recourse if we win is retaliation, which we are already doing.

As I wrote last week, this is a time for Canadians to stand up, but also for introspection. Our historic reliance on the U.S. in defence, the economy, and culture is now a liability. As Pogo in the old cartoon used to say, "We have seen the enemy, and he is us."

We evidently have a 30-day reprieve from the Trump tariffs, but we can't be complacent. We have to change the way we do business, and change our collective mindset about ourselves and our country.

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*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# Anchors away? Grits to keep Freeland-era fiscal guardrails as Ottawa faces tariff shock: LeBlanc

As a matter of generational fairness, Canadians 20 to 30 years down the line ‘shouldn’t be paying off the debt that we incurred’ to weather an economic downturn, says C.D. Howe’s John Lester.

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Despite that risky fiscal stance, a spokesperson for Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) told *The Hill Times* he remains committed to two of the fiscal anchors set by his predecessor: a declining debt-to-GDP ratio—though only in the “medium term”—and keeping the deficit below one per cent of GDP in 2026-27 and onward.

However, the current Liberal government has a track record of repeatedly missing its fiscal anchors, and public finance experts are not convinced these latest pledges by LeBlanc are realistic.

“This is exactly why I told [the Liberals] that [they] should be getting rid of the deficit and lowering the debt burden before because you have to be prepared for the inevitable next shock,” said economist Don Drummond. “Because there always is a next shock.”

Canada is facing a period of potential economic turmoil as its largest trading partner, the United States, threatens tariffs of up to 25 per cent. U.S. president Donald Trump first threatened the levies on all Canadian goods upon his inauguration. After signing an order to invoke them on Feb. 1, a 30-day pause on such plans was announced on Feb. 3.

*The Globe and Mail* reported on Jan. 28 that Ottawa is considering “a multibillion-dollar, pandemic-style bailout for workers and businesses” as a response if tariffs are levied. The measures would focus on helping those affected afford essentials like rent and groceries, and support businesses in meeting payroll and other expenses, according to unnamed government sources in the story.

Drummond—who was an associate deputy minister at Finance Canada in the 1990s—said that he has been encouraging the Liberals to move back to lower debt levels for some time. He expects the government’s grasp on its fiscal anchors will



Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc is committed to two of the fiscal anchors used by his predecessor Chrystia Freeland, says a government spokesperson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

slide further in the coming fiscal shock.

“I have been screaming that from the rooftop for many years and been ignored,” said Drummond. “So we’re going into the next shock with a debt-to-GDP ratio of over 40 per cent, and that is appalling.”

Drummond said that any tariff relief programs would likely see Canada taking on a significant new amount of debt, and that means “more and more of the taxpayers’ money for a long, long time” is going to be paying the interest.

“That’s yet another big transfer onto younger people who can’t afford a house,” said Drummond. “And now we’re just piling on something more on them.”

While Drummond said it “pains” him to think about Canada taking on more debt, it would be necessary if the fiscal shock were to materialize.

“You can’t say to the automobile worker who’s going to be put out of work, ‘Sorry, I can’t help you because our deficit is too high,’” said Drummond. “That’s just inhumane.”

## LeBlanc doubles down on Freeland’s anchors

*The Hill Times* reached out to LeBlanc, asking whether the new minister is committed to maintaining the fiscal anchors set under former finance minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.).

A spokesperson for LeBlanc said the government remains committed to “reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio,” but only “over the medium-term.”

“This metric is key not only for fiscal sustainability, but also to preserve Canada’s AAA credit rating, which helps maintain investors’ confidence and keeps

Canada’s borrowing costs as low as possible,” they said by email.

The spokesperson said the government also remains “guided by a fiscal objective” it held under the last minister: “keeping the deficit under one per cent of GDP in 2026-27 and future years.”

The spokesperson did not address whether the government remains committed to its prior pledge to have a declining deficit-to-GDP ratio in 2024-25.

LeBlanc’s office also did not state whether it would keep its deficit target of \$39.8-billion for the current fiscal year, as outlined in the 2024 fall economic statement.

A Jan. 30 Parliamentary Budget Officer report, titled *Stress Testing the Government’s Fiscal Anchor and Fiscal Objective*, looked at the likelihood of whether these targets could be maintained during a fiscal shock. It used the FES 2024 forecast as the baseline scenario, and did not take into account the threat of tariffs.



During her time as finance minister, Chrystia Freeland used several fiscal anchors, including a declining debt- and deficit-to-GDP ratio. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The report found the government has only a 61-per-cent chance of maintaining its declining debt-to-GDP ratio when a fiscal shock is applied to the baseline, and an 18-per-cent chance of keeping its deficit below one per cent of GDP for 2026-27 in a shock scenario.

## Don’t count on tariff revenues to offset spending: Lang

Former Finance Canada official Eugene Lang said any relief program’s impact on the government’s ability to maintain its fiscal anchors will depend on the nature and scale of both the tariffs and relief programs.

He said it remains to be seen if the Liberals will implement relief programs that are COVID-like in their scale of spending, or if it is more a matter of using program structures that were useful during the pandemic, and which could perhaps be improved based

on lessons learned from that experience.

However, he said the current government has a track record of missing all of its fiscal anchors, and “it’s hard to reconcile” the idea of these relief programs with the government keeping its targets.

Lang also emphasized that Canada should not see retaliatory tariffs as a reliable source of revenue to fund any relief programs.

He noted tariffs have not been used for the primary purpose of revenue for decades, and that last year the federal government’s total tariff revenues were only a few billion dollars.

“We’ve never used tariffs as a revenue source in modern times. We don’t know how to do it,” said Lang, who is now a policy professor at Queen’s University. He said any estimates about the revenues they would generate are being pulled “out of the air.”

He added it is inconsistent to criticize tariffs as being bad for the economy while also relying on them as a revenue source.

“If we believe our rhetoric that tariffs are a bad thing for the economy, I don’t know how we can sustain the argument that tariffs are a good thing in terms of revenue to support the economy,” said Lang.

## ‘Shifting the costs from the present to the future’: C.D. Howe report

A new report from the C.D. Howe Institute, released Jan. 28, found that Canada’s debt held by both federal and provincial governments leaves the country in a compromised position to weather the next fiscal shock, and that both levels of government should move to lower debt levels.

“Deficits and debt [have] real economic costs,” said John Lester, a C.D. Howe fellow-in-residence and co-author of the report.

The report discussed, for example, how higher interest payments would either crowd out program spending, or necessitate higher taxes that limit productivity.

“You’re shifting the costs from the present to the future, and during an economic downturn, that’s completely legitimate,” said Lester, a former federal government economist. “But they have to have a plan to pay back the debt for generational fairness.”

He said Canadians 20 to 30 years down the line “shouldn’t be paying off the debt that we incurred because we wanted to avoid the consequences of an economic downturn.”

“Each generation—or even every 10 or 12 years—we have an economic downturn,” he said, “and the people who benefit from [the supports] should end up paying for it.”

He said governments have not done enough to restore their fiscal position since the pandemic.

“It’s the people alive today that should be doing that, because the next generation is going to have its own downturns and problems as well.”

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# NDP look to 'meet the moment' with Trump response, but fail to shift story from Tories: Holmstrom

Although both the NDP and Conservatives are pitching an all-hands-on-deck approach to the U.S. tariff threat, the reception has differed wildly, according to NDP MP Matthew Green.

Continued from page 1

slip towards single digits, former staffer Cam Holmstrom says the party may be letting the opportunity to seize the narrative around the tariff response slip away to the Conservatives.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) has suggested that, if presented with a plan to support workers, his party would be willing to discuss it, but there is currently "nothing on the table."

"As it stands, my position remains we will be voting against the government at the earliest convenience," Singh told reporters at a press conference on Jan. 28. "If the Liberals are serious about providing more support to workers ... bring the opposition leaders together and present a plan."

Two days later, when multiple reporters asked whether his party had changed position on its confidence in the Liberal government, Singh reiterated his commitment to defeating the government "at the end of March" when the House of Commons is scheduled to return.

Parliament is currently prorogued until March 24 while the Liberal Party searches for a new leader to replace Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.). That contest wraps up on March 9.

Singh further opened the door to supporting the government until then, saying Parliament should return to pass a tariff-relief package.

"I'm demanding that the Liberal government call back Parliament," Singh told reporters on Jan. 30. "Let's put before Parliament a package to protect workers, support workers that are impacted by these tariffs."

On Feb. 2, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) reiterated a previous demand that Parliament be recalled to pass a "Canada First" plan, which would include implementing "dollar-for-dollar" retaliatory tariffs, with all revenue directed toward affected workers



Although NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh previously could be counted on to be the 'adult in the room,' it's not a role he's currently playing, says former staffer Cam Holmstrom. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and businesses; an emergency tax cut; repealing C-69; eliminating interprovincial trade barriers; and increasing military and border patrol funding.

MP Green (Hamilton Centre, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* he doesn't understand the rationale behind the disparate treatment between his party leader's suggestion to recall Parliament to pass legislation responding to Trump's tariff threats and Poilievre's.

Green said that while the media's focus after Poilievre's presser had been his tariff response plan, journalists honed in on Singh's alleged walk-back on his position rather than the NDP's own "Build Canadian, Buy Canadian" tariff response.

The NDP's plan would ban American companies from all federal procurement and defence contracts, "permanently change Canada's procurement policies to favour unionized and Canadian companies," increase Canadian content rules, and "incentivize value-added processing and manufacturing" of raw materials in Canada to reduce reliance on exporting to the U.S.

"That's not walking anything back about the NDP's confidence in this government," Green said. "That's about meeting the moment."

Green said the differing receptions to the two press conferences represents a "complete dissociative double standard" within the media.

"[Singh] was saying exactly what Poilievre is saying: that there needs to be an all-hands-on-deck approach, and that there should have been more urgency from the Liberal government to put something together that's constructive," Green explained.

Yet, while reporters may not be responding to the NDP's plan



NDP MP Matthew Green says rather than 'walking back' his party's lack of confidence in the Liberals, recalling Parliament to pass a tariff relief package is about 'meeting the moment' for Canadians. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

as he and the party had hoped, Green said he believes Canadians will see them as "rising to the moment" while the Conservatives continue to lose their grasp on it.

"I think that, generally, Canadians are very unsettled by Trump's unpredictability at this moment, and quite frankly, that harms the Conservatives' control of the narrative," Green said. "I think it's refocused many people's minds on what is really at stake here, and the carbon tax seems like such a small inconvenience compared to what's being imposed on Canada ... This is no longer a carbon tax election, and Poilievre has lost the plot."

As for whether he believes a perception the NDP is supporting the Liberals to pass a relief package will harm its chances in the next election, Green said he has even less confidence the Liberal government can rise to the occasion on its own.

"We need to rethink our industrial strategy and our trade agreements, and recognize that in the moment of Trump, all bets are off," Green explained. "Now, we have to come up with something, and it's unclear whether the Liberal Party can do that on its own at the moment."

However, former NDP staffer Cam Holmstrom told *The Hill Times* that while Poilievre and Singh have made similar suggestions, the difference is in the execution.

"[Singh] was asked a hypothetical question about the government needing support for a tariff response, and he never should have answered," said Holmstrom, now a founding principle with Niipaawi Strategies. "A more disciplined leader would not have done that."

"Where Singh made his bones in this Parliament was by being the adult in the room, and getting things accomplished," Holmstrom said. "I hoped that—in this moment—that experience would have suited him well to deal with what is right in front of us, but unfortunately, he's been careening from ditch to ditch."

Holmstrom said pointing to the similarities between Poilievre's and Singh's demands is far from a defence, particularly when you aren't prepared to explain how you plan to achieve those goals.

"You just can't recall Parliament without a Throne Speech, and that's going to need a confidence vote first," Holmstrom explained. "You can't say you want to recall Parliament, but not say how we're going to deal with that. It comes off as unserious ... and it's not a defence to say you're just repeating Poilievre because now you're just wrong together."

However, Holmstrom also said that NDP MP Charlie

Angus' (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.) approach is equally wrongheaded.

At the end of last year, Angus vowed not to play Poilievre's "procedural games" to bring down the government. In a Dec. 28 Facebook post, Angus said Trump's inauguration posed a "serious threat" to Canadians, and that he would not vote with the Conservatives to force an election.

"I believe in our party, but there are moments when we must put country first," Angus wrote. "Canadians deserve a plan, not political brinkmanship."

Holmstrom said Angus' argument essentially agrees with Poilievre that a game is being played, that there is no legitimate reason to bring down the current government, and that the NDP should ignore any legitimate reasons because the Conservatives stand to benefit.

"You have to make your own decision based on what's best for the country because the government is off the rails right now," Holmstrom said.

While he isn't confident an election is the solution to all of Canada's problems, Holmstrom said the NDP must approach them by recognizing that the public no longer accepts the status quo.

"That is part of the reason why we're either stagnant or bleeding support because otherwise, at some point, some of it should have been coming our way," Holmstrom said, noting that while polling since Trudeau's Jan. 6 resignation suggests a positive trend for the Liberals, those same polls show the NDP slipping further behind.

Polling aggregator 338 indicates the NDP have lost an average of two points since Trudeau resigned, falling to just 17 per cent support, expanding the gap between them and the Liberals to seven points.

On the more extreme end of the NDP's polling, Ekos Research's Jan. 29 survey indicated just 13 per cent support for the party—a 19-point deficit with the second-place Liberals at 32 per cent, followed by the Conservatives with 35 per cent.

Holmstrom said if the worst-case—or even the current best-case—scenario plays out, it could be catastrophic for the party, and the end of Singh's leadership.

"This election was always going to be make or break for Singh as his third election, but if he comes back with fewer seats, there's not much further to fall," Holmstrom explained. "His only saving grace is there is no heir apparent ready to step into that role right now."

However, while Trump's tariffs pose risks to the country and the NDP's future in the next election, there is also opportunity for Singh to re-demonstrate the qualities that made him leader in the first place, Holmstrom said.

"I'm not seeing someone acting as a leader with a well-thought-out approach; I'm seeing someone reacting," Holmstrom said. "It's not that he's incapable of it—I've been watching him do it for the last two years—but I haven't seen that guy in a bit."

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## NEWS

# ‘Divide and conquer’: Canada and Mexico offer unco-ordinated tariff response after premiers’ slights

‘What we did to Mexico was almost Trumpian in the way we threw them under the bus,’ says Carlo Dade, a member of the Mexican Council on Foreign Relations.

Continued from page 1

spotlighted the flow of migrants and drugs entering the U.S. from Mexico compared to the situation on the northern border.

That rhetoric targeting Mexico has only continued.

“Do you know what the problem is?” Ford questioned on Feb. 3. “China is the problem. Bringing in cheap goods into Mexico, slapping on ‘Made in Mexico’ stickers, shipping them up to Canada, costing American and Canadian jobs.”

Ford referenced creating a “Can-Am fortress,” a departure for those who argue for a “Fortress North America.”

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith also pushed in November for bilateral deals instead of the trilateral pact.

Then-deputy prime minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) said in November that there are “legitimate concerns” regarding Mexico’s alignment with U.S. trade policy.

On Feb. 1, Trump signed an executive order to put in place 25-per-cent tariffs on all Canadian and Mexican imports to the U.S., with the exception of a 10-per-cent levy on energy imports.

Trudeau and Sheinbaum spoke with each other that same day about tariffs and enhancing border security, according to a Prime Minister’s Office readout of the call.

After a Feb. 3 call with Trump, Mexican President Claudia Sheinbaum announced that the U.S. president agreed to delay



Ontario Premier Doug Ford has put the spotlight on Mexico in attempting to salvage Canada-U.S. trade. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

implementing the tariffs on which he had signed off on Feb. 1 for a month as Mexico pledged to send 10,000 troops to its northern border.

Canada had an identical reprieve from tariffs after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) held two calls with Trump on Feb. 3. In a post on X, Trudeau said that Canada would be appointing a fentanyl czar, as well as listing “cartels as terrorists,” and assembling a Canada-U.S. Joint Strike Force to address organized crime, fentanyl, and money laundering. A “new intelligence directive on organized crime and fentanyl” will be funded with \$200-million.

Dade said that the rhetoric from Canada has caused hurt among Mexican officials.

“To be treated like this, not just by Ford, but the sort of acquiescence from the non-strong objection from the federal government certainly will sour relations,” said Dade, director of trade and trade infrastructure at the Canada West Foundation.

“What we did to Mexico was almost Trumpian in the way we threw them under the bus,” he said.

“It was not that we lied or disparaged Mexico, but that we aired dirty laundry in front of Donald Trump, which would give him ammunition to go after Mexico instead of going after Canada,” he said.

Tensions between Mexico and Canada were already heightened as past Mexican president Andrés Manuel López Obrador had announced a diplomatic pause with the Canadian Embassy in Mexico City—as well as the U.S. Embassy—after Canada raised concerns over Mexican judicial reforms. A senior Canadian official confirmed that the Canadian Embassy is in contact with the Mexican government, meaning the pause seemingly has been lifted.

During the NAFTA renegotiations that led to the renewed Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement, some believe that Mexico blindsided Canada as it reached a deal on a modernized pact with the U.S., but Dade said the Mexican negotiators were keeping Canada in the loop, so they could quickly join on.

In a December op-ed in *The Globe and Mail*, Canada’s chief negotiator during the renegotiation, Steve Verheul, argued that the call for a bilateral deal has “unnecessarily created unhelpful negotiating dynamics for Canada and strained relations with a useful ally.”

“Although the relationship had its ups and downs in the last negotiations, Canada and Mexico worked together to successfully thwart some of the more extreme proposals put forward by the U.S.,” wrote Verheul, who has since been appointed a member of Trudeau’s Council on Canada-U.S. Relations.

Dade said without a co-ordinated response, it allows the U.S. to divide and conquer.

“Mexico has gotten special treatment, Canada hasn’t as [Trump] further fractures the

approach to us might very well be to divide and conquer.”

He said that Canada needs to be “mindful” of Mexico’s “feelings and sensitivities” as Mexico should be of Canada’s.

Boehm said the lack of a global co-ordinated response to Trump’s tariff threats is due to the uncertainty about what will happen, calling the 30-day tariff reprieve a “stay of execution.”

“What is happening is that Trump is keeping everyone off-balance. We can be as like-minded as we want, but when it comes to your own national interest, countries tend to be single-minded and not like-minded. I think that’s what we’re seeing in this moment,” he said.

Boehm said the lack of Canada-Mexico co-ordination is due to the differences in products that the two countries trade, as well as the differences in regulatory and legislative frameworks.

“It’s clear that the U.S. wants to deal with each country individually,” he said.

He remarked that there might be some opportunity to co-ordinate “if it gets to that point” in a response when dealing with the auto sector, as well as in transport infrastructure.

Former Canadian diplomat Colin Robertson, a Canadian Global Affairs Institute senior adviser, said it is important that Canada and Mexico keep each other informed about their responses.

“I think we’ll take different approaches as we have done in the past,” he said, remarking that there should be a principle of “no surprises” between the two countries.

He said that Canada and Mexico share a “natural interest” in trying to contain the U.S., but Ottawa and Mexico City have “never been close friends.”

He said that comments from Ford and Smith are “not lost on the Mexicans,” remarking that there is a certain “coolness” in the association.

“The Mexicans were sort of offended by it, and it didn’t help the relationship, which was already a bit rocky,” he said, noting that despite officials from the two countries being in contact, it isn’t a “deep, warm relationship.”

Robertson said it is in Canada’s interest to have closer ties with Mexico, but that has never materialized.

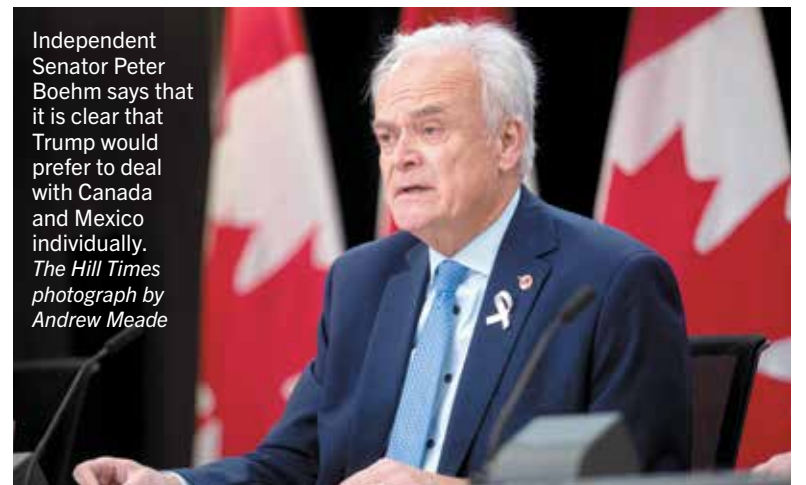
“It’s too bad, and it’s not too late,” he said. “It just never took.”

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*The Hill Times*



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau—flanked by Public Safety Minister David McGuinty, left, Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, and Finance Minister Dominic LeBlanc—announced on Feb. 1 that Canada would retaliate against American tariffs. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Independent Senator Peter Boehm says that it is clear that Trump would prefer to deal with Canada and Mexico individually. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Diplomatic Circles

By Neil Moss



## NATO defence spending target on quick uphill climb, says new Danish envoy

In a wide-ranging interview, Danish Ambassador Nikolaj Harris talks defence spending, Ukraine, Arctic security, and trade.

As the Kingdom of Denmark boosts spending on Arctic security, its newest ambassador in Canada says that expectations for how much NATO member nations spend on defence are similarly rising.

Danish Ambassador to Canada **Nikolaj Harris** said his country's defence spending is equivalent to 2.4 per cent of its GDP. That increase is a boost from a previous 2023 commitment to meet the NATO metric of two per cent of GDP by 2030.

Canada has been subject to heavy international pressure to boost its defence spending to meet its NATO commitment. In its defence policy update last year, Ottawa committed to reach two per cent spending by 2032, but didn't offer an accounting plan on how it would do so. Last month, Defence Minister **Bill Blair** quickened the timeline to 2027.

There have been mounting suggestions that two per cent is no longer an adequate target, including most recently by U.S. President **Donald Trump** who suggested the target needs to be five per cent.

Asked if Denmark anticipates the two-per-cent requirement evolving, Harris responded "definitely."

"That's what our government is clearly signalling at the moment," he told *The Hill Times* during a Jan. 31 interview at the Danish ambassador's Rockcliffe Park residence.

"Denmark has quite fast increased our defence spending. Now we are on 2.4 per cent with the expectation that would rise even further," he said, remarking that the ultimate target is still to be determined.

Harris said he read the news "with interest" that Canada will be speeding up its timeline to get to two per cent.

"The general position of Denmark is that we need to take more responsibility for security. It is a world that is changing. We see threats. We have a war in Europe. We have threats coming. We need to be able in Europe to take more responsibility for our own security," he said.

For the first time, the Danish Embassy in Canada will have a defence attaché in house. The role was previously conducted out of Denmark's Embassy in Washington, D.C.

Harris said continuing to support Ukraine will be a "high priority" for Canadian-Danish co-operation.

"We believe that this is important for the whole [of] Europe," he said. "We believe that it is important to have a focus on the conflict and that focus should remain."

### Harris' winter welcome

Harris is a career diplomat and a 24-year veteran in his country's foreign ministry. He had a previous ambassadorial posting in



A career diplomat with 24 years of experience in the Danish foreign ministry, Ambassador Nikolaj Harris started his new posting in Ottawa this past December. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Morocco and Mauritania from 2018 to 2021. He also had foreign postings in Lithuania, Turkey, and Egypt. Most recently, he was the head of crisis and consular affairs at headquarters in Copenhagen.

For Harris, the Ottawa posting is his first experience dealing with the Canadian winter. He said his three personal goals while in Canada are to learn to skate "elegantly," as well as to cross-country ski, and to become a hockey aficionado.

Last December, Harris presented his letter of credence to Governor General **Mary Simon**, herself a previous ambassador to Denmark and envoy for circumpolar affairs.

Harris said Denmark is in "close dialogue" with Canada on Arctic issues, remarking that Greenland is "very seriously" considering opening a diplomatic office in Ottawa. That office would likely be connected to the Danish Embassy in Canada.

In December, Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** announced that Canada would be opening a consulate in the Greenland capital Nuuk as part of its new Arctic foreign policy, as well as to establish an Arctic ambassador.

Denmark announced last month that it is embarking on a nearly \$3-billion plan to boost Arctic security.

The spending package was unveiled as Trump has pushed for an American purchase of Greenland. Questions about Trump's comments on the U.S. acquiring Greenland were referred to Copenhagen.

Harris said Denmark is entering a "super year" of diplomacy as it holds a temporary seat on the United Nations Security Council. It will also assume the presidency of the European Union in July, as well as take on the Arctic Council chair in May.

He pitched increased trade between Canada and the Kingdom of Denmark, including economic co-operation between Canada and Greenland, remarking that Canada has a "very interesting business climate" with "a lot of opportunities for Danish, Greenlandic, and Faroe Island companies here."

He said there is ample room for the trade numbers to spike, especially within the health-care and green energy sectors.

Canada-Denmark merchandise trade reached \$3-billion in 2023, which was heavily in favour of Danish exports to Canada.

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*The Hill Times*

# COMMENT

## Ugly efforts at cutting off access-to-information requests

Continued from page 5

Recently obtained Information Commissioner of Canada access records indicate that Abboud was among three-quarters of the 77 cases that were never publicly reported on by Commissioner Caroline Maynard. Only 18 vexatious cases are summarized on the commissioner's website.

An office chart shows that 13 cases were withdrawn before an information commissioner investigation. Only 12 department vexatious applications have been granted.

Four departmental vexatious applications remain open: one each at Export Development Canada, Shared Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations, and Indigenous Services. More than 30 agencies have made vexatious applications.

The senior director of investigations, Allison Knight, noted that the commissioner has discretion on what cases are publicly reported, with no mandated requirement to summarize and report each case publicly.

### Requesters accused of malicious intent

This brings us back to the many hurdles requesters face, including accusations of malicious intent, challenging their filing of access requests.

A few years ago, I was accused of maliciously filing very routine FOI requests for a contractor's municipal transportation contracts.

What my accuser—a Dan Baril of Core Insight Strategies Inc.—tried to do using the courts was to drag me into a commercial case with a competitor, seeking millions of dollars in damages, alleging I was helping ruin his career and reputation by filing those routine requests.

I had to spend thousands of dollars in legal assistance to successfully challenge

this, and get dropped as an added defendant party in that case. The judgement rendered set a precedent that stated my filing FOI requests was guaranteed as a Charter freedom of expression right.

Pugliese effectively uses records in his stories. But he was accused by former MP Chris Alexander of allegedly being in the employ of Russia at a House of Commons National Security Committee last October.

Alexander, a former Canadian diplomat who served in Moscow and Kabul before becoming Canada's immigration minister in the Harper years, made his accusation using parliamentary immunity, giving the committee documentation just hours before his testimony that could not be verified.

Pugliese went immediately in November to the Committee to refute this unfounded allegation and smear campaign as recycled by Alexander.

With Parliament prorogued, there has been no report issued by that committee on their mandated examination of Russian influence, or—if they go there—on Alexander's unfounded and unverified allegation.

DND's less-than-stellar treatment of Pugliese's requests to them may be coloured by such accusations, or it may be more about his aggressive reporting of the department's many failings.

Such accusations deeply hurt those doing the digging for records in the public interest. But so do claims by departments that no records exist, or that a user's legitimate pursuit can be falsely claimed to be vexatious.

The pursuit of federal records can be consequential, but can also lead to unexpected consequences and questionable claims and repression.

Exposing hidden files on matters that are far from trivial or malicious is what counts.

*Ken Rubin writes on transparency matters and is reachable via [kenrubin.ca](mailto:kenrubin.ca).  
*The Hill Times**



Information Commissioner Caroline Maynard has discretion on what vexatious or frivolous application cases are publicly reported, with no mandated requirement to summarize and report each case publicly. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



## Minister Anandasangaree picks up five former Vandal staffers

Plus, there are staff updates for the offices of Indigenous Services Minister Patty Hajdu, and Defence Minister Bill Blair.

Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Gary Anandasangaree** picked up the northern affairs portfolio—as well as responsibility for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency—as part of the Dec. 20 cabinet shuffle, and has since added five staff who'd worked for then-northern affairs minister **Dan Vandal**.

Vandal was shuffled out of cabinet after announcing he would not seek re-election. At the time of the shuffle, Vandal had 13 staff in his ministerial office.

While Anandasangaree's existing team as Crown-Indigenous relations minister remains in place—including chief of staff **Shaili Patel** who's been in the role since July 2023—the minister has added a number of ex-Vandal staffers to his office.

**Kathy Kettler**, who had been chief of staff to Vandal going into the shuffle, has been hired as a senior adviser for the North and Arctic.

Kettler became the first-ever Inuk chief of staff to a federal minister when she took charge of Vandal's office in September 2022. Previously, she'd been deputy chief of staff to then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister **Marc Miller**. On the Hill since the fall of 2017, she's also previously been director of operations to Miller as then-Indigenous services minister, and northern regional affairs and senior adviser to then-Indigenous services minister **Jane Philpott**.

Prior to her time working for the Trudeau government, Kettler had been a senior policy adviser with Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. She's also a past policy analyst with the Assembly of First Nations' residential schools unit, and a former records management co-ordinator with the Aboriginal Healing Foundation.

On the policy side of things, **Jed Graham** and **Bradley Boudreau** have been scooped up to serve as senior policy adviser and policy adviser, respectively.



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Gary Anandasangaree arrives at Rideau Hall on Dec. 20 to be sworn in to the added roles of northern affairs minister and minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Graham, who last held the title of policy adviser, had been working for Vandal since the beginning of 2024. He was previously a policy adviser to the federal health minister, starting under then-minister **Jean-Yves Duclos** in July 2022, and continuing for a time under current Health Minister **Mark Holland**. Graham's CV includes a roughly eight-month-long run as an assistant to then-Nova Scotia Liberal MP **Rodger Cuzner**, and an even briefer stint as a communications officer with the New Brunswick Liberal Party during the province's 2018 campaign.

Graham holds a bachelor's degree in social sciences from Glasgow Caledonian University (GCU), a master's of research degree in political communication from the University of Glasgow, and is currently working towards a PhD in political economy at GCU.

Boudreau is a former Manitoba public servant who joined Vandal's team as a policy adviser in early 2022. In Manitoba, he'd worked as a senior policy analyst with the province's department of Indigenous Reconciliation and Northern Affairs. His past experience also includes time spent as a policy analyst with the Manitoba Métis Federation, and as an assistant project manager with the Métis Economic

Development Organization in Winnipeg. Boudreau has a bachelor's degree in political science and government from the University of Manitoba.

**Kyle Allen**—who'd most recently been director of communications, parliamentary affairs, and issues management to Vandal—is now overseeing communications related to the northern affairs file for Minister Anandasangaree.

**Bahoz Dara Aziz** will continue as director of communications to Anandasangaree as Crown-Indigenous relations minister.

Allen was promoted to his recent triple-barrelled title in Vandal's shop in September 2023, and before then had been the minister's press secretary since January 2022. He's also a former special assistant for communications with the Liberal research bureau.

Finally, **Justine Lemoine** has joined Anandasangaree's office as a parliamentary affairs adviser. A former funding officer with the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, Lemoine had been hired to Vandal's team under the same title the month before the Dec. 20 shuffle.

Beyond Anandasangaree's new northern affairs-related hires, there's one other recent addition to the minister's Crown-Indigenous relations team unrelated to the recent cabinet shuffle: **Kevin van Mierlo Amezcua**, who is based in Toronto, was hired as an Ontario regional affairs and Greater Toronto Area outreach adviser as of Nov. 29, 2024.

He recently graduated from the University of Waterloo with a master's degree in political science and government, and his LinkedIn profile indicates he's previously

spent time working in an Ontario MP's constituency office.

With the recent northern affairs-related additions, that brings Anandasangaree's team to a total of 23 staff.

### Staff changes for ministers Hajdu, Blair

Indigenous Services Minister **Patty Hajdu** has made some changes to her office lineup of late, including hiring **Bradley Mateo** as a communications adviser last month.

Mateo recently graduated from Carleton University with a bachelor's degree in communications and media, and was last working part time as a communications consultant with Fixate Brand Strategy in Ottawa. His past experience includes internships with Hydro Ottawa, where he co-ordinated marketing communications; Canada Post, where he similarly focused on communications; and with Ontario Liberal MP **Sonia Sidhu**.

Headed in the other direction is **Cynthia Langevin**, who exited Hajdu's office in January after roughly five months as the minister's executive assistant. Langevin was previously an administrative assistant with Indigenous Services Canada.

With Mateo's hiring and Langevin's exit, **Joy Nwadike**, who had been a digital communications adviser and executive assistant to the chief of staff, is now executive assistant to Minister Hajdu.

Nwadike has been working for Hajdu since July 2024. Her past jobs include a part-time posting tackling administrative and clerical work related to intergovernmental affairs for the Métis Nation Saskatchewan.

In turn, **Frank Freeman**, who was hired as an operations assistant at the end of last year, has been given the added title of executive assistant to the chief of staff.

Also among those with a new title in Hajdu's office is press secretary **Jennifer Kozelj**, who was given the added moniker of senior communications adviser in mid-December.

Kozelj was originally hired to Hajdu's team as a social media

manager and communications assistant in September 2023, having spent the summer prior as an intern in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau**'s office. She first stepped in as acting press secretary to the minister in February 2024.

**Kaitlin Power** is director of communications to Hajdu, whose office is run by acting chief of staff **Randi Anderson**.

Meanwhile, Defence Minister **Bill Blair** has hired **Laurent de Casanove** as his new press secretary and senior communications adviser.

Blair had been without a press secretary since **Simon Lafortune** left to become a press secretary in Trudeau's office in early December.

De Casanove was among the hundreds of cabinet staffers affected by the Dec. 20 shuffle.

Originally hired as press secretary to then-transport minister and Quebec lieutenant

**Pablo Rodriguez** in May 2024, de Casanove continued to field media requests related to the transport file after **Anita Anand** took over the portfolio in September 2024. At the time, Anand was also president of the Treasury Board, with a separate press secretary in place for that file. With the recent shuffle, Anand is now transport and internal trade minister. Stay tuned for updates on her new team.

On the Hill, de Casanove has also previously been press secretary to Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities Minister **Kamal Khera**, and issues manager to Rodriguez as then-heritage minister.

**Andrew Green** continues as director of communications to Blair.

In another, slightly less recent staffing change for Blair's team, senior policy adviser **Larysa Lubka-Lewyckyj** bade the minister's office farewell in November after roughly a year on the job.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Lubka-Lewyckyj is now a policy analyst with the Canada Border Services Agency.

Prior to joining the defence minister's shop, Lubka-Lewyckyj was a policy adviser to then-public safety minister **Marco Mendicino**. She's also a former assistant to then-Ontario Liberal **Michael Levitt**, and previously spent roughly two-and-a-half years working at the Australian High Commission in Ottawa, largely as an executive officer.

**Manel Menouar** is deputy chief of staff and director of policy to Blair, whose office is run by chief of staff **Taras Zalusky**. [lryckewaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:lryckewaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*



Jed Graham is now a senior policy adviser to Minister Anandasangaree. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Now-Immigration Minister Marc Miller, left, Kathy Kettler, and Liberal MP Dan Vandal. *Photograph courtesy of X*



Justine Lemoine is a parliamentary affairs adviser to Minister Anandasangaree. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Bradley Boudreau is now a policy adviser to Minister Anandasangaree. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Laurent de Casanove is now press secretary and senior communications adviser to Minister Blair. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Jennifer Kozelj is now press secretary and senior communications adviser to Minister Hajdu. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



# Parliamentary Calendar

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

# Finance Minister LeBlanc takes the mic at Feb. 6 C.D. Howe event in Toronto



Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc, pictured right with director of communications Jean-Sébastien Comeau, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute on Feb. 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

**TUESDAY, FEB. 4—  
WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5**

**National Forum on UNDRIP Act**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a national forum on the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act. Tuesday, Feb. 4, to Wednesday, Feb. 5, at the Westin Bayshore, in Vancouver, B.C. Details: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

**TUESDAY, FEB. 4—  
THURSDAY, FEB. 6**

**Arctic 360 Conference**—Arctic360 hosts its 2025 Annual Conference on the theme "The Road to Arctic Sovereignty, Security & Prosperity Begins in the North: Strategy, Investment, Cooperation." Speakers include ex-Conservative leader Erin O'Toole, managing director of ADIT North America; and the ambassadors to Canada from Denmark, Norway, Iceland, Germany, Finland, Sweden, the European Union, and the British high commissioner. Tuesday, Feb. 4, to Thursday, Feb. 6, at the Palais Royale, 1601 Lake Shore Blvd. W., Toronto. Details: [arctic360.org](http://arctic360.org).

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 5**

**Canadian Chamber of Commerce CEO to Deliver Remarks**—Candace Laing, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, will deliver remarks at the Manitoba Chambers of Commerce. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 7:30 a.m. CT, at 2 Lombard Pl., Winnipeg. Details: [business.mbchamber.mb.ca](http://business.mbchamber.mb.ca).

**Stephen Poloz to Deliver Remarks**—Former Bank of Canada governor Stephen Poloz will deliver remarks titled "How do we get Canada's economy back on track?" at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: [canadianclub.org](http://canadianclub.org).

**Webinar: 'How to Respond to Trump's Tariff Threats'**—The Canadian Association for Business Economics hosts a webinar on "How to Respond to Trump's Tariff Threats" featuring a panel of Canadian trade economists for a discussion of this country's options, and potential response strategies. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 1 p.m. ET happening online: [cabe.ca](http://cabe.ca).

**Adam Chapnick to Discuss His New Book**—The University of Ottawa hosts professor and author Adam Chapnick who will discuss his new book, *Canada First, Not Canada Alone: The Past, Present, and Future of Cana-*

*dian Foreign Policy*, along with professor Roland Paris. Wednesday, Feb. 5, at 3:30 p.m. ET at the University of Ottawa, FSS 4004, 120 University Priv. Details: [cips-cepi.ca](http://cips-cepi.ca).

**THURSDAY, FEB. 6**

**Minister LeBlanc to Deliver Remarks**—Minister of Finance and Intergovernmental Affairs Dominic LeBlanc will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, Feb. 6, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**FRIDAY, FEB. 7**

**Minister Joly to Deliver Remarks**—Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly will deliver remarks at the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Friday, Feb. 7, at 11:30 a.m. AT at a location to be announced in Halifax. Details: [business.halifaxchamber.com](http://business.halifaxchamber.com).

**TUESDAY, FEB. 11**

**Food and Beverage Canada's Policy Breakfast**—Food and Beverage Canada hosts its annual policy breakfast to kickoff 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, 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](mailto:admin@fbc-abc.com).

**NextGen 2025: Shaping the Future of Public Affairs Today**—Maryscott (Scotty) Greenwood, Global Head of Government Relations at Manulife Financial Corporation, will deliver the keynote address at NextGen 2025 hosted by NHM Connect and Beacon North Strategies. This must-attend professional development event for public affairs professionals will feature topics including AI in public affairs, reading federal budgets, Canada-U.S. relations, and more. Tuesday, Feb. 11, 7:45 a.m. to 2 p.m. ET, The Westin Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details and tickets: [lu.ma/toni5emc](http://lu.ma/toni5emc).

**CCSPA Annual Government Breakfast Reception**—The CCSPA Annual Government Breakfast Reception will take place at the Westin Hotel on Tuesday, Feb. 11 from 7:30-9 a.m. ET. All

parliamentarians are welcome. Please RSVP to [hughesc@ccspa.org](mailto:hughesc@ccspa.org)

**Digital Access Day**—The Canadian Internet Society hosts Digital Access Day. This year's theme is "Bridging the Digital Divide: Ensuring Access for All," and features discussions on affordability, digital literacy, online safety, and public policy to create a more inclusive digital future. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St. Details via [Eventbrite](http://Eventbrite).

**Bloc Leader Blanchet to Deliver Remarks**—Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet will deliver remarks in French on "Quebec at a time of tariff walls" at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Le Westin Montréal, 270 rue Saint-Antoine O., Montreal. Details: [corim.qc.ca](http://corim.qc.ca).

**Nathalie Drouin to Deliver Remarks**—Nathalie Drouin, the prime minister's national security and intelligence advisor, will deliver keynote remarks at the launch of the new book *Canada Among Nations: Twenty-First Century National Security*, a timely exploration of the challenges and priorities shaping Canada's national security in an evolving global landscape. Hosted by Carleton University. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Westin Hotel. Details: [carleton.ca](http://carleton.ca).

**Panel: 'Black on the Ballot'**—Carleton University hosts the panel discussion "Black on the Ballot: Centring Black Narratives in Public Life," part of a research study and podcast series documenting the experiences of Black Canadians in politics. Participants will discuss how to increase the number of Black Canadians in public life and offer practical strategies for integrating Black perspectives into politics, journalism, and research. Tuesday, Feb. 11, at 7 p.m. ET (reception at 6 p.m.) at Richcraft Atrium, Carleton University. Details: [carleton.ca](http://carleton.ca).

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 12**

**Canada's Premiers to Washington, D.C.**—Ontario Premier Doug Ford, as chair of the Council of the Federation, will lead a joint mission of Canada's premiers to Washington, D.C., to meet with key members of the new White House administration, Congress, and business leaders. Details: [canadapremiers.ca](http://canadapremiers.ca).

**Canada-U.S. Relations Conference**—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts an invitation-only discussion on the breadth and status of the Canada-U.S. relationship under the

new Trump administration with both Canadian and American experts. Topics will include trade and tariffs, border security, energy relations and security, and defence and national security collaboration. Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 9 a.m. in Ottawa. Details: [cgai.ca](http://cgai.ca).

**Panel: 'Helping Canadian Businesses Take Flight'**—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a panel discussion, "How the Nation's Largest Airline is Helping Canadian Businesses Take Flight" featuring Mark Nasr, executive vice-president of marketing and digital, Air Canada, and president of Aeroplan; Vandra Provato, chief marketing and digital officer, LCBO; Michiel Wielhouwer, president and country manager, VISA Canada; and Lizaveta Akhmedzian Carew, co-founder and CEO, Chexy. Wednesday, Feb. 12, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Details: [economicclub.ca](http://economicclub.ca).

**Book Launch: Why Marriage Still Matters**—Cardus hosts the launch of a new book, *I...Do? Why Marriage Still Matters*. Co-authors Andrea Mrozek and Peter Jon Mitchell explore the enduring value of marriage through the lens of social science. What makes marriage relevant in our modern world? Refreshments, book purchases and signing. Wednesday, Feb. 12, from 6-8 p.m. ET at Cardus, 45 Rideau St., 8<sup>th</sup> floor. Register: [cardus.ca](http://cardus.ca).

**THURSDAY, FEB. 13**

**Webinar: 'Impact of Political Disruption on Business'**—B.C.'s Association of Professional Economists hosts a webinar, "The Impact of Scarcity and Political Disruption on Canada's Business Climate." Greg Lyle, founder and president of Innovative Research Group, will share his firm's findings on the pressures facing governments and political parties, and offer insights on how different parties are likely to respond. Thursday, Feb. 13, at 1 p.m. ET happening online: [cabe.ca](http://cabe.ca).

**FRIDAY, FEB. 14**

**Book Launch: My Life in Politics**—Carleton University hosts the launch of *My Life in Politics*, a memoir by former Liberal cabinet minister Lloyd Axworthy. Friday, Feb. 14, at 11 a.m. ET at Carleton University, 608 Pigiavik, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: [events.carleton.ca](http://events.carleton.ca).

**TUESDAY, FEB. 18**

**Lunch: 'Trade Wars and Canada'**—Canada's former chief trade

negotiator Steve Verheul, who's now a principal at GT & Co., and a member of the prime minister's Council on Canada-U.S. Relations, will deliver remarks on "Trade Wars and Canada: Finding Solutions in Uncertain Times," a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Feb. 18, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300. Details: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**WEDNESDAY, FEB. 19—  
FRIDAY, FEB. 21**

**First Nations Housing and Infrastructure Conference**—The Assembly of First Nations hosts "Mind the Gap: Advancing First Nations Housing, Infrastructure and Drinking Water," focusing on updates in urban, on-reserve, on-community, and northern First Nations housing, as well as asset management planning, water and wastewater management, and connectivity, and how they contribute to closing the First Nations infrastructure gap. Wednesday, Feb. 19, to Friday, Feb. 21, at the Westin Downtown Calgary. Details: [afn.ca](http://afn.ca).

**THURSDAY, FEB. 20**

**Panel: 'The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance'**—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunch event, "The Future of Money and Decentralized Finance: Trends, Opportunities, and Challenges for 2025." Panelists will explore how blockchain and decentralized solutions are transforming the financial landscape, and what does an effective regulatory framework look like. Thursday, Feb. 20, at 12 p.m. ET at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: [canadianclubottawa.ca](http://canadianclubottawa.ca).

**Webinar: 'A New Chapter for Canada-U.S. Economic Security'**—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a webinar, "A New Chapter for Canada-U.S. Economic Security," featuring Laura Dawson, executive director of the Future Borders Coalition. Thursday, Feb. 20, at 12:30 p.m. happening online: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

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POLICY BRIEFING

# HEALTH

Publication date:  
**Wednesday,  
February 12, 2025**

Advertising deadline:  
**Thursday,  
February 6, 2025**

Canada must take action now to be more adequately prepared for future health emergencies, according to a report released in October by an expert panel for the Review of the Federal Approach to Pandemic Science Advice and Research Coordination, which recommended better monitoring, understanding, and communication of most important infectious diseases. How can Canada better prepare for future health emergencies?

On Jan. 25, Health Minister Mark Holland released long-awaited guidance to provinces and territories on the delivery of insured health-care services, which clarified that patients should not be charged for services provided by any health professional if they would otherwise be covered when delivered by a physician. How is this guidance a benefit to health care? Does the guidance go far enough?

An aging population means that demand for long-term care in Canada will greatly increase in the coming years. What are the realities of long-term and seniors care in Canada, and how can the government be better prepared?

Challenges to the country's health system include overwhelmed emergency rooms, health-care workers facing burnout, and lack of access to a family doctor. How can the federal government address the strain on the health system?

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