

**CARNEY,
POILIEVRE:
it's go time**
▶ MICHAEL HARRIS PAGE 17



AGRICULTURE
and the trade war
▶ PAGES 15-24



**Canada needs all
ELBOWS UP!**
▶ SHEILA COPPS PAGE 9

**Exclusive
news:
inside**



THE HILL TIMES

**Exclusive
opinion:
inside**

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2205

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, MARCH 17, 2025 \$5.00

NEWS

Liberals, Conservatives gripped in a tie; next election will be 'like a knife fight in a telephone booth,' with Trump as disruptor, says Nanos

BY ABBAS RANA

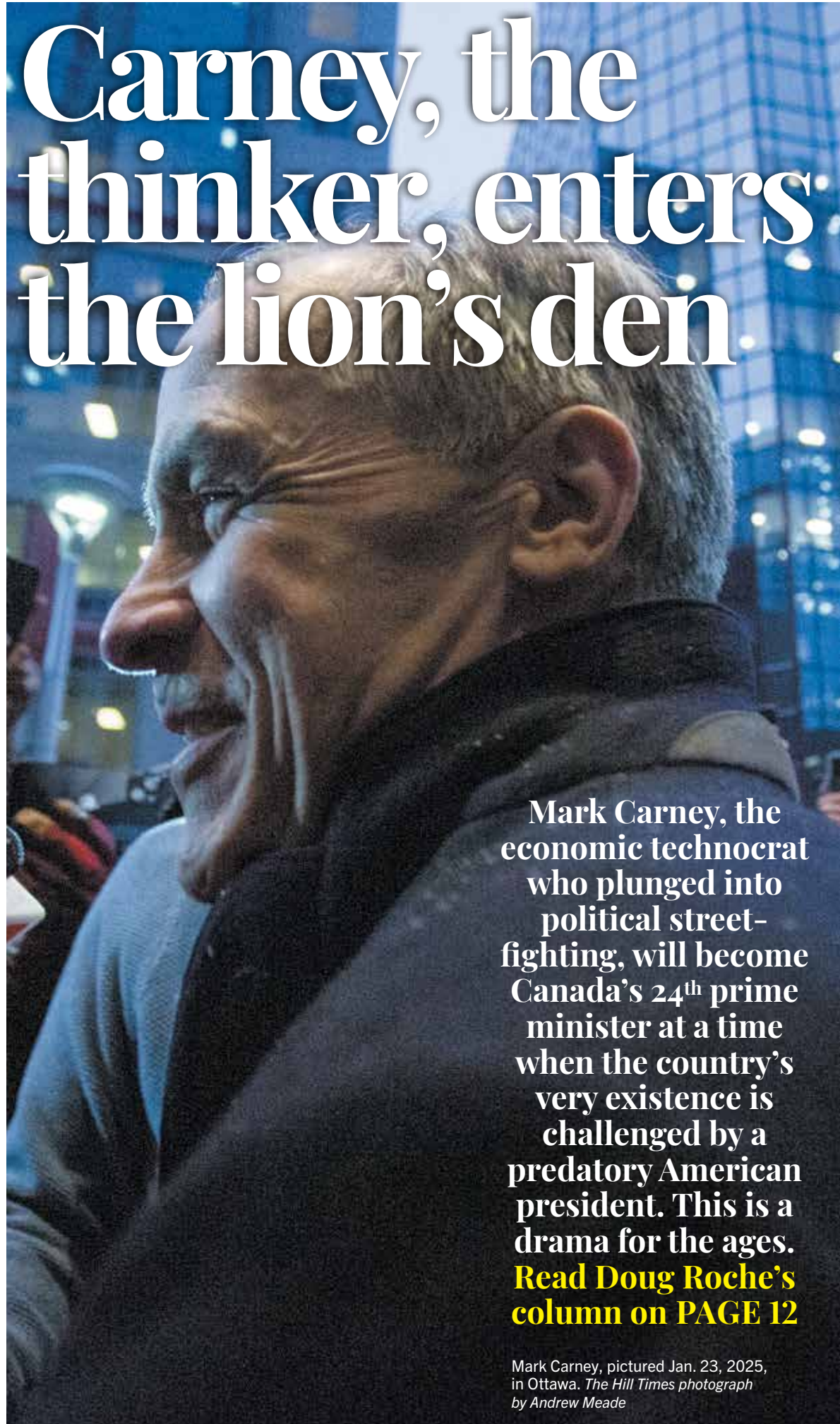
Newly minted Prime Minister Mark Carney—who was sworn in as prime minister on March 14—secured a convincing landslide victory in the Liberal leadership election on March 9, winning 89.5 per cent of the vote and sweeping all 343 ridings, which pollster Nik Nanos says indicates Carney's national appeal. He defeated his two main rivals—Chrystia Freeland and Karina Gould—even in their own constituencies.

Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research, described the leadership election result as a "crushing victory," highlighting the strength of Carney's campaign organization. He said that the outcome demonstrated Carney's ability to run a truly national campaign, ensuring no region was overlooked or left behind.

"Maybe that's one lesson that we can take from this, that perhaps when Mark Carney gets to fight the next election," said Nanos. "He's going to fight for every seat in every part of the country, that it's not going to be a situation where he gives up anywhere, because it's clear, at least from his leadership campaign, he was not prepared to give up any riding to his opponents."

Unlike members of the Conservatives, NDP, or Bloc Québécois, Liberal Party members prioritize electability over ideological alignment, Nanos said. The results, he said, validate party members' belief that Carney is the best candidate to defeat Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.), who had been leading in the polls for more than a year.

Continued on page 26



Carney, the thinker, enters the lion's den

Mark Carney, the economic technocrat who plunged into political street-fighting, will become Canada's 24th prime minister at a time when the country's very existence is challenged by a predatory American president. This is a drama for the ages. Read Doug Roche's column on PAGE 12

Mark Carney, pictured Jan. 23, 2025, in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

NEWS

Foreign interference risks must be addressed before voters go to polls, warns democracy watchdog, but Wark says holding off on election right now would be 'ridiculous'

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

The co-founder of Democracy Watch is calling on federal political parties to "put aside partisan self-interest" and hold off calling an election until legislation is passed to help address risks of foreign interference, such as possible disinformation spread through social media.



Marie-Josée Hogue

"Secret, unethical, undemocratic fundraising, lobbying, campaigning and other influence activities—including disinformation campaigns—are all legal, currently, and it's dangerous to have a federal election when those kinds of foreign interference activities are all legal and can be done in secret," said Duff Conacher. "I think we will have a very undemocratic and unfair election tainted by foreign interference if these loopholes aren't closed."

In a March 3 press release, Conacher urged federal parties to work together to pass legislation that could help address foreign interference, such as Bill C-65 and Bill C-290, before a federal election is called.

Bill C-65, the Electoral Participation Act, proposes a series of changes to the Canada Elections Act, including clarifying language around illegal inter-

Continued on page 5

Publications Mail Agreement #40068926
0 94922 81130 1

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

'I'm one of those rare characters who grew up reading *The Hill Times*': Flavio Volpe



HT Reader: Flavio Volpe, president of the Automotive Parts Manufacturing Association, said *The Hill Times* has been required reading for him since his dad was in cabinet. He has two walls full of framed pages from *The Hill Times*' 100 Most Influential People and our 100 Top Lobbyists lists. Photograph courtesy of Flavio Volpe

People and our 100 Top Lobbyists features. *The Hill Times*' executive editor **Peter Mazereeuw** asked Volpe about it last week.

"I'm one of those rare characters who grew up reading *The Hill Times*," said Volpe, whose father, **Joe Volpe**, was a Liberal MP and a **Paul Martin**-era cabinet minister. "My father was a Member. The morning clippings was an opportunity for him to tell me to read."

Volpe, who has been on *The Hill Times*' most influential lists for as long as he's been president of the APMA, added that it's been a real honour to be included on these lists.

"It's a special honour to be recognized in civil society as someone who has influence in government," said Volpe.

Volpe *père* was born in Italy and immigrated to Canada with his family in 1955. He was first elected in 1988, and represented Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont., until 2011, when he lost his seat to Conservative **Joe Oliver**.

Flavio Volpe, president of Canada's Automotive Parts Manufacturing Association, is in the thick of it these days with the Canada-U.S. trade war. Volpe is interviewed almost daily—some-

times multiple times a day—about his take on what's happening, so it's hard not to notice in his TV interviews that he has two full walls of framed pages from *The Hill Times*' 100 Most Influential

Liberal MP Mark Holland won't run in next election

Erstwhile cabinet minister **Mark Holland** announced he won't be running in the next federal election.

In a statement on X on March 13, the now-former health minister confirmed his decision: "I will not be running in the next election. It's time to go home. From the deepest parts of my heart; thank you. What an adventure it has been."

Holland's change of heart happened the day before Prime Minister **Mark Carney** was sworn-in to his new role at Rideau Hall, followed by the swearing-in of his cabinet.

The longtime Liberal MP has held many roles in former prime minister **Justin Trudeau**'s cabinet—including Government House Leader and Whip—and supported **Chrystia Freeland** in the party's recent leadership race.

Holland is a veteran Liberal MP whose first stint in the House ran from 2004-2011 when he lost his seat. He then worked as executive director of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada's Ontario Mission, but returned to the Hill with the Trudeau government in 2015.



Mark Holland, pictured on Jan. 23, 2025, on the Hill. Holland announced on March 13 that he won't run again. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Carney spends first morning on the job having breakfast with Sutcliffe

Newly elected Liberal Leader **Mark Carney** spent his first morning on the job on March 10 getting breakfast at John's Family Diner in Ottawa's Wellington West neighbourhood with Mayor **Mark Sutcliffe**. Sutcliffe tweeted a photo of the pair at the popular diner that morning.

"Thank you, to Prime Minister-Designate Mark Carney for taking the time to have breakfast this morning to talk about Ottawa's priorities and funding opportunities. Congratulations! I'm looking forward to working together."



On your marks: Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, left, and new Liberal Leader Mark Carney at John's Family Diner in Wellington West. Photograph courtesy of @MarkSutcliffe

Cutest Pet on the Hill contest is back

Calling all pet owners: the Cutest Pet on the Hill contest is back for a third year!

Until April 8, Parliamentarians, staffers, press gallery members, riding candidates, and campaign teams are invited to submit photos of their non-human companions to the Canadian Animal Health Institute's light-hearted competition.



Sit! Stay... Wally the Duck Tolling Poodle poses for the red carpet paparazzo at the Cutest Pet on the Hill contest. *The Hill Times* photograph by Cynthia Münster

paw-licies on belly rubs and treats."

After April 8, a panel of "esteemed judges" will choose the top 10 finalists in three categories—Dog, Cat and Other Pet—based on cuteness, creativity, and their paw-licy platform. From there, the 30 finalists will be put to a public online vote, with Canadians choosing the winners in each category. The winners will be announced in June "with our most exciting awards ceremony yet" teases the press release.

This year, participants also need an election-inspired angle to their submission. "As we are entering election season, pet owners will also be required to submit their pet's paw-licy platform, which can cover everything from all the purr-fect ways they will be showcasing their cuteness and offering support, to ta-ruff

Past winners include Liberal MP **James Maloney**'s dog **Walnut**, Conservative MP **Karen Vecchio**'s silkie chicken **Petunia**, and Conservative staffer **Drew Ostash**'s cat **Tabasco**.

Two bits of news from Liberal MP Yvonne Jones

Liberal MP **Yvonne Jones** announced two bits of news recently: first, she's published her memoir, and second, she won't seek the leadership of the provincial Liberal party.

"Excited today—the first copy of my memoir is out!! The books are coming off the truck today and in stores soon—Enjoy the read!" the former parliamentary secretary posted on X on March 4 with a photo of her book *Just Around the Corner*, which she published under the name "Yvonne Rumbolt-Jones."

Three days later, she then confirmed that she would not be seeking the leadership of her provincial Liberal Party.

"After a great deal of thought and reflection, I have decided not to enter the Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Leadership race. This was not an easy choice, but I know it's the right one for me at this time," she wrote



Farewell: Liberal MP Yvonne Jones' memoir, *Just Around the Corner*, is out now. Photograph courtesy of X

in a statement posted on X on March 7.

"While now is not my time, my commitment to fighting for the future of Newfoundland and Labrador is still as strong as ever."

Jones, who has been re-elected four times since 2013, will not be running in the next federal election.

Anthony Germain gears up for Grit nom in Nfld.

In other news from The Rock, former CBC journalist **Anthony Germain** is seeking the Liberal nomination in the renamed riding of Terra Nova-The Peninsulas, Nfld.

"Have made a difficult but important decision. It's time to step up," he posted on X on March 10, the day after the Liberals resoundingly chose **Mark Carney** as their new leader. Germain's post linked to his nomination page on Facebook.

After 32 years reporting for the CBC—including from Parliament Hill, Libya, and China—Germain retired last March. He's

currently a counsel at Global Public Affairs in St. John's.

The new riding of Terra Nova-The Peninsulas is mostly made up of incumbent Liberal MP **Churence Rogers**' current riding of Bonavista—Burin—Trinity, but swaps some bits with fellow Grit **Ken McDonald**'s Avalon riding.

Both Rogers and McDonald each announced they would not be running again, though McDonald told *The Hill Times*' **Abbas Rana** last week that if Carney were to call him, he would reconsider his retirement.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Carney Liberals reach out to prominent Tories and New Democrats to recruit ‘star’ candidates for next election

Sources told *The Hill Times* that Priti Obhrai-Martin, daughter of the late Conservative MP Deepak Obhrai, is seeking the Liberal nomination in Calgary East, Alta., the same riding her father represented as a Conservative for nearly two decades.

BY ABBAS RANA

Prime Minister Mark Carney and his senior campaign team are reaching out to prominent Conservatives and New Democrats to recruit high-profile candidates for the next election.

In an interview with *The Hill Times*, former Progressive Conservative and Conservative MP Lee Richardson confirmed that Carney’s team had asked him to run as a Liberal in the Alberta riding of Calgary Centre, which he represented five times as an MP. Richardson declined the request, saying he’s retired from elected politics and supports for incumbent Conservative MP Greg McLean, who is his protégé and whom he called an “outstanding Member of Parliament.”

Richardson—a Brian Mulroney-era senior PMO staffer and a well-liked MP on both sides of the aisle—described himself as a progressive politician, and noted that he left the Conservative Party in 2012 when he resigned his federal seat. During the recent Liberal leadership election, he supported Carney, helping to raise approximately \$50,000, and encouraging his friends and supporters to back the economist, as well.

Richardson added that he has contributed the maximum allowable contribution limit \$1,750 to the campaign.

“I’m 77 years old, and I was very encouraged by it all, and very flattered,” said Richardson, commenting on the Liberal offer to run in the next federal election. “I have a lot of respect for Carney. ... I was flattered that they asked



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured March 9, 2025, with his wife Diana Fox Carney, after winning the Liberal leadership in Ottawa. Carney’s senior team is actively engaging with prominent Conservatives and New Democrats to recruit them as candidates for the upcoming election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

me to run here, but I would not have run against Greg.”

Richardson represented Calgary Centre as a Progressive Conservative from 1988 to 1993, but lost his re-election bid to Reform Party candidate Jan Brown. In 2004, he returned as a Conservative candidate in the same riding and won three consecutive re-elections. However, he resigned from his seat in 2012 to take on the role of principal secretary to the then-Alberta premier.

Richardson said that he has known Carney since 2004, when Carney served as the deputy minister of finance.

Liberal sources told *The Hill Times* that an incumbent NDP member of a provincial legislature is set to announce their candidacy this week to run as a federal Liberal in the upcoming election.

Former Alberta Progressive Conservative MP and provincial MLA Ken Hughes confirmed to *The Hill Times* that he met with Carney at a Carney fundraiser. He also said that he has donated to both the Conservatives and Liberals. Hughes said that no one from the Liberals approached him to run as their candidate, and even if they had, he would have declined, as he is retired from politics and focused on his business.

He explained that his attendance at the Carney fundraiser was part of his due diligence to stay informed as a citizen. Additionally, Hughes mentioned that he has known Green Party Co-Leader Elizabeth May (Saanich—Gulf Islands, B.C.) since their time as Progressive Conservative staffers during the Mulroney era, and continues to meet with her occasionally.

“I’m not active in any campaign,” said Hughes. “I am very active in business, and so it [attending the Carney fundraiser] was part of my due diligence as a citizen, active in business in Canada, that I have talked to leaders of many parties.”

Hughes represented the Calgary-area riding then known as Macleod as a Progressive Conservative MP after winning the 1988 election, but lost the seat to Reform candidate Grant Hill in 1993. He later served as the provincial MLA for Calgary West, and held a cabinet position in then-premier Alison Redford’s Progressive Conservative government.

Team Carney is also in discussions with former British Columbia premier Christy Clark, who has publicly expressed interest in running in the upcoming federal campaign. In a text message to *The Hill Times* last week, Clark said that she had not yet made a final decision about running, but emphasized her commitment to supporting as many Liberal candidates as possible in securing victory.

According to Liberal sources who spoke to *The Hill Times* last week, if Clark decides to run as a federal Liberal, party officials are considering three potential B.C. ridings for her: Fleetwood-Port Kells, Vancouver Quadra, and Vancouver South. These seats have opened up following announcements from incumbents Ken Hardie, Joyce Murray, and Harjit Sajjan that they will not seek re-election.

Senior Liberals are encouraging the former premier to run in Fleetwood-Port Kells, as the other two ridings are considered safe.

The Liberals comfortably won the riding—which encompasses parts of Surrey and Greater Vancouver—in the last three elections. It was previously held by Conservative Nina Grewal from 2004 to 2015.

Team Carney also approached former Quebec premier Jean Charest for a senior role in the new administration, but he declined. A federal Conservative, Charest previously served as a Progressive Conservative cabinet minister in Mulroney’s government. The specific position he was offered remains unclear. Charest also ran unsuccessfully against Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) in the last Conservative leadership race.

The Carney Liberals have also reached out to former Quebec finance minister Carlos Leitão to run for them in the next election, Radio-Canada reported last week.

Meanwhile, sources told *The Hill Times* that Priti Obhrai-Martin, daughter of the late Conservative MP Deepak Obhrai, is seeking the Liberal nomination in Calgary East, Alta.—the same riding her father represented as a Conservative for nearly two decades.

Obhrai-Martin did not respond to interview requests from *The Hill Times*, but sources said that she has submitted her nomination paperwork to the party, and is undergoing the vetting process. Meanwhile, she has also been actively signing up new members. As of press time, a nomination meeting had not yet been scheduled.

Sources said that it is Obhrai-Martin’s own decision to seek the Liberal nomination, and was not at the request of Carney’s team.

Since its creation in 1917, the riding of Calgary East has been rejigged and renamed multiple times. Since 1945, it has been a stronghold for right-of-centre parties, with only Progressive Conservative, Reform, Canadian Alliance, and Conservative candidates winning the seat.

At the time of his death in 2019, Deepak Obhrai was the longest-serving Conservative MP, and was called “the dean” of the Conservative caucus. First elected as a Reform MP in 1997, Obhrai became the first Hindu MP in the House of Commons. He continued representing the riding as it transitioned from Reform to the Canadian Alliance in 2000, and then to the Conservative Party in 2004.

In 2017, Obhrai ran unsuccessfully for the Conservative Party leadership, a race won by Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu’Appelle, Sask.). Because of the riding’s safe Conservative status, Obhrai consistently secured victory in all six of his elections with comfortable double-digit margins.

If Obhrai-Martin secures the Liberal nomination, she will compete against incumbent Jasraj Singh Hallan, the Conservative Party’s finance critic. Hallan was first elected in 2019 in the riding then known as Calgary Forest Lawn with 59.6 percent of the vote, defeating the second-place Liberal candidate Jag Anand, who received 21.7 per cent. In the 2021 election, he was re-elected with 44.5 per cent of the vote, while the Liberals’ Jordan Stein finished second with 27.7 per cent.

Hallan secured the Conservative nomination in a contested race against three other candidates, including Aman Obhrai, Deepak’s son.

According to her LinkedIn profile, Obhrai-Martin is a communications specialist, and has been the social media strategist of Blute Consulting Incorporated in Calgary for eight years.

“I am a Communications Strategist specializing in the area of Cross Cultural Communication, and effective New Media Strategies. My Body of Knowledge consists of World Politics, Oil and Gas, Information Technology, Media Development and Distribution, Not for Profit Communication, New Media, and world travel,” Obhrai-Martin wrote on her LinkedIn profile.

The federal Liberal Party declined to say when the nomination election will happen in Calgary East, nor how many candidates are running for the candidacy.

“We’ve had a number of community leaders express interest in running for the Liberal Party in Calgary East, and the nomination process will move forward in due course, and will be fully in line with all of the Party’s nomination rules,” wrote Parker Lund, director of communications of the Liberal Party.

Hallan and the Conservative Party’s communications office did not respond to comment and interview requests from *The Hill Times*.

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

Disclosure, transparency rules part of new federal public service AI strategy



Treasury Board President Ginette Petitpas Taylor launched the government's AI strategy for the public service on March 4. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The first whole-of-government strategy for the use of the technology in the federal public service acknowledges that 'levels of mistrust in AI and its use are high.'

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

The government's AI strategy for the public service will require public disclosure of which technologies are used and the tasks they perform, as both public and private sector surveys show mistrust about the use of artificial intelligence remains high.

Treasury Board President Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe, N.B.) launched the AI Strategy for the Federal Public Service on March 4 at the Waterloo Data and Artificial Intelligence Institute, part of the University of Waterloo.

The strategy will require federal departments to consider using AI when developing new

programs or initiatives, report on existing use cases and those in development, and review the alignment between established departmental policies and strategies on AI, and the new government-wide directive.

A new co-ordinating body, to be called the AI Centre of Expertise, will be created to support departments and agencies. The centre will also identify "high-value use cases" for AI use and integration, support procurement options, and develop common AI adoption infrastructure across the government.

Beyond the centre, the government will develop training programs for current public servants, and data science-recruitment goals. On the policy and legislative front, the strategy recommends creating common AI governance and risk-management frameworks, and updating procurement policies, and address legal ambiguities related to privacy and training data.

"Today's announcement positions Canada as a global leader in the responsible use of AI in the public service," Petitpas Taylor said in a March 4 media release. "With the first-ever AI Strategy for the public service, we're laying the groundwork to leverage the potential of this technology to deliver the best possible services to Canadians."

The strategy is due to remain in effect until 2027. Consultations started on the strategy in May 2024, followed by a second round in September the same year. The government met with AI experts, academics, Indigenous communities, unions, and industry representatives.

The government's approaches will accompany accountability, engagement, and transparency measures on public sector use of AI, with a focus on "human-centred" policies. The strategy noted that "despite the increasing use of AI in Canada, levels of mistrust in AI and its use are high."

A consultation report released in January indicated that Canadians did not want AI used in criminal justice—such as in sentencing, parole decisions, and predictive policing—surveillance and mass data collection, or employment decisions. Respondents also wanted the technology kept away from political decision-making, policy recommendations, and determining social services eligibility.

The respondents feared the use of AI could reinforce biases in employment decisions, threaten privacy and civil liberties if used in surveillance, show a lack of empathy in political and policy recommendations, and create unfair exclusions in social services eligibility.

"The [government] must be extremely careful in how it uses AI in these sensitive areas. It must implement AI applications responsibly, with robust oversight and ethical guidelines, to foster public trust and uphold democratic values," the consultation report said.

AI's perception problem among Canadians extends beyond government use. Proof Strategies' 2025 CanTrust Index showed confidence that AI could positively affect this country's economy and consumer experiences has fallen in recent years.

The index, released on Feb. 25, found only 34 per cent of respondents trusted AI to improve consumer experiences—down from 37 in 2018—and 43 per cent believed AI would make information sources less trustworthy, while only 22 per cent believed it would make sources more trustworthy.

The percentage of respondents who trusted AI to support government services also dropped two points in the past year, from 33 per cent to 31 per cent.

There was also a major difference in confidence between users and non-users of AI—59 per cent of existing AI users trusted it to improve consumer experiences, compared with only 12 per cent of non-users. There was a small divide between users

and non-users when it came to government services, with 46 per cent and 17 per cent believing AI could improve the experience, respectively.

In response to the concerns in the consultations and broader society, the public service AI strategy outlines new requirements and standard language for the disclosure of AI use, explanations of how AI reaches a decision, and information about rights and protections. The government also plans to create a public register of its AI systems.

"Lastly, the Government of Canada will identify those AI capabilities that it will not pursue," the strategy said.

That disclosure even included a note on how this technology was used in the development of the strategy itself, which it said saved the team three weeks of work. According to the document, the team used the Microsoft Copilot generative AI tool, and some Microsoft Teams AI capabilities.

The artificial intelligence was used to automatically transcribe some discussions, summarize group comments and feedback, generate meeting invitation text, scan and summarize research, translate small pieces of text, and draft and edit reports and discussion papers.

"All uses of AI were consistent with [Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat] policy and guidance," the strategy document said. "Any personal identifiers, such as individual or organization names, were removed before AI use. Products generated by AI were reviewed by human analysts and were labelled to indicate that AI had been used in their development."

The strategy will also require that the government create common AI governance and risk management frameworks, addressing potential risks to data privacy and security, bias, environmental impact, and human involvement. Metrics and performance criteria will be established to demonstrate the value of AI initiatives to Canadians, and engagement criteria will be created for communities that face the greatest risks, alongside union and employee consultation.

AI is already being used within the public service, including through case processing assistance of temporary and permanent residence applications at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada, transcribing and summarizing parliamentary committee meetings through Innovation, Science and Economic Development's AI accelerator, and the pilot of an in-house, multilingual chatbot at Shared Services Canada.

As reported in *The Hill Times* earlier this month, the government is also using a virtual assistant tool that uses artificial intelligence to help clear the pay discrepancy backlog caused by the Phoenix payroll system. That AI system is being used to fix discrepancies in pay and compensation services, and is overseen by two boards.

sjeffery@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Foreign interference risks must be addressed before voters go to polls, warns democracy watchdog, but Wark says holding off on election right now would be ‘ridiculous’

Democracy Watch is urging federal parties to work together to pass legislation that could help address foreign interference, such as Bill C-65 and Bill C-290, before a federal election is called.



Justice Marie-Josée Hogue, commissioner of the public inquiry into foreign interference, issued a final report on Jan. 28. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Continued from page 1

ference in elections. Bill C-290, the Public Sector Integrity Act, would amend the Public Servants Disclosure Protection Act and the Conflict of Interest Act to try to strengthen whistleblower protections for public servants.

An early election seems likely as Liberal Leader Mark Carney, who was sworn in as prime minister on March 14, hinted during a recent national caucus meeting that members should be prepared for an election call ahead of Parliament's scheduled return on March 24. That was according to Liberal MP sources who spoke to *The Hill Times* on a not-for-attribution basis, as reported on March 11.

Justice Marie-Josée Hogue, commissioner of the public inquiry into foreign interference, issued a final report on Jan. 28, following a 16-month investigation that included communication with 150 witnesses. Hogue argued in the report that the greatest threat to Canadian democracy is the spread of misinformation and disinformation in the media and on social networks.

The report included 51 recommendations intended to help address foreign interference, including that the government should make it a priority to develop a whole-of-government foreign interference strategy. The report also advised that the leaders of all political parties represented in the House obtain top-secret security clearances as soon as possible after assuming their leadership roles.

Conacher argued that another comprehensive bill is needed to address issues not covered in the report's recommendations, such as prohibiting internet, social media and all other companies from allowing fake videos and

audio files to be posted on their sites, or measures intended to stop foreign governments, entities and individuals from funnelling money to nomination contestants and election candidates through Canadian front groups and "proxies."

In contrast, Wesley Wark, a national security expert who served two terms on the national security advisory council for then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper, told *The Hill Times* that he considered the idea of holding off on an election to be "ridiculous."

"I think there's probably a unanimous feeling across the political spectrum that one of the things Canada needs to have is a federal election as soon as possible in order to ensure that we have a stable governance system moving forward, and the Americans can't play tricks with a period in which there's transition or apparent instability," he said. "There's a theoretical argument to be made that strengthening various pieces of legislation would be helpful, but now's not the time."

In terms of addressing foreign interference, Wark said that he considers the most important priority to be getting the federal government's foreign influence transparency registry up and running.

On June 20, 2024, royal assent was granted to legislation to establish a foreign influence transparency registry to better manage national security threats. In accordance with the registry, individuals and entities who enter into "arrangements" with a "foreign principal" for activities related to a political or government process in Canada would be required to register those arrangements.

NDP MP Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.) accused the government of moving too

slowly in establishing the foreign influence registry during a news conference back in February, and argued that questions that remain unanswered include what the registry would look like and what its requirements would be.

Wark, who is also a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation and a fellow with the Balsillie School of International Affairs at the University of Waterloo, said that Canada currently faces an existential threat from the United States. He agreed political interference is a threat that Canada should be able to contest, but that the country cannot wait to hold an election for the sake of passing a law.

"It is important to put the risk in context and be proportional about it—take it seriously, but not to be overly alarmist," he said. "I think, in terms of the context of the next election, the starting point is to say, 'Well, among foreign actors that might be engaged in disinformation who would find something to benefit from backing one or another candidate, I think we're likely to see some local efforts at foreign interference, as we did in the 2021 election, but probably not on a significant scale.'"

Wark said he expects Elon Musk, the owner of social media platform X and *de facto* head of the Department of Government Efficiency in the U.S., to try to "step into the [Canadian] federal election" using X, with statements that could be amplified by "other right-wing social media platforms in the United States."

"I think the real concern has to be amplification of misinformation," said Wark. "I think we'll see probably lots of misinformation coming from U.S. platforms and from Elon Musk. To be honest, I doubt that it's going to have much traction in Canada in the context of the next federal election."

Chris Tenove, assistant director of the Centre for the Study of Democratic Institutions at the University of British Columbia, told *The Hill Times* that he agrees disinformation is a tactic that foreign governments and foreign actors use, and that the recent election of U.S. President Donald Trump has exacerbated those challenges. He argued that Canada's upcoming federal vote is more at risk concerning election integrity than has been seen in a long time.

"We've seen the new U.S. government take a more adversarial position towards other democracies, including Canada, and a more supportive position towards more authoritarian countries like Russia," he said. "President Trump and Elon Musk have both been willing in the past to either flirt with violating, or violate election laws ... and they've not been held to account for it. So, that, to me, suggests that they are likely—are possibly willing—to do the same in a foreign election."

With regard to Bill C-65, he said recommendations on improvements to the Canada Elections Act makes sense.

"I think that both the Canadian elections commissioner and others have highlighted that there are gaps in the Canada Elections

Act that expose it to, in particular, these questions about ... deceptive funding," he said. "C-65 did try to address some of those, including the use of cryptocurrencies and other untraceable sources of funding for election purposes, and more clarity on third parties, how they can receive and must document funds from foreign sources."

Aengus Bridgman, an assistant professor at McGill University who directs the Media Ecosystem Observatory, told *The Hill Times* that, generally speaking, there's a very high level of concern about foreign interference in the next election. He said the Hogue report highlighted the "unique and very real threat of disinformation."

"There's this set of actors that has an interest, has the capability, and has shown a willingness to engage in [foreign interference]. There have been many incidents over the last couple years in the Canadian context ... and we just expect that to be more severe during an election context," he said.

Bridgman argued that combating foreign interference in the form of disinformation isn't just up to the federal government, but is also the responsibility of Canadians and Canadian civil society.

"I hope that there is sort of a ... made-in-Canada information products-type movement during the election, where people are tuned in and paying attention to Canadian voices and making sure that they're getting their information from people who have their best interests at heart, and that isn't necessarily true for a lot of these American influencers," he said.

"The government is not capable, and should not be in the business of, regulating and policing and controlling what is said. So, in that sense, it does fall, to an extent, on citizens and civil society to step up in a moment like this."

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Highlights from the Hogue Report

- On Sept. 7, 2023, the federal government established the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions with Marie-Josée Hogue as commissioner. That commission's final report was released on Jan. 28, 2025.
- In its investigation, the commission heard from more than 150 witnesses over 39 days of public hearings and several weeks of in-camera hearings.
- According to the final report, there is no evidence to suggest that Canadian institutions have been seriously affected by foreign interference or that parliamentarians owe their successful election to foreign entities, although there are a very small number of isolated cases where foreign interference may have had some impact on the outcome of a nomination contest, or the result of an election in a given riding.
- Hogue stated in the report that she had not seen any evidence of "traitors" in Parliament plotting with foreign states to act against Canada. She added that, while a few cases have come to light involving things like attempts to curry favour with parliamentarians, "the phenomenon remains marginal and largely ineffective."
- Foreign interference comes in a variety of forms, and while some actors still use traditional methods, many are now attempting to interfere with our democracy by engaging in disinformation on social networks, according to the report. Hogue described data manipulation as "the single biggest risk to our democracy," and "an existential threat."
- The report included 51 recommendations, including that the government should make it a priority to develop a whole-of-government Foreign Interference Strategy; that Public Safety Canada, the Communication Security Establishment, and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service should work with the House and Senate administrations to develop a "Duty to Inform" policy about cyber campaigns targeting specific parliamentarians; and that leaders of all political parties represented in the House should be encouraged to obtain Top-Secret security clearances as soon as possible after becoming leaders.

Source: Public Inquiry Into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions, Vol. One, Report Summary, released on Jan. 28, 2025.

NEWS

U.S. pressure ‘lighting a fire’ under Ottawa to get major defence procurement projects moving, says expert, as trade war escalates

Amid the tariff tiff with the U.S., ‘there’s a sudden realization that ... Canada may actually be on its own,’ which may be speeding things up, says Adam Lajeunesse.

BY IREM KOCA

With a federal election on the horizon and rising pressure from the White House, the federal government’s decision to push ahead with two major defence procurements is both timely and critical, experts say as America’s president escalates his tariff war.

Last week, the Canadian government awarded two major defence contracts: a \$3.25-billion deal with Quebec’s Davie Shipyard to build a polar icebreaker, and an initial \$8-billion contract to Halifax’s Irving Shipbuilding to construct the Navy’s next generation of destroyers to replace its aging frigates.

St. Francis Xavier University professor Adam Lajeunesse, a Brian Mulroney Institute of Government research chair in Arctic and marine security, said the awarding of the contracts “marks a very significant moment,” and that while the federal government has been working for decades towards this goal, the pace at which it is now advancing its procurement plans could be considered as a shift.

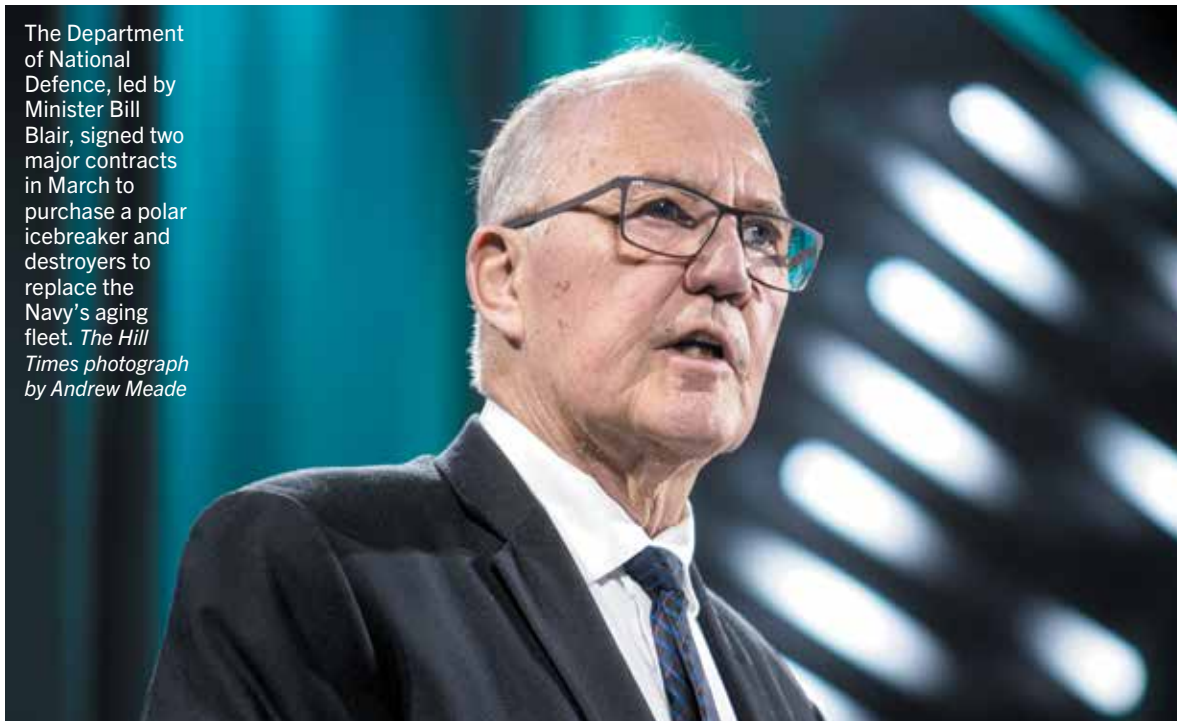
A ‘new urgency’ to move ahead: Lajeunesse

“Money has been spent, and construction is beginning. It is a follow through on decades of planning and preparation, but also a very, very important moment. There is a new impetus, a new urgency to move forward more quickly and to get things done,” Lajeunesse said.

He pointed to the imminent federal election in Canada, the war in Ukraine, and broader geopolitical shifts—particularly “the fact that the United States appears to be abdicating its role as the leader of the free world, that’s something nobody saw coming,” as reasons behind that new-found urgency.

“I think that is lighting a fire under the government,” Lajeunesse said.

The Department of National Defence, led by Minister Bill Blair, signed two major contracts in March to purchase a polar icebreaker and destroyers to replace the Navy’s aging fleet. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



On March 12, U.S. President Donald Trump imposed 25-per-cent tariffs on Canadian steel and aluminum, while continuing to threaten to annex the country as the “51st state.” The Canadian government has responded with \$29.8-billion in retaliation on American goods, as part of its overall planned \$155-billion counter-tariff package.

All of this is unfolding as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) begins to hand over power to former central banker Mark Carney, the newly elected leader of the Liberal Party.

“What’s happening in the United States is playing a role. This is speeding everything up, and that is creating a certain sense of crisis—because it is a crisis—and there’s a sudden realization that has never really been there since the 1940s that Canada may actually be on its own, and we need to start taking this sort of thing more seriously,” Lajeunesse explained.

However, given that the defence procurement review—launched in December 2023 and led by Public Services and Procurement Canada—still has not produced any results, some experts say they see no clear sign the federal government is prioritizing procurement more aggressively than before.

Push to get defence procurements moving

Canadian Forces College professor Paul Mitchell noted that “the timing is appropriate”

for these procurements which have long been in the works, and are in line with Canada’s 2017 defence policy—*Strong, Secure, Engaged*—as well as the ongoing National Shipbuilding Strategy.

“There is chatter within the [Canadian Armed Forces] about improving procurement to speed up results, which is definitely tied to American pressure. However, given the long lead times for both these projects, it is more likely that they have emerged at just the right time, rather than having been sped up,” Mitchell said.

Canada announced the procurement of two new polar icebreakers under the National Shipbuilding Strategy (NSS) back in May 2021. The other polar icebreaker is being built by Seaspan’s Vancouver Shipyards. The Canadian Coast Guard currently has 18 icebreakers, making it the second-largest icebreaking fleet in the world.

The River-class destroyers will replace the capabilities found in the four retired Iroquois-class destroyers, and the 12 Halifax-class frigates. The initial \$8-billion for the destroyers will go towards the first six years of construction and the delivery of the first three ships, which are expected to cost \$22.2-billion in total.

Craig Stone, emeritus associate professor at Canadian Forces College, agreed that the contracts being awarded are simply the implementation of previous commitments, but highlighted that, from a timing perspective, it is about “making the point to the U.S.” that Canada is following up

on its promise in terms of increasing defence spending.

“I don’t see any top-down direction to make changes or instil a sense of urgency,” Stone said, but added that he suspects the Canada-U.S. tensions do have an influence on getting these major—and already delayed—defence procurement projects moving.

“The politics are such that making these announcements now make sense for the U.S., and as a speaking point for the upcoming election,” Stone said.

Mitchell argued that the bilateral tensions are driving how the Department of National Defence is thinking about future procurement, even if the strife did not directly influence the two recent contracts being awarded.

Canada’s defence budget has been a point of friction with the U.S. since long before the tariffs, with Ottawa failing to fulfill its two per cent NATO commitment for military spending.

“The two-per-cent figure will be hit earlier than planned. Should NATO go to a three-per-cent figure, Canada will be expected to hit that target much more quickly than it has with the two-per-cent target. But it is unlikely that Trump pressure figured in the case of these two procurements,” Mitchell said, adding that local industrial politics were likely more influential in awarding of the contracts for destroyers than American pressure.

Canada’s forecasted defence spending is expected to increase from \$41-billion in 2024–25 to \$57.8-billion in 2029–30. A 2024

Parliamentary Budget Office report estimates that annual military spending must reach \$81.9-billion by 2032–33 to meet NATO’s spending target.

New ships will be critical for the Navy

All experts agree that these modern ships—set to replace decades-old fleets—will better position Canada to respond to security threats once they are received by the Navy and Coast Guard. That’s still years away, but the extent of that advantage will depend on the global threats at the time.

The new ships will be “absolutely critical,” serving as the heart of the Canadian Navy for the next three decades, Lajeunesse emphasized.

“The destroyers in particular are frontline combatants, not constabulary vessels or humanitarian response vessels. These are warships designed purely for defence and security. This is Canada’s frontline response to threats from states like China, Russia. They allow Canada to monitor and defend its own, exclusive economic zone, its territorial waters, and the approaches to Canada,” he explained.

“If they are delivered on time and fully equipped, the destroyers—alongside the new refuelling vessels—will re-establish the ability to conduct task group operations on a global basis. They will also have a far more significant capability to reach out at long range in terms of both theatre, air defence, and land attack. Icebreakers are critical to Arctic navigation, even under climate change conditions,” Mitchell said.

Lajeunesse said Canada’s contribution to continental defence has always been a lever point for the country in negotiations, and that is why building and delivering a new fleet of destroyers, for instance, would help Canada hugely boost its capabilities but also showcase a more-tangible financial commitment.

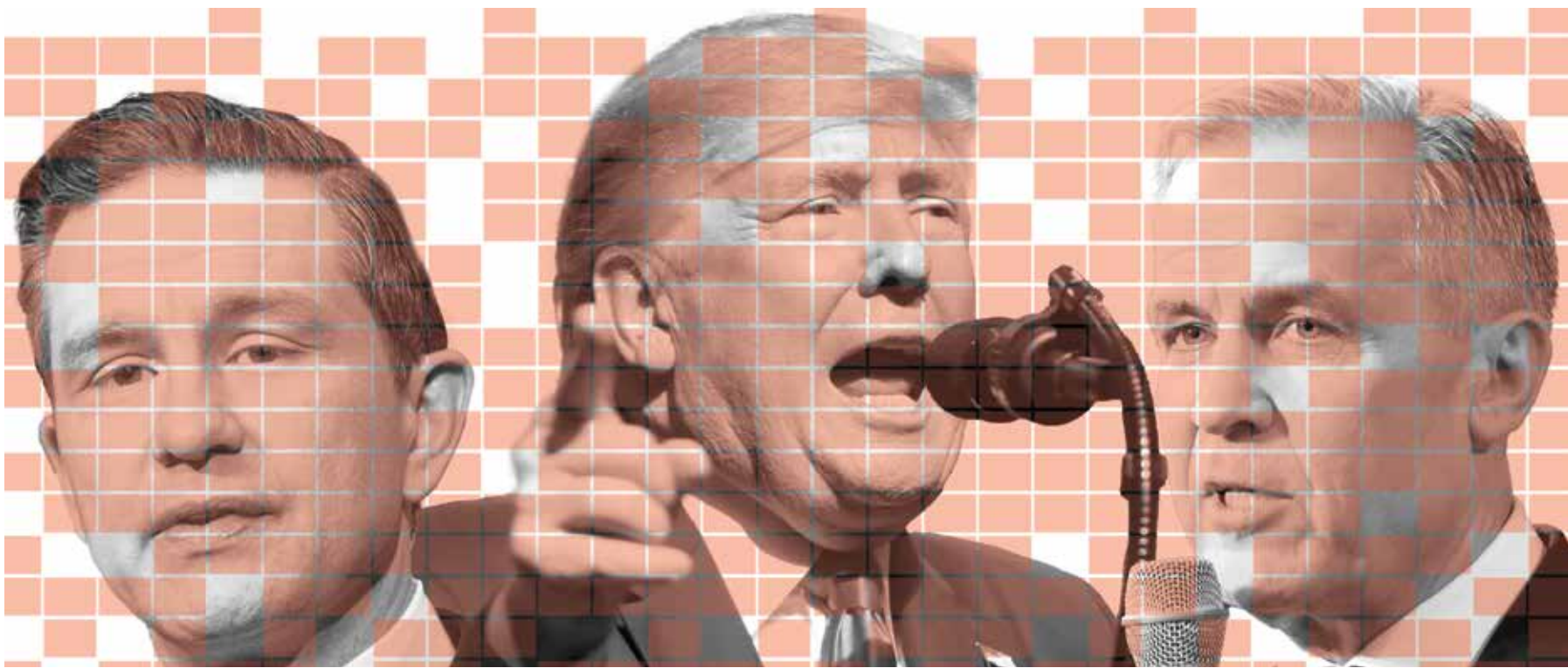
“It’s money going out the door that we can point to as coming closer to meeting our immediate goal of two per cent, so I think that’s that’s the big one. It’s demonstrating that Canada is doing its part and is not entirely reliant on the United States to defend itself, and its partners and allies,” Lajeunesse said.

While Lajeunesse said he does not expect U.S. tariffs to prompt immediate changes to Canada’s planned purchases or lead to cancellations, they will factor into future decision-making.

“So, we’re not going to go and buy a system that we hadn’t argued about because of the tariffs. However, for instance, the Navy is now looking at Corvettes [small warships]. We’re looking at submarines. And I think the question of how much American content goes into those ships is going to be a consideration ... How important a consideration? It will probably depend on how significantly Donald Trump chooses to elevate his kind of bizarre war against Canada over the next year or so.”

ikoca@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

COMMENT



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, U.S. President Donald Trump, and Prime Minister Mark Carney. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade, Sam Garcia, and courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons, illustration by *The Hill Times*' Neena Singhal

Who has the best economic plan to build a prosperous and sovereign Canada: Carney or Poilievre?

So far, neither party has presented such a plan. Yet the need is urgent. While we must retaliate in the face of U.S. tariffs and other hostile threats, the bigger issue is how to ensure future growth and opportunity for Canadians.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—With a federal election looming, the most important issue will be which party and leader—the Liberals, led by Mark Carney, or the Conservatives, led by Pierre Poilievre—has the best economic plan to build a prosperous and sovereign Canada in response to the American administration's

goal to subjugate and weaken our nation.

So far, neither party has presented such a plan. Yet the need is urgent. While we must retaliate in the face of American tariffs and other hostile threats, the bigger issue is how to ensure future growth and opportunity for Canadians.

Such a plan should include accelerated investments in growth-enhancing infrastructure, a solid commitment to education and training for a skilled workforce, enhanced support for university and business research and development, initiatives to diffuse and adopt advanced technology across the economy, and major support for our ambitious entrepreneurs to grow and scale up many more of our firms with potential for world scale. The plan should also include reform to our tax system that recognize the needs of an economy increasingly dependent on investment in intangibles and data, acceleration of our transition to a green economy and green energy systems for sustainable growth, and re-energizing our many public institutions and programs that can facilitate and support innovation and productivity-enhancing growth.

A growth plan for all this should also include strategically

marketing, branding, and promoting our country in export markets; policies to ensure that rare-earth and critical minerals are processed here; increased defence spending structured to build a Canadian defence industrial base, and focusing our programs for small and midsize companies on those producing tradable good and services and with growth potential. It should also include eliminating provincial barriers to trade, investment, and the movement of people; an identification of major projects; strengthening our digital infrastructure, and more effective use of government procurement to support innovative home-grown companies and technologies—adopting something like the U.S. Small Business Innovation Research Initiative to boost innovation and commercialization of new ideas. This growth plan needs to recognize that the creative industries are a key source of potential growth and exports, strengthen the policymaking and implementation capabilities of the public service, and create an effective arm's length agency to closely monitor what works and what doesn't, and be a source of policy ideas.

This is not just about tech industries. For Canada to advance, we need major invest-

ments everywhere, in Alberta irrigation systems and Saskatchewan's massive Lake Diefenbaker water project, in new rail-based transportation systems linking much of southwestern Ontario, the new lithium mining and lithium processing plant in Thunder Bay, or planned support for cheese-making production on Prince Edward Island, for example. But in all of these projects—and many others like them—we should aim to maximize the Canadian value-add, including advanced technology, in such projects.

In his Liberal leadership acceptance speech, Carney promised to deliver a “plan to build a stronger economy, to create new trading relationships, and to secure our borders.” Saying he’s learned that, in a crisis, a “plan beats no plan, and that first you need to distinguish between what you can change and what you can’t change.” We cannot change U.S. President Donald Trump, he said, but, with a plan, Canada can change. But a plan, he went on to say, would take “extraordinary efforts. This won’t be business as usual. We will have to do things that we haven’t imagined before at speeds we didn’t think possible.”

Now he has to tell us what he has in mind.

The same applies to Poilievre, who is more focused on what he’s against than what he’s for—seemingly more a destroyer than a builder.

What is clear is that a successful response to Trump’s agenda will require big changes and sustained commitment and leadership in both the public and private sectors.

Finance for growth companies is one such example. CIBC president Victor Dodig said recently in *The Globe & Mail*, “We need more financial capital flowing to the industries of tomorrow,” arguing that one possibility would be to expand the use of flow-through shares currently limited to mining firms. They help attract capital to mining businesses with potential, and could help raise capital for other Canadian growth compa-

nies, such as those in the health care, technology and AI industries, as well as those in defence, Dodig argued. This is not a new idea—some of us have been advocating it for more than a decade. But it’s time to take a new look.

But finance needs much bigger change than this so we can grow domestic firms rather than—as happens far too often—our young businesses with great potential finding themselves forced to sell to foreign corporations because they cannot raise capital here at home.

We have significant savings in Canada, but too little of those savings find their way into boosting our businesses. Our banks must become more innovative in building a stronger country. And while Canadian pension funds, mutual funds, and other investors had \$4.2-trillion in foreign portfolio investments at the end of 2024, many Canadian firms seeking capital had to go to New York City if they wanted \$100-million or less. Even our venture capital industry depends heavily on government funds or foreign funds.

Ultimately, it comes down to a public and private innovation-led investment strategy. Ultimately, it is technical progress that drives economic growth, and generates the gains in productivity that are essential for sustained improvements in living standards. In our country’s case, we have a productivity crisis. Last year, productivity in the business sector rose by just 0.6 per cent after declines over the three previous years. Raising productivity growth would be even more difficult in the new economic environment, but it is essential if we are to avoid stagnation.

This is the really big issue for the next federal election. It’s not enough to talk about Canada’s potential. We need a vision of what a better, stronger and sovereign nation would look like. And we must have a plan to realize that potential. If we want a better future, Canada has to become a can-do nation.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.
The Hill Times

Editor: Kate Malloy
 Managing Editor: Charelle Evelyn
 Digital Editor: Samantha Wright Allen
 Executive Editor: Peter Mazereeuw
 Deputy Editors: Stephen Jeffery,
 Laura Ryckewaert
 Assistant Deputy Editor: Abbas Rana
 Publishers: Anne Marie Creskey,
 Jim Creskey, Leslie Dickson, Ross Dickson
 General Manager, CFO: Andrew Morrow

EDITORIAL
NEWS REPORTERS
 Stuart Benson, Jesse Cnockaert, Riddhi Kachhela,
 Irem Koca, and Neil Moss
ENGAGEMENT EDITOR
 Christina Leadlay
PHOTOGRAPHERS
 Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster
EDITORIAL CARTOONIST
 Michael de Adder
COLUMNISTS
 Andrew Caddell, John Chenier,
 Sheila Copps, David Crane, Jim Creskey,
 Gwynne Dyer, Matt Gurney, Michael Harris,
 Erica Ifill, Joe Jordan, Rose LeMay, Alex Marland,
 Arthur Milnes, Tim Powers, Susan Riley,
 Ken Rubin, Josie Sabatino, Bhagwant Sandhu,
 Evan Sotiropoulos, Scott Taylor, Lori Turnbull,
 Nelson Wiseman, and Les Whittington

ADVERTISING
**VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND
 MULTIMEDIA SALES**
 Steve MacDonald
**DIRECTORS OF BUSINESS
 DEVELOPMENT**
 Ulle Baum, Craig Caldwell, Erveina Gosalci, and
 Martin Reaume

DIGITAL AND DESIGN
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER
 David Little
SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER
 Nick Vakulenko
DIGITAL AND PRODUCTION MANAGER
 Joey Sabourin
SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER
 Neena Singhal
GRAPHIC DESIGNER
 Naomi Wildeboer

ADMINISTRATION
HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER
 Tracey Wale

SUBSCRIPTIONS
MARKETING DIRECTOR
 Chris Rivoire
**LOYALTY AND
 SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER**
 Melanie Grant
OFFICE AND CIRCULATION MANAGER
 Irma Guarneros
SALES CONSULTANTS
 Brendan MacKay
 Puran Guram

DELIVERY INQUIRIES
 circulation@hilltimes.com
 613-688-8821

Published every Monday and
 Wednesday by Hill Times
 Publishing Inc.

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

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

Publications Mail Agreement No. 40068926
 RETURN UNDELIVERABLE CANADIAN
 ADDRESSES TO: CIRCULATION DEPT.
 246 Queen Street Suite 200, Ottawa, ON
 K1P 5E4



Editorial

Editorial

Canada must stay united for this fight of our lives

Shortly after winning the Liberal leadership on March 9, Mark Carney told the party faithful: “I know that these are dark days. Dark days brought on by a country we can no longer trust.”

Outgoing prime minister Justin Trudeau put it more bluntly. He said U.S. President Donald Trump “wants a total collapse of the Canadian economy because that’ll make it easier to annex us.”

It is surreal to see an American president openly and repeatedly insult our country, our electoral system, and undermine our political leaders, while also putting the economic screws to us in the hope we give in to his annexation demands.

But this is where we are in March 2025. And it’s going to take an insurmountable level of political leadership, political skills, and national unity to get this country through the next four years, united and strong.

For the last 80 or so years, the United States and Canada have shared the longest undefended land border, and we have been the closest of allies. Canada has been one of America’s most reliable partners.

But Trump, in less than two months on the job, has destroyed that relationship. He has also disrupted the global order by siding with Russian dictator Vladimir Putin—instead of Ukraine’s democratically elected Volodymyr Zelenskyy—in the conflict in Europe; by launching trade wars and levying steep tariffs on Canada, Mexico, and

the European Union; and by declaring that he will take over Greenland and Panama, and will annex Canada.

It’s all part of Trump’s push for dominance in the Western Hemisphere. Canada happens to be in the way of these ambitions.

Alasdair Roberts, author of *The Adaptable Country: How Canada Can Survive the Twenty-First Century*, said he believes Trump wants to politically divide our country and make it economically weak, forcing it to be a “client state.” Moreover, he said, in the coming years, our political systems could collapse and Canada, specifically, will be in an especially difficult situation as climate change intensifies.

“For its population, Canada has a disproportionate share of the world’s habitable and arable land, fresh water, and other critical resources. This will become even more true as the planet warms. We shouldn’t expect that international law or diplomatic norms will deter other countries from taking the steps they consider necessary for national survival.”

The U.S. government can no longer be trusted, and Trump may not actually have a strategy. But it’s up to our political, business, and civil society leaders to work together and to push back against the U.S. government, even if it means hard times for Canada. Trump has given us a massive wake-up call to the future. It’s up to us to keep our country together.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

In a nuclear-armed world, any conflict can turn into a nuclear war: Canadian Coalition for Nuclear Responsibility

Re: “Time for Canada to reconsider its own nuclear deterrent,” (*The Hill Times*, March 10). Responding to U.S. President Donald Trump’s punitive behaviour towards Canada, author Jamie Carroll suggests Canada should “buy” nuclear weapons from France. Presumably he is willing to tear up the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT). It forbids any Nuclear Weapons State from transferring such weapons to any recipient whatsoever. Would Canada follow North Korea’s lead by formally withdrawing from the NPT, as the latter did in 2003? That would likely induce non-nuclear weapons states to abandon a treaty that Canada once promoted as a cornerstone of nuclear non-proliferation efforts.

Carroll apparently thinks that nuclear-armed cruise missiles could be usefully deployed in Canada to defend northern territories from attack by nuclear-armed states like Russia, China, or even India. How would that work? A cruise missile can carry a conventional explosive or a nuclear bomb. In the event of military confrontation, Canada’s Arctic adversary would interpret the launching of any cruise mis-

sile by Canada as a nuclear attack, even if it were not. The MAD doctrine of Mutually Assured Destruction means the adversary will respond with its own nuclear counter-attack. That’s how an “accidental nuclear war” starts.

India’s nuclear weapons capability was launched by Canada’s gift of a small research reactor—a copy of Chalk River’s NRX design. Plutonium from that reactor was used in India’s first atomic bomb, detonated in 1974. Canada’s main political parties are now hoping to sell similarly small reactors overseas, giving many non-nuclear countries access to plutonium and empowering them to develop their nuclear weapons capability. The only thing to prevent this is the international “safeguards” that spring from NPT.

In a nuclear-armed world, any conflict can turn into a nuclear war. Nobody knows how to keep such a war limited. Undermining the NPT leads not to enhanced security but to unparalleled catastrophe. Mr. Carroll is not thinking things through.

**Gordon Edwards
 President,
 Canadian Coalition for
 Nuclear Responsibility**

Canada should have one national body looking after health care: letter writer

We elect governments and pay taxes so the governments can do things that we as individuals, cannot do: build hospitals, schools, pave roads and provide security.

If we have one body to purchase medical equipment and everything else, then the cost would be less expensive than 13 independents, or 1,300 independents. My question is why do we not have one national body looking after our health care? Would it not be so much cheaper?

Each province wants to run their own health-care system, but could they not do it through a co-operative body?

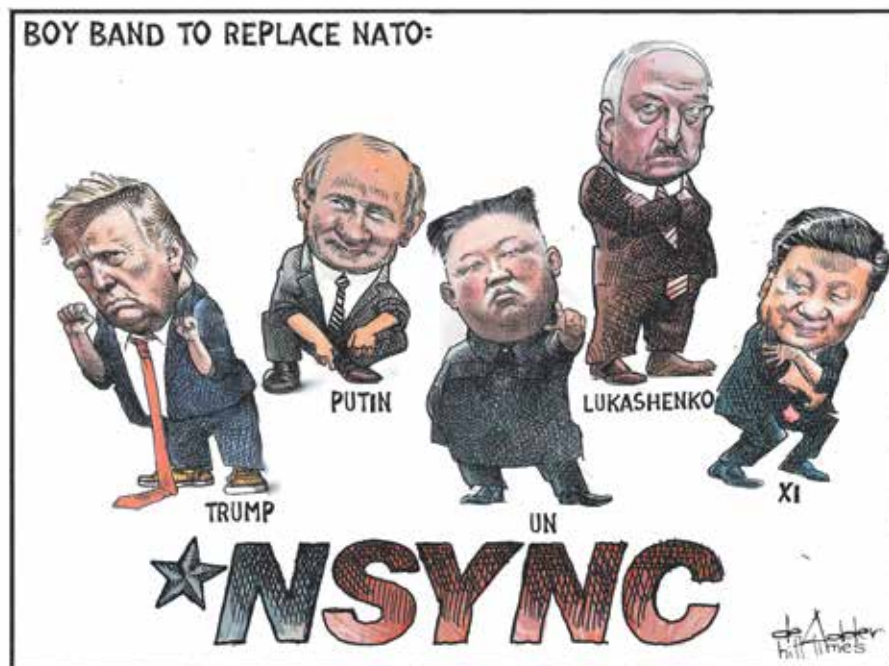
What is even more distressing is some provinces

want to break it down into many private-sector units negating any bulk savings, and throwing in profit margins and shareholders’ return on investments.

Here in Alberta, we are going through accusations, enquiries, investigations, restructuring, legal challenges, buy-outs, and court cases that cost money and we are paying for all of it. We, as taxpayers, pay for every side in this power struggle and political gamesmanship.

Perhaps we could find some fiscally prudent adults to work this out? I would support them.

**Garfield Marks
 Red Deer, Alta.**



COMMENT

Canada needs all elbows up!

If this fight continues, the federal government may have to consider overriding Danielle Smith's objections. The pain of tariffs needs to be shared across the country. If Ontario and Quebec are facing tariffs on steel, aluminum and automobiles, every province has to do their part.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—The roller-coaster ride facing our country is unlikely to end soon.

U.S. President Donald Trump is doubling down on his false claims that Canada is responsible for the tariff wars engulfing both countries.

And he continues to repeat that Canada's best economic path would be to simply join the United States. Trump has been publicly questioning the boundaries between the two countries, and the organizations that man-



Canadian comedian Mike Myers, pictured March 1, 2025, on *Saturday Night Live*, pointed to his raised left elbow and mouthed, 'Elbows up!' The phrase is inspired by Canadian hockey legend Gordie Howe, who was known for fighting with his elbows up to defend himself. The words are now Canada's rallying cry against U.S. President Donald Trump. Screen shot courtesy of *Saturday Night Live*/YouTube

age boundary issues and shared watersheds.

The International Boundary Commission has maintained the integrity of the border since a treaty signed in 1925. The current boundary was surveyed and demarcated in 1908. Since that time, there has been zero claim that the border designation is wrong.

But we are dealing with a president who thinks he can rename the Gulf of Mexico simply by executive order.

He can also decide that news organizations refusing to carry the Gulf of America geographic designation will no longer be part of the White House press pool.

Reuters and the Associated Press have both been kept out of White House briefings for not bowing to the president's order.

The White House Correspondence Association used to be responsible for managing the media membership and presidential pool access. It has criticized the change in policy, but Trump has said he wants new media included.

The president has also decided to further snuff out free speech by authorizing U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement to deport anyone in the country on a temporary permit who participates in legal demonstrations.

So much for America's First Amendment guaranteeing free speech.

Trump's disrespect for Canada continues apace, even though the vast majority of Canadians have made it very clear that they are not interested in becoming the 51st state.

The only organized group that seems lukewarm to the fight for Canada is the truckers' Ottawa occupation group.

Leader Tamara Lich—still awaiting the verdict in her trial for mischief, intimidation and counselling people to break the law—went on social media to complain about the slogan "Elbows Up," calling it "the stupidest slogan I ever heard of."

Mike Myers didn't agree with her. In his recent appearance on *Saturday Night Live*, the Canadian comedian launched the "elbows up" movement after playing Elon Musk on the show. At the very end of the episode, Myers opened his vest, showing his 'Canada Is Not For Sale' T-shirt, and mouthed the words "elbows up" message while crooking his left elbow up. Every Canadian knew exactly what he meant. #Elbows Up became a rallying cry that Liberal Leader Mark Carney referenced in his victory speech at the party convention last weekend, as did outgoing prime minister Justin Trudeau.

Some of the Liberal government's more vocal opponents don't like the unity message. It will be interesting to see how the leader of the official opposition manages this national consensus.

Pierre Poilievre has expended so much political energy to convince people that Canada is broken that it is tough for him to embrace a national, united fight for the country.

His core support draws from anti-vax truckers and if he appears to be too pro-Canada, that could cost him dearly. Alberta Premier Danielle

Smith has made it clear she will risk nothing in her tariff fight.

While most other premiers appear focused on this existential fight of our lives, Smith heads off to Florida March 27 to headline a conservative event with Ben Shapiro, a strong supporter of the plan to overrun our nation.

"When we take over Canada, you will be expelled to Panama to work the canal," he wrote in a social post to prime minister Justin Trudeau in January.

Alberta New Democratic Party Leader Naheed Nenshi called Smith's participation in the US\$1,500 ticketed event, "Despicable. These are not the kind of people that Albertans want her associating with," Nenshi told reporters.

Smith defended her participation, saying she will be influencing millions of followers on Shapiro's social media account.

The premier has also been on Breitbart, saying she is getting the message out, but unlike Ontario Premier Doug Ford, her main strategy appears to be appeasement.

Smith repeatedly states that Alberta will not retaliate with oil and gas tariffs, even though the brief threat of electricity tariffication got Trump's attention.

If this fight continues, the federal government may have to consider overriding her objections. The pain of tariffs needs to be shared across the country. If Ontario and Quebec are facing tariffs on steel, aluminum and automobiles, every province has to do their part.

A fuel tariff would be immediate cause a hike in gasoline prices south of the border. Gas-guzzling pro-Trump truckers would not be amused.

Canada needs all elbows up!
Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister, and a former deputy prime minister.

The Hill Times

Conservative attack ad lacks authenticity

To stand up to Trump, the Conservatives should say: 'Canada needs a brawler like Poilievre, not a banker like Carney.'

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Given the nature of the political ads currently flooding our TV airwaves, you could be forgiven for thinking that U.S. President Donald Trump would be a candidate in the next Canadian federal election.

After all, so many of the ads I've seen—from Liberals, from Conservatives, and from third-

party organizations—put Trump in a starring role, all of them featuring menacing images of the U.S. president glowering at the viewer from the screen.

And it's not hard to see why this is happening.

Simply put, Trump has become our *bête noire*; he's to Canada what Emperor Palpatine was to the Rebel Alliance in *Star Wars*.

Basically, Canadians either hate or fear Trump, and those are the two most powerful motivating emotions in politics.

Thus, it's understandable that political parties are seeking to tap into those emotions by designing ads to exploit the public's anti-Trump mood.

More specifically, their respective goal is to link Trump to their political opponent.

Yet, just inserting Trump into a political ad doesn't mean it'll automatically be persuasive.

For example, the Conservative Party is currently running a Trump ad on television that I don't think works very well.

It starts off with a scary photo of Trump, as a narrator ominously declares, "Trump wants our jobs." Then the viewer is presented with an unflattering photo of Liberal leader Mark Carney whom, the narrator warns, is "the man to help" Trump.

How does Carney help Trump?

Well, according to the ad, Carney's favoured economic policies are driving Canadian jobs south of the border, plus Carney moved his company's headquarters from Canada to New York.

Now, while sticking Carney with the stigma of being a man who helps our enemy is effective rhetoric, I still think the Conservative approach is flawed.

Why?

Well, to be effective, a political ad must align with the public's pre-existing perceptions so that its message will flow unhindered into a consumer's mind, making it more likely to stick.

I'd argue the Conservative Trump-Carney TV ad I noted

above doesn't do that; in fact, it's counter-intuitive.

Sure, maybe Canadians don't know a lot about Carney, but what they likely do know is that he's a former international banker; in other words, he's a member of the world's financial elite, an intellectual, an expert in global economics.

In short, I suspect the default position for most Canadian voters is that Carney's not the kind of guy who—either through incompetence or by design—would "help" Trump by driving jobs into the United States.

He's just too smart for that.

Hence, I'd argue most political consumers will reject the Conservative ad, if only on a subconscious level, because it won't seem rooted in reality.

It'd be as if the Liberals ran an attack ad proclaiming that Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre was soft on crime or that he pandered to woke activists.

Of course, this is not to say the Conservatives can't use Trump's persona to their political advantage, but to do so effectively, their message must come across as authentic.

For instance, I'd argue a better approach would be for the Conservatives to practise a little political jiu-jitsu in their messaging about Carney, turning his perceived strengths against him.

To do this, I'd put out an ad suggesting that Carney is an intellectual more accustomed to the refined and polite gatherings of international commerce than he is to the rough-and-tumble world of political street fighting.

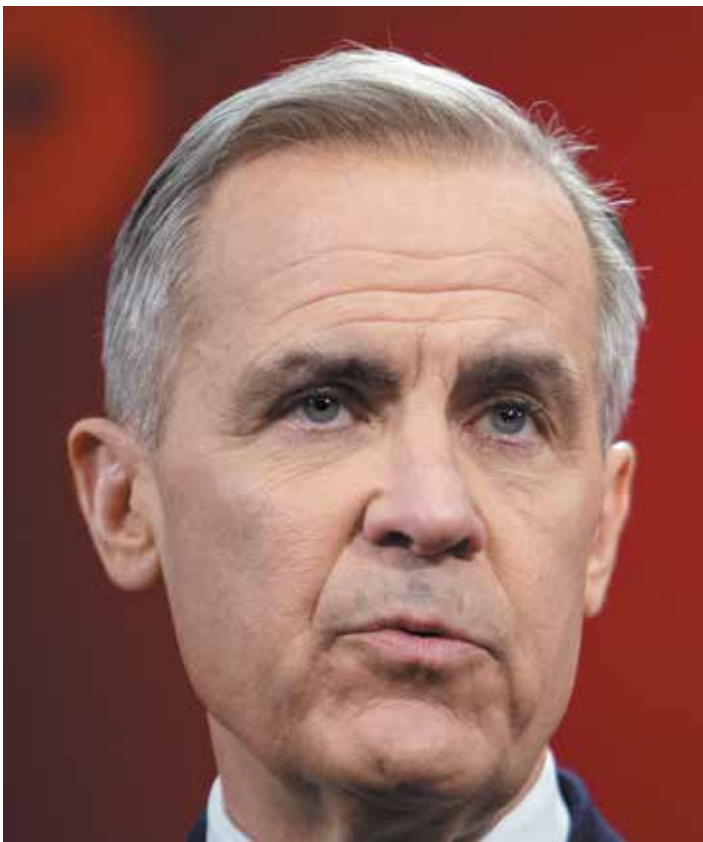
To stand up to Trump, the Conservatives should say: "Canada needs a brawler like Poilievre, not a banker like Carney."

That way the Conservative message would be going with the grain, not against it.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

COMMENT



On paper, Liberal Leader Mark Carney, left, has the clear advantage of having navigated the 2008 financial crisis in Canada, and in the post-Brexit turbulence in the U.K. But does he have the retail political skills? Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre clearly has demonstrated considerable retail political skills, writes Michael Harris. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Here's why. Canadian politics has been turned upside down by Trump. That once-upon-a-time 24-point lead in the polls favouring the Conservatives has vanished. Depending on which polls you look at these days, the Tories are either slightly ahead or slightly behind the Liberals. In other words, what looked just a few weeks ago to be a lop-sided victory for the Conservatives at the next election is now a competitive contest. Poilievre should understand something. With their sovereignty at stake, Canadians are not interested in how much Carney's sneakers cost. Or who he happens to be standing beside when someone snaps a photo. Or how much money he has. What they care about is whether he has the chops to stand up to Trump and his vengeful bullying. For Carney, that means moving beyond his impressive resumé and persuading Canadians that he is the person for the job. As Ontario Premier Doug Ford recently said, Carney knows more about finances than anyone—something to be expected of the former governor of the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England. But does he have the retail political skills to make the sale?

Poilievre has clearly demonstrated his considerable retail political skills. You don't get elected as an MP seven times in a row by accident. Or serve in Parliament for more than 20 years.

But like Carney, Poilievre must show Canadians that there is more to him than slander, slogans, and the smirk. He has to convince voters that he is the best choice to stand up to Trump and defend Canada.

On paper, Carney has the clear advantage. His talents have been road-tested in the 2008 financial crisis in Canada, and in the turbulence of the post-Brexit period in the United Kingdom.

Carney also holds something of a political ace. Former Conservative PM Stephen Harper appointed him governor of the Bank of Canada, and then subsequently asked Carney to be his finance minister. So it gets a bit sticky for Poilievre to now question his opponent's credentials.

And there is another disadvantage facing Poilievre. Trump's threats have ignited Canadian nationalism. But, according to an Angus Reid poll, 20 per cent of those who voted Conservative in the 2021 election would vote to join the U.S.

Nor does it help the Conservative leader that some of his admirers are part of the Trumpian hard right. Endorsements from the likes of Musk, American billionaire Bill Ackman, and U.S. radio host Alex Jones are unlikely to impress Canadians worried about Trump's agenda for this country.

Both leaders of the mainstream parties need to demonstrate their credentials for the top job, and their plan to rebuff Trump. An election is the best way for that to happen.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist. The Hill Times

For Carney and Poilievre, it's go time

Both leaders of the mainstream parties need to demonstrate their credentials for the top job, and their plan to rebuff Donald Trump. An election is the best way for that to happen.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Despite the economic crisis triggered by U.S. President Donald Trump's trade war, Canada needs to hold a federal election as soon as possible. It may be inconvenient, but it is necessary.

The main reason is the next four years with Trump as the U.S. president. Canadians need to decide who is best equipped to deal with the malignant narcissist who currently holds the White House and every other branch of the American federal government. And they need to give that person a clear mandate.

There is a degree of urgency to the task of putting our political

house in order. It was one thing to watch Trump deconstruct democracy south of the border.

To watch him take a wrecking ball to America's federal public service.

To watch him usurp the authority of Congress and its power of the purse.

To watch him allow Tesla the Terrible—otherwise known as Elon Musk—to fire hundreds of thousands of people as if they were useless hangers-on, mere parasites on the public purse.

To watch the president gut the U.S. Department of Education, slash the budgets of entitlement programs like social security and medicare, under the transparent ruse of cleaning up fraud and corruption.

To watch him undermine the justice system by trashing judges who rule against his ongoing power grab for the executive branch.

That is all America's business to be decided by Americans at the polls. If they choose to elect a dictator, so be it. As former U.S. president Thomas Jefferson said, the government that you elect is the government you deserve.

But things have changed dramatically outside the scope of American domestic politics. Trump has jumped the track and has now become a menace to the rest of the world. His heavy-handed and foolhardy tariffs are sowing chaos in Canada, Mexico, and now the European Union.

“ Things have changed dramatically outside the scope of American domestic politics. Trump has jumped the track and has now become a menace to the rest of the world. His heavy-handed and foolhardy tariffs are sowing chaos in Canada, Mexico, and now the European Union.

Trump's mercenary approach to the Western alliance is threatening NATO. His openly declared desire to acquire new territory for the United States—including annexing Canada—is grotesque and unacceptable. His incompetence is only exceeded by his malice.

Not only do we need an election to face the hitherto unimaginable threat of a hostile America, but also Canadians need to decide how that election will be fought.

Will it be a riveting event, engaging the country at the level of policy and information? Or will it descend into an exercise in political mud-wrestling of the sort that is all the rage in the U.S.

For now—and hopefully this will change—the Conservative Party of Canada has been mimicking the Trumpian style. Many of Pierre Poilievre's attacks on then-prime minister Justin Trudeau were deeply personal. And he didn't waste any time transferring the trash talk to Mark Carney when he became Liberal leader on March 9. Suddenly, the new PM was “Sneaky Carney.”

Giving insulting nicknames to political opponents is vintage Trump. Remember “Crooked Hilary,” “Sleepy Joe,” and “Comrade Kamala?” The Conservative leader may be unloading on a personal basis because that tactic not only drove Trudeau to resign, it also gave the CPC a 24-point lead in the polls for more than 18 months. So why change?

Don't let Maple MAGAs dictate Canada's path

Unfortunately, there are many eager to use Trump's tariff threats as cover to advance a 'maple-MAGA' agenda that includes gutting Canadian environmental protections and securing new subsidies for upstream oil and gas.

Keith Stewart

Opinion



To protect the people and places that we love, we can't allow American President Donald Trump's bullying to set the political agenda here in Canada. He would love it if we followed him in abandoning hard-fought, years-long efforts to deal with real cri-



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and Liberal Leader Mark Carney. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia

ses like climate change in favour of misinformation-fuelled, fake crises like paper straws. Instead, we should build the green homes, power grid, and transportation systems that Trump so despises.

Unfortunately, there are many eager to use Trump's tariff threats as cover to advance a 'maple-MAGA' agenda that includes gutting Canadian environmental protections and securing new subsidies for upstream oil and gas. This includes a domestic lobbying campaign and collaboration with American far-right organizations like the Heritage Foundation, the principal architect of Project 2025 plan that has served as the blueprint for the Trump administration's recent policy moves.

Tim Egan, president and CEO of the Canadian Gas Association, was a featured speaker at the most recent Heritage Foundation-organized 'Whose World Order?' conference. As one of the

most powerful fossil fuel lobbyists in Canada, he would know that the Heritage Foundation is famous for falsely asserting that greenhouse gas emissions from fossil fuel burning present no harm to our well-being, so there is no justification for government intervention to curtail these emissions. Right on cue, Egan's speech never acknowledged climate change as a threat that must be addressed. Instead, he attacked the goal of achieving net-zero carbon emissions—the official target of 102 countries including Canada—as “deeply ideological” and “the language of religion not commerce and the fervour for it is more cult-like than it is religious.”

Back at home, the CEOs of pipeline giants Enbridge and TC Energy are calling for a major rollback of Canadian environmental law while their colleagues demand taxpayers foot the bill for new pipelines. They want taxpayers—who already sunk \$34-billion

into building the TransCanada Expansion pipeline—to take the risk because they know there's no business case for new pipelines. We're also seeing fake grassroots groups with close ties to the oil industry pop up, echoing MAGA-style attacks on environmental advocates.

Canadian banks have already broken the first rule of resisting authoritarian regimes: they are obeying in advance. Within two weeks of Trump's inauguration, all the big banks had quit the Net Zero Banking Alliance out of fear of Republican reprisals.

Federal Liberal politicians are wavering in the face of the onslaught, while Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has emerged as the biggest supporter of Trump-style policies to boost fossil fuels while hobbling renewable energy. Poilievre is famous for his “Axe the Carbon Tax” slogan, but fewer know that he has promised a gutting of Canada's climate plan that would make Trump jealous. This includes killing the oil and gas pollution cap, the phase-out of gas-powered cars, the clean electricity regulation, the low-carbon fuel rule, and the requirement to consider climate impacts when assessing mega-projects.

There is another path forward. Canada could follow the example

of Europe, which doubled down on renewable energy when Russia tried to use fossil fuel exports as a weapon.

Rather than spending tens of billions more of public money on another pipeline for already-wealthy oil companies, we could be the stable, predictable alternative for clean-energy investments fleeing the United States. We could put thousands of Canadians to work building green, affordable homes using sustainably-harvested home-grown lumber. Homes heated and cooled by high-efficiency heat pumps powered by rooftop solar panels and a modernized East-West electrical grid that links clean power sources across the country. We could then travel to and from these homes using pollution-free, electrified transportation systems.

This would be good news for our pocketbooks and the planet. As an added bonus, it would enrage Trump.

That could be almost as much fun as watching Team Canada captain Connor McDavid score in overtime.

Keith Stewart is a senior energy strategist with Greenpeace Canada, and teaches a course on energy and environmental policy at the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

Transform Your Career with IOG's Learning Opportunities

Ready to advance your public service career? The Institute on Governance is now accepting registrations for **Leadership Programs** and **virtual courses** designed to equip public servants with the skills needed for greater effectiveness and career growth.

Explore the **IOG's Spring Calendar** for a range of **online programs** available for immediate registration.

Register today for an IOG Leadership Program or Virtual Course:

www.iog.ca



Applying good governance to serve Canadians better.

OPINION



Mark Carney, the economic technocrat who plunged into political street-fighting, will become the 24th prime minister of Canada at a time when the very existence of the country is challenged by a predatory American president. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ferent to human suffering and can be blind to our greatest needs.”

Then he reveals the deep conviction that has driven him into politics: “That’s why politicians who worship the market tend to deliver policies that hurt people, and those who default to *laissez faire* leave us unprepared for the future. Put simply, markets don’t have values, people do.”

He wants to channel the dynamism of markets to create value for all, and to do this by reinforcing the core values of solidarity, fairness, responsibility, resilience, sustainability and humility. Carney seeks to advance distributive justice, equality of opportunity, and fairness across generations. These are powerful ideas to make a more livable planet.

The word “sustainability” runs through his book. He says we must develop a “clean economy” that draws the continued input of private investors. To do this, he sets out a 10-point plan for Canada on growth, borrowing and productivity. The seeds of the new Liberal platform, with Carney in charge, are planted in *Value(s)*. “It’s our job to make our markets work for all Canadians,” he writes.

Social justice permeates Carney’s thinking, but he writes in the terse manner of the boardroom. It is clear he has immense knowledge of the market and banking systems, and how they would be strengthened by making a more livable life for vulnerable people—but can he slam that point home?

This is a man who sees politics as a vocation, a medium to lift up the common good. He is touching a nerve in the fabric of Canada, and that is why people are beginning to respond to him. He gives them hope that fairness in life can be achieved.

If the Canadian people were to elect Carney, they would have a leader who shows signs of operating in the tradition of Pearsonian diplomacy. Lester “Mike” Pearson, our 14th prime minister, was also a technocrat before entering politics where he distinguished himself at home by producing medicare and the Canadian flag, and abroad by solving the Suez crisis with a soft diplomatic touch.

Today’s politics are nastier than in Pearson’s time. To succeed in the political maelstrom, Carney must show he is “tough.” Poilievre relishes cloaking himself this way, but it is not natural terrain for Carney. He has to withstand—and answer back—the derisive insults that Poilievre is hurling at him; and he has to show Trump that economic warfare against Canada hurts America’s interests, while at the same time not alienating a supreme egotist.

This calls for diplomacy that rises above the fray. That’s what Pearson had. Carney, the thinker, is not comfortable in the lion’s den, but if he survives these dehumanizing battles, he will lift up the humanity of all Canadians: high drama indeed.

Former Senator Douglas Roche is the author of *Keep Hope Alive: Essays for a War-free World, which includes a Post-script, “Hope in the Era of Trump”* (Amazon).

The Hill Times

Carney, the thinker, enters the lion’s den

If Mark Carney survives these dehumanizing battles, he will lift up Canadians: high drama indeed.

Douglas Roche



Opinion

EDMONTON—Mark Carney, the economic technocrat who plunged into political street-fighting, will become Canada’s 24th prime minister at a time when the country’s very existence is challenged by a predatory American president. Hollywood could scarcely have dreamed up the political scenario now playing out: a star central banker, who believes strongly that the market should be infused with social justice values, taking on both a slogan-spouting political opponent at home and a psychopathic bully heading the adjoining country we used to call our best friend.

This is a drama for the ages.

It is playing out on several levels. First, who do Canadians want to govern them: the 60-year-old Carney—whose resumé of accomplishments such as governor of both the Bank of Canada and Bank of England as well as UN adviser on climate change is staggeringly long—or the 45-year-old Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, who has spent the past 21 years as a Member of Parliament, rising to minister of two departments: democratic reform, and employment and social development?

Second, which of these two men can stand up most effectively to U.S. President Donald Trump, who has torn up the friendship agreements between his country and Canada, and seeks to impose a range of crippling tariffs us for no good reason? Third, who can best forge a unified Canadian response to the domestic economic threat, and deal most effectively with the European countries that are aghast at how Trump is blowing up the rules-based international order put in place after the Second World War to keep the peace?

No Canadian prime minister in modern history has had to deal with such a fraught agenda. At the moment, everyone is focused on the election choice: Carney or Poilievre. The usual questions are

“
NO CANADIAN
PRIME MINISTER IN
MODERN HISTORY
HAS HAD TO DEAL
WITH SUCH A
FRAUGHT
AGENDA.”

being examined by the pundits: which of the two main contenders is “stronger”? Who is the better campaigner? The better debater? Will it be a majority or minority government for whoever wins?

These questions fascinate us, but concentration on the horse race obscures a fundamental question crying out for answer: what are the basic beliefs of the new prime minister, Carney, who has entered the political arena for the first time in his life, and is not known by the wider public? Aside from a luminous pedigree, what does he stand for? Who is he?

The answers to these questions are contained in Carney’s book, *Value(s): Building a Better World for All*, which he wrote during the pandemic and published in 2021. This 507-page treatise, which won the National Business Book Award, is not bedside reading. It is a formidable examination of how market fundamentalism has corroded social values and fostered the crises of our time, such as global warming and health-care capacity.

“Having worked at the centre of markets all my professional life,” Carney writes, “I know they are the most powerful instrument we’ve ever created. Their energy and dynamism can be harnessed and directed to service greater purposes. But markets are indif-



A Canadian CF-18 fighter aircraft, pictured. The Canadian Forces could use the Resolute Bay facility to support fighter operations, long-range maritime patrol aircraft and unmanned arial vehicles used for Arctic surveillance. A long-range air defence radar would add to the North Warning System, writes Pierre Leblanc. Photograph courtesy of Canadian Forces/DND

Canadian Forces Base Resolute Bay is a better choice

Given the new adversarial relationship with the U.S. and our inability to trust any bilateral or international treaty they would sign, Canada would be wise to invest seriously in our own defence.

Pierre Leblanc



Opinion

OTTAWA—The leader of the Conservative Party has announced his intention to build a Canadian Forces base in Iqaluit, Nunavut, to increase our security in the Arctic. I am puzzled. Our present enemy is Russia. One of the Russian threats to NORAD is from the North. Iqaluit is some 2,100 kilometres from Canadian Forces Station Alert. It is also some 1,500 kilometers from the Northwest Passage. The Northwest Passage is within the internal waters of Canada, but that position may well be challenged given the present collapsing of the international rules-based order. More puzzling is that the

pace threat for the United States and Canada is China.

Iqaluit is some 2,400 kilometres from the western edge of the Arctic Archipelago, and 200 nautical miles to the edge of our western exclusive economic zone. The latter could see an addition of hundreds of kilometres of continental shelf once our Arctic claims are accepted. Most of the recent interceptions of Russian and Chinese bombers have been north of Alaska. It does not make sense to build a base on the East Coast when the main threat will be thousands of kilometres on our Western Coast. True, Iqaluit has defence infrastructure on which to build. It has a small port, a Forward Operating Location for the CF-18, and a long runway. However, the lay of the land will make it costly to increase all the facilities required to support a large increase in permanent personnel. CFB Iqaluit would be hard pressed to support air operations on our western flank. It is 2,300 kilometres from the centre of the archipelago making refuelling of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard challenging at best.

Inuvik could have been a better western location since it has a runway being upgraded for the CF-35 and it has a Forward Operating Location on which to build upon. The community there is large enough to absorb an important influx of personnel. It is connected by road to southern Canada. Unfortunately, it does not have access to a proper, deep-sea port. Although there is now

a road connecting Inuvik and Tuktoyaktuk on the Arctic Ocean, the ocean is very shallow to a distance of about 25 kilometres which prevents the construction of a deep-sea port. Tuktoyaktuk is also threatened by the rise of the ocean, and is considered for relocation to higher ground.

As previously mentioned, Resolute Bay is—in my opinion—a better strategic location. To start with, it is sitting on both the classical Northwest Passage and the most used of the seven possible transit routes. Thus, the vast majority of the shipping sails by Resolute Bay. The channel at that point is only about 35 kilometres, and is easily monitored both above and below the surface. The lay of the land would make it easy to expand the already existing federal facilities. It would reduce the 2,900-kilometre gap between our CF-18 Forward Operation Locations in Inuvik and Iqaluit. Being further north, it would be better able to support fighter operations up to Canadian Forces Alert at the northern tip of Ellesmere Island. From Resolute Bay it would also be easier to monitor activity in our Arctic, as well as support search and rescue, environmental response, and safety and security operations. Deployment time of resources from Resolute Bay would be approximately the same in all directions of the Archipelago.

On several occasions, I recommended that Resolute Bay be further developed to host a multi-departmental facility that would be anchored on an

all-seasons paved runway supported by modern instrumented approaches and a long-range air defence radar to support fighter operations. The facility could also host a network of sub-surface monitoring devices, a polar orbit satellite download antenna farm, a protected docking facility and a ship and aircraft refuelling capability. This multi-purpose facility would operate in part on a seasonal basis. During the active shipping season, the facility would see a peak in operations. Some personnel would be permanently stationed in Resolute Bay while others would be added to deal with increased seasonal activity.

The Canadian Forces could use the facility to support fighter operations, long-range maritime patrol aircraft and unmanned arial vehicles (drone) used for Arctic surveillance. A long-range air defence radar would add to the North Warning System and the planned northern over the horizon radars. The enhanced runway and related facilities would support the Canadian Forces' and Coast Guard's Search and Rescue Operations, and increase our ability to deliver under the Arctic Council's Agreement on Cooperation on Aeronautical and Maritime Search and Rescue. The Resolute Bay location would also facilitate the deployment of boarding parties ready to deal with rogue vessels attempting to run the Northwest Passage such as that New Zealand sailboat that ran the Northwest Passage despite a prohibition due to COVID risk to Inuit communities.

An appropriate fuel-tank farm would permit Resolute Bay to become a refuelling facility to support the operations of the Royal Canadian Navy and the Canadian Coast Guard. The latter already uses Resolute Bay to store environmental response kits and to effect crew changes and resupply.

Transport Canada's National Aerial Surveillance Program could use the facilities for refuelling and repairs. NAV Canada could utilize the data of the

air defence radar in support of transpolar flights depending on the situation with Russia. Resolute Bay airport could become an alternate airport for such flights, and increase alternate options for local traffic.

Natural Resources Canada already uses Resolute Bay to provide weather services, and to support research in the Arctic through its Polar Continental Shelf Program. It is recognized that we lack a solid understanding of global warming as it affects the Arctic. To the extent increased research is merited in the Arctic, it would be well supported from an enhanced facility.

The establishment of a multi-purpose facility in Resolute Bay would improve the delivery of services of other government departments such as the RCMP whose members could be deployed to deal with security issues or deployment of their Immediate Reaction Teams as required. The Canada Border Services Agency and Immigration Canada could facilitate the clearing of people who use Resolute Bay as a first point of entry into or exit out of Canada. The growing cruise ship industry has been using Resolute Bay for that purpose for decades, and the number of adventurers is steadily increasing due to the disappearance of the ice. The facility would support the Fisheries and Oceans for their fisheries patrols, and Environment Canada for their ice patrols.

The development of Resolute Bay would potentially generate several commercial opportunities such as a cold-weather testing centre, a liquified natural gas fuel farm to support the many ships that are shifting to this more environmental friendly fuel, the establishment of a satellite download antenna farm similar to the one in Inuvik, and a ship repair shop, as well as grey waters and a garbage storage and disposal facility for the the cruise ship industry and the adventurers who sail the Arctic.

An approach drawing upon the full range of federal and territorial resources would increase opportunities for gainful employment for the people of the Arctic. Many of the operational and support positions could be filled by the residents of Resolute Bay and the adjacent Nunavut communities. Such employment would be challenging, rewarding, and contribute to improving the capacity of northern residents to achieve sustainable development goals in this challenging climatic environment.

The cost of developing this facility can be added to the efforts to increase our defence spending at a time of clear reasons for NATO countries to meet the pledge to invest up to two per cent of GDP in defence spending, or the recently new proposed floor of five per cent of GDP.

Given the new adversarial relationship with the U.S. and our inability to trust any bilateral or international treaty they would sign, Canada would be wise to invest seriously in our own defence.

Colonel (Retired) Pierre Leblanc is a former commander of the Canadian Forces in the Arctic. *The Hill Times*

COMMENT

Who's Tory now?



Newly elected party leader Mark Carney, right, arrives for the Liberal Party caucus meeting in the West Block on March 10, 2025. You don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. In Canada, it is blowing right, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

There is a new Liberal in town, a blue-suit Liberal, and all these ordinary concerns—although climate change is hardly trivial—seem to be set aside in face of a more immediate threat: Donald Trump and his shy surrogate north of the border.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—You don't need to be a weatherman to know which way the wind blows. In Canada, it is blowing right.

That said, if recent polls are reliable, it isn't blowing us directly into the arms of Pierre Poilievre. It is newly appointed Liberal Prime Minister Mark Carney, with his business-friendly rhetoric and vaguely progressive environmental views, who has changed the political climate in this country. That and, of course, U.S. President Donald Trump, who is daily giving right-wing

lunacy a bad name. So we're moving right, but not off the cliff.

What these shifting currents mean for Canada in terms of climate change, the cost of housing, social supports, gender and income parity, and minority rights remains ambiguous. But we are about to find out.

On a good day, the ideological shadings among our major political parties "run the gamut from A to B," in American wit Dorothy Parker's famous comment. (She was referring to a stage performance by a youthful Katherine Hepburn.)

It is particularly hard to discern the difference between blue Liberals (a category that would include Carney) and Red Tories, a near-extinct political species that may be on the brink of a modest comeback. Fiscally conservative, socially liberal is the shorthand, although it is a messy definition at best.

Undenied reports suggest that Carney, or his team, approached former federal Progressive Conservative leader and former Liberal premier of Quebec, Jean Charest, although Charest has confessed to having no interest in a cabinet post. Another potential recruit is former British Columbia premier and political gadabout Christy Clark, who has toyed with running in both Liberal and Conservative federal leadership races in recent years.

To be kind, that displays considerable ideological flexibility. More concerning is that Clark has been caught in an easily disproven lie when she denied she had purchased a Conservative Party membership to vote for

Charest in the party's 2022 leadership vote. She later declared herself a "one-day" Conservative, emphasizing the need to defeat Poilievre. Notwithstanding that, and lingering resentment of her regime in B.C., she is actively considering representing Carney's team in a Vancouver riding in the pending election.

Then there is Carney's amicable relationship with Stephen Harper and his finance minister, the late Jim Flaherty, when Carney was governor of the Bank of Canada. Harper's warm praise when Carney was recruited by the Bank of England to take the reins there puts Poilievre in a difficult spot. If Carney is only Justin in sensible socks, why did Poilievre's mentor—Harper—admire him so much?

(Harper since released a statement accusing the Carney campaign of trying to overshadow Flaherty's work in helping Canada survive the 2008 recession. But it had all the sincerity of a forced confession. And it didn't help Poilievre. There are photos.)

So, how conservative is Carney? Depends on what you mean by "conservative." It's a moving target. Older people will remember when the Progressive Conservative label embraced the likes of Alberta premier Peter Lougheed; Ontario premier Bill Davis; prime ministers Joe Clark, Brian Mulroney and Kim Campbell: fiscally conservative, and, on social issues, either liberal or dis-inclined to meddle in private lives.

There also existed a brace of Atlantic-Canadian premiers

who were serious about promoting business investment in their chronically challenged provinces, but not so obsessed with pronouns. There are still pockets of virulent social conservatism in the Maritimes—witness departed New Brunswick premier Blaine Higgs—but the key word here is "departed." Historically, conservatives from Eastern and Central Canada (except for Ontario's Mike Harris) have been a milder variant.

But the conservative movement in Canada forever changed with the arrival of the icy, ideological Harper, followed by the sharp-tongued, reflexively-partisan, vengeance-driven Poilievre. Unlike Ontario premier Doug Ford, an old-school Progressive Conservative, Poilievre seems genetically incapable of collaborating, even in a national crisis. After a call with Carney during the ongoing tariff crisis, Ford—who has mostly steered clear of Poilievre—said of the new Liberal prime minister: "He's a very bright individual. He understands finances like no other person."

But the most puzzling metric is where the two major parties stand on our relationship with the U.S. During the 1988 federal election, the Liberals, then led by John Turner, fought Mulroney's first free trade deal with the United States, arguing that it would end up erasing the 49th parallel. Yet, historically, it was Tories who were protectionist and wary of American power and ambitions, while Liberals were the free-traders.

They are all free-traders now, although both Jean Chrétien and Mulroney have stood up for Canada at crucial moments—Mulroney in the softwood lumber and acid rain issues, and Chrétien by refusing to send Canadian Forces to Iraq (a gesture enthusiastically applauded at the recent Carney coronation.)

Would Poilievre stand up to a hostile American president? He says he would, but displays none of the vigour and passion he brings to his attacks on domestic targets. He leads a party, after all, with many links to MAGA Republicans and some 30 per cent of Conservative voters who like the U.S. president. So he treads carefully, which is not what a traumatized nation wants at the moment. It wants more of Ford's bluntness and strength (even Trump called the Ontario premier "a strong man.")

As for Carney, who still has a good chance of winning the next federal election, what kind of prime minister would he be once the Trump contagion either resolves, or passes through the body politic? A Paul Martin Liberal minus the folksiness? A Red Tory, like Charest, but with less-polished French?

There are some clues. The most telling is Carney's promise to reverse a proposed increase in capital gains tax that would affect only the wealthiest, including rich doctors and lawyers, selling second homes or businesses. In his acceptance speech, Carney noted, echoing noted social justice warriors like the Canadian Taxpayers Federation, the Fraser Institute, and other corporate lobbyists:

"Builders should be incentivized for taking risks and rewarded when they succeed." Selling that second home doesn't sound that risky, and, for the well-off people affected, the tax increase is minor.

But what about the truly "progressive" vote: those who support trans and minority-rights, Indigenous reconciliation, legalized marijuana, helping families with child care, dental coverage and drug costs. That would be the Justin Trudeau Liberals, and they are gone, gone, gone. So, it would appear, is the NDP.

Never mind the lonely stalwarts who oppose new gas and oil pipelines, who favour a rapid expansion of clean energy, and are beyond fed up with the "both/and" approach favoured by Trudeau and Carney: keep developing clean AND conventional (oil and gas) resources, they say, while emissions increase and fossil fuel companies embrace billion-dollar expansions.

There is a new Liberal in town, a blue-suit Liberal, and all these ordinary concerns (although climate change is hardly trivial) seem to be set aside in face of a more immediate threat: Trump and his shy surrogate north of the border.

For many progressive voters there is only one choice at the moment: cautious, conservative Carney, or tiresome, shallow, flame-thrower, Poilievre.

Put like that, it's no contest. Susan Riley is a veteran political columnist and regular contributor to *The Hill Times*.

The Hill Times

THE HILL TIMES POLICY BRIEFING | MARCH 17, 2025

AGRICULTURE

AGRICULTURE
& the trade war

Agricultural
INTELLIGENCE

Sustainable
**SOLUTIONS
NEEDED**

Driving down
FOOD WASTE

TRADE
uncertainty

FARMERS NEED
support from
governments

**TOXIC
PESTICIDES**

CLIMATE
mitigation

**SUPPLY
CHAINS**

**BUILD BACK
CANADA'S
AGRICULTURAL
FUTURE**

AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

Trade anxiety creates 'unprecedented' risk to agriculture, requires bold advocacy, says sector experts

Tariffs and the threat of tariffs from the U.S. and China could have devastating effects on Canada's agriculture sector, say agriculture industry insiders.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Lawrence MacAulay, who was the federal agriculture minister up until Friday's cabinet shuffle, has been regarded as an approachable member of cabinet who cares about Canada's farmers, but who did not display the aggressive advocacy that's needed in response to the crisis created by an uncertain trade atmosphere with the United States and China, according to sector experts.

"[MacAulay] often talks very proudly of his time as a farmer, and how proud he is of having the job of agriculture minister. You can tell that he really cares when you hear him talk. But, unfortunately, we have not seen that affinity for the sector translate into action for the sector," said Tyler McCann, managing director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute (CAPI).

"While we have seen, for example, the internal trade ministers across the country work aggressively and come up with a new agreement on removing internal trade barriers, we've not seen much action from agriculture ministers, and I think this is unfortunate," said McCann.

Both real and threatened tariffs from two of Canada's largest export markets could combine for a devastating effect on this country's agriculture sector, according to McCann.

U.S. President Donald Trump launched a trade war on March 4 by imposing 25-per-cent tariffs on imports from Canada and Mexico, with a lower 10 per cent levy on Canadian energy. Canada's fed-



To support Canada's farmers, Lawrence MacAulay announced on March 7 that Ottawa will set the interest-free limit of the Advance Payments Program at \$250,000 for the 2025 program year. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

eral government responded with retaliatory tariffs on \$30-billion worth of American goods, and on March 6, Trump signed amended orders to exempt all CUS-MA-compliant trade with Canada and Mexico from his tariffs until April 2.

Ottawa announced tariff relief measures on March 7, including a Trade Impact Program through Export Development Canada that will deploy \$5-billion over two years to help exporters reach new markets for Canadian products, and support companies contend with losses from non-payment, currency fluctuations, and other complications.

On March 9, Trump said tariffs "could go up," during an interview with Fox News.

Canada is also currently facing trade woes with China. On March 8, Beijing announced a 100-per-cent tariff on this country's canola oil, as well as other Canadian goods such as seafood and pork, to come into effect on March 20.

McCann said it's hard to imagine a worse situation for Canadian agriculture. According to McCann, Canada needs to be working aggressively with the U.S. and China to find a way to

Tyler McCann, managing director of the Canadian Agri-Food Policy Institute, says, "We need to spend more time looking at what can we do at home, domestically ... to better mitigate and manage the fallout from these tariffs."

Photograph courtesy of Tyler McCann



Keith Currie, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, says, "It's not like we can delay planting. It's not like we can hold cattle or pork or other livestock products back," and that "if the market's not there or the price isn't there to make it profitable, that's going to be devastating, from an economic standpoint." *Photograph courtesy of Keith Currie*



remove the tariffs and return to a typical trading relationship.

"The problem is that seems increasingly unlikely, and so we need to spend more time looking at what can we do at home, domestically ... to better mitigate and manage the fallout from

these tariffs," he said. "How do we better position the sector to succeed in a new, very different, very volatile and risky environment?"

CAPI released a policy brief on Feb. 6 with recommendations for actions that government could take to help this country navigate

the trade uncertainty. The organization recommended measures including working through institutions such as Farm Credit Canada to offer loan guarantees and liquidity support, expanding the Advance Payments Program limits, and relaunching the Canadian Emergency Business Account.

CAPI also recommended agriculture ministers should "work to rebuild trust in North America" through regulatory cooperation, and those ministers should also convene with international partners, possibly alongside the G7, to improve collaboration.

McCann said since the release of that document, he has been frustrated by a lack of action.

"One, we have a set of business risk management programs that offer support to farmers in situations like this. Government should be working with the sector, with farmers, to make sure those programs are ready to respond in this extraordinary situation and be prepared to make changes if needed," he said. "Government should be looking at, 'how do you double down on trade market access? How do you commit the technical and political resources to resolving market access barriers around the world?'"

To help support farmers, MacAulay (Cardigan, P.E.I.), announced on March 7 that Ottawa would set the interest-free limit of the Advance Payments Program at \$250,000 for the 2025 program year.

"Raising the interest-free portion of the Advance Payments Program will give our hardworking farmers some extra cash flow and savings as we head into the 2025 growing season. In the face of different challenges and trade uncertainty, our hardworking producers continue to show their resilience and deliver top-quality products for Canadians, and the world," said MacAulay in a departmental press release.

Keith Currie, president of the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, called this measure a good start, although he said his organization had been asking for a higher interest-free limit of \$350,000. He said the first step in addressing the tariff situation is for the feds to sit down and talk with industry representatives.

About 60 per cent of what is produced by Canada's agriculture sector goes south of the border, according to Currie.

"It's not like we can delay planting. It's not like we can hold cattle or pork or other livestock products back. I mean, when they're ready, they're ready, and if the market's not there or the price isn't there to make it profitable, that's going to be devastating, from an economic standpoint," he said.

"Food is far more integrated than the automobile sector, [with] products crossing the border four or five[or] six times before it gets on your table. How do the tariffs apply to those products? Are they applied every time? Once? We don't know."

When asked about MacAulay, Currie described the now-former minister as having a good sense

Continued on page 24



Feeding the future, sustainably.

UCalgary researchers are developing high-protein crops, improving animal health, and turning waste into biofertilizers to build a sustainable future. Through the Creative Destruction Lab's Ag stream, we're helping AgTech startups bring solutions to market. Learn how we are accelerating these innovations and helping position Canada as a global leader in agriculture.



UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

**Start
something.**

ucalgary.ca/startsomething

AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

Driving down avoidable food waste in Canada

Tackling food waste is not easy, but, like climate action, it is important. Reducing food waste could help meet the needs of the millions of Canadians who don't have secure access to enough food to eat.

Liberal MP
Joyce Murray



Opinion

Did you know that an estimated 46 to 58 per cent of Canada's food supply is lost or wasted each year, a significant portion of which is avoidable? That food waste costs our economy an estimated \$10-billion to \$25-billion annually, and contributes to food insecurity for millions of Canadians? This waste undermines the efficiency and competitiveness of our agriculture and agri-food sector, and when

discarded raw or processed food materials rot in landfills, methane gas is generated—a greenhouse gas 25 times more powerful than carbon dioxide (CO₂).

Tackling food waste is not easy, but, like climate action, it is important. Reducing food waste could help meet the needs of the millions of Canadians who don't have secure access to enough food to eat; that's yet another reason why the federal government committed in 2015 to the United Nations' 2030 agenda for Sustainable Development Goal 12.3: to cut food loss and waste in half by 2030. Canada has implemented some supporting policy changes. However, a renewed focus on this challenge, and a doubling down on actions to reduce food waste will be necessary to meet the goal.

Whether it is avoidable (such as perfectly safe and edible food thrown out thanks to overly restrictive "best before" dates) or unavoidable (inclement weather that damages a vulnerable crop still in the field or on the tree), food loss and waste, similarly to climate gas emissions, has a vast array of sources. That makes solving this challenge more complicated, and the federal government can't do it alone.

Some of the waste happens in the growing of food—on farms,

orchards, and in greenhouses across Canada. Waste can also result from the transport, processing, and packaging processes. Retailers may prune out (or waste) food that is not attractive to the shopper, while home kitchens and restaurants account for a share of food waste, too. The aforementioned "best before" dates are a significant contributor, accounting for almost a quarter of the more than seven million tonnes of food wasted per year from the processing stage to point of purchase.

Were one main governmental regulator responsible for Canada's food chain, regulatory, or policy solutions to reducing food waste would be simpler and more implementable. The reality is much more complicated, since the growing, conversion, importing, storage, retailing and sale of raw materials or processed food across this country is governed by a range of bodies and regulations—at the federal, provincial, and municipal levels.

On a positive note, the federal government's 2019 Food Policy for Canada creates a "framework to coordinate and align federal food-related initiatives and address critical challenges facing Canada's food systems to improve social, health, environ-



The federal government's Food Policy for Canada was announced in 2019 by then-agriculture and agri-food minister Marie-Claude Bibeau, pictured. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

mental and economic outcomes." Clearly, awareness of the challenge of food waste is increasing, and progress is being made.

In 2021, Environment and Climate Change Canada, and Agriculture Canada organized a Food Systems Summit conference with 52 participants from 11 different stakeholder groups to "identify specific mechanisms that can foster collaboration of reducing food loss and waste across Canada's food system." Participants noted "the need for a culture change, from farm to fork, that no longer accepts food loss and waste." That calls for better utilization of surplus food, or food that doesn't meet commercial specifications for size, colour or other non-health related parameters. Organizations that help feed people in need are key to this, and removing existing barriers, or creating incentives such as tax breaks, would facilitate their efforts.

Among the many voluntary and local groups in countryside, towns and cities across Canada mobilizing to help reduce food loss and waste, Second Harvest

Canada (SHC) deserves recognition as a critical partner in this work. Having published a report that quantified food waste in Canada in 2019, SHC researched and reported on measures of food waste again in 2024, identifying "new driving factors and the potential for economic incentives to address it."

Canada's overall amount of food waste has declined since 2019, businesses are now more conscious of food waste and working to decrease it, and governments have improved their monitoring and reporting of food waste statistics. More is needed, though, on all fronts, to continue driving down avoidable food waste in this country.

Liberal MP Joyce Murray, who was first elected Vancouver Quadra, B.C., in 2008, has previously served as minister of fisheries, oceans, and the Canadian Coast Guard, minister of digital government, and as president of the Treasury Board. Murray is also a member of the House Agriculture and Agri-Food Committee. *The Hill Times*

We need to build back Canada's agricultural future

Canada's agricultural growth has slowed to one per cent over the past decade because of needless regulations and bureaucratic red tape. It doesn't have to stay this way.

Conservative MP
John Barlow



Opinion

Food production and food security must be a priority in the next federal election because feeding our people and helping those around the world is essential.

Food production is the cornerstone of Canada's economy—not

only are we feeding our country and the world, but also agriculture drives economic growth, and secures a prosperous future for all Canadians at a pivotal moment in our history.

For the last decade, this vital sector has been neglected and undermined by the Trudeau-Carney Liberal government. No one in the Liberal cabinet has championed the needs of our farmers, or fought for policies to support them. Instead, it has been the exact opposite as this government advances activist-driven policies without any regard for the damage they cause.

As a result, Canadian farmers are drowning under a relentless barrage of policies stifling growth, innovation, and their ability to feed Canadians. From the carbon tax and rising fertilizer tariffs to soaring input costs and a proposed capital gains tax hike, the pressure is unbearable, pushing Canadian farm families to the breaking point.

The time for bold change is now, and we need a com-

mon-sense government to make it happen.

Conservatives recognize Canada's agriculture and agri-food sectors are essential to our economic recovery. To unlock this country's full agricultural potential, we need policies to drive productivity growth, promote innovation, and re-position us as global leaders.

Our farmers set the gold-standard reducing emissions by 50 per cent while continuing to increase production over the last two decades. Yet, despite these successes, the Liberal government's carbon tax and ideological policies threaten the financial stability of Canadian farms. The tax on farm fuels makes it harder for farmers to reinvest in the innovations and practices that will drive sustainability and growth. On day one, Conservatives will axe the costly carbon tax and capital gains tax-hike, empowering our farmers to remain competitive and continue to lead the way in global food production.

The challenges do not end there. Our agricultural growth

has slowed to one per cent over the past decade because of needless regulations and bureaucratic red tape. It doesn't have to stay this way. Harmonizing regulations and creating a competitive tax regime will boost Canadian farmers' cash receipts by \$30-billion and drive growth to two per cent. The opportunity is right in front of us, but we must remove the unnecessary barriers holding our farmers back.

Canada can play a leading role in global food security, but to reach our potential we must change our path from ideological and activist-based policies to one focused on productivity, common sense, science, and innovation. One where the Canadian Food Inspection Agency is a partner with domestic producers, not an adversary. Where decisions within Health Canada's Pest Management Regulatory Agency are based on science, not politics. Where the federal government defends Canadian interests when we are challenged with unfair trade practices and

non-tariff trade barriers. Where our producers are rewarded for the environmental stewardship, not punished with higher taxes and regulations.

Misguided Liberal policies have devastated a vital part of our economy, and jeopardize food production. With food insecurity up 111 per cent and families paying an additional \$800 for groceries this year, it's clear Canada has veered off course. The future of Canadian agriculture is far too important to be left in the hands of an out-of-touch Liberal government again.

Our farmers deserve more—they've earned a partner who will stand with them, not against them.

It's time for a common-sense Conservative government that recognizes the essential role our farm families and agri-food businesses play in food production and our economic future. Canada is poised to lead the world because the world needs what we produce: an abundance of high-quality, sustainable, and affordable food.

The path to success is clear, and it starts with bold, decisive leadership focused on science-based productivity growth and economic viability.

Conservative MP John Barlow has represented Foothills, Alta., since 2014, and his party's official critic for agriculture, agri-food & food security. *The Hill Times*

Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**

Are we really supporting our agricultural industry in the face of changing geopolitics and climate?



Considering the geopolitical situation across the world and the need for healthy and secure food systems in Canada, we need to reflect on our current agricultural system, writes Dr. Liette Vasseur. Image by jf-gabnor, pixabay.com

of these farmlands with depletion of soil capacity to support production. These factors are further threatening the capacity of Canada to continue to be self-sufficient in at least some of the major crops.

A better understanding of the system by all Canadians and why buying Canadian produces may help is a step. But it's not enough. This is a complex globalized system in which we import a lot, and but a large part of our crops and livestock are exported (e.g., pork exportation approx. 70 per cent). It is highly vulnerable to weather conditions and the current international market. Without stronger policies to support our farmers and their capacity to transition to a more sustainable agricultural practices, as well as long-term growth with value added processing and digital transition, food production in Canada may remain in this vulnerability zone.

Dr. Liette Vasseur is full professor in biology and environment sciences at Brock University.

The Hill Times

Improving the resilience of our agricultural industry is a must. We are already losing farmlands due to urbanization and other developments (a decrease of eight per cent between 2001 and 2021), and farmers because of the stress of uncertainty and low economic value that they get from their labour (62 per cent between 1971 and 2021). Farmlands, on the other end, have increased by 20 per cent in the past five years, making it difficult for young farmers to acquire lands. Heavy reliance on fertilizers and pesticides also threatens our environment, and the long-term production

Improving the resilience of the agricultural industry in Canada is a must. We are already losing farmlands due to urbanization and other developments, and farmers because of the stress of uncertainty and low economic value that they get from their labour.

Liette Vasseur



Opinion

Canadians are used to talk about the weather. We may not all believe in a changing climate, but we know that we are now experiencing greater unpredictability in weather patterns with more frequent extreme weather events such as drought, heat waves, heavy rainfalls, and hail. As individuals, we may complain, but have you ever thought about how these events can affect food production?

Considering the geopolitical situation across the world and the need for healthy and secure food systems in Canada, we need to reflect on our current agricultural system. Are we able to ensure its sustainability in the face of all these circumstances? Our current agricultural system is vulnerable, and we need to understand to what exactly.

First, we may consider the changes in weather conditions. In the past decades,

this country's agricultural industry has had to deal with more frequent and more costly droughts. For example, the severe drought in Saskatchewan in 2021 resulted in a reduction of crop production of over 47 per cent compared to previous years. Compensating farmers through insurance has also increased in many cases. The drought of 2023 in Abitibi, Que., limited the hay for which producers had to be compensated at a rate of \$6.8-million.

Heavy rainfalls and associated flooding represent the major cause of crop damage in the past five years in Canada. In both August 2023 and 2024, Quebec farmers requested relief after the torrential rains and flooding in their fields. In southern Ontario, the similar events in July and August 2024 brought damage especially for corn and soybean harvesters. Heatwaves also have consequences not only on crops in the fields as plant stress leads to reduced productivity. In most cases, heatwaves being accompanied by droughts also exacerbate the level of stress of the crops.

Greenhouses are not immune to these unpredictable events, especially hail, freezing rain, and heatwaves. While hail and freezing rain may cause damage to the infrastructure, heatwaves and extreme cold temperature require greenhouses to increase energy usage to buffer changes and maintain crop production, increasing the costs of food production.

Second, to add to the system's complexity, the world's current geopolitical situation has also caused the increase in chemical fertilizers, further increasing the price of food production. As Canada significantly relies on fertilizer imports from Russia, the war in Ukraine had the consequence of increasing prices to farmers.

All these events have something in common: they result in a decrease in food production, and increased farmer compensation, and insurance premiums. This may, however, not be well reflected in food prices at the store.

Care goes into Canadian egg farming

Canadian egg farmers are passionate about providing fresh, high-quality eggs while looking after their animals, communities and the environment. Find out more at eggfarmers.ca/sustainability

- Reducing GHG emissions
- Supplying high-quality eggs
- Caring for our animals
- Following rigorous standards
- Supporting the future of our food system

EGG FARMERS OF CANADA

AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

Canada must step up support for farmers and their critical role in climate mitigation and adaptation

A future where farming is viable, sustainable, and regenerative is within reach—but it requires urgent and coordinated action.

NDP MP
Richard
Cannings

Opinion



Canadian farmers are at the forefront of the climate crisis. Unpredictable weather, inconsistent seasonal patterns, and extreme events have become the new normal. Agriculture also accounts for 10 per cent of this country's greenhouse gas emissions, placing farmers in a unique

position to both experience and fight against climate change.

Across agricultural hotspots like British Columbia's Fraser Valley and Okanagan Valley, the Prairies, southern Ontario, and the Maritimes, climate models are predicting an increase in severe heat. Along with changes in season length, average temperature, and timing of hot and cold spells, farmers are having to make difficult decisions. Crop farmers are being forced to adapt to new growing conditions, while livestock farmers are feeling the brunt of extreme heat and humidity on animal health and productivity.

Erratic precipitation patterns—drier summers and wetter springs—are disrupting water supply management, leading to fields that are too wet for seeding, and too dry for growth. Farmers are facing increasing risks of both drought and flooding throughout the same season. In 2021, Saskatchewan experienced a severe drought which slashed crop production by 47 per cent.

Statistics Canada reported that while "activity was up in most sectors of the economy, those gains were entirely negated by the worst drought in nearly two decades."

Temperature and precipitation shifts are also facilitating the spread of agricultural pest and diseases into previously unaffected regions. The federal government's climate change impact assessment highlights that "warmer winter temperatures could increase pest and disease pressure by improving over-wintering survival of new and existing species." This shift poses significant threats to crop yields and quality as producers face adversities for which accessible management strategies are insufficient.

A 2024 report by Farmers for Climate Solutions revealed that 76 per cent of farmers and ranchers have faced severe weather in the past five years. Concerns are mounting over a future of farming defined by restrictive policies and regulations, income loss, reduced yields, and mental health impacts. In 2023, crop insurance payouts

reached \$6.4-billion in 2023, surpassing the five-year average, according to Statistics Canada.

Farmers pride themselves on being stewards of the land, caring about soil health and resilience. They are interested in implementing resilient, low-emissions practices like no-till farming, improved nitrogen management, cover cropping, wildlife habitat conservation, and rotational grazing. However, financial constraints limit their adoption. Canada also needs to support enhanced technical support, training opportunities, incentives, risk management programs, and price premiums as we transition to more climate smart agriculture.

Our country also must step up its support for new entrant farmers as they will help build solutions to fight and adapt to climate change. The Canadian Agricultural Human Resource Council warns that nearly one-third of the agri-workforce will retire by 2030. New farmers face rising startup costs and limited land access, making it an increasingly unviable

career. Despite these challenges, Farm Secure Canada found that many new "farmers are increasingly adopting more sustainable and climate-resilient practices." Federal leadership is essential to ensure all new entrants can get started farming without first piling on massive debts. Also key to maintaining Canadian agriculture is viable farm succession.

The International Institute for Sustainable Development affirms that "federal agricultural policy has yet to fully mainstream climate change considerations." Our farmers are leading the way in climate change adaptation, but they can't do it alone.

As the backbone of our food system, they need policies and programs that recognize their critical role in climate mitigation and adaptation. A future where farming is viable, sustainable, and regenerative is within reach—but it requires urgent and coordinated action. Farmers, researchers, policymakers and consumers must work together to create a system that supports both the land and those who tend it.

The choices made today will determine the future of food production in Canada. Let's ensure it is one of abundance, resilience, and sustainability for generations to come.

NDP MP Richard Cannings, who represents South Okanagan-West Kootenay, B.C., is his party's critic for the Treasury Board, agriculture, and science.
The Hill Times

Trade war with U.S. an opportunity to clean up Canada's approach to toxic pesticides

When it comes to ensuring pesticide regulations reflect the latest science, Canada is painfully behind the times.

Anelyse
Weiler

Opinion



Many people in Canada feel a tug of nostalgia when imagining our rural landscapes as a peaceful place to slow down and breathe in clean air. The desire to protect the places we love looms especially large amid threats from south of the border to absorb Canada as the "51st state."

But many rural agricultural landscapes in our country are regularly contaminated with cancer-causing pesticides. Because we don't have routine air monitoring programs for pesticides, we don't know how much of a toxic load we're inhaling, or where the chemical hotspots are located. Although Canadians today are conscious of the connection between a clean environment and human health, our agricultural sector is more chemically dependent than ever. New research from EcoJustice shows that pesticide sales in Canada have increased 47 per cent between 2011 and 2021. Canada is now the world's fifth largest pesticide user.

What are the human health consequences of this overuse of toxic agrochemicals?

Rural communities tend to be hit hardest, particularly migrant agricultural workers who face big

barriers to asking for protective equipment and refusing unsafe work. The harmful health consequences of pesticide exposure may not be manifested until the body until years after exposure. For example, children of farmworker women who were exposed during pregnancy could face neurodevelopmental issues later in life. Pesticide exposure can increase the risk of illness such as certain cancers, and some pesticides are suspected to increase the risk of neurodegenerative diseases like Parkinson's. Other potential harmful health outcomes include autoimmune diseases, diabetes, and male infertility. My research has also shown that younger, middle-class agricultural workers may inaccurately perceive themselves as immune to pesticide exposure on the job.

When it comes to ensuring pesticide regulations reflect the

latest science, Canada is painfully behind the times. In fact, Dr. Bruce Lanphear, the co-chair of the Health Canada Scientific Advisory Committee on Pest Control Products, recently quit his role due to frustrations about a lack of transparency. He declared that we "can no longer continue to rely on an obsolete regulatory system that protects the pesticide industry more than it protects Canadians."

Notably, Canada has continued to give the green light to hundreds of pesticides that Europe has already banned. For example, Europe banned a toxic fungicide called mancozeb in 2022 due to concerns about endocrine disruption and reproductive toxicity. In 2018, Health Canada nearly banned mancozeb, but it back-pedalled after backlash from apple growers. Likewise, glyphosate—more commonly known as "Roundup"—is the most heavily used pesticide in Canada. Although people have long assumed this herbicide was relatively benign, emerging research suggests it may be more dangerous than previously recognized. Our government still allows the use of glyphosate to dry out crops before harvest—arguably an unnecessary use that isn't even for weed control.

Amid the current trade war, Canada will likely face pressure to ramp up domestic food production, and some may argue that this makes increased pesticide use a necessary evil. But pesticides don't always lead

to better yields. Excessive use of pesticides brings diminishing returns to yield and can aggravate the problem of pesticide resistance. All this chemical dependence costs farmers a lot of money, much of which is funneled toward massive pesticide companies like Syngenta, which is owned by the Chinese government.

Policymakers can use the current wave of support for made-in-Canada food products as an opportunity to overhaul our heavy chemical dependency.

First, Canada should identify pesticides that are highly hazardous and ban them. We also need to establish better monitoring of exposure among workers, along with other high-risk groups such as children and Indigenous communities. We can support our farmers by providing comprehensive training on how to shift toward integrated pest management, along with crop insurance to ease their transition. Finally, researchers and members of the public need more transparent access to data on pesticide use, including information on formulators.

These changes would ensure our collective values—such as a clean environment, caring for vulnerable people, and human health—are proudly reflected in our agricultural system and rural communities.

Anelyse Weiler is an assistant professor of sociology at the University of Victoria.
The Hill Times

Policy Briefing **AGRICULTURE**

We need agricultural intelligence to protect against the threat of avian influenza

As of early March, 30 poultry operations in Canada were dealing with avian influenza outbreaks: 16 in B.C., 10 in Ontario, and one each in Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland and Labrador.

Independent
Senator
Paula Simons



Opinion

When Canadian farmers talk about the threat of AI, they're not talking about fear of robots. They're talking about H5N1: highly pathogenic avian influenza.

This AI isn't new. Canada's poultry sector is fighting the sixth wave of H5N1 to hit our country since 2022. So far, we've been lucky. The Canadian Food Inspection Agency's (CFIA) policy of stamping out the disease, by culling entire flocks at the first sign of infection, establishing a 10 km quarantine zone around each infected farm, and doing genetic testing to pinpoint the sources of infection has been working. But for farmers who lose their flocks, it comes at a high economic and emotional cost.

As of the first week in March, 30 poultry operations in Canada were dealing with AI outbreaks: 16 in British Columbia, 10 in Ontario, and one each in Alberta, Quebec, Nova Scotia, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

British Columbia is hardest hit, in part because of the large number of chicken and egg farms in the Fraser Valley, which increases the odds of cross contamination between farms. But the biggest disease vector is migrating wild birds, especially waterfowl. The lush Fraser

Valley, on the Pacific migratory pathway, provides perfect habitat for wild geese and ducks—hence, a spike in cases each fall and spring.

Still, Canada hasn't seen anything like the disaster that's hit the United States, which has led to soaring egg prices, egg rationing, and a big jump in egg smuggling across the Canadian border. Avian influenza has been found in commercial and backyard flocks in all 50 states, plus Puerto Rico. Outbreaks have led to the deaths—either by disease or by culling—of 166.4 million chickens, turkeys and ducks.

Then, last March, AI jumped the species barrier and started showing up in American dairy cows—something that wasn't supposed to happen. Dairy herds in 17 states have been infected—with California and Colorado being the hardest hit.

In response, the CFIA ramped up testing of raw milk and dairy herds in this country. To date, they've found no evidence of H5N1 here.

Why? After the mad-cow crisis, when bovine spongiform encephalopathy was found in Alberta, Canada banned the practice of feeding animal products to cows. But in the U.S., it's still common practice to feed used poultry litter to cattle, as a cheap source of protein and nitrogen—a possible reason American cows are falling ill with a disease that wasn't supposed to infect them.

But that may be too simple an answer. California, which has the highest rate of dairy infection, already bans the feeding of poultry waste to milking cows. And now, H5N1 is suddenly showing up in all kinds of other mammals in America from cats and rats to seals and dolphins.

More disturbingly? There have been 77 confirmed or probable cases of American people—mostly farm workers—with H5N1. The first reported cases were mild; but earlier this year, a Louisiana man died of AI, likely contracted from a backyard chicken flock. If H5N1 were to mix genetic material with ordinary human flu

strains—say, perhaps in a farm worker who is infected with both viruses at the same time—we could end up with a far bigger problem. Especially, if ideologically-driven health policies and public sector funding and staffing cuts in Donald Trump's America create new and greater risks.

We will need Canada's poultry farmers—and dairy farmers—to remain vigilant and maintain the highest biosecurity standards.

In Canada, biosecurity standards on farms are not enforced by legislation. There are no fines for those who break protocols. We rely on an honour system. We expect farmers to follow the rules out of enlightened self-interest, with producer associations provide training and oversight. Farmers who follow mandatory reporting rules can report outbreaks without fear of punishment if they make mistakes and get support from government if flocks must be destroyed.

So far, the system seems to be working. But as the threats posed by avian influenza and other zoonotic diseases grow, it may come time to reconsider our largely voluntary approach to biosecurity and risk mitigation.

To protect our food supply, and our health, from the evolving threats of this AI, we'll need all the agricultural intelligence we can muster.

Paula Simons is an Independent Senator from Alberta. During the 44th Parliament, she served as deputy chair of the Standing Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry.

The Hill Times

Problem-solving farmers need supportive government policies

Farming has always come with its risks, but climate change has led to more unpredictable weather patterns and an increased risk of natural disasters. The threat of tariffs from our trading partner to the south has also added extra layers of risk and concern for the industry.

CSG Senator
Robert Black



Opinion

The agriculture industry contributes significantly to Canada's overall success and well-being. This sector needs to be taken seriously for its innovative and sustainable practices, commitment, and significant contributions to this country's economy.

In 2023, the agriculture and agri-food sector contributed \$150-billion to our economy, accounting for approximately seven per cent of Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and employing 2.3 million Canadians. In fact, one in nine jobs in Canada are within the agriculture industry, generating substantial revenue for our country.

Beyond its contributions to the economy and the labour market, the agriculture sector fulfills the basic needs of Canadians: providing us with nutrient rich, delicious foods, day in and day out.

Yet, as Canadians, we are so far removed from where our foods originate. In the back-ground of every grocery store trip or meal you prepare, there is a farmer who has grown and

harvested, and a processor who has packaged and delivered the products that we consume daily.

However, the agriculture industry is facing increased barriers every year. Farming has always come with its risks, but climate change has led to more unpredictable weather patterns and an increased risk of natural disasters. The threat of tariffs from our trading partner to the south has also added extra layers of risk and concern for the industry. Farmers are facing challenges now more than ever.

While the federal government offers business risk management programs to provide financial support in response to this instability, I continue to hear from farmers that these programs are fraught with issues. This suite of programs is integral to counteract the risk that comes with farming, but they are not helpful unless they are meeting the real needs of farmers. The Government of Canada needs to listen to farmers' voices, and address the shortcomings of these programs

so that farmers do not question if the risks are worth the reward.

To complicate things further, all across the country, the soil we use to grow the food and the feed for livestock that inevitably feeds our nation is being degraded. In addition, prime agricultural lands are disappearing with increased development and infrastructure to sustain our ever growing population. As outlined in the Senate Standing Committee on Agriculture and Forestry (AGFO) report on soil health, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations "estimates that 33 per cent of the earth's soils are already degraded and over 90 per cent could become degraded by 2050". Moreover, farmland is being sold and developed, making these soils inaccessible and unusable for growing food. If we do not take action to protect and conserve our soils, as the AGFO Report outlines, we will not have the land we need to feed our country and the world in the generations to come.

Although land use and rural planning is not within federal jurisdiction, ensuring we can feed our country is a national issue. This is why we need a pan-Canadian approach to make sure we have the land and healthy arable, useable soils we need to feed the next generations of Canadians and beyond. Soil health and the preservation of farm and agricultural land requires a whole of government approach. The recommendations to the Canadian government in the AGFO soil report must be taken seriously and need to be responded to with action, and not just with platitudes, as received in the government response to the report.

The agriculture sector is encountering more obstacles daily, thereby requiring more innovation and problem-solving from farmers, yet their hard work, initiative and resilience are not being acknowledged through Canadian government policies.

Government needs to do better and support all aspects of our agricultural industry, providing farmers with policies, resources and programming they need to continue feeding our nation.

Prior to prorogation, CSG Senator Rob Black chaired the Senate Committee on Agriculture and Forestry. He represents Ontario in the Senate.

The Hill Times

AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

Fortifying Canada's agricultural supply chains: a path forward

The agriculture sector has always adapted to challenges, but today's complex, interconnected problems require collaborative solutions across government, industry, and research institutions.

Asim Biswas

Opinion



Canada's agriculture sector, contributing more than \$140-billion annually—more than seven per cent—to our GDP and employing 2.3 million Canadians, stands at a critical crossroads. As a global agricultural leader, our nation faces unprecedented supply chain challenges that threaten not only our economic prosperity, but also our food security and trade competitiveness. The pandemic exposed vulnerabilities

that climate change, infrastructure limitations, and workforce shortages continue to exacerbate.

Climate variability has become a relentless stressor on our agricultural landscape. The 2021 British Columbia floods, which severed critical transportation networks and caused \$2-billion in agricultural losses, demonstrated how extreme weather can paralyze supply chains. In 2023, severe drought in Western Canada alongside excessive rainfall in Ontario created bottlenecks in grain delivery and processing. These disruptions are no longer anomalies but recurring threats demanding immediate attention.

Our infrastructure compounds these vulnerabilities. Rail networks—essential for moving agricultural products across our vast geography—operate at near capacity with limited redundancy. The average age of this country's agricultural infrastructure exceeds 35 years, with maintenance backlogs creating systemic weaknesses. These limitations become catastrophic when climate events strike, rendering vital transportation corridors unreliable or impassable.

Labour shortages present another critical challenge. The agricultural workforce is aging, with insufficient young Canadians entering the sector. Temporary foreign worker programs, while essential, proved vulnerable during the pandemic, leaving



Canada stands at an inflection point. With thoughtful investment, policy reform, and technological innovation, we can transform current supply chain vulnerabilities into future competitive advantages, writes Dr. Asim Biswas. *Photograph by Jannis Knorr, Pexels.com*

crops unharvested and processing facilities understaffed. Moreover, as agriculture embraces technological advancement, the skills gap in precision agriculture, digital analytics, and modern soil management continues to widen.

Digital fragmentation further hinders progress. Despite technological advances, many segments of our agricultural supply chain remain disconnected, with incompatible data systems preventing the seamless information flow necessary for responsive decision-making and operational efficiency.

What path should we take to address these multifaceted

challenges? First, we must accelerate digital agriculture adoption nationwide. My research at the University of Guelph demonstrates that farms implementing precision agriculture technologies can achieve 15-20 per cent greater operational efficiency while reducing waste. Real-time crop monitoring can forecast yields in advance, allowing transport and storage facilities to align capacities accordingly. Blockchain-based traceability systems can track commodities from farm to consumer, building trust and streamlining exports.

Second, strategic infrastructure investment is essential. Beyond repairs, we need forward-looking investments in climate-resilient systems—expanded climate-controlled storage, modernized irrigation networks, and transportation corridors designed to withstand extreme weather. Public-private partnerships could modernize these critical assets while developing regional processing hubs to ease pressure on coastal facilities.

Third, workforce development requires immediate prioritization. Strengthening pathways for domestic agricultural careers through enhanced education programs, while stabilizing foreign worker programs, will ensure operational continuity. Partnerships between universities and agribusinesses can help bridge

the growing skills gap in digital agriculture.

Fourth, regulatory harmonization across provincial boundaries would reduce friction in domestic supply chains. Currently, inconsistent regulations create unnecessary costs and delays as products move between provinces.

Finally, enhancing trade relationships remains crucial for Canada's agricultural prosperity. While agricultural exports reached record levels despite global disruptions, over-reliance on single markets creates vulnerability, as demonstrated by recent tariffs threats from the United States or China's 100-per-cent tariffs on canola and derive products. Diversification into emerging markets across Asia, the Middle East, and Africa—where rising middle-class populations present growing demand—offers significant opportunities.

Our nation stands at an inflection point. With thoughtful investment, policy reform, and technological innovation, we can transform current supply chain vulnerabilities into future competitive advantages. The agriculture sector has always adapted to challenges, but today's complex, interconnected problems require collaborative solutions across government, industry, and research institutions.

By harnessing technology, policy, and collaboration, we can cultivate resilience from the ground up—securing Canada's position as a global leader in sustainable, efficient, and reliable food production.

Dr. Asim Biswas is a professor, and Canada Research Chair (Tier 1) in Digital Agriculture, and OAC Research Chair in Soils and Precision Agriculture at the University of Guelph.

The Hill Times

Canada should use trade uncertainty as catalyst to grow agriculture sector

There have long been signs that our reliance on the U.S. was becoming a risk. The ongoing trade dispute is a wake-up call—business cannot continue as usual.

Liam MacDonald

Opinion



Our nation's agriculture sector is dependent on international trade. In 2023, agri-food added \$150-billion to Canada's

GDP, with exports worth nearly \$100-billion. For certain commodities, such as canola, 90 per cent of production is destined for international markets. Of our total agri-food exports, about 60 per cent goes to the United States, making our southern neighbour our most important market by far.

There have long been signs that our reliance on the U.S. was becoming a risk. The ongoing trade dispute is a wake-up call—business cannot continue as usual. For decades, we have taken for granted our unfettered access to the American market, and have underperformed in our efforts to diversify our export markets. Indeed, though volumes have increased across the board, since 2015, the share of our agri-food exports destined for markets other than the U.S. has decreased.

It is perfectly natural for exporters to prefer a familiar neighbour to an unknown market

on the other side of the world. But when a growing global population is rapidly increasing the demand for food, at a time when food stocks are decreasing, we cannot settle for the status quo. Growing our contributions to global food security is a tremendous opportunity—as well as an imperative amidst current threats. If we fail to act, we could lose our status as a leading exporter of agri-food altogether.

To be efficient, we will need to focus on regions that offer the most untapped potential. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations—with a population that will reach nearly 750 million by 2035 and a growing middle class—has long been touted as an opportunity. Its citizens increasingly want the kind of high-quality, high-protein food that this country produces. The proof: Studies have shown that demand for many of the agricultural prod-

ucts Canada produces exceeds their domestic production. The region's untapped potential for our agriculture is in the billions of dollars, and there are few geopolitical risks to increasing our trade. We should double down on our efforts, such as the establishment of Indo-Pacific Agriculture and Agri-Food Office, to open markets in the region for Canadian agri-food and demonstrate our reliability as a partner.

Europe is also worth our attention. Amidst geopolitical uncertainty, our dependability as a trade partner—which we've put much effort into demonstrating over the years—is a huge selling point. Europe needs reliable partners more than ever and this need could be our opening to address non-tariff barriers that have hindered our efforts to expand in the European market.

Market diversification will require some adjustments at home. We should start by looking at expanding our existing transportation infrastructure. If we're going to sell more to overseas markets, we need to reliably move goods—often produced in landlocked regions—through our international ports. When shipments are late or don't come at all because extreme weather events or frequent labour disruptions paralyze our transportation

infrastructure, customers will look elsewhere.

The U.S.-provoked trade war should also be a trigger to reduce the regulatory burden on our producers. We can afford to cut some red tape because our agri-food sector is already one of the most sustainable in the world and because, unfortunately, regulation in the sector has been moving away from its traditional grounding in science-based decision making (as recent issues around pesticide regulation have shown). This means we can reduce regulation without adding risk to the environment or human health. Supporting the productivity of producers and lowering production costs at home will also go a long way to increasing the attractiveness of our products internationally.

However the dust settles, agri-food trade between Canada and the U.S. will never completely halt. We are too mutually dependent. Even so, mitigating current and future risk will require diversification and a review of our domestic policy environment. Our agri-food sector is integral to our national interest and we must not let it fall behind.

Liam MacDonald is the director of policy and government relations for the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

The Hill Times

Policy Briefing AGRICULTURE

Evolution of Canadian agriculture and need for sustainable solutions

Saji George



Opinion

Over the last century, Canadian agriculture has evolved from small-scale, labour-intensive farming into a highly efficient, technologically advanced, and globally competitive sector. This transformation has been driven by technological progress, policy support, and evolving market demands. The post-Second World War era saw the widespread adoption of synthetic fertilizers, pesticides, and high-yield crop varieties through various breeding programs. More recently, this country's agriculture sector has embraced automated machinery, GPS-enabled precision application of agrochemicals, and biotechnology to improve efficiency and yields.

The aspiration to increase agricultural output through conventional practices is expected to exacerbate environmental stress. In 2018, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations said the use of synthetic

nitrogen fertilizers alone is projected to rise by 50 per cent from 2012 levels by 2050, which could worsen greenhouse gas emissions and jeopardize climate targets outlined in the Paris Agreement. Excessive use of agrochemicals has severe environmental and health consequences, including biodiversity loss; pollution of air, soil, and water; and the development of resistance in pests and pathogens.

As a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions and environmental pollution, the agricultural sector faces increasing pressure to adopt cleaner and more sustainable solutions.

A shift towards circular bioeconomy-based agriculture is essential for the agri-food sector's future. Sustainable, cost-effective, and eco-friendly alternatives that nourish soil and protect crops from pests and diseases can be achieved by adopting circular bioeconomy principles.

Fertilizers and pesticides derived from microbial cells and natural products have emerged as sustainable solutions to improve soil fertility and plant health. In nature, plants have evolved alongside a multitude of microbes. Some bacteria reside inside plant cells (endophytes), some attach to

external surfaces of roots, leaves, or stems, while others thrive in the soil near root systems (rhizosphere). Micro-organisms such as bacteria, fungi, and viruses play essential roles in organic matter decomposition, nutrient cycling, phytohormone production, and stress mitigation. They also produce novel biologically active compounds with unique structures and mechanisms beneficial for crop growth and protection.

Similar to animals, plants depend on beneficial microbes for various functions, though harmful microbes can also pose risks. The key challenge is to identify beneficial microbes, understand their symbiotic relationship with plants, and amplify their advantageous traits for large-scale agricultural applications.

Biostimulants improve soil structure, microbial activity, and stress resilience, reducing dependence on chemical fertilizers and supporting sustainable agriculture. The global biostimulant market was valued at US\$3.91-billion in 2023 and is projected to reach US\$12.85-billion by 2034, growing at a compound annual growth rate of 11.42 per cent.

Despite promising research on the benefits of microbial fertilizers and biostimulants, the

commercial adoption of bio-based agricultural inputs remains slow. The primary challenges include:

- **Stability and shelf-life:** Biologicals are generally less stable than synthetic agrochemicals under ambient storage conditions, leading to a shorter shelf life;

- **Field performance:** When applied, bio-based products may degrade more quickly than synthetic chemicals. While this reduces environmental residue, it can also limit effectiveness;

- **High production costs:** Biotechnological methods for deriving bioactive compounds and microorganisms are expensive due to costly growth media, skilled labour, and specialized infrastructure;

- **Regulatory hurdles:** Compliance with regulatory frameworks, particularly those involving genetically modified organisms, adds complexity; and

- **Farmer awareness and adoption:** Limited awareness among farmers and perceived risks lead to hesitancy in adopting bio-based inputs.

Nanotechnology offers solutions to enhance the stability, field longevity, and effectiveness of biostimulants. Nanomaterials with natural chemistry are being developed to improve the bio-

availability of bioactives derived from microbes.

Furthermore, cost-cutting strategies—such as using agricultural waste as a growth medium for beneficial microorganisms—offer additional opportunities for sustainable production. Technological advancements in gene-editing tools also present new possibilities for increasing bioactive compound yields, making bio-based agricultural inputs more viable for commercial applications.

My research group at McGill University is actively addressing these technical challenges through innovative solutions in nanotechnology and biotechnology. By improving the efficiency and affordability of biofertilizers and biostimulants, these advancements could pave the way for widespread adoption of sustainable agricultural practices.

For Canada to realize the full potential of circular bioeconomy in agriculture, stronger government and industry support programs are essential. With the right investments in research, innovation, and farmer education, Canada can lead the global transition toward a more sustainable and resilient agricultural future. Saji George is an associate professor and Canada Research Chair in Sustainable Nanotechnology for Food and Agriculture in the Department of Food Science and Agricultural Chemistry at McGill University.

The Hill Times

Growing stronger: strengthening Canada's agriculture in the face of climate and global challenges

Becky Chapman



Opinion

Canada's food system is facing complex threats.

With our nation experiencing increasing impacts from a changing climate at a time of unprecedented uncertainty in its trading relationships, the urgency to strengthen our agricultural resilience has never been clearer.

A recent series of Council of Canadian Academies' expert panel reports explores a range of interconnected policy issues—from climate resilience to food security to technological innovation and economic policy. Collectively, they provide insight into how technology can be applied to help primary agriculture—and the broader food system—meet the challenge. Agriculture is an import-

ant contributor to Canada's economy and way of life, and it is imperative that we innovate to safeguard the stability and success of our food system even as serious and complex threats continue to mount.

There are considerable opportunities to cement Canada's role as an agricultural leader. Following a burst of agricultural productivity gains in the 1990s and 2000s, advances have slowed, and the development and application of enabling technologies may hold the key to picking up the pace once again. Robotics and automation may substantially increase productivity, while the potential benefits of using AI in critical activities across production are growing at a rapid pace. Furthermore, increased application and improvements to precision agriculture may help mitigate the risks of climate change and pest outbreaks. However, the ongoing development of these tools requires advanced skills in a range of high-tech skills,

including robotics, computer programming, and software systems.

Gene editing is another critical enabling technology across agriculture, including atypical food production, like controlled environment agriculture (CEA) that has the potential to enable year-round growth of a wide range of fruits and vegetables indoors. CEA operators are largely limited to plant varieties refined for outdoor conditions, and there is considerable potential to develop plants for indoor growth. Beyond improving the productivity of existing CEA crops, there are considerable opportunities to expand the types of produce that can be successfully grown indoors. On the protein side, genomics plays an integral role in the continued development of several methods such as cellular agriculture.

There are also opportunities to apply gene editing to pest control as the efficacy of some conventional tools is diminishing at the same time as land use

changes and the arrival of globally mobile pests are accelerated due to climate change. Gene-editing can suppress or alter pests to minimize their impact, but there are also risks associated with the development and use of these tools that demand proactive and engaged management and governance.

Gene-edited pest control is emerging globally. Canada's limited investment in this field leaves us with less control over their deployment, even as other countries move ahead. A stronger research and governance framework is essential to ensure we manage these innovations on our own terms, protecting our environment and economy, while strengthening food security.

Our expert panels have been consistent in highlighting Canada's unique chance to lead in agricultural innovation, but doing so requires forward thinking, intergovernmental collaboration, public engagement, and strategic investment.

Building resilience in our food system means supporting research and development with regulations to keep pace with scientific advancements. Stronger collaboration among federal and provincial policymakers, industry leaders, and researchers is essential to ensure that Canada remains competitive on the global stage. Meaningful and continuous engagement with Indigenous communities, including respective inclusion of Indigenous knowledges and recognition of Indigenous rights, are also critical pieces for developing and successfully implementing new tools to increase the resilience of the food systems overall.

Canada has the talent, resources, and ingenuity to lead the next agricultural revolution—one that drives economic growth and strengthens our food system resilience in an unpredictable world. By embracing innovation with smart policies and responsible governance, we can turn today's challenges into tomorrow's competitive advantage.

Becky Chapman, PhD, is the director of environment, security, and society at the Council of Canadian Academies where she oversees expert panel assessment on some of this country's most pressing policy issues. Contact her at becky.chapman@cca-reports.ca.

The Hill Times

AGRICULTURE Policy Briefing

Trade anxiety creates ‘unprecedented’ risk to agriculture, requires bold advocacy, says sector experts



Michael Harvey
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
CANADIAN AGRI-FOOD TRADE ALLIANCE

Michael Harvey, executive director of the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, says, ‘The Canadian and American agri-food sectors are deeply integrated to the point where we really produce food together.’
ParlVu screencapture

is that Canada’s agri-food sector be included in all decision making related to U.S. trade and tariff issues.”

When it comes to MacAulay, Harvey described him as always having shown great commitment to the industry.

“Minister MacAulay and his staff have always been very easy to access for me, and always willing to listen to my concerns,” he said.

Nathan Phinney, president of the Canadian Cattle Association, described MacAulay as a “good Maritimer.”

“I had the opportunity to travel with [MacAulay] on many trade missions, and I remember him speaking very highly of Canadian cattle when we were in Korea, both for our sustainability and our high-quality product,” he said. “I’ll remember at one of our barbecues him publicly saying that we need to have more cattle on the Canadian landscape, which is a good sign of support and advocacy on his behalf.”

When it comes to trade, Phinney said the U.S. is Canada’s largest trading partner for cattle, adding that about \$6-billion worth of live cattle and beef were exported south of the border in 2024.

To help support the beef and cattle industry, Phinney said Canada should align its regulations for specified risk material (SRM) in cattle with regulations in the U.S. When it comes to cattle, SRM refers to tissue such as brain, skulls, eyes and spinal cordsthat are considered too high a risk for prion contamination. Canadian beef processors pay more to process and dispose of SRM than counterparts in the U.S., where there are less strict regulations.

“Ultimately, it is putting us at a competitive disadvantage with the U.S., and there’s room to move on that and get that completed through [the Canadian Food Inspection Agency]. It just has to be something that has to take a priority and get expedited and get done to help level the playing field,” said Phinney.

jcnockaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Continued from [page 16](#)

of the agriculture industry as a whole.

MacAulay, who is also the longest-serving MP in the history of Prince Edward Island, announced he would not be seeking re-election in an interview with CBC News on March 1.

“He’s a guy who’s very approachable. It doesn’t matter what the situation is. We can sit down and have a conversation with Minister MacAulay at any time. He’s very quick to grasp whatever the issue is that we’re dealing with,” said Currie. “He certainly has been very good at understanding our issues, our needs, [and] what we’re asking for.”

Currie added that he is disappointed that MacAulay didn’t “push agriculture as hard as we would have liked to have seen around the cabinet table.”

“I, obviously, wasn’t sitting around the cabinet table, but the sense is that there wasn’t that same fight to really defend agriculture around the cabinet table as strongly as perhaps maybe it should have been fought for,” said Currie. “You’re always going to be frustrated with an elected official—it doesn’t matter who they are or what position they have—at times, depending on the issue. But I think overall, his heart was in the right place all the time. As a farmer in his background, he understands the importance of the industry.”

MacAulay was replaced by Liberal MP Kody Blois (Kings-



Troy Sherman, the Canola Council of Canada’s senior director of government and industry relations, says, ‘It’s going to be hugely challenging for us regardless of whether or not there’s an election, but I think it is going to be even more challenging as we go through a time of political transition here.’

Photograph courtesy of the Canola Council of Canada

Hants, N.S.) as federal agriculture minister on March 14 when Prime Minister Mark Carney’s new cabinet was unveiled and sworn in.

Troy Sherman, senior director of government and industry relations for the Canola Council of Canada, told *The Hill Times* that the U.S. and China represent about 80 per cent of this country’s canola export market. He said the canola industry cannot afford delays in federal action on this issue, which could be a concern if a spring federal election is called.

“It’s going to be hugely challenging for us regardless of whether or not there’s an election, but I think it is going to be

even more challenging as we go through a time of political transition here,” he said.

“The stakes are simply too high right now to have inaction during a caretaker period, and so we are hoping that there will be direction to federal officials that, in the event an election is called and is underway in the very near future, that they will have the latitude required to work with their American and Chinese counterparts, but also work with us as an industry as this situation continues to evolve.”

Michael Harvey, executive director of the Canadian Agri-Food Trade Alliance, told *The Hill*

Times that the domestic agriculture sector is facing a level of political risk around its exports “that’s basically unprecedented.”

“The Canadian and American agri-food sectors are deeply integrated to the point where we really produce food together. The current uncertainty puts those supply chains at risk, and that is in nobody’s interest,” he said. “With the changes in leadership that are upcoming, our main ask

Canada Agriculture Statistics (2023)

- In 2023, this country’s agriculture and agri-food system employed a total 2.3 million people, provided one in nine jobs, and generated \$150-billion (around seven per cent) of our gross domestic product (GDP)
- Canada is one of the world’s largest food exporters, and in 2023 exported nearly \$99.1-billion in agriculture and food products (including raw agricultural materials, fish and seafood, and processed foods).
- Primary agriculture (defined as work performed within the boundaries of a farm, nursery or greenhouse), contributed 247,200 of those jobs in 2023, and \$31.7-billion in GDP (1.4 per cent).
- The U.S. is our top trading partner, accounting for about 60 per cent of all our agri-food exports and more than half our imports. China has been our second leading agri-food and seafood export market since 2012 – our exports have increased by 112 per cent since then.
- Primary agriculture in Canada consisted of 189,874 farms covering 62.2 million hectares of this country’s land area in 2023. Average farm size almost doubled over the last 50 years due to consolidation and technological advances.
- Farm market receipts (which represent the farmer’s revenues from the sale of agricultural commodities) reached a record high of \$93-billion in 2023, and showed a 5.8 per cent average annual growth between 2013 and 2023, with grain and oilseed receipts leading the way.



Source: Overview of Canada’s agriculture and agri-food sector, released by Agriculture and Agri-food Canada on June 27, 2024.

What is suddenly, painfully clear: we need to get our own economic house in order

There are pipelines to build. Refineries. LNG terminals. Critical mineral mines. Small modular reactors. Wind and solar projects and the transmission lines to move the power between jurisdictions.

Jay Khosla
& Arash
Golshan

Opinion

It's good to see LEGO doing so well—the company credits high demand with its outperformance of the overall toy market, particularly in North America.

Heartening, too, to see applications to Canadian engineering schools up, maker spaces exploding in popularity in our schools, and STEM initiatives everywhere.

At least the kids are building things. The adults, not so much.

While the post-war period in Canada has been spent deepening our relationship with the United States on trade, energy, defence, and everything in between, what is suddenly, painfully clear is that we must get our own economic house in order—and fast. That means leveraging our many advantages in energy and natural resources, and overcoming this national (adult) aversion to building things.

Colossal investments are required to meet rising energy demand; RBC estimates that \$2-trillion will be required in the next three decades to overhaul this country's energy system. There are many other estimates on offer—many of them higher—depending on varying scope and moving goal posts.

Meanwhile, the pace of Canada's investment in energy, mining, infrastructure, and clean-tech projects has stalled. According to Natural Resources Canada, the value of natural resources projects under development or consideration in Canada between 2015 and 2024 declined by 11 per cent, from \$711-billion to \$632-billion, while the number of completed projects fell by 39 per cent.

That is a concerning decline at a time when our nation faces the



On public infrastructure, Canada should be investing in interprovincial electricity transmission lines, pipelines and ports to open new markets, write Jay Khosla and Arash Golshan. *The Hill Times* photograph by Kristen Shane

existential threat of a trade war and constant talk from the U.S. president that we should become the 51st state. It's time to up our game.

While the Site C Clean Energy Project in British Columbia is almost finished and LNG Canada will be operational by July 2025, an alarming number of other important projects have failed to get off the ground. LNG Canada's Phase 2 expansion has been delayed. The Atlantic Loop energy corridor has stalled

over financing and political challenges. Ontario's Ring of Fire mining region is hung up with protracted environmental assessments. Alberta's Frontier oilsands project—which would have been the least emitting in history—was shelved. Newfoundland's Bay du Nord offshore oil project has been put on hold by Norway's Equinor—a company adept at working in harsh and complicated environments—after years of reviews and delays. The list goes on.

There has been plenty of talk among officials and political leaders recently about the need to get moving, but none of them clearly articulate how we get big projects across the finish line to a final investment decision. There are about 340 energy projects and 138 mining projects that are either planned or under construction in Canada.

In months-long consultations and convenings with industry, associations, governments, and Indigenous leaders, we've devel-

oped a policy frame that identifies the obstacles and solutions. The key areas include co-ordinated financing, efficient regulation, advancing Indigenous economic participation, and mobilizing infrastructure.

First and foremost, Canada must remove regulatory roadblocks. As one industry leader told us, it's time for us to "control our controllables."

We could start by naming projects of national interest (a "no regret" list). B.C. has proven that we can do so quickly and diligently with its recent reform and fast-tracking of energy and infrastructure projects.

Canada could establish a national strategic investment office to prioritize key projects, and to make sure investors think of this country as a destination of choice. It should establish service standards and time limits for project reviews to ensure accountability (it should not take many years to get a project approved in Canada). We also need to remove overlaps between provincial and federal requirements.

There needs to be clarity, order, and simplification of the financial tools and levers for key projects, as well as targeted new ones like providing back-stop guarantees where private capital is skittish and departing for the U.S.

On public infrastructure, Canada should be investing in interprovincial electricity transmission lines, pipelines, and ports to open new markets.

All of this would require a culture shift in the federal bureaucracy from focusing on risks to identifying opportunities.

And Indigenous groups have to be involved early in process, both in areas of economic participation and consultation. Indigenous equity ownership is quickly proving to be a successful model. Consider the flurry of renewable energy projects in B.C., Nova Scotia, and other provinces now moving ahead with Indigenous majority ownership.

If we don't do all this, others will. In the U.S., President Donald Trump's Day One executive orders aimed to rush through the development of energy and infrastructure. In Australia, a 'single touch' approval system has been introduced to consolidate federal and state environmental assessments. And the United Kingdom has made critical reforms to its Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects regime.

Energy, mining, and infrastructure projects have the potential to unite Canadians, contributing to greater prosperity and a stronger, more resilient country.

There are pipelines to build. Refineries. LNG terminals. Critical mineral mines. Wind and solar projects, and the transmission lines to move the power between jurisdictions. Small modular reactors.

Let's get started. Maybe ask your kids how.

Jay Khosla and Arash Golshan both work on the energy file at the Public Policy Forum, where Khosla is executive director of economic and energy policy, and Golshan is an energy policy lead. *The Hill Times*

NEWS

Liberals, Conservatives gripped in a tie; next election will be 'like a knife fight in a telephone booth,' with Trump as disruptor, says Nanos

In the March 9 Liberal leadership election, Prime Minister Carney secured a 'crushing victory,' winning all 343 ridings.

Continued from page 1

Another key factor in Carney's victory was his positioning as a blue Liberal or centrist. His credentials as a former governor of both the Bank of Canada and the Bank of England also played a significant role in securing his win.

Nanos said that although the Liberals have made significant gains in the polls over the past two months, anything can still happen as voters tend to focus more closely on party platforms and candidates as the election approaches.

Right before former prime minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) announced his exit plans, the Liberals were trailing the Conservatives by about 27 points. Now, some polls show the Conservatives either tied in a statistical dead heat, and at least one poll is showing the Liberals in a majority territory.

According to a Nanos poll released March 7, the Conservatives had the support of 35.7 per cent of voters and the Liberals 34.7 per cent. The NDP support was at 14.9, Bloc 7.9, Greens 3.8 and People's Party 2.1 per cent.

An Ekos poll conducted between Feb. 27 and March 5 suggested that if an election were held today, the Liberals would secure a majority government. The rolling poll, with a sample of approximately 2,000 respondents, showed the Liberals at 40.7 per cent support, followed by the Conservatives at 35.5 per cent, the NDP at 12.8 per cent, and the Greens at 3.2 per cent.

"The Liberals and the Conservatives are gripped in a tie, and it's like a knife fight in a telephone booth, and anything could happen now, especially with [U.S. President] Donald Trump as part of this disruptive, unpredictable mix of whatever the campaign happens to focus on," said Nanos.

According to the Liberal Party's announced leadership race results, Carney secured 29,456 points out of a maximum of 34,300. In the leadership election, each riding carried an equal weight of 100 points, with candidates earning points based



In the March 9 Liberal leadership election, Prime Minister Mark Carney secured 29,456 points out of a maximum of 34,300. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

on their percentage of the vote in that riding. To win, a candidate needed at least 17,151 points—50 per cent plus one.

The vote was conducted across 343 newly reconfigured ridings, an increase from the previous 338. Party members used a ranked ballot system, listing the four candidates in order of preference. If no candidate secured a majority on the first ballot, the lowest-ranked candidate would be eliminated, and their votes redistributed to the remaining contenders. This process would continue until a candidate achieved a majority.

Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) received 2,728 points, or eight per cent of the votes, while Gould (Burlington, Ont.) secured 3.2 per cent. Both are incumbent MPs, but failed to win their own ridings. Former Liberal MP Frank Baylis received 1,014 points, or three per cent of the votes.

In University-Rosedale, Carney won 1,322 votes (82.9 per cent), Freeland received 188 (11.8 per cent), Gould 51 (3.2 per cent), and Baylis 32 (2 per cent). In Burlington, Carney secured 818 votes (75.9 per cent), Gould received 190 (17.6 per cent), Freeland 47 (4.3 per cent), and Baylis 22 (2 per cent). In Pierrefonds-Dollard—the riding Baylis represented from 2015 to 2019—the former Montreal MP secured 130 votes (31.7 per cent), while Carney received 247 (60.2 per cent), Freeland 26 (6.3 per cent), and Gould seven votes (1.7 per cent).

In a message to *The Hill Times*, Tom Allison, Freeland's campaign manager, said that the University-Rosedale riding results reflected the national trends.



Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland came in second place in the March 9 Liberal leadership race, and failed to win in her own riding. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Former government House leader Karina Gould ended up in third place in the Liberal leadership race and also failed to win even her own riding. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"University—Rosedale voted the same way Liberals all over Canada voted," wrote Allison. "University-Rosedale has one of the largest memberships in the country. Mark Carney received a strong vote everywhere in the country, including in downtown Toronto."

In an email to the Freeland campaign team on March 13, Allison wrote that Freeland's campaign placed second in all provinces and in 317 of 343 ridings. He also stated that their campaign raised \$700,000 in less than two months, and noted that 70,000 Liberals who did not select Freeland as their first choice ranked her as their second choice.

"Our targeted outreach paid off. With the exception of Ontario

and Saskatchewan, we won larger proportions of points than our proportion of votes," said Allison in his email.

"We made a real effort to engage the grassroots over the past two months, including 20 town halls with Liberals from every riding in the country."

A spokesperson for the Gould campaign did not say why the former government House leader failed to win even her own riding in an emailed response to *The Hill Times*.

"Liberals across the country gave Mark Carney a clear and strong mandate to lead our party, through the next federal election and beyond. Karina Gould is proud of the progressive campaign she ran," the spokes-

person said. "The Liberal Party is stronger for each candidate that ran and put their ideas on the table. Karina Gould is excited to be apart of the Liberal Team, and looks forward [to] take the fight to [Conservative Leader] Pierre Poilievre and stand up for the interests of Canadians, alongside Mr. Carney and her other colleagues. Karina looks forward to running again in Burlington and standing up for the people of Burlington."

Darrell Bricker, CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs, said that the leadership election results suggested that none of the other candidates had a substantial organizational presence. It was surprising that both Gould and Freeland—two former senior government ministers—failed to secure victories even in their own ridings while running for party leadership and the position of prime minister, he said.

Bricker noted that the leadership debates lacked excitement, creating the impression that none of the candidates was making a strong effort.

"It was like watching the hockey practice in which there was no hitting, no pads, and no puck," said Bricker. "It was like they were kind of going through the motions," he said.

Meanwhile, Carney and his new cabinet were sworn in on March 14. Since then, the prime minister and his ministers have been in the process of staffing their respective offices. When a prime minister or any cabinet minister leaves their position or is reassigned to a new portfolio, their exempt staff automatically receive termination letters as a general rule. Consequently, incoming cabinet ministers and the prime minister have to hire staff again.

Before the cabinet was unveiled, Carney appointed Liberal MP Marco Mendicino (Eglinton—Lawrence, Ont.) as his chief of staff for the transition process. Once the transition is complete, a new chief of staff is expected to succeed him. Mendicino, a three-term Liberal MP and former cabinet minister, is not seeking re-election. His appointment as chief of staff faced considerable pushback from caucus members due to past controversies during his time as a minister—issues that opposition parties are likely to exploit in the next election. Additionally, his staunch support for Israel has drawn criticism, particularly in light of the more than 48,000 Palestinian deaths in the most recent conflict.

Tim Krupa, a policy adviser from Carney's leadership campaign, is expected to join the Prime Minister's Office as policy director.

The next federal election is anticipated to be called by March 23. As a result, Liberal sources said last week that staffing will not be fully completed until after the election. During the campaign, most ministerial staffers are expected to shift their focus to election efforts by taking leaves of absence from ministerial positions, with only a few exempt staffers remaining in their offices.

arana@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Toronto top donor city for Carney, Freeland, and Gould's Liberal leadership campaigns

All the candidates fared the best at fundraising in Ontario, with 54 per cent of Mark Carney's cash coming from the province, and 68 per cent for runner-up Chrystia Freeland.

BY RIDDHI KACHHELA

Toronto was a most generous donor city for the top three Liberal leadership contenders, with the Liberal Leader Mark Carney fundraising more than \$560,000, according to interim campaign returns.

All four final leadership candidates filed their second interim campaign returns last week, revealing the places where they each got the most money, and the number of people who donated to their respective causes.

The returns covered the cash raised by the candidates between Jan. 10 and March 2, or until a week before the Liberal Party declared the winner. This includes both contributions the candidates received directly, and those sent to the party on their behalf.

Carney's team told *The Hill Times* he raised more than \$5-million in two months as of March 9. The two interim returns for Carney totalled \$3.5-million, including the contributions below \$200 received by his campaign, suggesting that he may have raised nearly \$1.5-million in the last week before he was elected.

For runner-up Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.), the returns totalled \$361,398, followed by Karina Gould's (Burlington, Ont.) \$363,149, and \$349,726 for Frank Baylis. The campaign teams said these numbers don't reflect the totals raised, with Freeland's team



Then-Liberal leadership candidates Mark Carney, Chrystia Freeland, and Karina Gould. All three raised some of their top dollars in Toronto and Ottawa, though winner Carney raised much more. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia and Andrew Meade

internally reporting \$750,000, according to *The Canadian Press*, and Gould's team saying it raised \$450,000, not counting the \$350,000 entry fee.

Canada's capital emerged as Carney's second-most-generous city, with Ottawa also appearing in the top donor destinations for Freeland and Gould, as well. Toronto and Ottawa were also the top voting cities, with Liberal member residents turning out in big numbers to determine their next leader. Carney also earned big bucks from Vancouver, B.C., and Calgary and Edmonton in Alberta to round out his top five cities. Of note, the city and province details don't include people who paid under \$200 directly to the campaigns, so these totals exclude those types of donors.

The trend was slightly different for Baylis, with the former MP raising the most cash from Beaconsfield, Que., and Missis-

sauga, Ont., with Toronto as his third-best city.

All the candidates fared the best at fundraising in Ontario, with 54 per cent of Carney's cash coming from that province. This figure was 68 per cent for Freeland, 73 per cent for Gould, and 54 per cent for Baylis.

Carney and Freeland had several donors from locations outside of Canada, including in London, U.K., and New York, U.S.A.

Carney beat Freeland nearly six-fold in donations from outside

the country, with \$32,960, while the early data suggests the former deputy prime minister earned \$6,750.

Cash coming from foreign locales is not against the rules. Elections Canada outlines that candidates can receive cash from people living abroad if they are either Canadian citizens or permanent residents.

The Hill Times previously asked Carney's campaign about its verification process to ensure the donors were all eligible. A spokesperson said that they take

their obligation towards political financing "very seriously," and only those allowed to donate to Canadian political parties can send money towards their cause.

Carney's campaign has also given back \$7,903 to contributors or remitted it back to the chief electoral officer, according to the interim returns.

The candidates also took out loans—Carney borrowed \$150,000 from the Bank of Montreal at a 5.45 per cent interest rate. Baylis lent himself \$50,000 for an operating loan, while Freeland and Gould refrained from taking debt for the campaign.

The final returns will include the money sourced by the candidates in the contest's final week, and those will be filed by the campaign teams within the next six months. Canada's federal elections watchdog will carry out an audit of the statements after this period, the agency told *The Hill Times*.

rkachhela@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Top 10 Cities for Fundraising by Mark Carney

City	Funds raised
Toronto	\$567,426
Ottawa	\$240,262
Vancouver	\$164,654
Calgary	\$93,672
Montreal	\$83,465
Edmonton	\$80,315
Victoria	\$70,453
Westmount	\$57,950
Halifax	\$54,291
Winnipeg	\$48,930

Source: Interim campaign returns filed with Elections Canada

Province-wide Funds Raised by Mark Carney from Jan. 10 to March 2

Province	Funds raised
Grand Total	\$3,324,326
Ontario	\$1,807,637
B.C.	\$548,004
Quebec	\$329,356
Alberta	\$236,459
Nova Scotia	\$138,673
Manitoba	\$65,561
New Brunswick	\$59,682
Saskatchewan	\$56,428
Newfoundland and Labrador	\$19,233
P.E.I.	\$13,047
Yukon	\$7,763
Northwest Territories	\$7,256
Nunavut	\$2,269

Source: Interim campaign returns filed with Elections Canada

Carney's Top Fundraising Cities Outside of Canada

Mark Carney raised a total of \$32,960 tied to cities outside of the country.

City	Country	Funds raised
London	United Kingdom	\$9,250
New York City	United States	\$6,250
Tartegnin	Switzerland	\$3,500
Geneva	Switzerland	\$3,500
Menlo Park, California	United States	\$1,750
Paris	France	\$1,750
Greenwich, Connecticut	United States	\$1,750
Atlanta, Georgia	United States	\$1,750
Jersey City, New Jersey	United States	\$1,750
Bethesda, Maryland	United States	\$700
Madrid	Spain	\$510
Vienna	Austria	\$500

Source: Campaign returns filed with Elections Canada

Funds Raised by Liberal Leadership Contest Candidates between Jan. 10 and March 2

Candidate	Number of Donors	Total raised	Average donation per donor
Frank Baylis	468	\$348,778	\$745
Mark Carney	18,127	\$3,324,326	\$183
Chrystia Freeland	1,055	\$350,089	\$332
Karina Gould	1,695	\$320,881	\$189

Source: Interim campaign returns filed with Elections Canada

NEWS

Poilievre's riding among seats with highest turnout in Liberal leadership race

Mark Carney swept all ridings, provinces, and territories, while Ontario Liberals accounted for more than half of all votes cast.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Ottawans and Torontonians turned out in force for the Liberal leadership election on March 9, with the two cities accounting for eight of the 10 ridings with the greatest number of electors in the contest—including the seat held by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre.

Mark Carney won by a landslide on the first ballot with 85.9 per cent of the points tallied, a decisive victory making him the party's next leader and the country's new prime minister.

Data released by the Liberal Party of Canada shows that the former central banker enjoyed major support among the party's rank-and-file members in every province, territory, and riding, ranging from three-quarters of the 33 votes in Nunavut to 90.73 per cent of the 1,037 cast in Prince Edward Island.

These figures count only the ballots cast for candidates, and do not include the 268 voters who abstained during the process. The distribution of these abstentions across ridings was not available by press time.

Liberal Leadership Votes by Province/Territory

Ontarians accounted for slightly more than half of the 151,631 votes cast in the Liberal leadership contest.

Province/territory	Votes
Ontario	76,992
British Columbia	23,311
Alberta	16,112
Quebec	12,663
Nova Scotia	7,729
Manitoba	4,468
New Brunswick	3,830
Saskatchewan	2,731
Newfoundland and Labrador	2,108
Prince Edward Island	1,143
Yukon	300
Northwest Territories	211
Nunavut	33



Liberal Party Leader Mark Carney won majority support in every riding during the party's leadership vote on March 9. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

In his worst riding-level result, Carney still secured 60.24 per cent support among the 410 people who voted in Pierrefonds—

Dollard, Que.—the former riding of his leadership opponent Frank Baylis. In contrast, it was a clean sweep of all 18 electors in the

sprawling northern Saskatchewan riding of Desnethé—Misisnippi—Churchill River.

Overall, Ontarians accounted for slightly more than half of the 151,631 votes cast in the Liberal leadership contest. But it was a different story in Quebec—home to more than one-fifth of both the party's federal caucus and the country's population—from which only 8.35 per cent of the votes arrived.

That was behind British Columbia (15.37 per cent) and Alberta (10.63 per cent), the latter of which counts only two Liberals among its 34 federal representatives. Quebec is also the province in which Carney performed worst, albeit with 82.14 per cent of votes cast.

Seven of the 10 ridings with the greatest number of voters are represented by Liberal MPs, including University—Rosedale, Ont., held by leadership candidate Chrystia Freeland. The former deputy prime minister secured

her second-best vote in her home riding, at only 11.8 per cent to Carney's 83 per cent.

The other three ridings were Toronto—St. Paul's, Ont.—held by the Liberals for 21 years until a Conservative upset win in a byelection last year; Carleton, Ont.—held by Poilievre; and Victoria, B.C.—held by NDP MP Laurel Collins.

As for the other contenders, second-place Freeland found her highest levels of provincial support in Manitoba—though none of those ridings cracked her top 10 in total votes—where she secured 9.67 per cent of the votes, and her native Alberta, where she secured 9.57 per cent.

Looking at the ridings where she received her highest percentages, Freeland secured eight votes—or 25 per cent—in north-eastern Quebec's Côte-Nord—Kawawachikamach—Nitassinan; another eight—or 19.51 per cent—in Chicoutimi—Le Fjord, Que.; and 24 votes—18.75 per cent—in Peace River—Westlock, Alta.

Karina Gould, meanwhile, secured 17.64 per cent of the vote in her riding of Burlington, Ont., just behind her best performance of 17.95 per cent in Saint-Hyacinthe—Bagot—Acton, Que. Baylis performed best in his former riding of Pierrefonds—Dollard, Que., with 31.71 per cent, achieving almost double the 17.03 per cent secured in his next-best seat—neighbouring Saint-Laurent, Que.

sjeffery@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Liberal Leader Mark Carney's Top 10 Ridings, by Total Vote

Mark Carney won by a landslide on the first ballot, taking 85.9 per cent of the points tallied, and 86.84 per cent of all votes cast for candidates.



Riding	Votes	Per cent
Ottawa Centre, Ont.	2,270	84.39%
Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Ont.	1,640	86.73%
Toronto—St. Paul's, Ont.	1,584	86.04%
University—Rosedale, Ont.	1,322	82.99%
Carleton, Ont.	1,319	88.29%
Kingston and the Islands, Ont.	1,309	85.78%
Victoria, B.C.	1,293	90.36%
Beaches—East York, Ont.	1,276	87.16%
Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Ont.	1,254	86.42%
Toronto—Danforth, Ont.	1,236	88.73%

Karina Gould's Top 10 Ridings, by Total Vote

The former government House leader came in third in the Liberal leadership race, with 3.2 per cent of the points tallied, and 3.16 per cent of all votes cast for candidates.



Riding	Votes	Per cent
Ottawa Centre, Ont.	206	7.66%
Burlington, Ont.	190	17.64%
Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Ont.	108	5.71%
Toronto—St. Paul's, Ont.	72	3.91%
Ottawa West—Nepean, Ont.	58	4.56%
Kingston and the Islands, Ont.	52	3.41%
University—Rosedale, Ont.	51	3.20%
Beaches—East York, Ont.	51	3.48%
Ottawa South, Ont.	50	4.24%
Hamilton Centre, Ont.	46	6.35%

Chrystia Freeland's Top 10 Ridings, by Total Vote

The former deputy prime minister came in a distant second in the Liberal leadership race, with eight per cent of the points tallied, and 7.34 per cent of all votes cast for candidates.



Riding	Votes	Per cent
University—Rosedale, Ont.	188	11.8%
Ottawa Centre, Ont.	167	6.21%
Toronto—St. Paul's, Ont.	163	8.85%
Kingston and the Islands, Ont.	142	9.31%
Taiaiaiko'n—Parkdale—High Park, Ont.	140	9.65%
Etobicoke Centre, Ont.	130	15.82%
Ottawa—Vanier—Gloucester, Ont.	115	6.08%
Etobicoke—Lakeshore, Ont.	110	10.79%
Calgary Confederation, Alta.	109	9.85%
Ottawa West—Nepean, Ont.	106	8.33%

Frank Baylis' Top 10 Ridings, by Total Vote

The former MP came in fourth in the Liberal leadership race, with three per cent of the points tallied, and 2.66 per cent of all votes cast for candidates.



Riding	Votes	Per cent
Pierrefonds—Dollard, Que.	130	31.71%
Lac-Saint-Louis, Que.	83	13.03%
Nepean, Ont.	67	5.98%
Kanata, Ont.	59	4.66%
Notre-Dame-de-Grâce—Westmount, Que.	48	5.02%
Ottawa Centre, Ont.	47	1.75%
Mississauga—Erin Mills, Ont.	44	8.03%
Vaudreuil, Que.	41	3.13%
Toronto Centre, Ont.	41	8.01%
Oakville East, Ont.	39	4.58%

Civil Circles

By Stephen Jeffery



Fisher to lead new water agency, while ministers announce raft of new Crown corp board chairs



Infrastructure Minister Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, left, Labour Minister Steven MacKinnon, Transport Minister Anita Anand, and Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault announced appointments to government agencies and Crown corporations in the last two weeks. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia

Mark Fisher joins the Canada Water Agency, the prime minister will soon have a new PCO foreign and defence policy adviser, and four new chairs have been announced at Crown corporations.

Mark Fisher has been named the Canada Water Agency's first permanent president, taking the helm of the Winnipeg-based freshwater management organization.

First announced in the 2023 budget, the Canada Water Agency was created in October 2024 and is intended to improve freshwater management across federal departments and agencies, building partnerships with Indigenous partners, improve collaboration with the provinces, territories, and United States, and increase science, monitoring, and the use of Indigenous knowledge.



Mark Fisher is president of the Canada Water Agency. *Photograph courtesy of X/CanadaWaterAgency*

Fisher will work with freshwater management director general **Véronique Hiriart-Baer**, freshwater policy and engagement director general **Gemma Boag**, and corporate services director general and chief financial officer **Mirielle Drouin**. He will answer to Environment Minister **Steven Guilbeault**.

Fisher joined the organization from the binational Council of the Great Lakes Region (CGLR), where he had been president and CEO since 2014. The Cleveland, Ohio-based group includes representatives from both sides of the Canada-U.S. border, and is intended to foster collaboration between governments, businesses, and non-governmental organizations to improve economic and environmental conditions in the Great Lakes region.

The organization is composed of four parts, two in each country: CGLR Canada; CGLR Canada Foundation; CGLR USA; and the CGLR Foundation.

"Under Mark's leadership since 2014, the Council has become a recognized regional leader in so many areas, from cross-border trade and border management to protecting the Great Lakes for future generations," CLGR said in a March 7 press release. "The boards of directors of CGLR Canada, the CGLR Canada Foundation, CGLR USA and the CGLR Foundation would like to wish Mark all the best as he takes on this vital leadership role with the Canada Water Agency."

Fisher stepped down from the role on March 14, and the CGLR

Foundation's senior program director **Lora Shrake** will serve as interim executive director.

Prior to Fisher's appointment, **Daniel Wolfish** had served as the Canada Water Agency's interim president since October 2024. Prior to enabling legislation that created the agency as a separate entity, Wolfish was appointed acting assistant deputy minister responsible for the Canada Water Agency as a branch within Environment and Climate Change Canada in June 2023.



Daniel Wolfish is former interim director of the Canada Water Agency. *Photograph courtesy of Government of Canada*

Angell to join PCO

Former diplomat **David Angell** will become foreign and defence policy adviser to the prime minister on March 31, following the retirement of **Stephen de Boer**.

Angell joins the PCO from Global Affairs, where he is political director and assistant deputy minister, international security and political affairs. He has previously been Canada's high commissioner to Nigeria and Kenya, as well as



David Angell will become foreign and defence policy adviser to the prime minister. *Photograph courtesy of Government of Canada*

ambassador and permanent representative to the North Atlantic Council, which is the main decision-making body of NATO.

Beyond international postings, Angell has been director general for Africa and international organizations, human rights and democracy at the predecessor departments of Global Affairs. He has had one stint in the PCO, as assistant secretary to the cabinet for foreign and defence policy between 2016-2019.

New rail, infrastructure bank, labour board chairs

Meanwhile, ministers announced the appointment of three new chairs for Crown corporations in the last days of **Justin Trudeau's** prime ministership.

Hockey Canada chair **Jonathan Goldbloom** has been named the next chair of the VIA Rail Canada board of directors, Transport Minister **Anita Anand** announced on March 8.

Goldbloom, who has been a board member of the passenger rail service since 2017, will assume the chair on April 12 for a five-year term. He is currently a partner at Avenue Strategic Communications in Montreal, Que., and has previously served on the board of directors for the Stratford Festival, Selwyn House School, and the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs.



Jonathan Goldbloom will become chair of the VIA Rail board of directors. *Photograph courtesy of VIA Rail*

He will succeed **Françoise Bertrand**, who has held the position since 2017. Bertrand had previous experience at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission, Fédération des chambres de commerce du Québec, Télé-Québec, and Université du Québec à Montréal.

Over at the Canada Infrastructure Bank, **Macky Tall** will take the reins as chair of the board of directors for the next four years.

Tall is a senior adviser at multinational investment firm Carlyle Group, having previously served as chair of the company's Washington, D.C.-based Global Infrastructure Group. He is also a board director of WSP Global Inc., the National Bank of Canada, and the United Nations



Macky Tall is the new chair of the Canada Infrastructure Bank board. *Photograph courtesy of CIB*

Joint Staff Pension Investments Committee.

In the past, Tall held leadership positions at pension fund Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec. He was founding chair and CEO of the fund's subsidiary CDPQ Infra—which specializes in infrastructure projects—and chair of real estate subsidiary Ivanhoe Cambridge.

Jane Bird, a senior adviser at Bennett Jones LLP, had served as interim chair since Jan. 27, 2024, following the end of **Tamara Vrooman's** three-year stint chairing the board. Bird remains a board director.

"With a strong history of leading significant infrastructure projects and fostering investments, Mr. Tall's leadership will be crucial to the Canada Infrastructure Bank,"



Infrastructure Minister **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith** said in a press release announcing Tall's appointment on March 7.

Erskine-Smith also announced that **Sylvain Villiard** would become chair of the Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated on March 8, making official the role he has served in on an interim basis since April 2024.

In labour news, **Ginette Brazeau** is departing the Canada Industrial Relations Board (CIRB) after a decade as chairperson.



Maryse Tremblay will be the next chair of the Canada Industrial Relations Board. *Photograph via LinkedIn*

Maryse Tremblay, a partner at BLG and employment and labour lawyer, will succeed Brazeau on May 1.

Brazeau became CIRB chair on Dec. 28, 2014, during which she "has deftly navigated countless complex situations with integrity and intelligence," Labour Minister **Steven MacKinnon** said in a press release announcing her departure. Brazeau will remain chair until Tremblay assumes the role.

Tremblay is a member of the Canadian and American bar associations, and was a former member of CIRB's client consultation committee from 2012-2015. She is a founding member of the Canadian Association of Counsel to Employers, and was a director of that organization from 2003-2005. sjeffery@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

NEWS

New graduate programs to boost pool of potential federal government interpreters amid ongoing shortage, but hurdles remain

None of the 21 candidates who sat the Translation Bureau's most recent accreditation exam this past October were successful.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Two new graduate programs in conference interpreting announced since the fall will boost the potential crop of fresh talent with an anticipated 35 new admission slots per year, but how many will ultimately graduate, seek jobs at Parliament, and subsequently pass the federal Translation Bureau's accreditation exam remains to be seen.

Interpreters must be accredited by the bureau in order to be hired as staff or freelancers and cover parliamentary proceedings. In the most recent exam held by the bureau this past October, none of the 21 candidates who sat the test successfully passed.

The Translation Bureau—and Parliament generally—have been grappling with a shortage of qualified interpreters amid efforts to boost interpretation capacity and support the rising number of meeting hours being logged by parliamentarians in recent years.

The shortage, which took root prior to COVID, was exacerbated by the pandemic as a result of the increased rates of injury and strain experienced by interpreters while covering remote participants. At the time, less stringent guidelines than have since been introduced were in place regarding the microphone equipment and internet connections used during virtual proceedings. Other efforts have also since been made to improve the quality of sound fed to interpreters covering remote participants, and to protect interpreters from dangerous sound spikes that can be caused by in-person participants, which have helped reduce risks to interpreters and lower injury report rates.

Still, natural attrition of the workforce remains a challenge, and the bureau has noted difficulties in attracting interpreters



An interpreter covers a press conference with then-prime minister Justin Trudeau in the Sir John A. Macdonald Building in February 2021. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

to live and work in the National Capital Region, leading to the piloting and subsequent adoption of remote simultaneous interpretation in 2023, which enables interpreters to work remotely. The International Association of Conference Interpreters (AIIC) Canada, an association that counts federal freelance interpreters among its members, has warned of a “looming crisis” with regard to staffing levels, with a 2022 survey conducted by the association having found that 49 per cent of the 92 accredited freelance interpreters who responded planned to retire in the next five years.

The 2024 federal budget allocated \$31.9-million over five years and \$3-million per year going forward to the Translation Bureau under Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) in order “to expand translation and interpretation capacity in Parliament.” The budget also set out \$1.1-million over five years and \$200,000 going forward to establish a scholarship program, with that funding coming from within PSPC’s “existing resources.”

Since then, PSPC has announced partnerships with two universities to offer new graduate programs in conference interpreting, both of which will begin this fall.

The bureau only hires individuals who hold a graduate degree in conference interpreting, and previously only two such programs existed in Canada: one at the University of Ottawa, and the

other offered by York University’s Glendon College.

On Oct. 25, PSPC announced an agreement between the bureau and Laval University to support a new graduate microprogram in interpreting to begin in September 2025. As part of its support, at least two bureau interpreters will help with two of the program courses, and the bureau will also be “offering students opportunities for learning in the workplace.”

More recently, on Feb. 25, the department announced a partnership with the Université du Québec à Trois-Rivières (UQTR) to launch a new online, two-year “specialized graduate diploma” in conference interpretation that will begin in the fall of 2025. The bureau will similarly “provide teaching support” and “workplace learning opportunities” to students.

Graduates of both programs will be eligible to sit the accreditation exam.

Laval’s new program aims to accept 15 admissions per year, according to a spokesperson, and while applications are still being accepted, so far the “response from the student community is good” with 12 admission offers sent out for students to start next fall.

A spokesperson for UQTR told *The Hill Times* the school expects to have about 20 students per year for its new program.

Those 35 potential new students per year add to the roughly 30—more or less—students who

enrol annually in the two pre-existing programs.

The University of Ottawa’s master of conference interpretation program accepts up to 12 students per year, but the school’s media relations team noted that the “number depends in large part on success in the admission exam” that prospective students are required to take, and as a result, it “is usually fewer” than 12 per year.

So far for the 2025-26 school year, uOttawa has processed 22 applications, of which 15 candidates will “soon” be interviewed. Last year, four students graduated from the program, and the university said it expects that number “could be as many as [six] this year.”

Glendon, meanwhile, has no cap on the number of students who can be admitted to its two-year master of conference interpretation program each year, and its numbers fluctuate. Between 2019-20 and 2024-25, the lowest number of students enrolled in a year was 17 (in 2019-20), and the highest was 38 (in 2020-21). More recently, 2023-24 saw 32 students enrol, and 26 in 2024-25.

Over those six years—from 2019-20 to 2024-25—Glendon saw a total of 167 student enrolments in its master’s program. In 2021—the graduating year for the 2019-20 cohort—seven students graduated, followed by 18 in 2022, six in 2023, and 16 in 2024. Since 2014, the program has seen a total of 129 students graduate.

In order to try to help new grads pass the accreditation exam, the Translation Bureau offers workshops to prospective candidates. In sharing the latest exam result with *The Hill Times*, the bureau noted it will “continue to organize workshops to help potential candidates succeed.”

“Partnerships with universities are one way for the Bureau to detect new talent,” read the emailed response.

Currently, the bureau has 61 staff interpreters, and 84 freelancers working under open contracts to provide interpretation to Parliament (other freelancers are on roster but do not cover parliamentary proceedings).

Last May, the bureau had indicated it had 66 staff interpreters and 84 freelancers covering Parliament. By comparison, in December 2022, it reported approximately 70 staff interpreters and 60 freelancers serving Parliament, and back in early 2021, it reported 53 staff interpreters and 76 freelancers.

Pass rates for the bureau’s accreditation exam have been consistently low.

It began offering the exam twice annually in 2023—one in the spring, in addition to the regular fall exam—with 38 candidates sitting that spring’s test, four of whom passed.

Before then, in 2022, a total of 69 candidates sat the exam, only 10 of whom passed and chose to become freelance interpreters rather than accept jobs as staff. In 2021, 52 people sat the exam, with nine passing, all but three of whom signed up as either freelancers or as staff. No exam was held in 2020 due to the pandemic, and in 2019, two people passed out of the 44 individuals who sat the exam, only one of whom was subsequently hired.

Last year, the bureau launched a pilot project to test offering “entry-level accreditation” to individuals who came close to passing its accreditation exam in order for them to work in contract positions. The bureau has indicated these entry-level interpreters would only only be assigned to “general, non-technical” departmental events—which the bureau is also juggling resources to try to cover—and not parliamentary ones.

The pilot has prompted concerns from MPs and AIIC Canada alike, with the association arguing that the move would water down qualifications and diminish the quality of services offered in providing a short-term solution to the long-term challenge facing interpretation in Canada.

Asked about the status of that pilot, in a March 4 email, the bureau said it “is still considering creating” this new accreditation program.

“Among other things, the Bureau has consulted its international counterparts who have developed different certification levels according to the degree of specialization required. As previously stated, the Translation Bureau will only assign parliamentary events such as committee meetings and House debates to interpreters who have passed the accreditation exam.”

lryckewaert@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



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 by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper.

Sudds to attend Iftar dinner on March 17

Families Minister Jenna Sudds will be the special guest at the Community & Friendship Iftar Dinner hosted by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute on Monday, March 17, at 5:30 p.m. ET, 144 Wellington St. in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



MONDAY, MARCH 17

Minister Sudds to Attend Iftar Dinner—Families Minister Jenna Sudds is the special guest at the Community & Friendship Iftar Dinner hosted by the Intercultural Dialogue Institute. Monday, March 17, at 5:30 p.m. ET, 144 Wellington St. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, MARCH 18

Minister Erskine-Smith to Deliver Remarks—Housing Minister Nathaniel Erskine-Smith will take part in a fireside chat hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Tuesday, March 18, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Details: economicclub.ca.

Webinar: 'Removing the Roadblocks'—The Macdonald Laurier Institute hosts a webinar, "Removing the roadblocks: How provinces can lead the charge on boosting internal trade." Drawing from his recent paper, MLI Senior Fellow and economics professor Trevor Tombe will discuss how these obstacles are holding back businesses and workers alike, and why waiting for a national solution is unnecessary. Tuesday, March 18, at 3 p.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

Colombian Ambassador to Deliver Remarks—Colombia's Ambassador to Canada Carlos Arturo Morales López will deliver remarks on "From The Home Front to The Global Stage: Colombia's Path Forward," part of the Ambassador Speaker Series hosted by Carleton University in Ottawa. Tuesday, March 18, at 6 p.m. ET at the Westin Ottawa Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: carleton.ca/npsia.

Panel: 'Reimagining Borders'—McGill University hosts a panel on "Reimagining Borders," exploring the challenges governments face in managing borders in a way that responds to economic, political, and humanitarian concerns. Participants include former member of the German parliament Peter Altmaier; former mayor of San Antonio, Texas, Julián Castro; and University of Toronto professor Ayelet Shachar. Tuesday, March 18, at 7 p.m. ET at Centre Mont-Royal, 2200 Mansfield St., Montreal. Details: mcgill.ca.

Book Launch: *The Left in Power*—Carleton University hosts the launch of *The Left in Power: Bob Rae's NDP and the Working Class* featuring author Steven High and special guests. Tuesday, March 18, at 7 p.m. ET at Perfect Books, 258 Elgin St. Details via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 19

Senator Patterson to Speak on DEI in the Military—CSG Senator Rebecca Patterson will deliver the keynote address at this day-long conference,

"Shaping Defence: Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and the Future of Military Operations," hosted by Carleton University. Wednesday, March 19, at 9 a.m. ET at 2220 Richcraft Building, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: events.carleton.ca.

Webinar: 'Preparing for the 2025 Federal Landscape'—Business/Arts hosts a webinar, "Preparing for the 2025 Federal Landscape—Advocacy Strategy for Arts & Culture," an arts advocacy session with staff from PAA Advisory. With federal priorities evolving and an election on the horizon, this session will provide a strategic analysis of what's ahead and ways to engage policymakers to ensure sustained support for the sector. Wednesday, March 19, at 3 p.m. ET happening online. Contact: info@businessforthearts.org.

THURSDAY, MARCH 20

Forum: 'Advancing the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice'—The Assembly of First Nations hosts the National Virtual Forum on Advancing the MMIWG2S+ Calls for Justice. The theme, "Prevention of Human Trafficking and Sexual Trafficking," will help inform the AFN's advocacy positions, raise awareness, advance mandates, and develop indicators for the AFN's Calls for Justice Progress Report. Details to follow: afn.ca.

Catherine McKenna to Deliver Remarks—Former Liberal cabinet minister Catherine McKenna, founder and CEO of Climate & Nature Solutions, will take part in "Leaders Creating a Sustainable World," an International Women's Month event hosted by Invest Ottawa. Thursday, March 20, at 11 a.m. ET at 7 Bayview Station Rd. Details via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'Canada-Europe Innovation Collaboration'—Signe Ratto, deputy director-general of research and innovation at the European Commission, will take part in a panel on "Stimulating collaborative innovation between Canada and Europe" hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, March 20, at 11:30 a.m. ET happening online. Details: corim.qc.ca.

Canada's Envoy to Ukraine to Deliver Remarks—Natalia Cmoc, Canada's ambassador to Ukraine, will deliver remarks at an event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, March 20, at 12:30 p.m. ET happening online. Details: cdhowe.org.

Unpacking the Hogue Commission Report—The University of Ottawa hosts an event, "Canada Under Influence? Unpacking the Foreign Interference Commission Report." Canadian experts will discuss Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue's report, and the legal, political, economic, and policy ramifications of its findings as Canada

assumes the G7 presidency and with a general election looming. Thursday, March 20, at 1 p.m. ET in Room 4101 Desmarais Building, 55 Laurier Ave. E. Details: cips-cepi.ca.

Gwynne Dyer to Deliver 2025 Balsillie Lecture—*The Hill Times* columnist and author Gwynne Dyer will deliver the fifth annual Balsillie Lecture on the topic of his latest book, *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World's Climate Engineers*. Thursday, March 20, at 7 p.m. ET at CIGI Auditorium, 67 Erb St. W., Waterloo, Ont. Details: balsillieschool.ca.

MONDAY, MARCH 24

Parliament Resumes—Parliament is expected to resume today with a Speech from the Throne given by Governor General Mary Simon outlining the government's priorities in this new session.

Air Canada President to Deliver Remarks—Michael Rousseau, president and CEO of Air Canada, will discuss the airline's vision for the future at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club Toronto. Monday, March 24, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

TUESDAY, MARCH 25

Mayor's Breakfast—Goldy Hyder, president and CEO of the Business Council of Canada, is the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe. Tuesday, March 25, at 7 a.m. ET Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details: business.ottawabot.ca.

Mexican Ambassador to Deliver Remarks—Mexico's Ambassador to Canada Carlos Manuel Joaquín González will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Tuesday, March 25, at 11:30 a.m. ET at a location to be announced. Details: corim.qc.ca.

Three Ambassadors in Francophonie Panel—Le Club Canadien de Toronto hosts a French panel discussion on La Francophonie in a global world, featuring Haiti's Ambassador to Canada Weibert Arthus, Senegal's Ambassador to Canada Gorgui Ciss, Belgium's Ambassador to Canada Patrick van Gheel, and Zahara Kamil Ali, the Organisation International pour la francophonie's Americas director. Tuesday, March 25, at 11:30 a.m. ET on the 9th floor, Simpson Tower, 401 Bay St., Toronto. Details: clubcanadien.ca.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26

AFN National Chief to Deliver Remarks—Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak will deliver remarks on

"Indigenous Economic Leadership in a Changing Global Landscape," hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto.

Wednesday, March 26, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

Webinar: 'Canadians' Response to Crises'—Ipsos hosts a webinar, "From the Pandemic to the President: Canadians' Response to Crises," unpacking the impact of global and domestic challenges on Canada. Drawing from several of Ipsos' proprietary data sources, this special live session will feature four senior Ipsos leaders exploring how Trump's policies have influenced Canada, and what lies ahead for the nation. Wednesday, March 26, at 1 p.m. ET happening online: ipsos.com.

EU Ambassador to Canada to Deliver Remarks—European Union Ambassador to Canada Geneviève Tuts will take part in a panel discussion, "EU + Canadian Approaches to International High Tech Governance Issues," hosted by the Canadian International Council and KPMG. Wednesday, March 26, at 5:30 p.m. ET at KPMG, 150 Elgin St., Suite 1800. Details via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 26—FRIDAY, MARCH 28

CMA Health Summit—The Canadian Medical Association hosts its Health Summit on the theme "the politics of change." Participants include CMA president Dr. Joss Reimer; Dr. Ashley Miller, chief medical information officer, Nova Scotia Health; Anthony Morgan, co-host, *The Nature of Things*; and content creator Brittlestar. Wednesday, March 26, to Friday, March 28, in Ottawa. Details: events.cma.ca/website/81161/eng/home.

THURSDAY, MARCH 27

Panel: 'Mining in the New Political Era'—Former Liberal MP Paul Lefebvre, now mayor of Sudbury, Ont., will take part in a panel discussion, "Mining in the New Political Era," hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Thursday, March 27, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York Hotel, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

FRIDAY, MARCH 28

Lecture: 'Canada's LGBT Purge: Is History Repeating Itself?'—Carleton University hosts this year's Chet Mitchell Memorial Lecture on the topic "Canada's LGBT Purge: Is History Repeating Itself?" featuring Michelle Douglas, executive director of the LGBT Purge Fund. Friday, March 28, at 10 a.m. ET at 2017 Dunton Tower, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: events.carleton.ca.

TUESDAY, APRIL 1

Economic Reconciliation Summit—Canada 2020 hosts "The Indigenous-led Economy: 2025 Economic Reconciliation Summit." Industry innovators, community leaders, and Indigenous innovators will explore best practices in trade, security, and economic development, building social and political solidarity, and leading the way on thoughtful policy-making toward economic reconciliation. Tuesday, April 1, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 55 Colonel By Dr. Details: canada2020.ca.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

Alto's President Imbleau to Deliver Remarks—Martin Imbleau, president and CEP of high-speed rail network Alto, will deliver remarks. Wednesday, April 2, at 12 p.m. ET, at the C.D. Howe Institute, 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, APRIL 3

Lunch: 'Collaborative Strategies for Interprovincial Trade'—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a lunch event, "Beyond Boundaries: Collaborative Strategies for Interprovincial Trade" featuring Christiane Fox, deputy clerk of the Privy Council; Corinne Pohlmann, executive vice-president, Canadian Federation of Independent Business; and Ryan Manucha, inter-provincial trade researcher at the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, April 3, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9—FRIDAY, APRIL 11

2025 Progress Summit—The Broadbent Institute hosts the 2025 Progress Summit, Canada's largest annual progressive politics conference featuring thought leaders, movement builders, elected officials, and frontline activists. Wednesday, April 9, to Friday, April 11, at the City Centre Delta, 101 Lyon St. N. Details: broadbentinstitute.ca.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 9—SATURDAY, APRIL 12

CSFN 25 Conference—The Canada Strong and Free Network hosts its annual conference in Ottawa. This year's theme is "From Ideas to Action." Conservatives in Canada must be ready on Day 1 to follow through on our ideas and put them into action. This applies to leaders in the conservative movement no matter where they sit, as conservative activists, journalists, thinkers, politicians, or leaders. Wednesday, April 9, to Saturday, April 12, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: canadastrongandfree.network.

MONDAY, APRIL 14

Byelection in Halifax—A by-election is set to take place today in the Nova Scotia riding of Halifax. However, if a general election is called before this date, the by-election writ is withdrawn and is superseded by the writ for the general election.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 23

Bruce Heyman to Deliver Remarks—Former U.S. ambassador to Canada Bruce Heyman, now CEO of Power Sustainable, will deliver remarks on the environment at a lunch event hosted by the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Wednesday, April 23, at 11:30 a.m. ET at a location to be announced in Montreal. Details: corim.qc.ca.

FRIDAY, APRIL 25

'An Inclusive Parliament?'—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts "An Inclusive Parliament?" exploring equity, diversity, inclusion, and access in legislative spaces, from the experiences of legislators themselves to public engagement and staff participation behind the scenes. Friday, April 25, at 9 a.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St. Details via Eventbrite.

Superintendent of Financial Institutions to Deliver Remarks—Peter Routledge, head of the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions, will speak at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Friday, April 25, at 12 p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

FRIDAY, APRIL 25—SUNDAY, APRIL 27

IMF and World Bank Ministerial Meetings—The 2025 Spring Meetings of the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund will take place from Friday, April 25, to Sunday, April 27, in Washington, D.C. Details: worldbank.org.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 30

CANIC 2025—The Canadian Military Intelligence Association hosts CANIC 2025, the Canadian Intelligence Conference. Participants include Nathalie Drouin, national security and intelligence adviser to the prime minister, and her predecessor Richard Fadden, among others. Wednesday, April 30, at 7:30 a.m. ET, Ottawa Conference and Event Centre, 200 Coventry Rd. Details via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, MAY 1

Panel: 'Canada vs. Trump'—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a lunch event, "100 Days of Disruption: Canada vs. Trump" featuring Flavio Volpe, president, Automotive Parts Manufacturers' Association; Benjamin Tal, deputy chief economist, CIBC Capital Markets; and Jeremy Kronick, C.D. Howe Institute's director of monetary and financial services research. Thursday, May 1, at 11:45 a.m. ET in Toronto. Details: economicclub.ca.

TALK

POLITICS

TO ME

Subscribe to *The Hill Times* today.

