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NEWS

'This cannot stand in Canada': advocates push Liberals to showcase 'zero tolerance' after downplaying former candidate's China bounty comments

Despite Paul Chiang's resignation, diaspora communities 'will now remember' Liberal Leader Mark Carney 'stood by his candidate' whose comments are now being probed by the RCMP, says Hong Kong Watch's Katherine Leung.



Former Liberal candidate Paul Chiang's comments suggesting people collect the bounty put on a Conservative candidate by the Chinese government are an 'unthinkable' example of transnational repression, say advocates. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

BY STUART BENSON

Despite an eventual resignation, the initial decision by

Liberal Leader Mark Carney to back a candidate after learning he had made light of a Chinese government bounty

on the head of a Conservative rival has diaspora community advocates on the front lines of the foreign interference threat

saying they've lost confidence in the party's commitment to

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NEWS

'Completely unpredictable': will Trump's words upend Canada's vote?

BY NEIL MOSS

So far, the Canadian campaign has had little encroachment from United States President Donald Trump—who has taken an uncharacteristically restrained approach to his northern neighbour since the election kicked off—but the unpredictable com-

mander-in-chief has ample time before the April 28 vote to upset the proceedings. In the early days of the campaign, Prime Minister Mark Carney, who is running for a seat in Nepean, Ont., held his first call with Trump on March 28. In a post-call statement, gone were Trump's

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OPINION

Canada's national security bureaucracy needs a rethink

BY ANDREW KIDD

Canadians may be spending the spring focused on elections and political drama both here and in the United States, but a series of quiet disclosures has been laying bare extensive weaknesses in

Canada's security apparatus. The Trudeau government's Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference was mandated to investigate foreign meddling in our elections, and to find ways to protect our democracy. It uncovered a long list of attempts to inter-

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Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Pendulum Group launches new geopolitical advisory practice



Jonathan Berkshire Miller, left, and Balkan Devlen are the principals leading a new geopolitical advisory practice at Ottawa's Pendulum Group launching April 2. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and courtesy of Yaroslav Baran

In a time of unstable international relations, Ottawa-based communications firm Pendulum Group is launching a new geopolitical advisory practice on April 2 led by two well-known commentators: **Jonathan Berkshire Miller** and **Balkan Devlen**.

"This is the first real expansion since we founded Pendulum two years ago," Pendulum co-founder **Yaroslav Baran** explained to *Heard on the Hill* by email on March 31. "We had been thinking about this for some time, but the current geopolitical shifts suggested this is an obvious time to take this step."

This new group will offer advice to help "leadership teams navigate complex global challenges with scenario planning, crisis response, and making

informed and proactive decisions on things like investment and supply chains, and strategic positioning." It's basically a new tool in Pendulum's toolbox of existing services that includes political analysis, crisis management and communications, government relations counsel, and public relations support.

Until recently, Berkshire Miller lead the Macdonald-Laurier Institute's foreign affairs, national defence, and national security practice. He will remain affiliated with MLI as a senior fellow.

Devlen, too, is an MLI senior fellow, and also teaches at Carleton University. He's also been recognized by the United States' national intelligence director as a "superforecaster," and has provided advice and training for

NATO, Five Eyes nations, and United Nations agencies.

Using data-driven analysis and expert insights to predict emerging geopolitical trends, "our forecasting helps organizations prepare for long-term risks, enabling proactive decision-making, investments and strategic positioning," said Devlen.

"Superforecasting is a rare skill and designation, and we are looking forward to bringing this expertise to Canadian based clients and to international clients with an interest in Canada," said Baran, confirming that both principals will be based in Ottawa, and focused on this new venture full time.

"We are looking to fill a gap in Canada—a niche that isn't really occupied at present," said Baran.

Parliamentary Internship Programme founder has died

The funeral for **James Ross Hurley** is set for April 2 in Ottawa at St. Clement's Church. A former longtime public servant, Hurley was the founding director of the Parliamentary Internship Programme (PIP). He died on March 24, aged 83.

Hurley worked in the Privy Council Office as a constitutional adviser in the federal-provincial relations section. "Serving under six prime ministers, he participated in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords, as well as the patriation of the Constitution in 1982, the highlight of his career," according to his obituary.

He went on to found the PIP in 1969, which he directed until 1975. "He had, in his words, 'a life-long dedication to the non-partisan political education of Canadian and mentoring a new generation,'" reads his obituary.

"Thanks to his vision and leadership, both initiatives have been changing the life course of



James Ross Hurley, left, and House Speaker Greg Fergus. *Photograph courtesy of Instagram*

exceptional young Canadians for the last 55 years for the benefit of our parliamentary democracy," House of Commons Speaker **Greg Fergus** posted on Instagram on March 28, along with photos of him and Hurley at a recent PIP event. To which former House speaker **Geoff Regan** replied: "Thinking of the thousands of

young people who've benefited from his vision and initiative. A great Canadian."

Hurley is survived by his sister **Ann Patricia Gibson**, his nieces, and nephew. Donations to the Hales and Hurley Parliamentary Foundation—created in 2017 to support the PIP—in Hurley's memory are welcomed.

Han Dong won't seek re-election

Former Liberal-turned-Independent MP **Han Dong** says he will not seek re-election.

"I was informed by the Liberal Party of Canada that they will have a new candidate running in Don Valley North," he wrote in a statement posted on X on March 30. "I have decided not to participate in this election to give the LPC the best chance to form a government and protect us from the threats posed by [U.S. President] **Donald Trump**."

The two-term MP stated he is "disappointed not to be part of this



Former Liberal-turned-Independent MP Han Dong will not run in this election. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

important campaign," and recalled how he "had no choice but to leave the Liberal caucus about two years ago to try to clear my name in response to false accusations Global News published about me. I am continuing my fight to do that through the Court."

He thanked his supporters, as well as Justice **Marie-Josée Hogue**, whose final report on the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions "showed that

Global News' accusations about me were completely false."

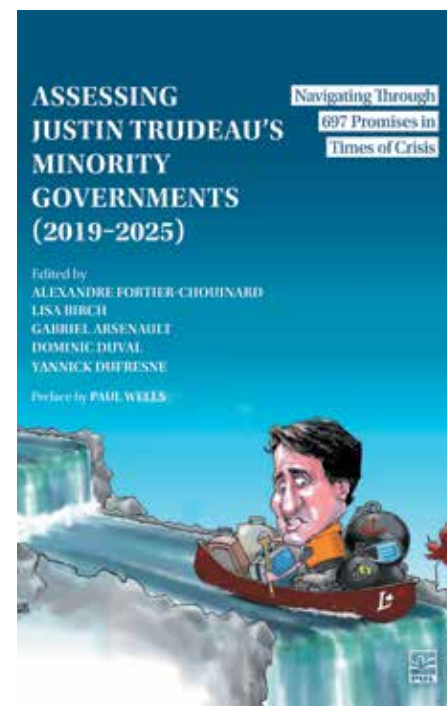
New book on 2019, 2021 Liberal promises out now

A new book poring over the nearly 700 promises then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau's** minority government sought to keep is available today in digital format, one week ahead of its hard-copy release.

Assessment of Justin Trudeau's Minority Governments (2019-2025): Navigating Through 697 Promises in Times of Crisis is published in both English and French by Presses de l'Université Laval, and is edited by five academics, three of whom are connected with the institution—**Alexandre Fortier-Chouinard**, **Lisa Birch** and **Yannick Dufresne**—as well as l'Université de Moncton's **Gabriel Arsenault**, and **Dominic Duval** with Université du Québec à Montréal.

This book is a follow up to 2019's *Assessing Justin Trudeau's Liberal Government. 353 promises and a mandate for change* edited by Birch and **François Pétry**, which only covered the campaign promises overseen by the Liberals' 2015 majority government.

Billed as offering "an impartial, fact-based, and thoughtful examination," the new publication "evaluates the performance of two consecutive Liberal minority governments, one of which was supported for many years by an agreement with the New Democratic Party," according to the publisher's website.



Assessment of Justin Trudeau's Minority Governments (2019-2025): Navigating Through 697 Promises in Times of Crisis will be out in hard copy on April 9. *Book cover courtesy of Presses de l'Université Laval*

Using data from the Polimeter—"an independent initiative developed by political scientists that tracks whether politicians keep the promises they make," as described online—the contributing academics and experts "decrypt the successes, failures, limitations, and compromises of these minority governments," according to PUL.

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The Hill Times

Trump has flipped the election narrative, but it's a long way to April 28

The knock-on effects of tariffs could be well on the way to erasing the Liberals' advantage in the Trump survival showdown.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—On the night of Dec. 12, 1979, I called the large American daily for which I worked as a freelancer from Ottawa to tell them to expect then-prime minister Joe Clark's government to be defeated the next day.

The foreign editor scoffed at the idea. "The Liberals don't even have a leader," he said, well aware that Pierre Trudeau had announced his intention to end his 11-year domination of Canada's national agenda only a several weeks previously.

Clark's parliamentary caucus had reached the same conclusion. Despite the widespread unpopularity of finance minister John Crosbie's ill-conceived 18-cents-a-gallon gas tax, the Conservatives dared the Liberals to try to dump the Progressive Conservative minority. And, unperturbed by it all, Clark failed to keep his MPs in town for Commons votes, and the government was indeed defeated by the opposition on the night of Dec. 13.

Pressed to bail out his party, Trudeau returned as leader, and the Liberals went on to win a slim majority government against Clark's PCs in a February 1980 vote.

That would have to qualify as the strangest national political event in modern times until now, 45 years later. It's been a very long time since anyone has seen anything like the reversal in political fortunes in this country created by the emergence of United States President Donald Trump's destroy-your-neighbours philosophy, and the arrival on Canada's political scene of new Prime Minister Mark Carney and his high-flying resumé.

After a year and a half of double-digit leads in the polls—sufficient for a Pierre Poilievre-led Conservative majority victory—and with the Justin Trudeau Liberals at risk of being buried by voters, the Conservative advantage has completely evaporated in a few months, with Carney's Liberals having streaked to the top in some opinion surveys.

It shows, as always, how the defining narrative tends to surpass everything else when it comes to election politics. From 1980, when Clark was defined as too inexperienced for the job, through to 2006 when Stephen Harper led the Conservatives to power on his promise to clean up Ottawa, to 2015 when Canadians rejected

the hard-hearted Harper in favour of Justin Trudeau's "sunny ways," the central story behind the campaign has almost always been paramount.

As everyone but Poilievre seemed to accept a while back, the dominant previous national narrative fuelled by dislike of Trudeau has quickly re-focused on the urgent question of which leader is best equipped to handle the menace in Washington, D.C.

Carney appeared to have that one sewn up even before Trump dealt him a political straight flush last week. The Liberal leader—who, despite campaigning in an election, was able to put on his prime minister's custodial hat and talk to the president—could hardly contain his elation after the risky phone call came out to his advantage. To the extent that anything Trump says can be taken seriously, his respectful acceptance of Carney as a Canadian leader with whom the White House might be able to possibly pursue some winding down of the trade war—or at least engage in an adult discussion—is widely seen as a breakthrough.

It's clear that the U.S. threat, and the question of who can best manage it, could persist as the pre-eminent narrative in this campaign all the way to April 28. But, as solid as that prediction would seem today, no one should forget that absolutely anything can happen in an election. (See Carney's rookie decision on March 31 to stand by Liberal candidate Paul Chiang, despite Chiang's suggestion in January that people turn in a Conservative candidate to the Chinese consulate and collect a bounty.)

Moreover, dealing with Trump is like having a pet rattlesnake—as the whole world has learned the hard way. He could turn on Carney at any moment. And the tariff threat is likely to peak right away, as Trump's on-again, off-again trade war against Canadians and the world is expected to hit full stride this week. By April 28, then, this country's suffering in the form of mounting unemployment, factory closures, bankruptcies, stock market turmoil, inflation, and a downward sliding economy could be well on the way to erasing the Liberals' advantage in the Trump survival showdown.

So, while Carney would appear to have the upper hand in the early going in the campaign, the politics of all this are a crap shoot. That is, of course, why the Liberal leader is sticking to his warning that the era of Canada-U.S. co-operation is over. His response is to urge the country to reimagine a wholly renovated economy, an ambitious call for Canadians to break out from decades of U.S.-tied business activity and regional parochialism to develop a more unified, prosperous, and self-reliant economic model.

This is a compelling vision in the face of Trumpism, but it's a tall order. Will Canadians still buy into it on election day?

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

In rural Quebec, the wave looks red



Right now, Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, is the Teflon man, which could spell potential victory for Liberal candidates in Quebec's Lower St. Lawrence ridings, writes Andrew Caddell. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

This region is not that influential in terms of policy, but its role as a bellwether is significant.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



KAMOURASKA, QUE.—We are far from the real action of the election here in the Lower St. Lawrence, and with only three seats in a region stretching hundreds of kilometres between the river and the American border to New Brunswick, we don't have much influence.

The reorganization of the electoral map in 2023 eliminated one riding in eastern Quebec. The former Avignon-La Mitis-Matane-Matapédia represented by Bloc Québécois MP Kristina Michaud has been absorbed, in part, into Rimouski-Matapédia. The riding where I live and ran as a Liberal in 2011 will absorb the Témiscouata region and become Côte-du-Sud-Rivière-du-Loup-Kataskomiq-Témiscouata. West of us on the river is now Bellechasse-Les Etchemins-Lévis. For simplicity, let's call them Rimouski, Côte-du-Sud, and Bellechasse.

Each of these ridings is enormous. But declining populations and the increase of urban ridings around Montreal required a rejigging of the electoral map of Quebec's 78 seats. The search for votes can be gruelling: in 2011, I travelled more than 5,000 kilometres in less than a month to visit the 60 or so municipalities in the riding. With Témiscouata added, there will be another 20 towns—and surrounding rural areas—to visit. The other ridings will add even more.

This region is not that influential in terms of policy, but its role as a bellwether is significant. Going as far back as the Quebec referendums of 1980 and 1995, the votes were almost exactly those across the province: 60/40 "non" and 52/48 "non," respectively.

In the Mulroney sweep in 1984, the region went Progressive Conservative. When the Bloc Québécois was formed, it won these seats from 1993 onwards, and in 2011 the "Orange Wave" of the NDP swept in. In 2015, "Trudeau-mania" led to wins in Rimouski and a close call in our riding, with Conservative Bernard Généreux winning. Bellechasse also bucked the trend, and has been a Conservative stronghold.

So it would be useful to examine the policies, the trends, and the candidates to get a sense of where we might end up here

and across Quebec on April 28. There is no question: while small business, forestry, and supply management in agriculture are key to the economies of much of all three ridings, there is one ballot question on the minds of the people here: who can deal with United States President Donald Trump? The answer: Prime Minister Mark Carney.

Surprisingly enough, while the Conservatives and the Bloc Québécois have been courting nationalist votes for the last few years, this time is different. Faced with an existential threat to Canada, Quebecers have trotted out the Maple Leaf flag.

In a householder from Généreux, there were calls to buy Canadian, and he even quoted Liberal Wilfrid Laurier, "*Le Canada d'abord, Le Canada avant tout, Le Canada toujours* (Canada First, Canada before all others, Canada always)."

While Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre got an endorsement from Quebec Premier François Legault, it may be the kiss of death. The unpopular Legault endorsed Poilievre's predecessors as Conservative leader, and the Trudeau Liberals continued to win.

For the Bloc, this could be the last gasp; Yves-François Blanchet is fighting for his survival as leader, and doesn't seem to be able to square the circle of Canadian nationalism with his belief in an independent Quebec.

Which brings us to Liberal Leader Carney. He committed a series of gaffes last week, failing to remember the name of a candidate who was a survivor of the Polytechnique massacre, which he said was at Concordia University. He named an advocate of the Century Initiative, Mark Wiseman, to the board of his Canada-U.S. advisory panel. It is poison in Quebec: anti-immigration nationalists believe French Quebec would become a tiny fraction of a much larger Canada.

As of this writing, Carney is the Teflon man, which could mean wins for Liberals Glenn O'Farrell in Bellechasse, environmentalist Alexander Reford in Rimouski, and former MP Rémi Massé in Côte-du-Sud.

With more than three weeks to go in this election campaign, the adage usually attributed to former British PM Harold Wilson comes to mind: "A week is a long time in politics." However, it is possible people have already decided, and the remaining days of the campaign are just a formality.

Along the St. Lawrence River, the tide laps onto the shore. This year, that wave looks red.

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

The Hill Times

Who's who on Mark Carney's 2025 Liberal campaign team



Prime Minister Mark Carney at his local campaign office in Nepean, Ont., on March 29. Carney has added some new senior figures to the national Liberal campaign since taking over the party helm. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Tom Pitfield is now executive director of the 2025 Liberal campaign, with Andrew Bevan, Braeden Caley, and Andrée-Lyne Hallé in place as co-campaign directors.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The Liberals and Prime Minister Mark Carney have assembled a national campaign team with plenty of political experience between them.

Marci Surkes, a former cabinet chief of staff and one-time head of policy in then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's office, said the absence of many former senior advisers to Trudeau, and the "number of new faces at the staffing level around Mr. Carney" is something she "noticed immediately" about the Carney campaign team.

"In spite of some of the criticism from political opponents pointing to, obviously, some continuity within the caucus and the ministry in particular, there are a number of staff changes—particularly at the senior level—that are quite evident, and Mr. Trudeau's senior team is now no longer in the picture," said Surkes, managing director and chief strategy officer at Compass Rose.

Zita Astravas, another former cabinet chief of staff and ex-director of issues management in

Trudeau's PMO who's played senior roles on past campaigns, said the 2025 team brings a "broad depth" of local, provincial, and federal campaign experience.

"They really have pulled together a really seasoned campaign team, and you see that from how quickly they've been able to go from a leadership campaign to launching a national campaign that has already visited, in the past couple of days, several regions of the country," said Astravas, who's now a vice-president at Wellington Advocacy.

The Hill Times spoke with multiple sources to compile and confirm the names of key members of the 2025 national Liberal campaign team.

Absent from the senior campaign ranks this year are Trudeau stalwarts like Katie Telford, who ran Trudeau's office as prime minister throughout his more than nine-year tenure and played senior roles on the Liberals' last three election campaigns, including as national campaign director in 2015.

Jeremy Broadhurst, a former deputy chief of staff and principal secretary in Trudeau's PMO who ran the Liberals' 2019 campaign, was originally lined up to once again serve as national campaign director, but he resigned this past September.

Trudeau subsequently tapped Andrew Bevan to take over as campaign director. Bevan left his post as chief of staff to then-deputy prime minister and finance minister Chrystia Freeland—who is running for re-election in University-Rosedale, Ont.—last October to take on the job.

Bevan had been running Freeland's office since October 2023, and before then was vice-president of Canadian Pathway and executive

vice-president of the Fakh Group. A former chief of staff to then-federal infrastructure minister John Godfrey and then-Liberal leader Stéphane Dion, Bevan has also been principal secretary and chief of staff to then-Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne.

Alongside Bevan's appointment, then-PMO deputy chief of staff Marjorie Michel was named deputy campaign director. However, Michel, who had been working for Trudeau cabinet ministers since 2016 and in the PMO since 2021, has since exited to instead run to succeed Trudeau as the Liberal candidate in Papineau, Que.

With Carney's ascension to the party helm last month, some new faces have been added at the top-most level of the campaign, with Data Sciences CEO Tom Pitfield now executive campaign director and chief strategist.

Chairman and co-founder of Canada 2020, Pitfield previously worked for former Liberal senator Jack Austin during his time as then-government leader in the Senate. Though Pitfield never worked in Trudeau's PMO, he played a senior role on Trudeau's 2012 leadership campaign, and is a longtime friend of the now-former Liberal leader.

Data Sciences is contracted by the Liberal Party to manage its membership database and voter-outreach software.

Pitfield oversaw digital operations for the party during the last three elections fought under Trudeau. He is also husband to former party president Anna Gainey, who's seeking re-election as the MP for Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount, Que.

Bevan remains on board as a national campaign co-director, now working closely with fellow

campaign co-directors Braeden Caley, who also serves as a senior adviser, and Andrée-Lyne Hallé, who *The Hill Times* understands has a focus on Quebec.

Caley ran Carney's successful leadership campaign, and has been president and CEO of Canada 2020 for the last almost three years. He previously spent six years—between 2016 and 2022—leading communications for the federal Liberal Party. Among other things, Caley is also a former press secretary and later director of policy and communications to then-Vancouver mayor Gregor Robertson, who's running as the Liberal candidate in Vancouver Fraserview-South Burnaby, B.C., this spring.

Hallé is a former director in Trudeau's PMO, but has been off the Hill since 2022, and working for transportation equipment manufacturing company Alstom—most recently as director of Quebec public affairs, media relations, and communications—since 2023. A former Quebec Liberal staffer, Hallé started as a PMO press secretary in 2015, working her way up to director of outreach before leaving after the 2019 election to spend a year as deputy chief of staff and director of operations to Freeland as deputy PM and finance minister. Hallé returned to the PMO in late 2020, staying on for another almost two years before exiting as a strategic adviser.

Former Liberal MP Marco Mendicino, who recently became chief of staff to Carney, has stayed behind to run the PMO, which—like other cabinet offices—continues to operate with a skeleton crew.

The Liberals have a fleet of deputy campaign directors,

including Marie-Pascale Des Rosiers, who held the same title on Carney's leadership bid.

Des Rosiers was most recently working as a tour advance in Trudeau's PMO since October 2023 after almost three years away working in the private sector, including as director with consulting firm Will & Way. She ran Gainey's successful 2023 byelection campaign, and was an advance for Trudeau's leader's tour during the 2015 and 2019 elections. Between the end of 2015 and end of 2019, Des Rosiers worked in various roles for the government, starting as a special assistant for Quebec to then-infrastructure minister Amarjeet Sohi, and ending as director of communications to then-fisheries minister Jonathan Wilkinson. Sohi has returned to the Liberal candidate fold, taking a leave from his role as Edmonton South-east, Alta., while Wilkinson looks to hold his seat in the renamed riding of North Vancouver-Capilano, B.C.

Jamie Kippen is deputy campaign director for national field work. He was a key Ontario organizer during the 2015 and 2019 federal elections, and in 2021, left his post as chief of staff to then-diversity, inclusion, and youth minister Bardish Chagger—running for re-election in Waterloo, Ont.—to become senior director of election readiness at Liberal Party headquarters ahead of that year's federal election. Kippen worked as one of two Ontario regional affairs advisers in Trudeau's PMO between 2016 and 2019, and went on to also serve as chief of staff to then-health minister Jean-Yves Duclos, who is running again in Québec, Que. Up until last September, he was chief of staff to then-environment and climate change minister Steven Guilbeault, looking to be re-elected in Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.

Overseeing tour organization from campaign headquarters in Ottawa is deputy campaign manager Mike Maka.

A former Ontario Liberal staffer, Maka worked in the PMO communications and planning unit supporting Trudeau between 2016 and 2018, ending as senior planning manager. Maka went on to become operations and planning director, and later chief of staff to Duclos as then-families minister, and has since also run the offices of then-transport minister Omar Alghabra, then-immigration minister Sean Fraser (briefly), and most recently then-international development minister Ahmed Hussen. At Queen's Park, Maka's senior-most roles included advising then-Ontario government services minister Harinder Takhar, and then-municipal affairs and housing minister Linda Jeffrey. Fraser is recontesting his seat in Central Nova, N.S., while Hussen is running again in the renamed York South-Weston-Etobicoke, Ont.

Another former cabinet chief of staff, Dunerci Caceres, is deputy campaign manager for planning and executive. Caceres, who started working for the Trudeau government as executive

Defence pledges have unprecedented electoral spotlight, but more ambition may be needed to match allies: experts

‘We seem to be catching up on the old conversation just as it’s on the cusp of changing,’ says defence expert David Perry on the consensus building towards two per cent defence spending.

BY NEIL MOSS

Amid annexation threats from United States President Donald Trump, Canada’s major national parties have put a spotlight on defence pledges in the early days of the election campaign, but questions loom as to whether the commitments are sufficient to match the burgeoning peril.

Prime Minister Mark Carney, running for a seat in Nepean, Ont., has remarked that Canada’s sovereignty faces the “greatest threats in generations” with Trump threatening to absorb Canada as a “51st state,” as well as a rising tide of authoritarianism around the globe.

In response, Carney has pledged to meet Canada’s NATO commitment of two per cent of its GDP on defence spending by 2030—a commitment he first announced during the Liberal leadership race. On March 25 in Halifax, the Liberals rolled out the first tenets of their defence platform, which include promises to purchase submarines and fill the Armed Forces’ personnel shortfall.

The plan also pledges an “unprecedented” investment in the Canadian military, as well as modernizing legislation for the problem-plagued procurement system.

Defence expert David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, called the military pledges from the three major national parties “interesting and welcome.”

“There seems to be an agreement—at least at a high level—on the need to make further investments in defence,” he said.

The NDP have pledged to reach the two-per-cent target by “no later” than 2032.

“Both the NDP and the Liberals agree that it is necessary for Canada to hit that spending mark, [but] just disagreeing on the specific year that they would do it, which is a sentence that I never



A CF-18 at the Pituffik Space Base in Greenland in 2021 as it takes part in NORAD joint exercises. DND photograph by Master Corporal Gary Calvé

thought I’d be saying—so that’s a unique and welcome development,” Perry said.

The Conservatives—who have yet to release a full-fledged defence plan—have not confirmed if they would commit to reaching the metric, but have indicated that they would “work towards” the target.

In the first instalment of their defence plan released on Feb. 10, the Conservatives pledged to establish a permanent Arctic base in Iqaluit, as well as boost the personnel in the Canadian Rangers and build two new polar icebreakers.

Perry said the Conservative approach isn’t as declarative as that of the Liberals and NDP, but remarked it is in the same kind of spirit.

“That’s welcome as a whole,” he said.

Perry said that the recent pledges have an increased degree of “seriousness” compared to those made by the previous government of former prime minister Justin Trudeau, who had indicated that he expected to reach the target by 2032, but didn’t account for how his government would do so.

But, Perry said Canada is still catching up on the NATO metric, as some members of the alliance are boosting their spending well beyond the mark.

“The downside is we seem to be catching up on the old conversation just as it’s on the cusp of changing,” he said, remarking that Canadian political leaders need to be thinking of a metric beyond the two-per-cent target. “[But] you can’t meet a spending target

higher than two per cent if you don’t get to two per cent.”

University of Calgary professor Rob Huebert, a Canadian defence and Arctic sovereignty expert, said the fact that the country is dealing with a destabilizing U.S. administration shows that superpowers don’t operate on Canada’s timeline for when it will boost spending.

“We have a growing nuclear-weapon threat from Russia, we have a United States that we can no longer trust, and God knows what China is ready to do in the Arctic,” he said.

He said reaching two per cent won’t solve all of Canada’s security problems, remarking that there needs to be greater strategic planning to understand the threats to which Canada needs to respond.

Charlotte Duval-Lantoine, who authored the 2022 book *The Ones We Let Down: Toxic Leadership Culture and Gender Integration in the Canadian Forces*, said the pledges aren’t currently meeting the moment.

But she noted that there has been a sea change in how the parties are prioritizing defence during the election campaign.

“We can see still [an approach] of very much throwing spaghetti at the wall and seeing what sticks in terms of the approach to defence policy,” she said. “I don’t see an overarching vision that is clear just yet.”

“Given the severity of the moment, I’m also seeing a lack of ambition,” Duval-Lantoine said, noting that no party is committing to meet the NATO target

before the 2030s. “There is no strategic vision that comes with that [which] is a little bit problematic, especially when we find ourselves scrambling, wondering whether or not we can continue relying on the United States—not only in terms of NATO, but also ... NORAD.”

Personnel pledges missing the systemic issues

Over the last few years, the Canadian military has been facing a series of compounding crises, including equipment and readiness shortfalls, as well as a recruitment and retention shortage.

To address the personnel crisis, the Liberals and the New Democrats have pledged to increase pay for military members, as well as boost housing options and access to health care.

“The real concrete things that I’ve seen in terms of personnel in the Liberal platform is increasing salaries for service members and for the Conservatives is getting rid of woke culture in the military,” Duval-Lantoine said. “You are showing clearly a lack of understanding of the deep structural issues that service members are facing.”

She said that an increase in salary is a positive, but it isn’t looking at the reasons why a salary boost is needed.

“That’s because service members are moving so often that the problems that regular civilian Canadians are facing today in

terms of access to health care, housing affordability, and stuff like that is getting duplicated by service members, which also means that they are less likely to have a dual-income family because they are moving so much,” she said.

Those issues could be exacerbated by the Conservative pledge to open a permanent base in Iqaluit, she said.

“There needs to be a real conversation about the recruitment and retention aspect of opening a base in the Arctic,” Duval-Lantoine said, remarking that there is an open question as to whether service members are going to be willing to move to the North amid a concern over lack of resources.

Focus on major defence purchases: procurement expert

Charles Davies, a retired colonel in the Armed Forces who spent time as the senior director responsible for procurement and equipment management policy, said Canada needs to boost its recapitalization efforts to ensure the military has the equipment it needs.

“We’ve seen time after time after time [that] major platforms just rust out, and they have to be taken out of service,” he said.

While the focus has been on the two-per-cent metric, NATO member nations have also committed to devoting 20 per cent of spending to buying major new equipment. Davies said that Canada needs to be spending north of 25 per cent.

“The Canadian deficit is so great,” he said. “Canada is a very different country than most of the NATO members. We’re not landlocked like many of them are, or nearly landlocked. We have much larger maritime and air areas to cover. Navies and air forces are capital intensive, while armies tend to be more personnel intensive. So we need to be spending a lot more on recapitalization just to keep equipment fit for purpose over the long haul.”

The Liberal defence pledge includes a commitment to fulfill all orders that are underway as part of the National Shipbuilding Strategy.

Davies said that Trump has focused minds on the need to invest in defence, but he noted that many of the pledges will take time.

“This is a very near-term threat that needs near-term action,” he said. “It’s good that we’ve come to the realization ... I hope that global circumstances will give us time to get our act together.”

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The Hill Times



The Conservatives were riding the wave of indestructibility ever since Pierre Poilievre's commanding leadership victory in 2022, but now find themselves tied or behind the Liberals in the polls. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Are we witnessing the ignominious crumbling of the Conservative citadel?

Imagine running the party that effed up a 25-point lead in a matter of two-and-a-half months.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



CALGARY—Are we being trolled by the Conservatives' ineptitude? According to Nanos Research data reported by CTV News, Conservative support bled another 0.9 percentage points, while the Liberals gained another 1.7. (The rolling sample was from March 28-30.)

What a humiliating decline. Imagine running the party that effed up a 25-point lead in a matter of two-and-a-half months. No wonder Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is dodging questions from the press about his rudderless political existence; he may actually be held to account for squandering a lead of that enormity.

The federal election is on April 28, and we are witnessing the ignominious crumbling of the Conservative Party. It's quite remarkable, even gobsmacking. A party that promised so much in terms of dominance, the Conservatives were riding the wave of indestructibility since Poilievre's

commanding leadership victory in 2022. Since then, he has pulled the party further to the right, ostensibly to diminish the threat of Maxime Bernier's People's Party of Canada that now barely registers on the political radar. Poilievre sought—and succeeded—in defining his political identity via the 2022 Ottawa Convoy. Even though most Canadians opposed the insurrection, the Conservatives latched on.

The direction they chose mimicked that of the Republican Party in the United States and was quickly adopted by Poilievre's Conservatives. Discrimination became the impetus for the Canada that the party wanted to shape for the next election to appease the evangelical zealots. Conservatives became Maple MAGA in their own right (ex-Manitoba MP and erstwhile interim leader Candice Bergen was photographed wearing a MAGA cap). Make America Great Again is seen by many in the U.S. as a symbol of white supremacy and fascism. I would even portend that U.S. President Donald Trump's mix of white supremacy and evangelicalism is the gateway to Christian nationalism. In a campaign stop in British Columbia, the Conservative leader made a reference to women that mirrored the Republicans' attack on women's bodies. The CBC reported that Poilievre "said he will stand up for the millennial women 'whose biological clock is running out faster than they can afford to buy a home and have kids.'" Once transgender peo-

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No wonder Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is dodging questions from the press about his rudderless political existence; he may actually be held to account for squandering a lead of that enormity.

ple's bodies became the topic of regulation in Poilievre's Canada, cisgender women were next.

Latching onto MAGA was a big gamble that seemed to pay off for a while. Poilievre made consistently attacking then-prime minister Justin Trudeau his *raison d'être*. In 2023, even with prominent support as a party, "only 37 per cent of Canadians have a positive impression of Mr. Poilievre," a poll by Abacus Data revealed. His delivery is full of vitriol, anger, and resentment. This is a guy who has the same personality as *Star Wars*' Emperor Palpatine, and the charm of *Game of Thrones*' Joffrey Baratheon.

Now that Trump is an existential toxin, having an MP in your caucus as close to Vice-President J.D. Vance as Jamil Jivani is no longer a flex, it's a political impotence.

Poilievre himself has a connection that directly questions the authenticity of his policy pronouncements pertaining to "illegal border crossers." As discovered by the investigative reporting of *The Breach*, Anaida Poilievre's uncle, Venezuelan lawyer José Gerardo Galindo Prato, "had previously entered Canada in 2004 and lived without documentation until 2007, when he was deported by Canadian border agents."

The Breach reports "Galindo Prato was convicted in 2017 of helping a drug trafficker escape from prison and served six months in prison, which he says was a trumped-up, false charge."

In 2018, he crossed at Roxham Road to apply to stay in Canada

as a refugee. While Poilievre rails against the scourge of what he says are not legitimate refugees, his own uncle-in-law may have benefitted from his political contacts to help him stay in Canada despite being deported—and living illegally in Canada—years earlier.

"Mr. Galindo Prato has pursued his case through established channels, including with the use of an immigration lawyer," the Tory campaign told *The Breach*, adding, "It is certainly ridiculous to suggest that opposition Conservative MPs would be able to influence cases under a Liberal government."

Doth protest too much.

Poilievre has still refused to seek top security clearance after two years of being Conservative leader. Reporting by *The Globe and Mail* made a very serious accusation about his leadership race, writing, "Agents of India and their proxies allegedly meddled in the 2022 election of Pierre Poilievre as Conservative Party Leader." Although Poilievre and his inner circle were most likely not aware, CSIS could not share the accusations with him due to his improper level of security clearance necessary to access the info. Though I—and this paper—am not alleging that Poilievre himself did something untoward, his refusal to attain top-secret security clearance raises questions about his judgement, ability to take on responsibility, and transparency. He remains the only party leader in the House of Commons without necessary clearance.

The Canadian people should not have to suffer Poilievre's hypocrisy, his virtual mentorship under Trump and the Republicans, and refusal to adult all wrapped in a scornful and mean communication style. You wouldn't invite this guy to a child's birthday party, so why should we be forced to deal with him as prime minister? Judging from the current numbers, the rest of the country agrees.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT



Then-Air Force Commander Lt.-Gen. Yvan Blondin gets ready for a flight at Solenzara Air Force Base in Corsica, France, on Dec. 4, 2013. DND photograph by Master Seaman Steeve Picard

Will the F-35 become a casualty as Trump's trade war widens?

The U.S. president badgering Canada into spending more on American defence technology under threat of economic punishment does not sit well with most patriotic Canadians.

Scott Taylor



Inside Defence

OTTAWA—On March 27, United States President Donald Trump posted yet another threat to punish Canada and the European Union should we dare to lessen the blows of his tariffs through increasing trade with each other.

Of course, in Trump's mind, it is the U.S. and himself personally that are under attack. In his Truth Social post, Trump wrote: "If the European Union works with Canada in order to do economic harm to the USA, large scale Tariffs, far larger than currently planned, will be placed on them both in order to protect the best friend that each of those two countries has ever had!"

Given that the EU is actually a trading bloc of 29 member states, I'm sure Trump meant to write "each of those 30 countries," but I digress.

Trump has repeatedly boasted that he will target the EU and Canada in his planned "Liberation Day" reciprocal tariffs rollout on April 2.

Canada faces a far more serious threat than the EU as Trump remains fixated on annexing Canada into becoming the 51st state. Included in Emperor Trump's list of intended conquests and acquisitions is the territory of Greenland and the Panama Canal. The rationale for the U.S. occupying Greenland is that it is now a vital strategic location necessary to thwart Russian and Chinese aggression.

Trump's claim is that Denmark has failed to properly secure the vast territory, and, therefore, they are not a reliable NATO ally. Sound familiar?

The fact is that the U.S. has had a military presence on this vitally strategic frozen island since June 1941. This is under an agreement with the Danish authorities.

During the Cold War, this was a major airport at U.S. Thule Air Base, and recently it was incorporated into the new U.S. Space Force and renamed Base Pituffik.

There would be no need for the U.S. to "invade" Greenland as it already has the only military presence on the territory.

Trump has also claimed that he does not need military force to annex Canada, and that he would

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ACCORDING TO
RETIRED LT.-GEN.
YVAN BLONDIN,
GIVEN THE
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CANADA SHOULD
NOT PUT ALL OF
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EGGS IN ONE F-35
BASKET.

simply accomplish this through economic pressure. No Canadian leader has yet to deliver an "over my dead body" response to Trump's threats because everyone familiar with our defence capability knows that would be the result.

Serving senior military officers are not allowed to make political statements, and as such our generals and admirals in uniform have maintained their discipline. However, our large cadre of retired senior brass have been noticeably silent on the current spat with our erstwhile most trusted ally.

One exception to this is retired general Rick Hillier. The former chief of the defence staff took to X (formerly Twitter) on Feb. 15 to complain about Canada, admonish its citizens for booing the American anthem at sporting events, and to put his support behind Trump-booster Kevin O'Leary's proposal for a joint U.S.-Canada dollar. This was hardly the response Canadians expected from our most hawkish wartime general in recent memory.

Of course, this country's lack of defence spending has been at the forefront of Trump's ire since his first term. It is a fact that Canada currently only spends 1.37 per cent of our gross domestic product on defence, well short of the NATO alliance's target goal of two per cent of GDP. However, that is still a whopping \$41-billion, which puts us at the sixth-highest defence expenditure within the 32-nation NATO alliance.

Also, the vast majority of the expensive weaponry that Canada purchases comes from U.S. defence companies. Trump badgering Canada into spending more on U.S. defence technology under threat of economic punishment does not sit well with most patriotic Canadians.

One of them spoke out last week in a post on LinkedIn, which was later reported in *The Ottawa Citizen*. Former Royal Canadian Air Force commander, retired lieutenant general Yvan Blondin, stated that Canada

should halt the purchase of the F-35 fighter planes from the U.S. Ironically, it was Blondin himself who first recommended that Canada purchase the F-35.

He now says the deal should not go through because the U.S. has become untrustworthy with Trump re-elected as president.

"Reliance on a U.S. defence umbrella, a critical factor since the end of [the Second World War] for so many countries, is no longer guaranteed," Blondin wrote on LinkedIn. "No affected country can afford to close its eyes and hope that 2026 or 2028 elections in the U.S. will bring everything back to 'normal'... and not happen again. The toothpaste cannot go back in the tube."

As commander of the RCAF, former fighter pilot Blondin recommended the F-35 to then-prime minister Stephen Harper's Conservative government in 2012. The intent to purchase was announced but later cancelled due to ballooning costs and mechanical teething troubles.

A decade later, the Trudeau Liberals announced a project to spend \$19-billion to buy 88 F-35s. To date, \$7-billion has been contracted to build the first 16 of those aircraft. According to Blondin, given the current state of animosity, Canada should not put all of our Air Force's eggs in one F-35 basket.

Blondin said there is still time before a decision has to be made to purchase the remaining 72 F-35s. The solution, he added, may be a mix of some F-35s and other aircraft from European nations, while at the same time spending money for future aircraft being developed by Europe.

Which brings us full circle to Trump's threat to double down on tariffs if Canada and the EU try to find bilateral solutions to circumvent his trade war.

Hold on, folks, and get your elbows up. Blondin just did.

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

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Editorial

Editorial

Mark Carney's 'teachable moment'

New Prime Minister Mark Carney failed a major test of his leadership this week.

On March 28, the Toronto Association for Democracy in China resurfaced comments then-Liberal MP Paul Chiang made to Chinese-language media outlet *Ming Pao* during an ethnic media conference this past January regarding a HK\$1-million (CAD\$183,000) bounty issued the month before against Conservative candidate Joe Tay, Chiang's then-prospective competitor in Markham-Unionville, Ont., and a former resident of Hong Kong.

Last December, Hong Kong police issued the bounty after charging Tay with alleged violations of China's national security laws over criticism of the city's now Beijing-controlled government on his YouTube channel.

"To everyone here, you can claim the one-million-dollar bounty if you bring him to Toronto's Chinese Consulate," Chiang reportedly told a room full of Chinese-language journalists earlier this year.

Tay has since been appointed the Conservative candidate for Toronto's Don Valley North.

Once those remarks were published in English, Chiang apologized, saying his comments were "deplorable," and that they showcased "a complete lapse of judgment on the seriousness of the matter."

When pushed to address it on March 31, Liberal Leader Carney said Chiang's comments were "deeply" offensive and demonstrated a "terrible lapse in judgement," but that it could also serve as a "teachable moment."

"He's made his apology. He's made it to the public, he's made it to the individual concerned, he's made it directly

to me, and he's going to continue with his candidacy," said Carney. "He has my confidence."

Chiang announced shortly before midnight on March 31 that he was stepping aside so that there wouldn't be "distractions in this critical moment."

Whether or not that Carney's confidence was just for the cameras and moves were already being made behind the scenes to push Chiang out, the public-facing response is the one that ultimately matters since it's the one that's on record.

And that's the one that those who are most affected by transnational repression will remember.

"This situation has left me fearing for my safety," Tay said in a statement. "Even prior to Mr. Chiang's insidious comments coming to light, I had been in touch with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police regarding my personal protection."

As Hong Kong Watch policy adviser Katherine Leung told *The Hill Times*, the Liberals missed the opportunity to do the right thing, regardless of the final outcome.

It's not easy to be leader and make decisions—especially hard ones, or ones that will be seen as doing harm to the party brand. But if that's the job you wanted, then that's the job that has to be fulfilled.

It should be country over party, every time. And after the past couple of years in which foreign interference has been properly placed in the spotlight, now is not the time for any backsliding.

Something that can have a real detrimental effect on someone else's life is not a "teachable moment"—it's a call to action.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

Right-wing patriotism not sitting on a solid base, says B.C. reader

As I write this, the night-
mare in Canada caused
by the administration of
United States President
Donald Trump intensifies.
It has moved Conservative
Leader Pierre Poilievre to
use a tougher tone. Still, that
was a low bar given that his
toughest words had previ-
ously been, "knock it off."
OK, whatever, self-identified
"tough guy."

Sometimes the right
wing in this country seems
like a riddle wrapped in an
enigma encased in a conun-
drum. As hard as they try to
be outraged, their ideology
contradicts their messag-
ing, leaving their suddenly
edited stance wrapped in the
cheapest of American-made
plastic.

Poilievre's far-right base
(around 40 per cent of his
supporters, those who sup-
port Trump) would prefer to
destroy the government, to
starve the beast. Frankly, I
don't believe they can abolish
government, as Trump is
doing, but simply want to
reduce it to the size where
they can drag it into the
bathroom and drown it in the
bathtub.

You might not think that
two goals could coexist com-

fortably within a single party.
And of course, normally,
you'd be right if you were
talking about an ordinary
Canadian political party. But
the Conservatives are no
longer an ordinary party. In
many respects, in fact, they
have become the howev-
er-fractious sole property of
one President Trump.

Trump is quite possibly—
heaven forbid—America's
last president, and has no
trouble simultaneously advo-
cating contradictory, not to
mention devastating, ideas.
That's because, for conser-
vatives collectively, ideas are
an entirely fungible currency
that can be deployed primar-
ily to maintain support.

Sadly, once the Tories win
an election, the real fear is
their attention and adulation
of Trump—and his increas-
ingly go-it-alone approach—
would sync with the Amer-
ican GOP base. And that is
precisely because Poilievre
has so little invested in
actual policy, and the right
wing in Canada believes
their leader, like Trump, is a
weapon they can point and
shoot in whatever direction
they choose.

William Perry
Victoria, B.C.



Address gaps in MAID system: letter writer

Many Canadians are ineli-
gible for medical assis-
tance in dying (MAID) because
they are in the early stages of
a capacity-eroding condition,
such as dementia or Parkin-
son's or Huntington's disease,
and cannot put in place an
advance request for MAID.

An advance request would
allow someone to make
a written request for an
assisted death before experi-
encing intolerable suffering
from a known grievous and
irremediable condition, dis-
ease, or disorder. Then if—at

some point—this person loses
the capacity to make medi-
cal decisions for themselves
and their suffering becomes
unbearable, this formal
request could be honoured.

An advance request could
save a person from having
to endure many years of
unwanted suffering.

The lack of access to
advance requests is a critical
gap in our country's assisted
dying legislation and must be
corrected.

Peter Schmolka
Ottawa, Ont.

2025 ELECTION OPINION

Leadership and risk tolerance stymie fixing CAF recruitment, retention

A more flexible, learning-oriented leadership approach could help the Armed Forces remain attractive and effective in an increasingly complex security environment.

Dan Doran

Opinion



The Canadian Armed Forces face significant challenges in recruitment and retention, which is having impacts on current operational readiness. At the heart of these issues is a deeply ingrained risk-averse culture within leadership, which can sometimes hinder adaptability and innovation. Leaders, mindful of maintaining institutional stability, often prioritize established bureaucratic processes over pragmatic decision-making. While structure and caution have their place, an overly rigid approach can create inefficiencies that slow recruitment, discourage talented personnel, and limit the organization's ability to respond to evolving security challenges.

Compounding this issue is a culture of zero tolerance for failure, which can make decision-making more cautious than necessary. Leaders at all levels—wary of the consequences of mistakes—may opt for the safest possible course of action rather than the most effective one. While accountability is crucial in any military organization, an environment where failure is not an accepted part of learning and adaptation risks stifling innovation and creative problem-solving. This can lead to a culture where adherence to process is prioritized over outcomes, limiting the agility required to navigate modern security landscapes.

One major obstacle is the CAF's slow and bureaucratic recruitment process. Potential recruits often experience long waiting periods and unclear communication, which can discourage highly qualified candidates. This inefficiency not only deters applicants, but also creates a perception that the military is a sub-optimal work environment—communicating to potential hires, “if they are struggling this much to recruit me, what is the rest of the organization like?”

Beyond recruitment, retaining experienced personnel presents an ongoing challenge. Issues such as job dissatisfaction,

limited career progression, undesirable postings, and frustration with leadership contribute to attrition. As experienced members retire, the loss of institutional knowledge further complicates efforts to sustain a skilled and capable force.

At the core of these challenges is leadership's risk aversion and its strict zero-failure tolerance. While the intent behind these approaches may be to uphold high standards and ensure responsible decision-making, an unintended consequence is a reluctance to embrace necessary reforms. A more balanced approach—one that encourages calculated risk-taking and learning from setbacks—could foster a culture of adaptability and forward-thinking leadership. Historically, the CAF thrived when it embraced innovation; unfortunately, this typically occurred only in times of great existential crises, when the survival of Canada and our allies were at imminent risk.

To address recruitment and retention challenges—and the broader decision-making culture that underlies them—the CAF could benefit from several key reforms. Streamlining bureaucratic processes and improving communication would enhance the candidate experience and attract top talent. Establishing clear and attainable career paths would bolster morale and encourage long-term commitment.

Leadership should prioritize innovation over rigid procedural adherence, fostering a culture where commanders at all levels feel empowered to take informed risks without fear of punitive consequences. Providing greater autonomy to local commanders could allow for more tailored retention strategies, recognizing that different units and environments have unique challenges. Most importantly, a shift toward a leadership model that balances accountability with adaptability would strengthen both recruitment and overall operational effectiveness.

The CAF's recruitment and retention challenges reflect a broader issue: a leadership culture that leans heavily on risk aversion and a zero-failure tolerance mindset. While these tendencies stem from a desire for stability and discipline, they can also create barriers to progress. A more flexible, learning-oriented leadership approach—one that values adaptability and constructive risk-taking—could help the CAF remain an attractive and effective force in an increasingly complex security environment. By embracing thoughtful reform, the CAF can position itself for long-term success, ensuring that it remains a resilient and capable institution for years to come.

Born in Montreal, Dan Doran is the vice-president of business development and marketing with ADGA Group Consultants Inc., and a reservist in the Canadian Forces.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Poilievre's predicament: can he wait out the Carney-public puppy love?

The force of personality that some found so compelling in the Conservative leader isn't penetrating to the degree the party now wants as infighting kicks off.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—The civil war drums are now beating loudly in the Conservative Party. It kicked off last week, and was inflated by a number of stories speaking to the apparent disconnect between the Conservative campaign and where Canadians actually are—worried about United States President Donald Trump. For now, I'll resist piling on as there are nearly four weeks to go in the campaign and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre could win if he can move the focus of more Canadians to affordability.

To be fair to Poilievre, he has made some interesting and positive policy announcements that could connect with the public. Two thumbs up for two of them: increasing the amount one can contribute to the Tax-Free Savings Account, and the changes he has proposed to capital gains taxation if reinvested in Canadian enterprises.

All that is good, but Poilievre finds himself in an interesting predicament now that former prime minister Justin Trudeau is not his competition. His new main opponent comes across as much more authentic than Poilievre does. In an ironic sort of way, all of Poilievre's political polish and pitches are working against him now. His schtick—which hard-core Conservatives love and would have played off of Trudeau—doesn't work the same way with Mark Carney as Liberal leader.

Carney's newness in political campaigning means he hasn't fully been injected with the talking-point potion or burying-your-real-personality sauce. He “ums” and “ahs” a lot, he makes mistakes with names and places, and ad libs more than campaign pros may like. But he comes across as normal and human. He doesn't portray an Elf on the Shelf, candidate-for-any-moment vibe. This not being just any moment, it works for him.

Equally, he comes across as serious and thoughtful at a moment when a lot of Canadians feel it necessary given the potency of the Trump threat. He does have the same volume of glib, rhythmic lines when he responds to questions. He also conveys some natural warmth mixed with occasional irritation when questioned by reporters. There is relatability in that.

Turn off the sound on the video clips and the visuals tell an interesting story.



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre still has a path to victory, but all of his political polish and pitches are working against him now, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

Carney with grey hair and a blue blazer looks like former PMs Jean Chrétien or Stephen Harper. Poilievre looks more polished but perfectly curated for the visual backdrop in front of him. He looks like a politician first. I think, in these circumstances, that comes with a penalty.

Poilievre has carved out an authenticity with younger voters who like his brash approach and impatience with Liberal failings, as he's styled them. As my wise business partner Kate Harrison has been arguing, if he stays on the path of affordability and generational injustice, there is no reason to believe he can't win. She might be proven right and prophetic by the time April 28 comes around. But the force of personality that some found so compelling, and the issue set to which the party aligned, aren't penetrating to the degree the Conservatives want now.

If Carney continues to lead, he will no doubt show more of himself. That might prove to be very helpful, or what the public feels is endearing or necessary in his make up will be less useful as time goes on. Impressions of Poilievre are firmer with the public than impressions of Carney. While Poilievre is unlikely to change his approach now, Carney is still new love for the public.

But new love can go sour. If the Conservatives are banking on that alone, they are not being wise. Staying on the same message track might work, but it feels like they need a longer runway for that. And if Conservative infighting continues, the Liberals will be laughing all the way to the ballot box.

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

The Hill Times

OPINION

Canada's future foreign policy in a 'multiplex' world order

The myriad of changes from Washington do not mean we need to panic, but it should finally catalyze the decision to meet the years-long call for a renewed foreign policy.

Sarah Moritz



Opinion

Before United States President Donald Trump took office this year, there were important discussions among experts in Canada about the need for a renewed or readjusted foreign policy and pressing areas within it that require attention.

One of the highlighted points is that the world has moved—or is moving—away from the liberal rules-based international order

(LRBIO) or rules-based order (RBO), and that Canada therefore needs to critically reassess this basis of its international engagement. The fact that our greatest ally in this order has abandoned it should serve as the catalyst for decision-makers to address this overdue issue.

This said, what should an alternative for the country's international engagement look like? To help answer this, I think there is an area that needs to be engaged with: Global South perspectives on why—for years—there was a rejection of and movement away from the LRBIO and RBO by this global majority. For those who understand that many dominant issues in international affairs are rooted in ethics and behaviour, this knowledge should be understood as vital for Canada's foreign policy moving forward.

Notably, scholars and analysts have written extensively from Global South perspectives to call attention to the narrow and problematic frameworks, norms, and lenses through which much of the Global North understands and engages with the South. For instance, these perspectives have drawn attention to the fact that Global North-led international relations theory and practice, and accounts of history should not be

understood as globally accepted. Many people—including Inderjeet Parmar, Vivienne Jabri, Charlotte Epstein, John Hobson, Antony Anghie, and Makau W. Mutua—have written extensively on imperialistic, colonialist, and other prejudicial, narrow, and harmful sciences, language, norms, “common sense,” and double standards that have formed the basis of much of Global North-South relations.

Others have examined the historically complex relationship liberalism has from colonial Europe to the present, and the unequal way the South was integrated into the Global North-led international system of governance. And the consequences of these realities are vast and deep.

For example, in his poignant article from 2023, South African professor John Dugard details problems with the Global North's amorphous use of the RBO and how this lies in tension—and often in conflict—with international law to the detriment of the Global South. We can also see it in the problematic ways in which Canada has wielded human rights, and the poor results this has had. In other words, the more one listens, the more one can understand that a key reason why the LRBIO or RBO—along with other international political norms—

are being rejected is because, as author Amitav Acharya explains, this order has been—or has tended to be—“unpeaceful, unjust, undemocratic, and unfriendly” to the Global South.

It should go without saying that this is not to claim all of our foreign policy outcomes have been negative—we have had a strong international reputation for a reason—nor is it to use harsh lines or play a blame game. It is to say that any readjustment, regardless of whether Canada chooses an interest- or value-based foreign policy, should consider its international engagement—including its underlying assumptions, mechanisms, and universalisms—from Global South perspectives. This is not simply to learn from past mistakes, nor is it about performative identity politics. Consistently challenging prevailing norms, instincts, and knowledge improves problem-solving, decision-making, and relevancy. As a result, this effort may improve the ability to address challenges, and increase opportunities for partnerships, including in the growing number of inclusive global co-operation efforts which, from development to security, are being increasingly driven by the Global South.

Certainly, the myriad of changes from Washington, D.C.,

do not mean we need to panic, but it should finally catalyze the decision to meet the years-long call for a renewed and more independent foreign policy.

With the global majority's rejection of the domination of a single, Global North power, and often, its norms—like zero-sum logic—and the growth and strengthening of the Global South's influence, decision-makers should ask themselves how Canada sees—or wants to see—the world, and how they want to be seen. I strongly believe in the practical need for these perspectives because the Global South—through its diverse and shared knowledge—showed me that many of my questions could be answered by it, and that I had a lot to learn about my own knowledge and the ways it limited me, and how I related to and worked with others. The sociologist and optimist in me sometimes thinks about the impacts this micro-level, critically reflective work would have on larger scales, including through a renewed foreign policy in this multiplex world order. In the words of historian David Roediger, “transforming international relations necessitates transforming international relations.”

Sarah Moritz has a master's in sociology from the American University of Beirut, which concentrated on public policy and international affairs. She has lived, worked, and conducted research in Lebanon and Jordan, where she developed her interest in Global North-South relations, international development, and their intersections.

The Hill Times

Canada's national security bureaucracy needs a rethink

Andrew Kidd



Opinion

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ferre with Canadian elections, and flaws in our efforts to combat this interference.

To protect Canada and its citizens from foreign interference in our elections, we need to launch a major, legislative effort to reinforce our approach to national security and intelligence. While it may be too late to launch this effort to be effective for this federal election, the next government must treat the protection of our democracy as its first priority.

The public inquiry has shown the breadth of foreign interference into Canadian politics. The commission reports that the Chinese government may have handed international students fake documents and

bussed them in to vote for what it believed to be the pro-China candidate in a 2019 nomination contest. In 2021, the Chinese government appears to have targeted the family of Conservative MP Michael Chong for retribution against what it feels are his anti-China policies. Meanwhile, in that year's election, Canadian media outlets with ties to Chinese state media seem to have launched a disinformation campaign targeting an anti-China candidate. The inquiry also reports serious threats from India, Pakistan, Iran, and Russia.

The inquiry has also shed light on the structural flaws within Canada's security apparatus. Critical national security institutions are formed and reformed at the whim of the prime minister. The array of secretariats focused on national security, intelligence analysis, and foreign policy is clustered in the prime minister's own department, the Privy Council Office (PCO). Its decisions are dominated by the personalities of the bureaucrats and politicians of

the day. Even then-prime minister Justin Trudeau publicly questioned the quality of intelligence he receives through this system, claiming “it might not be 100 per cent accurate,” and can have “contradictions.”

By stepping into this breach, the House of Commons should design a structure that would not change with each administration. We need federal legislation to clarify and strengthen our process to analyze intelligence, and make policy decisions for national security.

The consistency provided by legislation would reduce our tendency for organizational re-design. Experience in both government and the private sector shows that changing organizational structures rarely leads to success. Instead, stable structures let people understand their jobs and how those jobs fit with those of others, over time improving how they work together to actually get things done.

This legislation should explicitly separate intelligence analysis—assessing facts and deter-

mining their implications—from national security policy, deciding what to do about those facts and implications. Today, the prime minister's national security and intelligence adviser controls both functions. Nominally, they work both as an honest broker—neutrally collating facts and opinions from across the government—and a policy advocate—presenting their own perspective—which is an impossible balance to strike.

Instead, Canada's intelligence analysis function should report to a new senior leader in the PCO to “set the table” with accurate facts, and support the national security and intelligence adviser's efforts to develop policy responses based on those facts. This separation would clarify accountability for intelligence analysis, and prevent it from becoming politicized.

The U.S., United Kingdom, and Australia each use a similar structure. Their intelligence-analysis functions produce high-quality intelligence that shapes their nations' security policies.

Of course, legislation is slow to change. The House must resist the temptation to write into law details of how we analyze intelligence, and make national security policy. Instead, we should follow the American example. The U.S. relies on legislation to define the critical, high-level structure of their security apparatus, but allows the president to shape the specific details of that structure in response to the specific challenges they face. A similar balance should be struck in Canada.

Coming out of this election campaign, leaders must focus on strengthening our security in a world shaken by the uncertainty of the second Trump presidency. Establishing these improvements to our national security apparatus in law should be our clear priority.

Andrew Kidd is a master's student in public policy at the Harvard Kennedy School, concentrating in international and global affairs. He has conducted research at the Intelligence Project of the Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs. Kidd is a former engagement manager at McKinsey & Company, a leading global management consulting firm, where he advised clients on organization, technology, and strategy topics. He holds a BSc in engineering physics from the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

2025 ELECTION

Books & Big Ideas

Ripper offers a detailed, accessible, engrossing look at the making of Pierre Poilievre

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre launched his campaign outside of the Museum of History in Gatineau, Que., on March 23. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Mark Bourrie sets out to tell Pierre Poilievre's story from the beginning, and shows not only his origins and how they shaped the man currently seeking the Prime Minister's Office, but also how little that person has changed in 30 years.

Jamie Carroll

Opinion



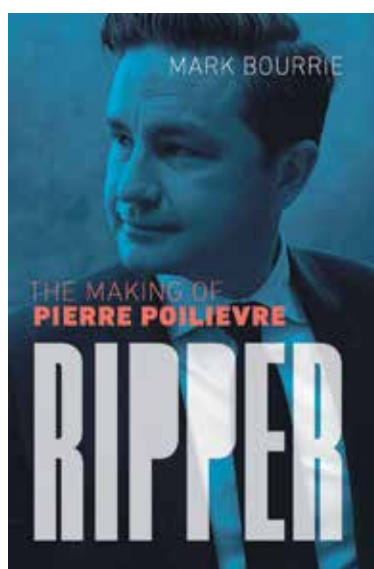
Let me start out by stating that Mark Bourrie is a friend of mine and Pierre Poilievre is not. In both cases, this is a fact based on a combination of direct and indirect experiences with the two men that come together rather nicely in Bourrie's new biography

of Poilievre, *Ripper: the Making of Pierre Poilievre*.

The timing of the book's release—accelerated to meet the start of the present election—was a herculean feat. Bourrie first told me he was thinking about writing this in the late spring of 2024. Only eight months later, I got the advance reader copy. For anyone who's ever stared at a blank page and fancied themselves a writer, that's awe inspiring.

Bourrie is a masterful writer of history. His recent books have covered the Jesuit invasion—and destruction—of Huronia (*Crosses in the Sky: Jean de Brébeuf and the Destruction of Huronia*), the adventures of the first true Canadian action hero Pierre-Esprit Radisson (*Bush Runner: Adventures of Pierre-Esprit Radisson*) and the rise and fall of *The Globe and Mail* founder George McCullagh (*Big Men Fear Me: The Fast Life and Quick Death of Canada's Most Powerful Media Mogul*). His ability to conduct detailed, primary research, and weave it into an accessible, engrossing story is second to none.

Ripper is no exception. Bourrie sets out to tell Poilievre's story from the beginning to show not only his origins and how they shaped the man currently seeking the Office of Prime Minister, but also to show



Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre, by Mark Bourrie, Biblioasis, 2025, \$28.95.

how little that man has changed in 30 years.

In so doing, Bourrie demonstrates one of the many reasons I have no intention of ever seeking office: like Poilievre, I have been more than happy to share opinions publicly since being a teenager. Unlike Poilievre, many of my opinions have changed. But the record, in both cases, stands and is readily available.

from his earliest political experiences to the role he is in now to the one he seemed destined for only scant weeks ago.

But that is another of the key takeaways from *Ripper*, certainly as an—opposing—partisan: Poilievre is predictable because he has been so consistent for so many years. The unctuous, mercurial, churlish, singularly focused angry young man who emerged at the University of Calgary is the same one campaigning across Canada today.

And the election he wanted to fight—the “Axe-the-Tax”-bash-Trudeau, rabidly partisan campaign Canadians previewed over the last two years—was the campaign he had been building in his mind for 30 years, along with friend and sometimes-partner of almost the same duration, national campaign manager Jenni Byrne. Growing up in Calgary, steeped in the legend of Trudeau père's National Energy Program, this was a perfect storm for Poilievre—he even got his own Trudeau to attack.

There's a particular chapter where Bourrie delves into the “Canada-is-broken” mantra that propelled Poilievre in the polls in 2024, but could be his undoing in 2025. Bourrie looks at this through the eyes of a particular individual—Richard—who lives on the streets in Ottawa.

This is possibly the most valuable section of the book for those looking to understand both Poilievre and the reasons why people like him—and United States President Donald Trump, and to a lesser extent Ontario Premier Doug Ford—have been able to tap into a sense of populist anger in their electorates. And Bourrie's treatment of both the subject and Richard are excellent.

Unfortunately, that is not the campaign that #Election45 has turned out to be. Events, dear boy, events, as then-United Kingdom prime minister Harold MacMillan would say.

The Poilievre that emerges from Bourrie's painstakingly researched portrait is one who will have tremendous difficulty pivoting from the campaign about which he has been fantasizing his entire adult life to one wherein he must play the calm, responsible national leader who Canadians can trust to stand up to Trump—someone Poilievre, Byrne, and a great number of their supporters actually believe to be right.

Every Liberal in their war room, every journalist covering the campaign and—should he win—every stakeholder doing business with an eventual Poilievre government owes it to themselves to read Bourrie's *Ripper* so that they can have a clear picture of who Poilievre is, how he came to be, and how that past is almost certain to shape his decision-making going forward.

Bourrie has done us all a favour here—it would be a crime if we didn't take him up on it.

Jamie Carroll is a former national director of the Liberal Party of Canada, and now works as a consultant and entrepreneur. *The Hill Times*

Poilievre, in fact, made this point himself when he did the podcast with Jordan Peterson a couple months ago: that he didn't think most of his core opinions had changed very much since he started writing letters to the editor at the age of 17. He seemed to see that as some sort of badge of honour. Bourrie provides the evidence that this is perhaps not a desirable trait.

I will concede that I think a lot of folks who got involved in politics at a young age will read Poilievre's trek along that path with a sense of familiarity. He was clearly a political nerd who sought out and found other political nerds, and has only really felt comfortable in their presence ever since.

I get that. At the same time, there is no doubt that Poilievre is a hard worker who has an impressive ability to agitate—both personally and professionally. The skills he displayed as a young man either organizing at the University of Calgary or working for Preston Manning or writing those op-eds are the very same skills that led him to lovingly talk about reclaimed wood in a YouTube video in 2022.

Put another way, Bourrie shows a clear, almost straight path that Poilievre followed to get

‘Completely unpredictable’: will Trump’s words upend Canada’s vote?

U.S. President Donald Trump seemingly curtailed talk of absorbing Canada as a ‘51st’ state following a call with Prime Minister Mark Carney.

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threats of absorbing Canada as a “51st state” or deriding this country’s head of government as a “governor.”

A Prime Minister’s Office readout of the call described it as “a very constructive conversation.” Carney said that Trump noted that he respected Canada’s sovereignty—seemingly an abrupt reversal after weeks of annexation threats.

Trump “is a proverbial bull in a china shop, and is completely unpredictable,” said former Canadian diplomat Colin Robertson, who was posted to Canada’s embassy in Washington, D.C., during his foreign service career.

While Trump was restrained in the aftermath of his call with Carney, that could all change with additional tariffs expected to be enacted on April 2 or renewed comments on Canada’s sovereignty in the coming weeks, said Robertson, now a senior adviser at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute.

“He’s had such a profound effect, and I don’t think that is going to lift in the coming weeks,” he said.

Prior to his call with Trump, Carney told reporters on March 27 that Canada’s “old relationship” with its southern neighbour based on economic integration and security links is “over.”

Among democracies, there is a diplomatic understanding not to comment about elections in foreign nations, but Trump has rarely adhered to convention.

Robertson said unlike foreign interference from China and India, any American intervention in the Canadian democratic process will be through public comments for all to see.

“It is public foreign interference, so it is foreign interference. But it is public, and I think the public sees it as such,” he said. “We tend to look at foreign interference behind the scenes.”

Canada’s chief electoral officer Stéphane Perrault said that a public comment wouldn’t equate to illicit foreign interference.

In a March 18 interview with Fox News, Trump said that he



U.S. President Donald Trump, centre, suggested that he would rather deal with Liberal Leader Mark Carney, right, as opposed to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre as prime minister, but remarked that he doesn’t care who wins the Canadian vote. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia, and photograph courtesy of Gage Skidmore/Wikimedia Commons, illustration by *The Hill Times’* Neena Singhal

would “rather deal with a Liberal than a Conservative” in Ottawa, but remarked that he didn’t care who wins the Canadian election.

He said that Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, running in Carleton, Ont., was “no friend of mine.”

“I don’t know him, but he said negative things,” Trump said. “When he says negative things, I couldn’t care less.”

Critics of Alberta Premier Danielle Smith allege that comments she said she made to U.S. officials are tantamount to electoral interference.

She told *Breitbart News* that there should be a pause on tariffs, remarking that they have benefited the Liberals’ electoral fortunes. Smith has denied that her comments were an attempt to meddle in the election. Perrault said Smith’s remarks didn’t meet the threshold of interference based on Canadian law.

A question of sovereignty

Frédéric Gagnon, director of the Centre for United States Studies at Université du Québec à Montréal, said with the management of the bilateral relationship a top election issue, Canadian voters will be paying attention to the public comments Trump makes about this country.

“People are paying attention to what Trump will be doing on the tariffs, and what he will be saying on Truth Social or to journalists because he has no discipline as we know,” he said. “He likes to improvise.”

Even though Trump refrained from continuing his annexation rhetoric immediately following



Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault says public comments don’t reach the threshold of foreign interference. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

his call with Carney, that can change quickly due to the U.S. president’s unpredictability, Gagnon said.

“We all know that Trump can change his tone and what he says everyday. So, we still have a few weeks to go in our election ... I think Trump will be tempted to comment [on] our election and maybe adopt a more robust rhetoric towards Canada in the weeks to come. I think he will not refrain from doing that,” he said.

He said the way the April 2 tariffs unfold can also have an effect on the Canadian vote.

“Everything Trump says, everything he does, can potentially have an impact on our elections. That makes this election very different than the elections



Alberta Premier Danielle Smith says she asked Trump administration officials for a tariff pause during Canada’s election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

we’ve seen in the past in Canada,” Gagnon said.

During previous periods of turmoil between Canadian prime ministers and American presidents, there has never been an instance of publicly endorsing a candidate. However, then-U.S. president John F. Kennedy loaned his personal pollster to Lester Pearson for the 1962 and 1963 campaigns to help his cause against John Diefenbaker.

Trump’s comments reveal his lack of respect for the sovereignty of other nations, Gagnon said.

“It seems like we have a president in the U.S. who respects even less than in his first term the sovereignty of other countries,” he said. “So he will not hesitate to say more about our elections along the way.”

Gagnon said the U.S. needs to be considered among the countries that can potentially interfere in the Canadian democratic process.

“President Trump doesn’t hesitate to interfere,” he said, remarking that the fact the comments from the U.S. president are public creates a different situation than the type of interference that other nations are employing.

Clandestine or not, public comments still are an affront to Canada’s sovereignty, Gagnon said.

“The fact that the president does not hesitate to comment [about] what’s going on in our electoral campaign for me is a sign that the relationship has changed—at least with this president,” he said. “I don’t think it’s good for our relationship that the president has been doing what he has been doing with the public comments ... trying to wade in and influence the way Canadians vote and how we should vote. [He] doesn’t respect our sovereignty.”

Will Trump’s restraint last?

Trade consultant Eric Miller, president of the Rideau Potomac Strategy Group, said Carney’s approach prior to his first call with Trump led to a more restrained approach from the American president.

“I certainly have the impression that his advisers have been counselling caution,” Miller said.

“But that is one day, one meeting,” he said, remarking that looming tariffs could upend any new self-control.

“The big one is deeds, not words,” said Miller, a former senior adviser in the Canadian Embassy in Washington. “There’s a big week of deeds rather than statements that we want to pay attention to.”

He said he expects Trump to be loud on tariffs, but quiet on other aspects of the Canada-U.S. relationship.

“Trump could certainly impact the campaign and throw things into disarray if that is what he was seeking to do,” Miller said. “But fundamentally, he’s only spending so much time thinking about Canada at any given moment. I’m sure his advisers have told him [to] stay out of it.”

“That seems to be what they’re inclined to do. But that being said, they’re not going to change any of their policies towards Canada,” Miller said, remarking that Trump’s ability to influence any result in Canada’s elections is “relatively limited,” and he will have to deal with the eventual winner in the long run.

Miller said the White House will be aware that anything positive Trump says about a candidate won’t be helpful to any particular party’s electoral fortunes, and that would mean a decrease in the president commenting on absorbing Canada.

“But, it’s Donald Trump—anything’s possible, and he does things that are not always necessarily rational,” he said.

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'This cannot stand in Canada': advocates push Liberals to showcase 'zero tolerance' after downplaying former candidate's China bounty comments

Despite Paul Chiang's resignation, diaspora communities 'will now remember' Liberal Leader Mark Carney 'stood by his candidate' whose comments are now being probed by the RCMP, says Hong Kong Watch's Katherine Leung.



Katherine Leung says she believes Paul Chiang's comments represent a genuine form of transnational repression, and shouldn't be downplayed as a joke or 'lapse in judgement.' Photograph courtesy of Katherine Leung

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protect them from transnational repression.

Yet, while Paul Chiang, the incumbent Liberal candidate in Markham-Unionville, Ont., eventually announced late on March 31 he would be standing aside so as not to "cause a distraction in this critical moment," his delayed departure and Carney's initial confidence have already caused damage.

"Carney should have shown his support for victims of transnational repression," said Katherine Leung, a policy adviser for Hong Kong Watch. "But communities will now remember he stood by his candidate who made remarks so heinous they warrant an RCMP investigation."

now Beijing-controlled government on his YouTube channel.

"To everyone here, you can claim the one-million-dollar bounty if you bring him to Toronto's Chinese Consulate," Chiang reportedly told a room full of Chinese-language journalists earlier this year.

Tay has since been appointed the Conservative candidate for Toronto's Don Valley North, where he will run against Liberal candidate Maggie Chi.

Incumbent Han Dong, who left the Liberal caucus in March 2023 to sit as an independent due to separate allegations of foreign interference, which he denies, announced on March 30 that he would not seek re-election.

During a March 31 press conference in Vaughan, Ont., announcing the Liberals' latest housing policy, most of the questions Carney fielded were focused on Chiang.

In response to those questions, Carney said Chiang's comments were "deeply" offensive and demonstrated a "terrible lapse in judgement," but that it could also serve as a "teachable moment."

"This is a person of integrity who served his community, as a senior police officer for ... more than a quarter of a century," Carney told reporters.

"He's made his apology. He's made it to the public, he's made it to the individual concerned, he's made it directly to me, and he's going to continue with his candidacy," said Carney, who is running for a seat in Nepean, Ont. "He has my confidence."

On March 28, shortly after TADC first reported the comments translated to English, Chiang posted an apology to social media, calling his comments "deplorable and a complete lapse of judgment."

"I sincerely apologize and deeply regret my comments," Chiang wrote. "I will always continue to stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of Hong Kong in their fight to safeguard their human rights and freedoms."

However, Tay had rejected that apology just hours before Carney's press conference, calling it "unsolicited," and demanded that the Liberal leader remove Chiang as a candidate.

"Threats like these are the tradecraft of the Chinese Communist Party," Tay wrote in a statement. "They are intended to send a chilling signal to the entire community in order to force compliance to Beijing's political goals. This situation has left me fearing for my safety."

Chiang's apology and subsequent resignation are also insufficient for Leung, whose group signed onto a letter alongside 40 other similar organizations representing the diaspora in Canada, the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, and Germany to "condemn Chiang's endorsement of the [CCP's] oppressive tactics," and calling for Carney to "affirm his commitment to human rights and stand in solidarity with all those who resist oppression."

"This weekend, we saw an example of transnational

repression, something that is so unthinkable for an incumbent MP to take part in that it brought into question whether elected officials take seriously the threats of transnational repression and foreign interference," Leung said during a press conference earlier on March 31. "This is a parliamentarian suggesting to the public, at a community event, that a political opponent should be taken into custody and handed over to a foreign regime ... This cannot stand in Canada."

Leung and her organization also view the comments as potentially rising to the level of criminality, and sent a letter to RCMP Commissioner Michael Duheme calling for an investigation into Chiang's comments.

"It is without question that Mr. Chiang's comments are an attempt to intimidate Mr. Tay and his supporters and to silence him during an election," wrote Ed Simpson, Hong Kong Watch's interim director. "Canada must send a strong signal that these threats are not acceptable, and that means law enforcement."

In a statement to the media later that evening, RCMP spokesperson Kristine Kelly said the force is "looking into the matter," but did not provide further details.

Those letters followed a March 30 joint statement issued by 13 advocacy groups representing Canadians of Hong Kong descent urging Chiang's removal, and for the Liberal Party to send a "clear message" that it will not tolerate transnational repression against political candidates.

During the press conference on Parliament Hill originally intended to present the findings of a new Montreal Institute for Global Security report on foreign interference, Leung instead focused on what she called a prime example of the threats her community faces from the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).

Leung said that Canada and the Liberals need to show they will take a "zero-tolerance" approach to any act of foreign interference or transnational repression, and that it will be "detected, intercepted, and perpetrators will be brought to justice regardless of political affiliations."

Leung also took issue with attempts to "downplay the situation" by referring to Chiang's comments as a joke or "lapse in judgment," noting her disappointment in Carney's continued defence of his candidate earlier that day.

Leung told *The Hill Times* she does not believe it was unreasonable to expect that Chiang, a former parliamentary secretary for immigration and refugees since 2023, would have taken the threat against Tay more seriously, and "act accordingly."

"This is a topic that he should have some expertise on ... he was briefed on why there is a lifeboat scheme for Hong Kongers leaving the territory because of human rights situations," Leung said. "So I think I expected more."

After Chiang's resignation, Leung told *The Hill Times* it was "long overdue," as he had "lost all



Kyle Matthews, executive director of the Montreal Institute for Global Security, centre, and MIGS' global affairs officer Marie Lamensch, centre left, present their new report, *Navigating the World of Foreign Interference*, authored by Wesley Wark, centre right, alongside contributors Mehmet Tohti of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, far left, and Hong Kong Watch's Katherine Leung. Screenshot courtesy of CPAC

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‘This cannot stand in Canada’: advocates push Liberals to showcase ‘zero tolerance’ after downplaying former candidate’s China bounty comments

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credibility as an MP and the legitimacy to seek re-election” the moment he had made his comments in January.

And now that Chiang has resigned, the Liberals have missed the opportunity to do the right thing entirely, Leung said.

Mehmet Tohti, executive director of the Uyghur Rights Advocacy Project, told *The Hill Times* prior to Chiang’s resignation that from his community’s perspective, Chiang’s candidacy would leave a “huge shadow” over the Liberal Party.

“This is unacceptable, and not only for the diaspora communities, but for the Liberal Party as well,” Tohti said. “They cannot afford to continue like this, and he should either resign or the Liberal Party should handle this situation as soon as possible.”

During a March 31 briefing by the Security and Intelligence Threats to Elections Task Force, officials said they remain “concerned” by the bounty as an example of transnational repression, and are “aware” of Chiang’s comments, but would not comment on them directly as it would fall outside the task force’s mandate.

However, Larisa Galadza, Global Affairs Canada’s director general for cyber, critical technology, and democratic resilience, added that the circulation of information on the bounty, whether online or in public, can also constitute a form of “coercion” itself.

“Spreading the information about the bounty is precisely how malign foreign states seek to silence, harass, and coerce,” Galadza explained.

‘Language firewall’ a major hurdle to greater foreign interference awareness, says TADC’s Cheuk Kwan

TADC co-chair Cheuk Kwan called Chiang’s comments “shocking” and accused the Liberal of “openly encourag[ing] people to assist in China’s interference and transnational repression.”

In an interview with *The Hill Times* on March 30, Kwan said that while the comments had been made nearly three months before, they had remained obscured behind a “language firewall” until his organization endeavoured to translate them into English.

“Anything reported in Chinese media is going to be ignored because nobody knows how to read it,” Kwan said, suggesting that the barrier is why Chiang was comfortable enough to make the comments in public.

“I’m glad I broke the story because it has been able to communicate to Canadian society that this is for real, and that it’s everyone’s problem,” Kwan said. “It’s not just a problem for Chinatown.”



Cheuk Kwan, co-chair of the Toronto Association for Democracy in China, says he is glad his reporting has broken the ‘language firewall’ that allows much of the CCP’s foreign interference to go unnoticed by the wider Canadian public.

Photograph courtesy of Cheuk Kwan

However, while Kwan said he has seen minor, slow improvements to how the public understands and responds to issues of foreign interference, members of those diaspora communities remain best placed to identify it and raise the alarm.

“We live in the community, we speak the language, and we can read WeChat; we know what’s going on,” Kwan said.

While the passage of the Liberals’ Bill C-70 was a step in the right direction, serving as a warning to potential perpetrators, the election began before any of the tools it provided could be implemented properly, Kwan said.

“My gut feeling is the Liberals haven’t learned anything,” Kwan said, adding that the last inquiry report had “whitewashed” the issue.

In the final report from the Public Inquiry into Foreign Interference in Federal Electoral Processes and Democratic Institutions released on Jan. 28, Commissioner Marie-Josée Hogue stated that despite a “very small number of isolated cases” wherein foreign interference “may” have affected the results, she found “no evidence” to suggest serious effects on institutions or parliamentarians’ loyalty to Canada.

Kwan said that he views Hogue’s conclusion as writing off the issue as merely a handful of problematic examples while downplaying their overall impact, and focusing only on whether they influenced the election’s final result.

“My view is that one election interference is one too many,” Kwan said, adding that he would have preferred no report at all rather than one he believes has given the Liberal government a pass and emboldened the CCP.

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Who’s who on Mark Carney’s 2025 Liberal campaign team

Continued from page 4

assistant to PMO senior advisers in 2017, most recently ran then-women and gender equality minister Marci Ien’s office.

Sean Wiltshire, senior vice-president of solutions at Data Sciences, is deputy campaign manager for insights. Wiltshire’s been with Data Sciences since late 2016, and before then was director of analytics for the Liberal Party.

Parker Lund is deputy campaign manager for communications, while Jane Deeks is deputy campaign manager for digital.

Lund has been director of communications for the Liberal Party since 2022, and is a former lead writer in Trudeau’s PMO. He oversaw communications products as a director with the party’s 2021 campaign, and worked on communications during the 2019 election. A party communications adviser between 2018 and 2020, he’s also got experience working for MPs on the Hill.

Deeks was named director of communications in Carney’s PMO in the short span between his March 9 leadership win and the March 23 election call, and is a former director of digital strategy to Trudeau. An assistant to then-longtime Liberal MP Carolyn Bennett between 2015 and 2018, Deeks’ first cabinet role was as press secretary to Bennett as then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister. Her past roles since include as communications director to then-fisheries minister Carla Qualtrough and then-labour minister Seamus O’Regan, and as deputy chief of staff and communications director to O’Regan as then-labour and seniors minister.

Azam Ishamel, who was the Liberals’ 2021 campaign director, continues as national director of the federal party—as he’s been since 2017—and as such has been another key player shaping this year’s campaign.

Former Privy Council clerk Janice Charette is a senior adviser for the Liberal campaign. A longtime federal public servant, Charette led the Privy Council Office from 2014 to 2016—supporting then-PM Stephen Harper—and again from 2021 until her retirement (from the public service, at least) in 2023. In between those terms, she served as Canadian high commissioner to the United Kingdom.

Sources who spoke with *The Hill Times* confirmed their understanding that former Trudeau principal secretary Gerald Butts is also in the mix to some degree advising the 2025 campaign team.

Former Liberal cabinet minister Scott Brison was spotted boarding the Liberal bus after attending a recent visit to Carney’s local campaign office in Nepean, Ont.

Christina Topp is a senior adviser for fundraising during the writ. A former vice-president with WWF-Canada, Topp served as the party’s interim national director after the 2015 election, and was its senior director of fundraising between 2013 and 2019. Since the 2019 election, she’s been a vice-president of marketing and community engagement for the Sunnyside Foundation.

Jeff Costen is tackling issues management work for the campaign.

Costen was part of Carney’s recent leadership campaign team, and has been working for Navigator in Toronto since 2017. Costen previously spent a number of years working for the Liberals in Ontario, including as an issues manager to then-

Ontario government and consumer services minister David Orazietti, communications adviser to then-associate health and long-term care minister Dipika Damerla, and press secretary to then-tourism, culture, and sport minister Eleanor McMahon.

Among those helping update the policy platform handed over by Liberal MP Mona Fortier—running again in Ottawa–Vanier–Gloucester, Ont.—and her team is Jonathan Barry.

Barry ran Energy and Natural Resources Minister Wilkinson’s successful 2015 campaign, and subsequently landed a job as a correspondence writer in Trudeau’s PMO. In 2017, Barry joined then-defence minister Harjit Sajjan’s office as a Western regional affairs adviser, later becoming operations director. He’s been working off the Hill since the 2021 election, most recently as an AI governance fellow with Mila, the Quebec Artificial Intelligence Institute, through which he worked on the 2025 International AI Safety Report. According to Barry’s LinkedIn profile, he’s currently wrapping up a master’s degree in public affairs at Princeton University.

A number of spokespeople are on hand with the Liberal campaign.

On the road are Audrey Champoux, who worked on Carney’s leadership team and subsequently joined his PMO as lead press secretary; and Ann-Clara Vaillancourt, who’s an example of a former senior Trudeau adviser on the campaign.

A former Quebec Liberal staffer, Vaillancourt started working for the Trudeau government in 2018, and joined the PMO as a press secretary in 2020. Most recently, she was director of media relations in Trudeau’s office.

Champoux was previously director of communications to then-innovation minister François-Philippe Champagne, who is running again in Saint-Maurice–Champlain, Que. A cabinet staffer since 2022, she’s also a past press secretary to Mendicino as then-public safety minister.

Working from Ottawa are spokespeople Kevin Lemkay, Emelyana Titarenko, Guillaume Bertrand, Isabella Orozco-Madison, Mohammad Hussain, Carolyn Svonkin, and Jean-Christophe Armstrong—all but one of whom were until recently filling communications roles in cabinet offices. Armstrong, who started on the Hill last October as press secretary to then-tourism minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada, was a press secretary on Carney’s leadership campaign and subsequently joined his PMO.

Lemkay, a one-time issues adviser in Trudeau’s PMO, was most recently director of communications to then-rural economic development minister Gudie Hutchings, reoffering in Long Range Mountains, N.L. Titarenko was last director of communications to Ien. Bertrand was most recently director of communications to Duclos as then-public services minister. Orozco-Madison has been tackling communications for Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly—running again in Ahuntsic–Cartierville, Que.—since the fall of 2023, most recently as deputy director. Hussain, who was press secretary to Trudeau between 2023 and 2024, was last director of communications to Martinez Ferrada; and Svonkin was most recently director of issues management to Wilkinson as energy and natural resources minister.

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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.

Pollster Coletto joins panel digging into views on immigration to Canada on April 3



Abacus Data CEO David Coletto will participate in a McGill University-hosted panel on 'Reassessing Immigration in Canada' in Montreal on April 3. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2

Senator Simons to Talk Migration Challenges—ISG Senator Paula Simons will join her former colleague Ratna Omidvar, now immigration policy fellow at Toronto Metropolitan University, for a panel discussion: "Cities of Migration: Navigating Migration Challenges Across Canada's Varied Urban Landscapes," hosted by TMU. Other participants include Doug Saunders, Mary Rowe, and Dr. Zhixi Zhuang. Wednesday, April 2, at 12 p.m. ET online and in-person at the CERC/TMCIS Office, 220 Yonge Street, Suite 204, Toronto. Details: torontomu.ca.

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.

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Hold a Rally—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will hold a Canada First rally. Wednesday, April 2, at 6 p.m. AT at Kimco Steel Yard # 2, 1431 McAdoo's Lane, Kingston, Ont. Details: conservative.ca/events.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 2—THURSDAY, APRIL 3

Combating Sports Manipulation and Betting Integrity Event—The Council of Europe and Loto-Quebec host "Combating Sports Manipulation and Betting Integrity," a two-day series of morning and afternoon sessions on themes like the manipulation of sports competitions and illegal betting. Wednesday, April 2, to Thursday, April 3, at Casino du Lac-Leamy, Gatineau, Que. Contact: sport-t-mc@coe.int.

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.

Panel: 'Reassessing Immigration in Canada'—McGill University hosts a panel, "Reassessing Immigration in Canada: Goals, Perceptions, and Policy Challenges," featuring David Coletto, founder, chair, and CEO of Abacus Data; labour economist Mikal Skuterud at the University of Waterloo; and Shamira Madhany, former Ontario assistant deputy minister for health, education, and social policy in the Cabinet Office. Thursday, April 3, at 5 p.m. ET at 3450 rue McTavish, Montreal. Details: mcgill.ca.

Conservative Leader Poilievre to Hold a Rally—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will hold a Canada First rally. Thursday, April 3, at 6 p.m. AT at Ryan Terminal, 1180 Keith Ross Dr., Oshawa, Ont. Details: conservative.ca/events.

FRIDAY, APRIL 4—SATURDAY, APRIL 26

Latin American Film Festival—The Group of Embassies of Latin American Countries in Canada hosts the 28th edition of the Latin American Film Festival featuring an extraordinary selection of film productions from 14 countries: Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay. Friday, April 4 to Saturday, April 26, at the Saint Paul University Amphitheatre G1124, 110 Hazel St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

SATURDAY, APRIL 5

Faithful Election Conversations—All Saints Anglican Church Westboro hosts "Faithful Election Conversations," exploring how might our faith shape the way we engage in public life, particularly as we approach the next federal election? Featuring a moderated panel and table group discussions. Saturday, April 5, at 3 p.m. ET at All Saints Anglican Church Westboro, 347 Richmond Rd., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

Mark Bourrie to Discuss His New Book on Poilievre—Author Mark Bourrie will discuss his new book, *Ripper: The Making of Pierre Poilievre*, at a launch event hosted by Perfect Books. Saturday, April 5, at 7 p.m. at St. John

the Evangelist, 154 Somerset St. W., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

MONDAY, APRIL 7

Politics at the Pub—The Canadian International Council hosts a "Politics and the Pub" event on the theme "Careers in International Affairs and The Art of Diplomacy" featuring former Canadian career diplomats Patricia Fortier, Peter MacArthur, and Roxanne Dubé. Monday, April 7, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Bridge Public House, 1 Donald St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, APRIL 8

Workshop: 'Indigenous Peoples' Prosperity Across the Indo-Pacific'—The Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada and the University of Ottawa host a workshop on "The Prosperity of Indigenous Peoples across the Indo-Pacific." Participants include Elder Claudette Commanda, Métis National Council president Victoria Pruden, Indigenous Languages Commissioner Ronald Ignace, Japan's Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, New Zealand's High Commissioner Cecile Hillyer, Australia's High Commissioner Kate Logan, and Taiwan's representative Harry Tseng. Tuesday, April 8, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the University of Ottawa Faculty of Social Sciences Building 4007, 120 University Pvt. Details: cips-cepi.ca.

Lunch: 'Protecting Canada's Sovereignty'—Deputy minister of National Defence Stefanie Beck and RCMP Senior Deputy Commissioner Bryan M. Larkin will take part in a roundtable lunch event, "Protecting Canada's Sovereignty: Balancing Power and Influence," hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, April 8, at 12 p.m. ET at 7 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., Ottawa. 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." Participants include Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, B.C. Conservative Leader John Rustad, former chief of defence staff Rick Hillier, former cabinet minister Tony Clement, and strategists Kory Teneycke and Ginny Roth, and former U.S. trade rep Robert Lighthizer. Wednesday, April 9, to Saturday, April 12, at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: canadastrongandfree.network.

FRIDAY, APRIL 11

Lecture: 'The (Homegrown) Politics of Backlash in Canada'—Carleton University hosts the annual Vickers-Verduyn Lecture featuring Dr. Debra Thompson, Canada Research Chair in Racial Inequality in Democratic Societies at McGill University, who will speak on "From Black Lives Matter to the War on Woke: The (Homegrown) Politics of Backlash in Canada." She will explore the collapse of old political norms, the uncertainty of emerging alternatives, the influence of U.S. culture wars, and whether Canadian democracy can withstand the challenges ahead. Friday, April 11, at 4 p.m. ET at Carleton University, 1811 Dunton Tower, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: carleton.ca.

Off the Pages: A Celebration of Banned Books—This annual event features local authors reading from their favourite banned books. This year's guest authors are Charlotte Gray, Dr. Monia Mazigh, Suyi Davies Okungbowa, and Dancia Kendra Susilo. A fundraiser for local adult and family literacy organization Alternative Learning Styles and Outlooks, the evening includes live music, food, drinks, and a silent auction. Friday, April 11, 6:30 p.m. ET, at Heartwood House, 404 McArthur Ave., Ottawa. Details and tickets at: also-ottawa.org/events.

TUESDAY, APRIL 15

2025 Canada Votes—The Greater Vancouver Board of Trade hosts "2025 Canada Votes," a chance for its members to hear from local senior candidates of the major federal parties as they present their parties' positions on the important economic and business issues facing Canada. Thursday, April 15, at 7:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, 900 W Georgia St., Vancouver, B.C. Details: boardoftrade.com.

AMA: 'Election 2025 Countdown'—Ipsos hosts an interactive "Ask Me Anything" live webinar examining the current popular vote and the public opinion trends impacting key election issues featuring Darrell Bricker, Global CEO of Ipsos Public Affairs; and Sean Simpson, Ipsos' senior vice president. Tuesday, April 15, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: ipsos.com.

TUESDAY, APRIL 22

Mayor's Breakfast—David Coletto, founder, chair, and CEO of Abacus Data, is the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe, the *Ottawa Business Journal*, and the Ottawa Board of Trade. Tuesday, April 22, at 7 a.m. ET Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details: business.ottawabot.ca.

Rose LeMay's Book Launch—The *Hill Times* columnist Rose LeMay will discuss her new book, *Ally is a Verb: A Guide to Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples*, at a private book launch hosted by Deloitte and Catalytic Canada. Space is limited. Tuesday, April 22, at 4:30 p.m. at Deloitte Greenhouse, Bayview Yards Innovation Centre, Suite E200, 7 Bayview Station Rd., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

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.

Panel: 'Charting Canada's Arctic Future'—Natan Obed, president of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, will take part in a panel discussion, "Charting Canada's Arctic Future," hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Other participants include Sean Boyd (Agnico Eagle), Heather Exner Poirot (Macdonald-Laurier Institute), and Jessica Shadian (Arctic360). Wednesday, April 23, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, Toronto. Details: canadianclub.org.

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., Ottawa. 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.

MONDAY, APRIL 28

Federal Election Day—Canadians from coast to coast to coast will head to the polls to vote in the snap election called by Prime Minister Mark Carney on March 23.

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.

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