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THE HILL TIMES

THIRTY-SIXTH YEAR, NO. 2259

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NEWS

Struggling auto sector promises deep engagement as wheels set to turn on CUSMA consultations

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Canada's auto sector, which has been the most active voice in federal lobbying about a North American trade pact so far this year, will be "deeply engaged" in coming months, looking for any signal that a deal can be secured despite the American ambassador's recent dismissal of the possibility of working out a larger agreement.

"How big the agreement is doesn't really matter. We've got to focus on the objective, which is reducing [or] eliminating tariffs. ... There's simply too much at stake," said Brian Kingston,

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NEWS

Ontario Conservative EDAs slam nomination process in last election at recent meeting, say party sources

BY ABBAS RANA

Some federal Conservative electoral district association association presidents lashed out at party headquarters officials at a recent meeting for failing to hold fair nominations, and for appointing between "80 to 90 candidates" when the last election was called, say Conservative sources.

Continued on **page 24**

NEWS

At least three safe Liberal seats poised to open as high-profile contenders line up



Liberal MP Chrystia Freeland stepped down from cabinet as transport and internal trade minister on Sept. 16 to take up the role of Canada's special representative for the reconstruction of Ukraine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Marco Mendicino, John Tory Jr., Mark Wiseman, and Liam Olsen are seen as some potential names to claim nominations in ridings soon to be vacated by Liberal MPs, say party sources.

BY ABBAS RANA

With at least three safe Liberal seats expected to become vacant in the coming weeks and months, prominent political figures are positioning themselves for the nominations and upcoming byelections.

Then-Transport minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) announced last week that she was stepping down from cabinet to become

Canada's special representative for the reconstruction of Ukraine. She also confirmed she would not re-offer in the next general election. While she will remain an MP for now, some media reports suggest Freeland may resign her seat in the next few months.

Following her resignation from cabinet on Sept. 16, Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour,

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NEWS

Hodgson, Dabrusin top-lobbied cabinet ministers last month as energy, environment lead the lobby charts

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Canada's energy minister and environment minister were the top-lobbied members of the prime minister's cabinet in August, according to the federal Lobbyists' Registry, with discussions about major international agreements, such as trading critical minerals and addressing the plastic pollution crisis topping the registries.

Energy Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) took

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OPINION

Trans Mountain pipeline tolls could leave feds on the hook for billions in further costs

BY SHAWN MCCARTHY

OTTAWA—A battle over Trans Mountain pipeline tolls could leave the federal government on the hook for billions of dollars in further costs, a red flag around financing for any new oil export project that Ottawa is considering.

Government-owned Trans Mountain heads to hearings this fall at the Canada Energy Regulator in its dispute with its shippers over the tolls those fossil fuel companies pay to move crude to the West Coast.

Trans Mountain wants them to bear a greater share of the

Continued on **page 17**

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Senator Pierre Moreau dishes with *Le Devoir* about Carney, Senate reform, and ‘rigorous’ budgets



Senator Pierre Moreau, left, has been Government representative in the Senate since July, but only met Prime Minister Mark Carney, centre, this past spring when he was asked to help Carney improve his French. In their mock debates, Moreau played the role of Bloc leader Yves-François Blanchet. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Government Representative in the Senate **Pierre Moreau** has known Prime Minister **Mark Carney** for less than a year, but already their relationship is a close one.

In a wide-ranging interview in French with *Le Devoir*'s **Boris Proulx** on Sept. 15, Moreau called Carney a “brilliant student, and curious,” explaining that he’d only met Carney for the first time during the spring election campaign when the newly appointed Quebec Senator was asked by the federal Liberals to help prepare

Carney for the leaders’ franco-phone debates.

Moreau, 67, said he played the role of Bloc Québécois Leader **Yves-François Blanchet** during their practice debates.

Now, the former provincial Treasury Board president under the Quebec Liberal governments of **Philippe Couillard** and **Jean Charest** is Carney’s point-man in the Senate—a place which, according to Moreau, Carney has “no intention” undoing any of his predecessor’s Senate reforms.

Moreau explained to Proulx that there’s no connection between the federal and provincial Liberal parties, and that Moreau himself identifies as “centre right” in his politics. As the government’s rep in the Senate, he is currently non-affiliated.

Moreau said Carney’s approach to public finances reminds him of Couillard’s “rigorous” budgets, which he hopes that Quebecers can now look back on as something that were good in the long run.

Retired Senators Oliver, Christensen have died



Public lives lived: Former Senators Don Oliver, left, and Ione Christensen both died last week. *The Hill Times* photographs by Cynthia Münster and courtesy of the Senate of Canada

Two retired Senators died last week: **Don Oliver** and **Ione Christensen**.

Oliver was a Conservative Senator from 1990 until his retirement in 2013. He was the first Black man appointed to the Senate, representing Nova Scotia. He died on Sept. 17 at the age 86 of cardiac amyloidosis. A memorial service is scheduled in Halifax on Sept. 27.

Born in the Yukon, Christensen was the former mayor of Yellowknife and commissioner for the territory when then-prime minister **Jean Chrétien** appointed her to the Senate in 1999 until 2006. She was 91 years old when she died on Sept. 15.

Serge Joyal, Ray Henault among Order of Canada inductees



Former Senator **Serge Joyal**, left, and ex-chief of defence staff **Raymond Henault**. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Jake Wright

A retired Senator, a former chief of defense staff, and an ex-public servant are among the Order of Canada’s newest laureates.

Gov. Gen. **Mary Simon** invested 61 Canadians during a ceremony at Rideau Hall on Sept. 18.

Retired Senator **Serge Joyal** was the sole “Companion” to be invested.

Among the new “officers” is former British Columbia lieutenant governor **Stephen Lewis Point**. And three notable new “members” are former chief of defence staff Gen. **Raymond Henault**, former Health Canada public servant **Jeffrey Farber**, and **Donald MacPherson**, the founder and long-time executive director of the Canadian Drug Policy Coalition.

Head of LGBT Purge Fund is this year’s Vimy Laureate

The Vimy Gala is still eight weeks away, but the Conference of Defence Associations Institute has announced this year’s Vimy Award Laureate.

Honorary Colonel **Michelle Douglas** will be recognized for her work to end the formal discrimination against 2SLGBT+ service members.

“Michelle joined the Canadian Armed Forces in 1986, excelling as a young officer. In 1989, she was dismissed—not for failure, but for being a lesbian. Her case was part of the systemic purge of 2SLGBT+ members from Canada’s military, intelligence, and security services,” reads the release from the CDAL.

The founding executive director of the LGBT Purge Fund, Douglas’ successful lawsuit helped to restore thousands of

careers and lives, and prompted the military to begin its long path toward inclusion.

“Some may ask: does this align with the Vimy Award’s legacy? We believe it does—resoundingly,” wrote former chief of defence staff Gen. **Tom Lawson**, CDAL’s board chair, and Carleton University’s **Steve Saideman** in the release.

“Michelle’s story reminds us that courage is not always found in combat—it is found in conviction. In standing up when others are silent. In challenging institutions not to destroy them, but to make them better. Michelle Douglas’s legacy is one of transformation.”

Douglas will be honoured at the Vimy Gala taking place at the Canadian War Museum in Ottawa on Nov. 5.

Catherine McKenna’s book launch draws a big crowd



McKenna fans: Raylene Lang, former national chair of Equal Voice, left; North Grenville Mayor Nancy Peckford; Prime Minister Mark Carney; and the Canadian Chamber of Commerce’s Catherine Fortin LeFavre grabbed their copies of *Run Like a Girl*, former Liberal minister Catherine McKenna’s new book, at its Sept. 16 launch at the National Arts Centre. *Photograph courtesy of Susan King*

Ministers Alty, Sidhu and Solomon in latest *Maclean’s*

Minister of Crown-Indigenous Relations **Rebecca Alty** and International Trade Minister **Maninder Sidhu** are among *Maclean’s* list of “40 nation makers.”

Noted as being “the youngest member of Mark Carney’s cabinet—and the first federal minister from the Northwest Territories in nearly two decades” Alty’s “weighty” file sees her “urging” the feds to chat more frequently with Indigenous communities.

The magazine said Sidhu is “quickly establishing himself as one of Ottawa’s indispensable dealmakers” as he pursues “fresh markets and new allies” for Canada.

Two PMO staffers grace the magazine’s October edition’s list’s “Power Brokers” section: **Audrey Champoux** and **Braeden Caley**. *Maclean’s* calls Champoux an experienced “rising star” who “has

so far been the steady voice of the PMO,” while glazing Caley as “a policy brain and political lifer with Ivy League polish” who has yet to celebrate his 40th birthday.

Assembly of First Nations’ national chief **Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak** also makes the list. The magazine said she’s “closely watching Mark Carney’s economic agenda” so as to “respectfully” remind the government that “growth starts with reconciliation.”

Not on the list, but appearing in the magazine’s front half is a feature interview with Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation **Evan Solomon**, who admitted to using AI to turn the text of Bill C-27 into a podcast which he then listened to on his way into the office.

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NEWS

Bloc eyes provincial PQ win, but says it won't affect strategy in the House: 'our goal has always been the same'

The Bloc Québécois is supporting the sovereignty-focused Parti Québécois in next year's provincial election, which could mean the federal party is less likely to collaborate with the minority Liberal government, says political scientist Eric Montigny.

BY ELEANOR WAND

The Bloc Québécois is less likely to collaborate with the governing Liberals while backing the staunchly sovereigntist Parti Québécois ahead of next year's provincial election, says one political scientist, but the federal party insists strong provincial ties won't alter their actions in the House.

"It's just natural and normal that because it's a brother—PQ and Bloc are two brothers—we work hand and hand for ourselves," Bloc Québécois Deputy House Leader Alexis Deschênes (Gaspésie-Les Îles de la Madeleine—Listuguj, Que.) told *The Hill Times*.

"Our goal has always been the same. We're here to defend Quebec's interest and to promote Quebec's independence," said Deschênes, a first-time MP and one-time PQ candidate.

But Deschênes, like Bloc Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Beloeil—Chambly, Que.), said the party's support for the Parti Québécois (PQ) won't affect their strategy in the House.

"It's not up to us to pave the way for a third referendum," Blanchet told reporters in French on Sept. 9, saying that work is up to Quebecers and the PQ.

Still, Blanchet said the party will do "everything we can to promote Quebec sovereignty outside Parliament."

Eric Montigny, a professor of political science at the University of Laval, said the Bloc's support for the PQ means they would be less co-operative with the Liberals in the House of Commons. The party holds 22 of Quebec's 78 seats, compared to the 44 Liberal ridings that helped Prime Minis-



Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet told reporters on Sept. 15 that his party would 'collaborate with anyone who favours Quebec's interests.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ter Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) to form a minority government.

"The Bloc Québécois will—now that it fully supports [PQ Leader] Paul St-Pierre Plamondon's approach—will adopt an anti-systematic, anti-system approach in the Parliament, which means that [Blanchet] will not collaborate with Mr. Carney," said Montigny, pointing to the leader's comments at the party's recent caucus retreat.

Blanchet said on Sept. 8 that the Bloc would support the provincial sovereigntist party seeking to revisit the question of Quebec independence for the third time in October 2026. He said one of the Bloc's priorities is to "send a sovereigntist government to Quebec City."

But that support comes after a tense few months between Plamondon and Blanchet. Following the April election, Plamondon publicly criticized the federal party leader for pushing the question of Quebec sovereignty to the side in their election campaign.

A day after losing 10 seats—all of them flipping red, except one—Blanchet called for co-operation and an "alliance" between political parties given the then "present circumstances," rising threats from United States President Donald Trump.

"The strategy adopted by the Bloc, which validates Mark Carney as a partner, as someone who is about to collaborate with Que-

bec ... that's not what we think," Plamondon said at the time.

Blanchet's co-operative tone has since tempered.

In his first press conference back on the Hill on Sept. 15, Blanchet was asked about working with other parties—either with the Conservatives to topple the Liberals' minority government, or with the Liberals to tackle the Trump threat.

Blanchet answered simply, "I will collaborate with anyone who favours Quebec's interests."

Quebecers' anxiety over Trump 'not the same as it was' in April: Deschênes

Montigny is the author of the chapter, "The Bloc Québécois and the Anti-System Dilemma," from the upcoming book *The Canadian Federal Election of 2025*. In it, Montigny argues that Blanchet "behaved like a tightrope walker" in the April contest, caught between the PQ's promise of an early referendum, and the "sudden and unexpected rise of Canadian nationalism in Quebec" that arose in response to the still-on-going trade war and sovereignty threats from the U.S.

The piece, written alongside University of Laval's doctoral candidate Katryne Villeneuve-Siconnely, is set to be published in McGill-Queen's University Press' book this fall.

But Montigny said it's not certain the rise of Canadian nationalism in Quebec will stick. Quebecers who rallied behind Canada in the face of the looming American threats did so out of a "defensive reflex," Montigny said, explaining they haven't suddenly become more pro-Canada than before Trump took office.

Many past Bloc and PQ voters, and even those who've voted for sovereignty, "decided to go behind the Liberals just to protect their interest," he said, not because "they're in love with Canada more than ever."

But, now, that threat is "less important" than during the election, he said, adding that in politics, "timing is everything." This could be behind the Bloc's shift in strategy, he said.

This is a fact Deschênes also acknowledged.

"The level of anxiety is not the same as it was," he said of Quebecers' concerns about Trump.

"In February and March, I was doing a lot of calls, and I was meeting a lot of citizens, and they were really stressed about the situation."

Now, he said, though people remain concerned, they've to some degree become "used to it."

David Coletto, founder and CEO of Abacus Data, shared a similar assessment.

"The public, including in Quebec, is less focused on Trump than they were before," he said.

He added that the "continued unpopularity" of Quebec Premier François Legault's Coalition Avenir Québec's (CAQ) government, and the "clear lead" for the PQ, is creating "little bit of strategic tension for the Bloc."

A Léger poll from June had the PQ leading with 30 per cent of the vote share, followed closely by the Liberals with 28 per cent. The CAQ was sitting at a measly 17 per cent.

"We're assuming they're just going to play along, but I think ... they're going to do things that will help push a PQ government into Quebec," Coletto said of the Bloc.

Coletto said though the party would "never admit" to it, they may be asking themselves internally, "what position can we take that will help better position the PQ in Quebec?"

"They share the same goals as the PQ," he said. "Ultimately, they're a separatist party. They ultimately have an end goal of wanting to see Quebec leave the federation. ... We shouldn't forget that as being the primary purpose of existence."

Montigny said that with Blanchet's support for the PQ, the "PQ now controls the agenda."

"The Bloc will do whatever it takes to support the PQ," he said. "There's always been a tension between the Bloc and the PQ, but now it seems that Mr. Blanchet gave a blank cheque to Paul St-Pierre Plamondon regarding the referendum agenda."

The PQ has promised to hold a referendum if elected. But whether Quebecers support the idea is up in the air. Though the party is ahead in the polls, according to a public opinion poll released on Sept. 17, 49 per cent of respondents were "very unfavourable" to the question of holding a referendum, with only 19 per cent saying they were very in favour of the proposition.

But Deschênes pointed to a trend of more younger Quebecers being in favour of independence.

"The idea of having a sovereign state, a nation state, that protects our identity and that supports who we are seems to be increasing amidst the younger generation," he said.

He added that in his conversations with older residents during the spring, they thought it was too "risky" amid threats from the U.S.

But, "I said, 'don't you realize that this crisis highlight[s] the importance of having a sovereign state, of controlling and of being more independent?'" he said.

Coletto confirmed that the province's younger population is polling as pro-independence.

"Traditionally, at least in the last number of years, it was older Quebecers who were more likely to say they vote for the Bloc," he said, saying it's a good "proxy" to indicate support for independence. "Younger Quebecers [are] now starting to migrate there."

"Young Canadians, generally, and young Quebecers, feel ... that the system really isn't working for them. They're not able to get a job, buy a house. That opens their minds to alternatives."

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IT IS TIME TO COMPLETE THE REMOVAL OF OPEN-NET FISH FARMS FROM BC WATERS

The unexpected surge in Sockeye Salmon to the Fraser River in British Columbia is a welcome development for First Nations throughout the interior and coastal B.C., commercial fishermen and tourism operators who rely on wild salmon for sustenance and economic growth. The closure of open net pen fish farms along crucial migration routes has contributed to the wild salmon rebounds sweeping across southcoast rivers for the second year in a row.

The BC Assembly of First Nations, Union of BC Indian Chiefs and the First Nation Summit (collectively, the First Nation Leadership Council), First Nation Wild Salmon Alliance and Wilderness Tourism Association of BC jointly express their gratitude to the federal government for its decision to remove fish farms, particularly noting the efforts of the BC caucus and former fisheries ministers. While 8 First Nations removed 25 salmon farms, the federal government cleared the critical migration route through the Discovery Islands.

The 2012 Cohen Commission Report identified multiple stressors affecting Fraser River sockeye that remain relevant today. Most notably, the report's recommendation to remove open net fish farms from wild salmon migratory routes in the Discovery Islands has been successfully implemented, which is a transformation too significant to overlook.

Individuals and businesses benefitting from the abundance of wild salmon where salmon farms have been removed strongly urge Prime Minister Carney and Minister Thompson to fully implement the government's commitment to close all remaining open-net fish farms in British Columbia's Pacific waters by 2029.

Furthermore, we implore Canada to recognize rebuilding wild Pacific salmon as a "Nation-building project". Such a project would not only advance First Nation reconciliation but also contribute to food security and foster the restoration of traditions and cultures. It would restore the fisheries economy and build tourism as well. Restored salmon stocks will help rebuild forests which combat climate change.

Investment in rebuilding wild Pacific salmon will provide economic and environmental benefits to all British Columbians.

NEWS

Industry Canada’s annual plan projects \$3.9-billion boost to budget by 2027-28

The largest increase is tied to what the department categorizes as ‘companies, investment, and growth’ with the budget growing from \$3.2-billion in 2024-25 to nearly \$7.7-billion by 2027-28.

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

The department at the forefront of Canada’s efforts to control the damage caused by United States President Donald Trump’s tariff and trade policies is projecting a 75-per-cent spending increase over the next three years.

That’s before factoring in whatever funding may be delivered in Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne’s (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) fall budget, which he plans to reveal on Nov. 4.

Innovation, Science, and Economic Development (ISED) Canada’s 2025-26 departmental plan forecasts spending to rise from \$5.1-billion last fiscal year to nearly \$9-billion by 2027-28, marking a \$3.85-billion jump. It shows a significant increase in spending under the category “companies, investment, and growth” compared to last year’s plan: from \$3.2-billion in 2024-25 to nearly \$7.7-billion by 2027-28.

The spending projection for that category includes roughly an additional \$800-million this year and another \$1-billion next year that weren’t reflected in last year’s plan. However, the extra cash isn’t going to new programming.

In a statement to *The Hill Times*, ISED spokesperson Andréa Daigle said there were two main factors behind the increase.

The first was the “re-profiling” into future years of money that was budgeted for previous years, but not spent. Daigle pointed to the government’s Strategic Response Fund (formerly Strategic Innovation Fund) as one example.

The program is intended to send cash to large business “projects” that the government considers to be “strategic,” and at



Industry Minister Mélanie Joly is among four MPs responsible for Innovation, Science, and Economic Development Canada’s many files. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

risk of disruption from U.S. tariffs or global trade calamities. The government takes applications for support under the program on a rolling basis, and “to effectively match company cashflows, the program must reprofile existing annual departmental funding into future years when project delays occur to support eligible company expenditures when they occur,” said Daigle.

The other factor was the announcement last year of new programming that hadn’t made its way through the government’s financial approvals process in time to be reflected in last year’s departmental plan. The most significant of those programs was the Sovereign AI Compute Strategy, for which the government earmarked \$2-billion over five years in the 2024 budget.

“The items do not get accounted for in the [departmental plan] until they are accessed through the fiscal framework. Therefore, although the announcements had been made, the funding was not available to ISED until after the publishing of the 2024-25 [departmental plan],” she wrote.

Funding for broadband, women entrepreneurship programs drying up

Also known as Industry Canada or ISED, the department has four members of the ministry attached to its files: Industry Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.), AI and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon (Toronto Centre, Ont.), and secretaries of state for small business and tourism, Rechie Valdez (Mississauga—Streetsville, Ont.), and for rural development, Buckley Belanger (Desnethé—Missinippi—Churchill River, Sask.).

Overall, the 2025-26 departmental plan shows that ISED is expecting to spend \$8.6-billion this year, \$8.8-billion next year, and just shy of \$9-billion in 2027-28. That’s up from \$5.1-billion in 2024-25.

Those figures don’t tell the whole story, however. The department expects to reduce its spending on “people, skills and communities” from just more than \$1-billion this year to only \$51-million in 2027-28, due to the “winding down” of three programs: the Universal Broadband Fund, the Women Entrepreneurship Strategy, and the Small Business and Entrepreneurship Development Program.

The detail about the Universal Broadband Fund “winding down”

appears at odds with an earlier section of the plan, which says the fund would “continue to support the expansion of broadband” in rural and remote communities.

Those figures also do not account for funding changes brought in through the upcoming budget. Nor do they reflect spending reductions the department may make in order to fulfill Prime Minister Mark Carney’s (Nepean, Ont.) mandate for departments to cut spending by 7.5 per cent next fiscal year, followed by 10 per cent the next year, and 15 per cent by 2028-29.

More spending, fewer staff

The departmental plan highlights government efforts to “protect Canadians” and the economy,

in part through its role in administering the \$2-billion Strategic Response Fund. The fund will support the auto manufacturing sector in particular, “which faces significant threats to jobs and global competitiveness.”

The plan also pointed to a role in the rearming of the military, and subsidizing the development of artificial intelligence—and identifying the risks AI poses—as well as green technology, “critical minerals,” and satellite internet for rural areas (via Telesat Lightspeed, not Elon Musk’s Starlink.)

The department has set itself a goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions by an incremental 0.2 megatonnes per year—meaning the previous year’s total reduction, plus 0.2 mt—using its multi-billion-dollar Strategic Response Fund. The department estimated that the program, then known as the Strategic Innovation Fund, wiped out 6.2 megatonnes of greenhouse gas emissions in 2023-24, the last year for which data was included in the report.

The plan also mentions that the Strategic Response Fund will prioritize the production of critical minerals. It noted a plan to provide Rio Tinto Iron and Titanium with \$222-million to mine lithium, titanium, and scandium for use in electric vehicles and batteries.

Among its other targets:

- \$263-billion in total business investment in Canada. That would be just more than the investment total of \$262.7-billion reached in 2023-24;
- 38,547 patent applications filed in Canada. This would be below the numbers reported in 2021-22, 2022-23, and 2023-24. The report explains this reduction in only vague terms, referring to “expected future Canadian and U.S. economic growth” and “the conditions that drive IP demand in Canada”; and
- That firms receiving cash from the department increase their revenues faster than the national average.

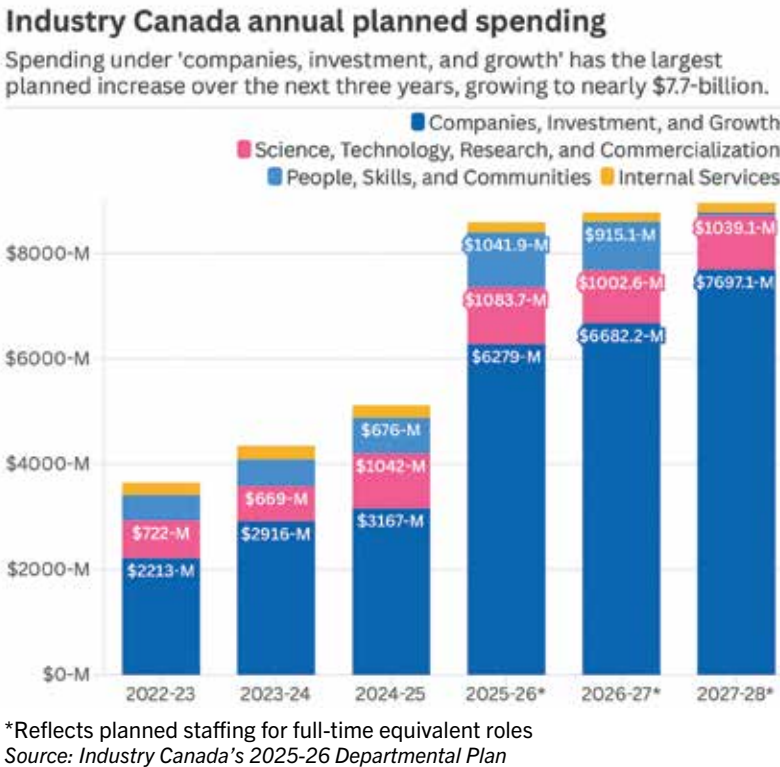
The plan points to subsidies to electric vehicle and battery manufacturers—PowerCo, NorthVolt, and NextStar—as a leading cause of the big spending increase from 2024-25 to 2027-28.

But NorthVolt is already in trouble, having declared bankruptcy in Sweden, and with an American startup firm eyeing its assets. NextStar, meanwhile, suddenly laid off almost 200 employees in Windsor, Ont., earlier this summer.

The department is expecting to reduce its total staff from 6,168 full-time equivalent positions to 6,054 positions by 2027-28. That reduction will come partly from staff who had been working on the zero-emissions vehicles consumer subsidy program, which the government “paused” this year.

A version of this piece first appeared in Politics This Morning, your go-to source for insider news, analysis, and updates on where all the key political players are that day. Get more insider coverage directly to your inbox from The Hill Times’ editor Peter Mazereeuw and reporter Riddhi Kachhela in this subscriber-only daily newsletter. Sign up here.

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Editorial

Editorial

Prime Minister Carney should run contested nominations in soon-to-be vacant ridings, or risk losing grassroots support

At least three—and possibly as many as five—safe Liberal ridings are expected to open up in the coming months.

Chrystia Freeland, a former powerhouse cabinet minister, announced her resignation from cabinet last week and Prime Minister Mark Carney also announced that he’s asked her to serve as Canada’s new representative for the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Former Trudeau-era cabinet ministers Bill Blair and Jonathan Wilkinson are also widely expected to step down soon. Both men are expected to move into diplomatic roles. Political insiders say Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault could also leave in the coming months, as well. Similarly, three-term Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith could leave to pursue his interest in the Ontario Liberal leadership that opened up recently after Bonnie Crombie failed to get adequate support in her leadership review.

The jockeying among prominent Liberals is already underway. The question now is whether Carney will allow open, contested nominations, or let the party again rig the rules to parachute in star candidates handpicked by senior Liberals. Carney, who won the party’s leadership race last March with grassroots support across all ridings, should ensure he recruits new candidates through fair nomination elections.

Former prime minister Justin Trudeau’s downfall was partly rooted

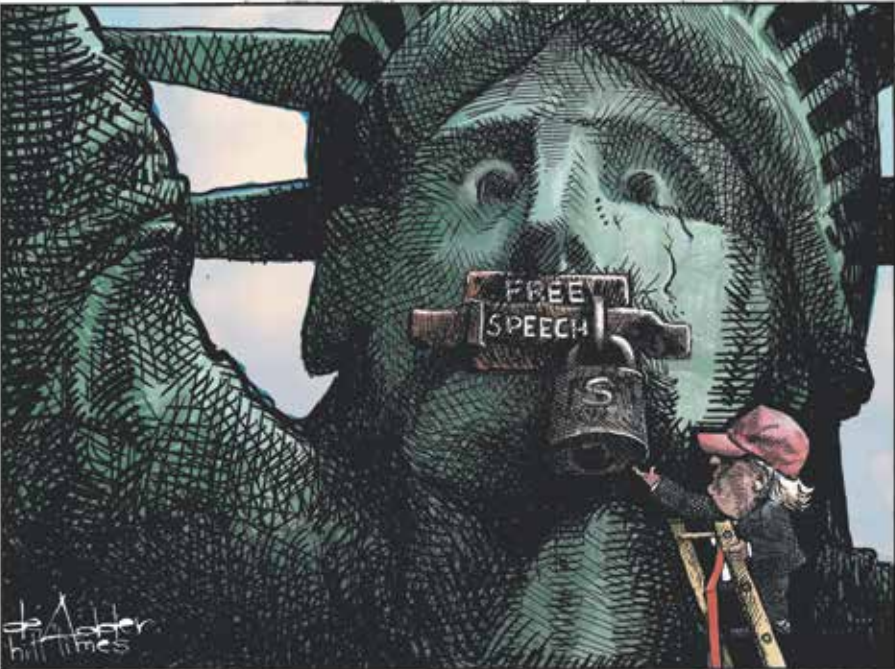
in a demoralized base, frustrated by a decade of centralized nominations where personal connections to the PMO and with other senior Liberals mattered more than local grassroots engagement.

The Conservatives, under Pierre Poilievre, made the same mistake in the last election cycle, running one of the most centralized nomination processes in that party’s history, for which they paid the price at the ballot box—winning just 144 seats instead of more than 220 many observers had predicted. Potential candidates and riding association presidents have since vented their frustrations to the national council, the party’s highest elected governing body, accusing the party of betraying its grassroots commitments. The lack of fair nominations is one of the key reasons why the party failed to form government.

The Liberals face the same risk. This is the party’s fourth straight mandate, but Carney’s first. He leads a minority government, and with the average minority lasting just 19 months—Joe Clark’s lasted less than nine months back in 1980—he cannot afford to alienate his base.

Carney’s landslide leadership win could unravel quickly if he disappoints grassroots members by sidelining them in the candidate nomination process. He should also remember that once a leader loses the enthusiasm of the party base, winning it back is a major challenge.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Judge federal spending by real effects, not arbitrary anchors: reader

Re: “New budget watching Rsays ‘deficit will absolutely be higher’ than forecast, feds have no clear fiscal anchors,” (*The Hill Times*, Sept. 17).

Federal government expenditures should be evaluated not by any arbitrary “fiscal anchor,” but by their effect on the real economy, in particular the rate of unemployment.

Today’s economic punditry ignore the high cost of keeping inactive 1.6 million Canadians who are not contributing to economic production, and whose skill levels, mental health, and family life deteriorate over time, leading to expensive and intractable social problems.

The economy can be likened to a cup. While we want to avoid overfilling and causing inflation, neither should we under-fill it, tolerating unnecessary recession and insufficient job creation.

Statistical anchors are ideological in nature, designed to restrain government action, and have no actual economic justification. The federal government wholly owns the Bank of Canada, and can spend any appropriate amount required. Evaluate the budget by whether it enables all employable Canadians to earn income, contribute productively to society, and share the benefits.

Larry Kazdan
Vancouver, B.C.

Climate, and our vision for the future

The wildfire season this year in Nelson, B.C., is not as bad as it was in 2023. The Eastern half of our country seems to have taken the lead on that, although we are expecting another atmospheric river to flow in over the next few days with flooding and transportation delays as a likely consequence.

When I think of meaningful climate action, I didn’t expect that myopia would be the lens through which we would proceed. Things are getting bad. It seems that adaptation is a symptom of mitigation failure.

We need to make a transformative journey from ‘A’ to ‘B,’ but are stuck at ‘A,’ not willing or able to take that transformative action toward the world in which we want to live. ‘A’ is our adaptation

zone, and, ironically, our current comfort zone.

The red/green factor approach of “I can change if I have to—I guess” leaves us stuck at ‘A’. Myopia does not offer a vision or understanding of the importance of reaching ‘B’. The concept of transformative change does require change and, yes, adaptation will be part of that journey. Currently, we are having to adapt without having started the journey.

Leadership at all levels of government and community are needed, not to give comfort for those stuck at ‘A,’ but to develop the policy and investment in infrastructure that will be needed if we are to reach ‘B’.

Ron Robinson
Nelson, B.C.

Canada, we can’t stop now

Every day, millions of people suffer needlessly from AIDS, tuberculosis, and malaria which are preventable and treatable. In the face of this human struggle, our inaction becomes harder to justify. Global health threats are rising, inequalities are widening, and we risk losing decades of progress if we do not maintain bold leadership.

Canada has historically been a crucial partner in the Global Fund to Fight diseases, helping to save millions of lives and build stronger health systems in low and

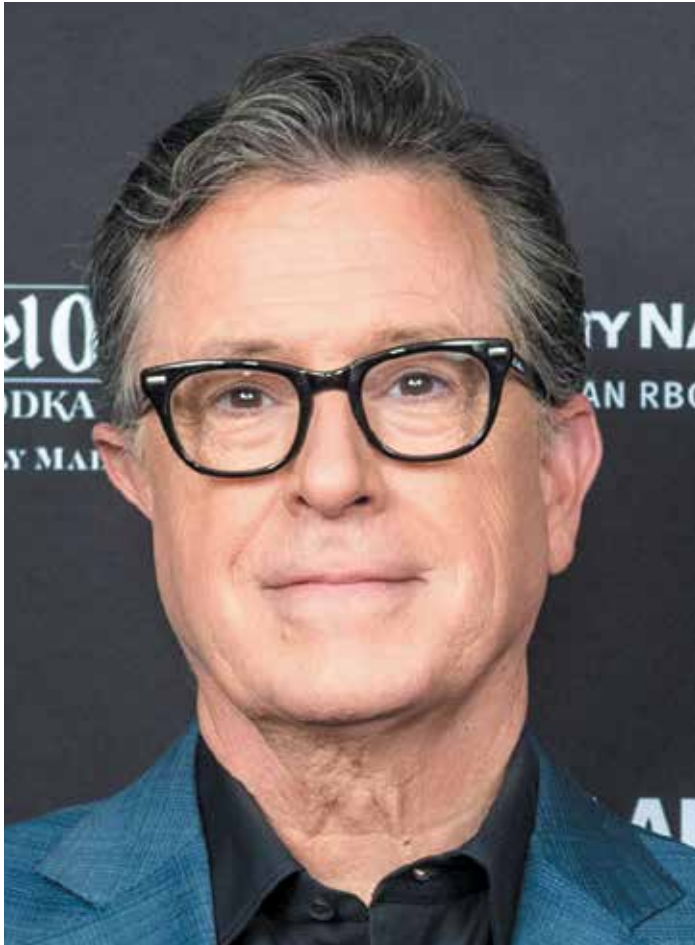
middle-income countries. But the fight is far from over. Funding shortfalls, emerging health risks, and gaps in access for marginalized populations threaten forward momentum.

We urge the Government of Canada to continue and increase its support. By strengthening our commitments today, we can help win the fight against TB, AIDS, and malaria, ensure health equity and protect lives globally.

Safia Ibrahim
Ottawa, Ont.

COMMENT

Trump goes after late-night comedy, no joke



Late-night American comedians Stephen Colbert, left, and Jimmy Kimmel each have been cancelled. Colbert was dumped by CBS because of costs, it said, and Kimmel was cut by ABC last week after making comments about the killing of Charlie Kirk. Donald Trump is now going after Jimmy Fallon and Seth Myers, *USA Today* reported last week. Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

of the United States. Even if you win in court, there are so many other ways POTUS has to get even. From a strict business post of view, it is better to pay and move on rather than fight.

Trump's success in cowering media owners has emboldened him. His attempt to rein in free-speech critical of him has now reached into late-night comedy. Comedian and Trump critic Stephen Colbert, who was dumped from CBS, now has some company on the sidelines of unemployed funnymen.

Late-night comedy icon Jimmy Kimmel has been suspended indefinitely, and his show taken off the air. ABC made the decision after comments Kimmel made relating to the assassination of right-wing activist Charlie Kirk.

Kimmel made two observations about the ghastly shooting, both true. He said that MAGA forces were doing everything in their power to take political advantage of the Kirk tragedy, pushing the line that leftist rhetoric motivated the shooter.

But his real sin—the one that likely led to his demise—was a joke he made about Trump. Kimmel showed a clip of a reporter asking Trump how he was personally coping with Kirk's murder.

The president gave a curt answer, "doing good." He then immediately directed the reporter's attention to work that was beginning on his latest building project, a ballroom for the White House. Kimmel quipped that Trump had entered the fourth stage of grief: construction.

Whether you think that's witty or tasteless is a subjective call everyone gets to make for themselves. But the First Amendment gives Kimmel the absolute right to say it. One of the hallmarks of American democracy is that all speech is protected.

At least it has been up until now. One of the reasons that ABC sidelined Kimmel is direct threats from the Trump government.

The head of the Federal Communications Commission publicly said that the offending Kimmel monologue could be dealt with in one of two ways. "We can do this the easy way or the hard way," Brendan Carr said publicly.

The easy way, presumably, would be for the network to deal with Kimmel. The hard way would be for the government to flex its regulatory muscles and take action on the free speech file.

Here's how Tricia McLaughlin, the assistant secretary of the Department of Homeland Security put it: "We are once again calling on the media and the far left to stop the hateful rhetoric directed at President Trump and those who support him...."

Former U.S. president and founding father James Madison, and civil rights advocate Frederick Douglass must be spinning in their graves.

Trump has cast his net so wide that it now includes an attack on late-night comics.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

One by one, individual by individual, and institution by institution, the man who once promised to protect free speech is systematically burning it down.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—A wise person watching my career once gave me some sound—if ominous—advice: if you tell the truth, keep your horse saddled.

Governments and major institutions, including the church, don't like criticism, let alone deep exposés that bite.

Perhaps it's because I have been shot off my horse once or twice for speaking up that I feel such distress over what is happening just across our undefended border with the United States.

There is a wildfire burning out of control in America, and it isn't

only on the land. It is raging in the highest corridors of power, threatening to engulf institutions fundamental to the survival of democracy. President Donald Trump has set a blaze of profound constitutional combustibility with his relentless attacks on free speech. He has put a match to the First Amendment.

One by one, individual by individual, and institution by institution, the man who once promised to protect free speech is systematically burning it down.

If anyone thinks that view is progressive hyperbole, they should reflect on Trump's record. Here are just a few of his media lowlights:

As president, Trump has defunded both the Public Broadcasting System (PBS) and National Public Radio, (NPR), accusing them off promoting a left-agenda.

Trump has sued *The New York Times*, which is generally considered one of the greatest newspapers in the world. But in his \$15-billion lawsuit, the president called the paper "one of the worst and most degenerate newspapers in the history of our country, becoming a virtual 'mouthpiece' for the radical left Democratic Party..."

It is notable that Trump's defamation suit against *The New York Times* is itself defamatory. There is no specific claim of

libel against him contained in the suit, just a baseless, potentially damaging rant against the paper.

Trump also sued *The Washington Post*, the newspaper that broke the Watergate scandal that eventually brought down then-president Richard Nixon.

Trump's \$10-billion suit against *The Washington Post* is based on a story the newspaper published about a lewd card Trump allegedly signed and sent to convicted child sex-trafficker Jeffrey Epstein. The card was allegedly sent on the occasion of the now deceased felon's 50th birthday. Despite Trump's claim that he never sent the greeting, the card subsequently showed up with his signature on it in subpoenaed Epstein files.

Trump also sued ABC news and one of its hosts, George Stephanopoulos, after the network reported that Trump had been convicted of "rape" in the E. Jean Carroll case. Trump's claim was that he was not convicted of rape, but "sexual abuse."

After CBS ran an edited interview with then-Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris, Trump sued *Sixty Minutes*. He alleged that the show had made changes to the interview to allegedly make Harris look more coherent.

To its everlasting shame, Paramount settled its lawsuit by paying Trump multi-million-dollar

settlements, rather than standing up for free speech in court. And that is despite the fact that U.S. Supreme Court ruled in the 1960s that the media has the right to be wrong in order to protect robust debate on public affairs.

The sad fact is that the decision to cave in to Trump's bullying attempts to sculpt media coverage of his presidency was made by ownership, not journalists. In fact, a CBS News president and the executive producer of *Sixty Minutes* resigned over the \$16-million settlement with Trump.

As reported by Robert Reich, CBS also agreed to hire an ombudsman, ostensibly to police the network for bias. The hire of Kenneth R. Weinstein is itself an exercise in bias. Weinstein was the former CEO of the right-leaning Hudson institute.

ABC made the same choice: to pay off the president, rather stand up in court for its journalists and free speech. It gave Trump \$15-million for his presidential library, and another million for his legal team.

Trump celebrated these settlements as "vindication" of his war on free speech, and even referred to other TV hosts he would like to see fired.

What these settlements actually mean is that from an ownership's perspective, it is a poor strategy to fight a lawsuit that is brought by the president

COMMENT

Until recently, I had never heard of Charlie Kirk

Those of us who were ignorant of Charlie Kirk expected that his background would back up the posthumous honorifics. Instead, what we see is the story of a man who went out of his way to sow division based on race, gender, and religion.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Until just recently, the only famous Kirk I knew was Captain Kirk from *Star Trek*, which first launched on the CTV network in Canada in 1966.

But on Sept. 10, the murder of American Charlie Kirk,



The Sept. 10 murder of American activist Charlie Kirk, co-founder of Turning Point USA, on the campus of Utah Valley University reverberated around the world. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

co-founder of Turning Point USA, on the campus of Utah Valley University reverberated around the world.

The president of the United States ordered all government flags to be lowered in mourning, and announced the posthumous provision of the Presidential Medal of Freedom for the slain political activist.

Those of us who were ignorant of Kirk expected that his

background would back up the honorifics.

Instead, what we see is the story of a man who went out of his way to sow division based on race, gender, and religion.

Media Matters for America, a not-for-profit that tracks conservative media statements, published the following direct quotes from Kirk's appearances and podcasts.

He had this to say about Black people: "Happening all the time in urban America, prowling Blacks go around for fun to go target white people, that's a fact. It's happening more and more."

On former First Lady Michelle Obama, he had this to say: "If we said that Joy Reid and Michelle Obama ... were affirmative action picks, we would have been called racists. Now they're coming out and they're saying it for us. ... You do not have the brain processing power to otherwise be taken seriously. You had to go steal a white person's slot to go be taken somewhat seriously." Not sure how Obama stole a white person's slot as her partner was elected by a majority vote, but it was this kind of racist vitriol that attracted attention to Kirk.

As for women, in a discussion of musician Taylor Swift's engagement to footballer Travis

Kelce, Kirk said: "reject feminism. Submit to your husband Taylor. You're not in charge."

Kirk also said that if he had a 10-year-old daughter who was raped, he would force her to carry the fetus to term: "Yes. The baby would be born."

He also promoted access to guns, suggesting that "it's worth it to have a cost of, unfortunately, some gun deaths every single year so that we can have the Second Amendment to protect our other God-given rights. That is a prudent deal. It is rational."

On religion, Kirk said he believed "Islam is the sword the left is using to slit the throat of America." He also did not support the separation of church and state, claiming the concept is "a fabrication, a fiction, it's not in the constitution. It's made up by secular humanists."

As for his views on the LGBTQ+ communities, "We need to have a Nuremberg-style trial for every gender-affirming clinic doctor. We need it immediately."

On immigration, he said he believed that "America was at its peak when we halted immigration for 40 years and we dropped our foreign-born percentage to its lowest level ever."

So why are so many people being excoriated—even fired—for

criticizing Kirk after death? And why is Donald Trump trying to convince the country and the world that Kirk is a patriot, and that his assassin was a crazed liberal?

Why was Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre upset that Prime Minister Mark Carney did not post a condolence message quickly enough after the murder?

All party leaders eventually posted messages, generally referencing Kirk's family and the fact that differences in political perspective should not be met with violence.

Of course, that is self-evident, but in the case of Kirk, he deliberately provoked reactions by the nature of his absurd racist, homophobic, and misogynistic statements.

Kirk on the former president: "Joe Biden is a bumbling, dementia-filled, Alzheimer's-corrupt tyrant who should honestly be put in prison and/or given the death penalty for his crimes against America."

There is never an excuse for politicians to solve problems with a weapon. That is one of the reasons why the majority of Americans want the government to promote gun control.

While innocent people—including children—are slaughtered almost every week in America by crazed individuals, Kirk spent his life lobbying against limiting that access.

Sheila Copps is a former Jean Chrétien-era cabinet minister, and a former deputy prime minister.

The Hill Times

Revenge of the Blue Liberals

If Mark Carney moves too far to the right, especially on environmental issues, he risks alienating his own political base and possibly creating a rift within the Liberal Party. The prime minister likely knows this.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Over the past six months, there seems to have been a dramatic reversal of fortune within the Liberal Party's ranks.

Whereas once, Liberals of the left-wing variety appeared to rule

the roost, now, in Prime Minister Mark Carney's government, it's "Blue Liberals" who seem to be calling the shots.

By "Blue Liberals," of course, I mean those in the Liberal Party who, while liberal on social and cultural issues, tend to be more fiscally conservative, or at least, they're more concerned about promoting policies that are business or free-market-friendly.

Noteworthy Blue Liberals of the past include John Turner, John Manley, Frank McKenna, Martha Hall Findlay, and Louis St. Laurent.

You could even argue that one of the most celebrated Liberal prime ministers of all time, Wilfrid Laurier, was firmly in the Blue Liberal camp, since, as Brian Crowley notes in his book, *The Canadian Century*, Laurier promoted "minimal state interference, low taxes and respect of property and of contract."

Yet, for the past decade or so, Blue Liberalism was a much-diminished force within the Liberal Party, largely because its leader during that time, Justin Trudeau, was much more on the left side of the party's ideological spectrum.

In other words, Trudeau was a leader who didn't seem to care

much about economic prudence, fiscal discipline, or pandering to businesses; indeed, he was more than willing to create new taxes, go on government spending sprees, and explode the deficit.

He even once declared, "I don't think about monetary policy."

What's more, the former Liberal leader was seemingly willing to sacrifice Canada's energy sector on the altar of green environmentalism.

But now that Carney leads the Liberal Party, there's a new sheriff in town, a sheriff who seems much more closely aligned with Blue Liberal philosophy.

And it certainly shows in how the Liberal government now operates.

As former NDP leader Thomas Mulcair recently put it, "Over the last few weeks, hardly a day has gone by without Carney giving another rightward tilt to his steering wheel."

What's most notable about the tilt to Carney's steering wheel is the way he's apparently putting economic growth ahead of environmentalism.

Consider how, since coming to power, Carney has scrapped the carbon tax (a key part of Trudeau's green agenda), prom-

ised to fast-track major energy infrastructure projects, and has paused a policy that would require automakers to reach certain targets for sales of zero-emissions vehicles.

Some Carney Liberals have even subtly criticized Trudeau's environmental policies.

For instance, while trying to find European markets for Canadian energy, Liberal Energy Minister Tim Hodgson declared, "Unlike the previous Canadian government, which closed the door to LNG exports, Prime Minister Carney's government has opened it. If the demand is here, and the infrastructure is built, Canada will deliver."

So, yes, it sure seems like the Blue Liberals have come out of hiding and are now firmly in charge.

As Industry Minister Mélanie Joly put it, "We have to be pragmatic, this is not a time for ideology."

But it should be noted that even though Trudeau is now off the national stage, a great many left-leaning, green-oriented, non-pragmatic "Trudeau Liberals" are still in the party.

That means if Carney moves too far to the right, especially on



Prime Minister Mark Carney announced the Build Canada Homes Project in Nepean, Ont., on Sept. 14, 2025. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

environmental issues, he risks alienating his own political base and possibly creating a rift within the Liberal Party.

The prime minister likely knows this.

So, I expect Carney, at some point, will make moves to mollify the Trudeau Liberals.

If nothing else, that could act as a check on Carney's rightward tilt on his political steering wheel.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Today's debate culture has normalized radical views

What would not have been articulated out loud years ago has become acceptable to say openly. Online influencers like Andrew Tate and shows like *Piers Morgan Uncensored* have thrived in such a culture. We would be foolish to think that such a culture only takes place online.

Aisha Sherazi

Opinion



The shocking murder of right-wing American activist Charlie Kirk has provided an opportunity for reflection. Discussions have erupted online and in public discourse about how people should respond to his shooting. Some surmise that his death, while tragic, was of his own making. Others call for clemency. He was after all, a father, a husband, loved by friends.

Throughout these discussions, I am hearing less about the impact that this will have on application of the law. As an educator, it troubles me greatly that public safety is not talked about enough in the aftermath of what took place. Shooting anyone in cold blood because of their views (however abhorrent one may find them) is unacceptable. As a person of colour and a visible minority, I worry about the knock-on effect open violence might

have on my own safety. If the perpetrator had been Muslim (in name at least), for example, how might that have impacted my potential safety in public spaces? We are seeing a rise in anti-Muslim hate, and it is of great concern. What people view online, be it open violence or open hatred—has real effects in the real world.

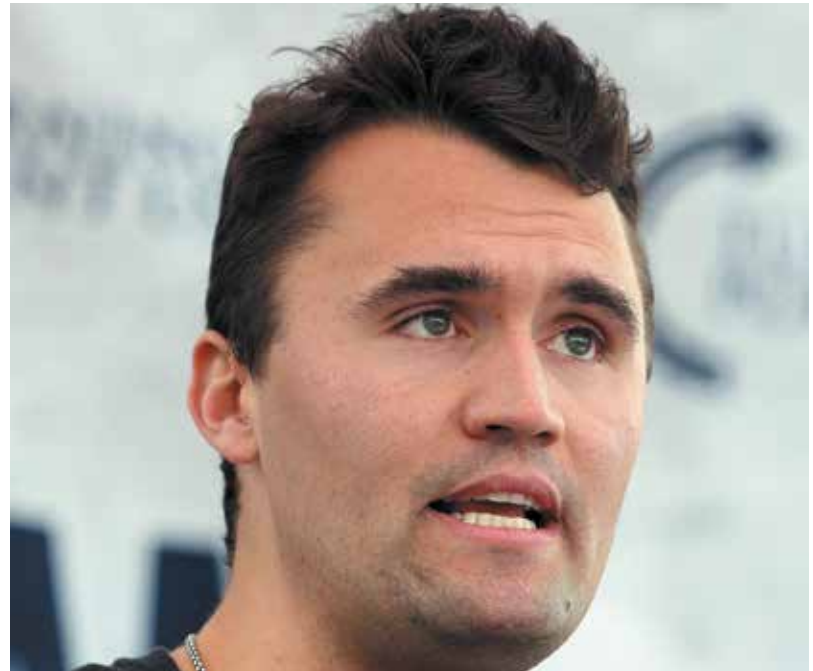
As an educator, I am also troubled by the fact that very little has been said about debate culture, something of which Kirk was a prominent part. Increasingly, young people are tuned into debates, and in a polarized society, I wonder how young minds might make sense of what they see and hear. The conduct during such debates online leaves little to be desired. Often, arguments are rooted in the inflammatory, and debates become more about being the person who shows the most, rather than the person who knows the most and argues that knowledge eloquently.

Young people tuning in might well learn that interruption is intellectual, rewarding the act of provocation over the building of a coherent argument. The more provocative the ideology, the more views the content generates.

Perhaps even more troubling is that debate culture has normalized radical views. What would not have been articulated out loud years ago has now become acceptable to say openly. Online influencers like Andrew Tate have thrived in such a culture, his comments about women (a man who cares about his girl will be strict, a man who doesn't care about his girl will let her do anything she wants), body sham-

ing (if you think being fat is acceptable, you will never achieve anything great in life, and the list goes on) leaves one to ponder how such words improve society. Shows like *Piers Morgan Uncensored* have also thrived. Ostensibly, Morgan invites guests to the show who are polar opposites, allowing them an opportunity to debate. In reality, the guests talk—and often shout—over one another, they insult

“WE ARE FOOLISH TO THINK DEBATE CULTURE ONLY TAKES PLACE ONLINE. JUST TUNE INTO QUESTION PERIOD TO SEE THE SAME POOR BEHAVIOUR ON FULL DISPLAY.”



Right-wing American activist Charlie Kirk was shot and killed while speaking at one of his Turning Point U.S.A. events at Utah Valley University in Orem, Utah, on Sept. 10, 2025. Discussions have erupted online and in public discourse about how people should respond to his murder, writes Aisha Sherazi. Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

each other at times, say inflammatory things, and then those insults and remarks are used as click-bait to entice new viewers.

We would be foolish to think that such a culture only takes place online. One only has to tune into Question Period in the House of Commons to see the same poor behaviours on full display. How they are covered by mainstream media also feeds into the debate culture. CBC News headlined the first day Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre was back in the House with words like “face-to-face,” reporting on them sparring with each other, almost

encouraging the same behaviours we have been subjected to for too long in Parliament.

When we look at debate culture for what it really is, a sport—like watching gladiators, it is entertainment, a battle of egos over ethics—it is no wonder that the world appears to be riddled with conflict. South of the border, there appears to be a poor example of restraint and decorum, but it is something we could avoid doing here. I sincerely hope we try.

Aisha Sherazi is an Ottawa educator, writer, and community advocate. *The Hill Times*



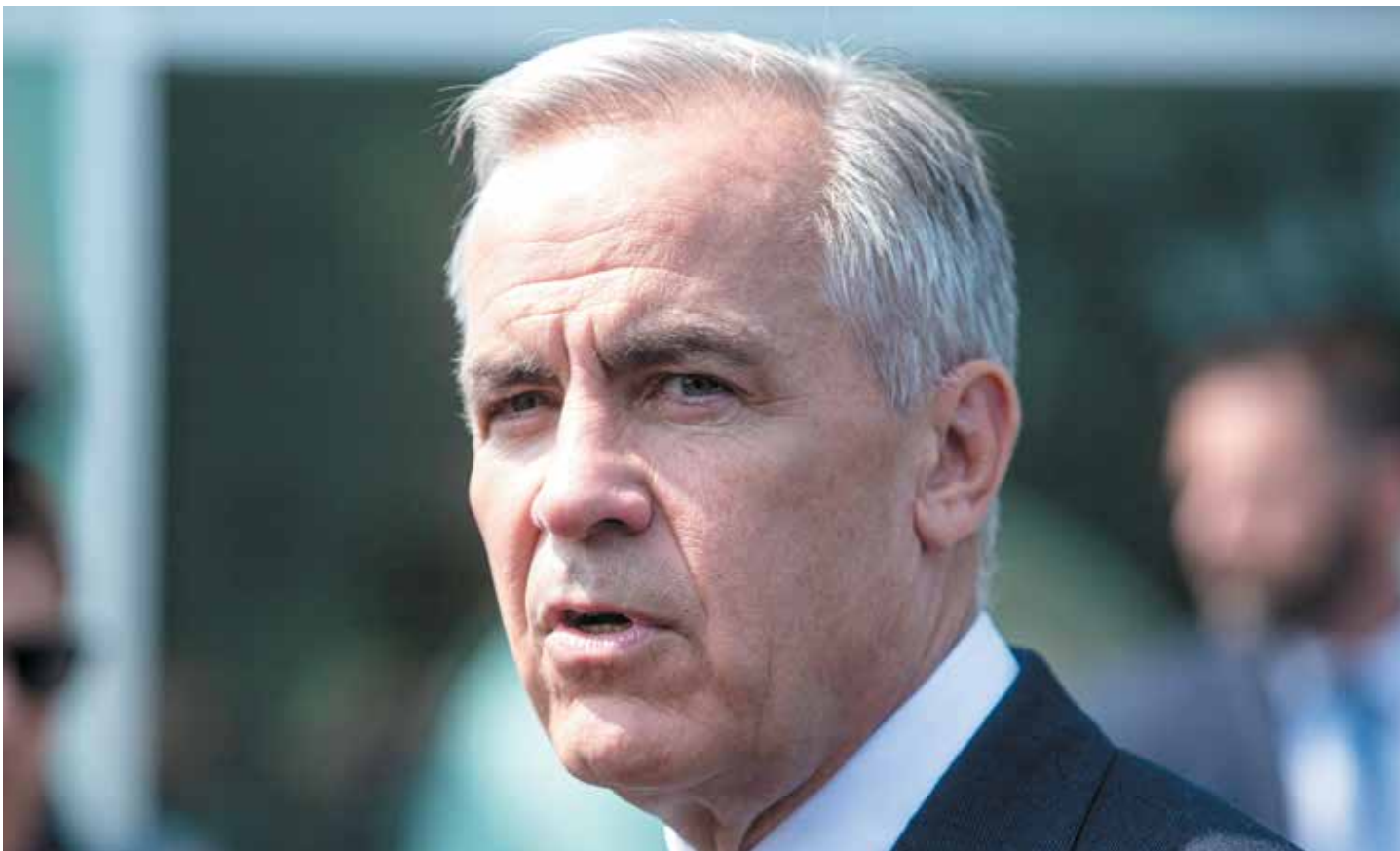
As school returns and families adjust to new routines, nonprofits provide critical support, from after-school programs to food security initiatives.

NONPROFIT-PUBLIC COOPERATION IS A FOUNDATION OF STRONG COMMUNITIES. LET'S WORK TOGETHER TO ENSURE EVERYONE CAN THRIVE.

IMAGINE
CANADA

Politics

Mark Carney should make a decision on the fighter jets, our national security depends on it



Prime Minister Mark Carney, pictured in Ottawa on Aug. 7, 2025, has enough on his plate, but absolutely needs to make a decision as soon as possible on a major purchase of the fighter jets for the Royal Canadian Air Force, writes Matt Gurney. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada is probably going to need an Air Force soon, and we've wasted 16 years already. We can't get back that lost time, but we can make a final decision quickly. Today wouldn't be too soon.

Matt Gurney

Opinion



TORONTO—Prime Minister Mark Carney won't want to hear this. Lord knows he has enough on his plate. But he absolutely needs to make a decision, as soon as possible, on a major purchase of fighter jets for the Royal Canadian Air Force. This is not something we can afford

to delay any longer. Our national security depends on it.

It would be too emotionally painful to recap this entire chapter in Canadian military non-procurement, but let's at least do the basics. The RCAF's fighter jet today is the CF-18 Hornet. The CF-18 jets were built in the early 1980s. They're increasingly obsolete and are so old we probably can't risk putting them under the intense structural stresses of an air battle.

The Harper government originally announced a procurement of F-35 stealth fighter jets back in 2009. But an enormous price tag and political opposition meant they didn't really push ahead. The Trudeau-led Liberal Party of 2015 campaigned on cancelling the F-35 purchase and buying a cheaper fighter, while dedicating the savings to other military priorities. They quickly discovered—awkward!—that the F-35 was the best choice, and rather than admit to that, tried to basically ignore the issue as long as they could. Things reached peak absurdity in 2019, when the government bought some used Australian early-80s vintage F-18s, so that we could keep our current fleet flying. This absurd decision served only to somewhat delay Trudeau

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The geopolitical trendlines aren't great, y'all, and we should probably start thinking about the RCAF as a war-fighting tool, not just a patrol force.

et al having to acknowledge their mistake.

That couldn't last forever, and didn't. The government announced in 2023 that Canada would proceed with the F-35. The eight intervening years and the Australian deal were essentially completely wasted. But at least we had a decision.

The problem, of course, is that the Americans have of late gone bonkers. Lord knows what leverage they'll extract if we place a big defence order with them. It's also unclear whether any government could take the political heat of announcing a massive multi-billion-dollar purchase of American military hardware at a time when the Americans are putting the screws to us.

This has led some to urge that Canada pick another jet, preferably one from a non-American provider. Sweden's Saab Gripen fighter is touted as the logical alternative. These jets aren't quite as advanced as the F-35, but they're cheaper to both procure and operate for each flying hour, and are more than good enough to handle the vast majority of the RCAF's routine missions.

There's basically three options for the Carney government here. The first is to accept the political

risk and damage of continuing with the F-35 purchase, and doing so. We'd get a flawed but good plane that would keep the air force fighting for years to come, and we wouldn't have to worry about this again for a few decades. That has appeal!

The second is cancelling the F-35 purchase, including the first block of orders for which Canada is already on the hook, and switching the entire order to Gripens (or, in theory, something else). That would certainly earn Carney some tough-on-Trump cred, but it would absolutely result in blowback from the White House, and the Air Force would, yet again, find itself in desperate need of new planes and a process starting from near zero.

The third option is mixing the fleet and having some squadrons operating F-35s and others operating Gripens. This choice is the most complicated. Operating two aircraft in the fighter role simultaneously adds a lot of work on the back end in terms of logistics for spare parts and training of pilots and ground crew. But it is not—contrary to what some observers would say—impossible. The only real obstacle is a lack of money and trained personnel. Happily, that's a problem we can solve by simply spending a lot more money, including gobs of it to recruit and retain the personnel we'd need. Since we seem set on dramatically increasing our defence spending, this isn't as big a stretch as it might have once seemed.

If it were up to me, I'd split the fleet and accept the higher costs and complexity. I'd also take the opportunity to purchase a much larger total number of jets—the 88 we're planning on simply isn't enough for a country the size of Canada, especially considering the increasing likelihood that we'll actually find ourselves in a shooting war. The geopolitical trendlines aren't great, y'all, and we should probably start thinking about the RCAF as a war-fighting tool, not just a patrol force. A large fleet of jets, with squadrons of varying capabilities, makes a lot more sense today than it might have 10 years ago.

Sadly,

But. It's not up to me. I wasn't crazy enough to seek office. This is Carney's problem.

He needs to solve it, though. Soon. Those are the three options. None are perfect, all have downsides. But something needs to happen. Canada is probably going to need an Air Force soon, and we've wasted 16 years already—and even that was pushing it! We can't get back that lost time, but we can make a final decision quickly. Today wouldn't be too soon.

Matt Gurney is a Toronto-based journalist. He is co-editor of *The Line* (ReadTheLine.ca), an online magazine. He can be reached at matt@readtheline.ca.
The Hill Times

COMMENT



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and U.S. President Donald Trump at the West Wing entrance of the White House on May 6, 2025. Official White House Photograph by Daniel Torok

A stupid U.S. imposed tariffs in 1930 on over 20,000 imported goods. Ostensibly introduced to protect American industries and counteract the Depression, they didn't accomplish either.

Trump, who knows a lot about the magnetism of reality TV shows—however unreal they actually are—overwhelms the daily news cycle by producing one artificial reality show after another. He has mastered one liners such as “Make America Great Again.” He knows that vulgarity plays well on American television and social media. Vulgarity explains why Jerry Springer’s gross and crude tabloid circus of a show dethroned Oprah Winfrey as the most-watched talk show on U.S. TV in the late 1990s.

In last year’s presidential election, Americans voted for stupid. In reaction, Canadians voted for smart. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is smart, but in economic smarts Carney beats him hands down. The public disliked the Liberals intensely, but decided that what the times required was not another sloganeer like Trump. Last April election was Carney’s victory, not his party’s.

Trump is not stupid about politics. Successfully scoring two improbable election victories proved that. So, what explains his backwardness when it comes to economics? Trump boasts of graduating as an honours economics student from the University of Pennsylvania. He gained admission only because of a family contact, there is no record of his being an honours student, and he has threatened lawsuits if information about his grades is released. His economics professor claimed, “Trump was the dumbest goddamn student I ever had.” Trump parlayed the millions of dollars he inherited and became a convicted shyster. Carney, a self-made success, also studied economics, earning his undergraduate degree at Harvard and doctorate at Oxford.

Because of their trading patterns and the size of their economies, Canada is at the mercy of the U.S. In navigating that challenging reality, bet on smart, not stupid.

Nelson Wiseman is professor emeritus of political science at the University of Toronto.

The Hill Times

Canada and making America stupid again

In last year’s presidential election, Americans voted for stupid. In reaction, Canadians voted for smart.

Nelson Wiseman

Opinion



Like United States Secretary of Heath Robert F. Kennedy Jr.’s “Make America Healthy Again”, Make-America-Great-Again crusader President Donald Trump is determined to Make America Stupid Again (MASA). Foreign observers see MASA

unfolding almost daily, but allies of the United States cannot say so publicly because the America still wields weighty economic and military cudgels. They can hurt badly as Canada has learned. Nevertheless, Trump insists that others praise him, as Prime Minister Mark Carney did when he was invited to the Oval Office. If they don’t, Trump whacks them.

Look at what happened to India’s Prime Minister Narendra Modi. India’s exports to the U.S. are now subject to 50-per-cent tariffs. In contrast, tariffs on Canadian exports to the U.S. are lower than they are for every other country in the world, according to *The Wall Street Journal*. Perhaps Carney’s strategy of not yet agreeing to a “deal” with Trump has not been bad, except for the steel and aluminum sectors.

Kennedy’s anti-scientism—like that of many Americans—has roots in an anti-intellectual tradition deeply ingrained in Amer-

ican politics. The anti-Catholic, nativist, populist, and xenophobic Know Nothing Party of the mid-19th century elected Congressmen, state officials, and nominated Millard Fillmore for president. Meanwhile, in that same long-gone era, the province of Canada’s Catholic and Protestant MPs, recognizing their communities would have to live together, worked out an accommodation for how their Parliament would operate based on bilingual and bicultural principles.

The Know Nothings espoused an evangelical Protestantism that persists, evident for all to see in the current White House. There, in one of the world’s most culturally diverse societies, the president’s press secretary and his attorney general regularly wear Christian cross necklaces as a fashion accessory, effectively symbolizing the intersection of faith and culture. Think how different that is from the secularist gospel that

drives Canadian politics, particularly that of Quebec.

British North Americans after the American Revolution thought of the new republican democracy to the south as “mobocracy,” where quickly changing public impulse rather than stability, order, and good government drove politics.

The War of 1812 demonstrated a palpable threat to the British colonies north of the border. Like Trump does today, New York newspapers in the 1860s boasted that it was only a matter of time before the Stars and Stripes flew from the Rio Grande to the Arctic Circle. Indeed, until the First World War, Canada’s military planners assumed that invasion by the Americans was the greatest threat to the country.

An impetus for Confederation was the Americans’ termination of a free trade agreement Britain had negotiated for its Canadian colonies in 1854. Perhaps Trump will give six months notice, as then-president Andrew Johnson did in 1866, to terminate the current free trade agreement which similarly requires a half year’s notice of termination.

Terminating CUSMA would be stupid, but stupidity in American politics is nothing new, as the Know Nothings demonstrated.

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OPINION

Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and federal Housing Minister Gregor Robertson make an announcement about the government's new Build Canada Homes project at a modular home construction site in Nepean, Ont., on Sept. 14, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The fall budget will be an early reckoning for the Carney government

The Carney government has much riding on the reaction to its fall budget. So, too, do Canadians as they wait to see what the future holds.

Kevin Lynch & Jim Mitchell

Opinion



With considerable fanfare earlier this year, Prime Minister Mark Carney delivered a single mandate letter to his new ministry promising a tight focus on seven priorities, delivered through an overdue embrace of cabinet governance and a promise of doing things differently. By contrast with the Trudeau administration, ministers are expected to act boldly in their responsibilities and get things done quickly—a welcome new playbook.

Recent polling by Abacus suggests that while Canadians still

support Carney's seven priorities, their sense of the government's progress does not match the prime minister's early rhetoric. Canadians also appear to be shifting their priorities towards bread, butter, and housing issues, and away from the crisis aura of dealing with United States President Donald Trump and his threats to our economy and sovereignty.

The Carney government's fiscal policy, as set out during the election, was summed up in the mantra "spend less, invest more." Budgets would be separated into two components: one for operating expenditures, and one for capital to build new national infrastructure. Managerial rigour would be the order of the day.

But, since taking office, no one knows the state of the nation's finances as the government has offered no fiscal update. Adding to the uncertainty as Canadians await the fall budget scheduled for Nov. 4, the Carney government has made large new spending commitments, eliminated most retaliatory tariffs, announced 15-per-cent cumulative three-year spending cuts, and instituted a regulatory review.

Expectations are high for the Carney government, and the fall budget will be the first opportunity for a rigorous appraisal—by

pundits, parliamentarians, markets, and the public—of how well it is doing in implementing its ambitious agenda.

It is worth reminding ourselves of the prime minister's seven priorities. Heading the list was a statement of sovereignty based on the recognition that Canada's old relationship with America was over. In June, Carney indicated he would establish a new economic and security agreement with the U.S. Now, with the reality of dealing with the Trump administration setting in, the minister leading the negotiations, Dominic LeBlanc, has redefined success as "a series of small deals that cumulatively would put us in a better position than right now." Less than expected, and it points to the risks in the upcoming CUSMA re-negotiations.

The next priority is dismantling barriers to interprovincial trade to boost growth. The government's actions to date have made a big show of what is actually a small step: eliminating the relatively small number of federal interprovincial trade barriers. Provinces—not the federal government—are the main culprits. And, despite their rhetoric, they continue to protect their own turf, limiting progress.

Bringing down the cost of living and making housing more

affordable are on the priorities list, as well. According to Abacus, these most align with Canadians' top-of-mind concerns today. But it is also where Canadians see the least progress. As with interprovincial trade barriers, these are issues significantly within the domains of provincial and municipal governments.

Beefing up our military, securing our borders, and reinforcing law enforcement were prominent among the PM's priorities, in part reflecting American pressures. The Carney government's decision to spend two per cent of GDP on defence this year grabbed the headlines, only to be trumped by a subsequent commitment, along with other NATO members, to raise defence and defence-related spending to five per cent of GDP by 2035. While more defence spending is clearly needed, announcing higher defence expenditures is the easy part. Now comes the hard part of implementing and paying for these promises.

Immigration is another priority, largely to undo the mess created by the Trudeau government. The Carney government promised a return to sustainable levels of immigration while attracting the world's best talent. Beyond the immigration caps imposed

in desperation by the Trudeau administration, little has been accomplished either on immigration sustainability, or a targeted program to attract top talent, particularly from the U.S.

Finally, there's the lofty target of building the strongest G7 economy. Today, battered by the Trump tariffs, this country's growth has been sputtering and the job losses mounting. The first list of five national projects along with a Major Projects Office headed by someone with strong private sector credentials is a good first step. But realistically it will take shovels in the ground and more national projects to move the needle on Canadian growth and jobs.

Expectations, promises, delivery and reality will come together in the fall budget. It has to deliver a credible growth story for a time of global upheaval—explaining how we are going to meaningfully reboot growth and diversify trade. The budget must also be fiscally credible. Will the budget narrative be austerity or investment? With a deficit likely well over \$80-billion—double the Trudeau government forecast in December—will current spending cuts be sufficient to lower the net debt-to-GDP ratio going forward or will further cuts and tax increases be needed? Will financial markets buy into the separation of operating and capital budgets, or will Canada face market credibility questions that threaten our strong credit rating?

The Carney government has much riding on the reaction to its fall budget. So, too, do Canadians as they wait to see what the future holds.

Kevin Lynch was clerk of the Privy Council Office and a deputy minister of Finance. Jim Mitchell is an adjunct professor at Carleton University and a former executive at the Privy Council Office.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Canada needs to support its EV future more than ever

Unifor National President Lana Payne, pictured on the Hill on March 19, 2024, was clear in a recent statement: 'We cannot surrender the future of EV production to overseas automakers, we need a full industrial strategy that ensures we both make and sell EVs in this country.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*



We have committed more than \$50-billion, and have built strong momentum. Pausing and potentially weakening the EV sales standard would put that progress and Canadian jobs at risk, and also deprive Canadians of access to cleaner and better cars.

Sam
Hersh

Opinion



The federal government's announcement of a pause and review of its electric vehicle sales standard is a serious misstep. Our government has already invested heavily, both politically and financially, in building a homegrown EV industry. Backing away would not only be short-sighted, it will also leave our domestic automakers dangerously exposed to shocks from American protectionism.

Since 2020, investments from different levels of government across Canada's EV sector have totalled more than \$46-billion. To support that, combined federal and provincial subsidy packages are worth over \$50-billion. Canadians also received federal rebates of up to \$5,000 per EV—relief that is critical given high sticker prices. Governments committed to those large subsidies to both support the domestic automotive sector and address the second largest climate change contributor in Canada—the transportation sector—with the half of all emissions coming from cars, SUVs and pickup trucks.

When it comes to its EV strategy, Canada should stay the course.

Critics argue these subsidies are costly. But they are about securing a domestic industry increasingly at risk in a global EV race where China has taken the lead, and about protecting good jobs for Canadian workers. Unifor's national president, Lana Payne, who represents tens of thousands of auto workers, was clear in a recent statement: "We cannot surrender the future of EV production to overseas automakers, we need a full industrial strategy that ensures we both make and sell EVs in this country." If we falter now, it doesn't just mean investors walk away. It also means the end of paycheques, pensions, and union protections for the people who build these vehicles.

If North American automakers keep resisting the move to EVs, clinging to their SUV-and-truck-profit model while lobbying for looser rules, they will fall out of step with global trends. This may be okay for the auto industry and their bottom line in the very short-term, but it isn't okay for our efforts to address climate change, nor does it protect auto worker jobs or help us get closer to affordable EVs for average Canadians.

Low-cost EVs from China are already reshaping global markets. Models like BYD's Seagull sell for as little as \$14,000 CAD in China, less than half the price of any new EV in Canada or even many gas-powered cars. In Europe, their arrival forced legacy automakers like Renault and Stellantis to introduce more affordable options. Canadians, by contrast, have limited choices because automakers here have faced little pressure to make an affordable vehicle.

The smartest path forward is not retreat, but recalibration. Government EV subsidies for production should be for affordable models to drive prices down. Rebates should be tied to income and extended to used EVs, with mandates on rental and fleet operators to feed supply into the secondhand market. Support must be conditional on genuine Canadian value-added content from mining to batteries to vehicle assembly, so investments advance a broader nation-building project that readies our economy for the future.

If automakers want billions of dollars in public money, they must deliver cars that Canadians can actually afford and jobs

that are secure, well-paid, and unionized, differentiating this country from America's retreat into short-term, industry-driven choices.

Detractors will scoff at the billions spent, but it is easier to criticize than to build. In a transition marked by market failures and first-mover risks, subsidies still serve a purpose. If there is neither policy nor competition, and Canadian firms continue to prove unwilling or unable to keep pace, there will be no affordable EVs. The federal government must make a choice to ensure affordability: they either have to compel domestic producers to scale up, or—less ideally—open the door to foreign competition.

This is also about political courage. The government already backed down on consumer carbon pricing under pressure from Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and repeating that mistake with EVs would be costly. If they were to back away now, that will reinforce the idea that any serious climate measure can be undone with enough fossil industry-backed partisan noise.


Canada has laid the foundation to lead in auto manufacturing's electrified future. We have committed more than \$50-billion, and have built strong momentum. Pausing and potentially weakening the EV sales standard would put that progress and Canadian jobs at risk, and also deprive Canadians of access to cleaner and better cars. By sharpening conditions and expanding affordability, Canada can secure an EV future that works for both people and the planet.

Sam Hersh is the clean transportation program manager at Environmental Defence Canada.

The Hill Times

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COMMENT

Mark Carney and the politics of subtlety

Prime Minister Mark Carney appears to be following a different course. And, so far, it is winning him popular support. Rather than engaging in a constant game of one-upmanship, making new enemies and fuelling old divisions, he is getting things done—getting things launched, at least, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Mark Carney appears open to changing details, if not his overall direction, in the face of pushback, and that direction is not dictated by ideology, but by pragmatism. But he is hard to read.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—At this hyper-partisan moment in our political lives, Prime Minister Mark Carney appears to be following a different course. And, so far, it is winning him popular support.

Rather than engaging in a constant game of one-upmanship, making new enemies and fuelling old divisions, he is getting things done—or launched, at least—with a minimum of bombast and a surprisingly loose sense of ownership. He appears open to changing details—if not his overall direction—in the face of pushback, and that direction is not dictated by ideology, but by pragmatism.

Pragmatism, of course, can be an ideology of its own—hewing to a careful, centrist, middle path that does little to correct his-

toric injustices, or challenge the powerful. It will wear over time, for sure, but, for now, the relative lack of rancour and personal sniping is as restorative as the silence of a northern lake.

There are other words for his approach, of course: hypocritical, false, and sneaky being some. There is growing suspicion among environmentalists, for instance, including some within his own caucus, that the prime minister's reputation as a climate champion, based largely on his 2021 bestselling book *Value(s)* and his United Nations work, has been overstated.

He has certainly not presented himself as an environmentalist since taking office, and many of his initial decisions have been head-scratchers, from killing the consumer carbon tax, to promoting an oil pipeline and LNG expansion, to uncharacteristic sluggishness in launching the consumer incentives to buy EVs and heat pumps that were supposed to make up for the demise of the carbon tax.

He's been under attack by opposition Conservatives, too, for failing to outsmart and out-muscle United States President Donald Trump (elbows at half-mast?), whose initial tariffs continue to hobble key industries. Meanwhile, the Trump cabal threatens to undo the Canada-U.S.-Mexico trade agreement, and not to our advantage.

While Carney has endorsed Trump's fanciful Golden Dome defence system, scrapped the digital services tax that annoyed the president's big donors, and even invited a member of Trump's brain trust to address his first cabinet meeting (the invitee sent his regrets), the prime minister has received nothing tangible in

return—just a brief reprieve while the always-agitated Trump causes trouble elsewhere.

On this failure, however, most Canadians will give Carney a pass. How does anyone deal successfully with an erratic, vengeful and self-absorbed leader like Trump? So far, no one has.

At home, Carney has been a whirling dervish of activity and many of his actions display a canny ability to judge what the public will tolerate. Canadians have never been keen on military spending, for instance, yet the prime minister has announced a staggering \$9-billion increase in defence spending this year—an ambitious goal, at minimum—with barely a peep of protest.

The new “threat environment”—a truculent U.S. president menacing Greenland, Denmark, Canada and the Arctic, along with a new focus on NATO—undoubtedly got everyone's attention. Our military needs to be present, or be run over, most reasonable observers would agree. Carney further disarmed critics by directing the first tranche of new military spending to increasing salaries progressively across the ranks, a certain crowd-pleaser in Atlantic Canada and elsewhere.

But his smoothest coup, so far, has been unveiling of the first five major “nation-building” projects, intended to diversify our economy from over-dependence on the U.S., and provide new domestic buyers for Canadian steel, wood and aluminum. This eagerly awaited \$60-billion investment has been mocked by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre as a re-announce of already existing projects (partly true) and shrugged off as pathetically unambitious in other quarters.

Significantly, however, the premiers don't see it that way—even those who didn't make the first list. (There is a second tally of potential projects still in early development, including expansion of the port of Churchill in Manitoba, and a drive to expand the use of wind power across the Atlantic provinces known in Nova Scotia as Wind West.)

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, for one, was full of praise for the prime minister after the announcement and expressed hope for a new, improved relationship with Ottawa, which is nothing short of a miracle given how poisonous the Edmonton-Ottawa dynamic has long been. But, interestingly, she did not get her oil pipeline to the Pacific, or any new oil infrastructure.

That is partly because both she and Carney agree that any such project needs a private sector partner and, to date, none have come forward. The oil companies are holding out for a complete retreat on existing environmental safeguards, including the tanker ban on the Pacific Northwest, demands that Smith has also made.

Yet, the premier appeared mollified by Carney's thumbs-up for another major project: doubling the size of the new LNG plant at Kitimat, B.C., to transport yet more Alberta gas via tanker to Asia. With preliminary work already done, expansion is expected to begin fairly soon.

This is not good news for the environment. “Natural” gas is fossil gas, and, while it can be transported more safely than oil, the extraction, production and shipping of liquified gas emits powerful methane, and, according to one disputed academic study,

the overall impact is as damaging as coal.

In response, Carney's Energy Minister Tim Hodgson parrots the industry line: he claims that Canada's natural gas is cleaner than that of its competitors, with lower emissions overall. To ease consciences further he refers to it as a “transition fuel,” rather than acknowledging that the Kitimat expansion will prolong the life of the oil sands and the fossil fuel industry. And add to the emissions contributing to climate change.

Why wouldn't Smith be delighted—for the moment, at least—with a federal energy minister who appears to be reading from her own old speeches?

Perhaps the prime minister believes there will never be a private investor for another oil pipeline given the expense, the gradual global movement towards clean energy, and continuing resistance from Indigenous groups and those Canadians losing their homes, livelihoods, and ability to breath clean air every summer due to wildfires. Did he only leave the door open to another pipeline to appease the Alberta premier?

As for Hodgson, his twinkly-eyed excitement at the prospect of more oil production comes with caveats: “Any proponent who comes forward with a project that features good economics, and buy-in from the province and indigenous groups, we will take a good look at.” That is a few commas short of carte blanche.

There are two possible explanations: Carney is stringing Alberta along to maintain political peace, which would suggest an artfulness bordering on hypocrisy; or, that he doesn't see climate change as the urgent problem that it is.

He has a friendly manner, an impressive work ethic and—unlike Poilievre—is not in politics because he has no other compelling opportunities. Beyond that, he is hard to read.

For instance, he recently told constituents in his Ottawa riding of Nepean that any austerity-driven job losses in the public service would happen “naturally, though attrition” that he is “capping” the size of the bureaucracy, not cutting. Yet 300 jobs have already been eliminated from the Public Health Agency, and 3,000 earlier this year at Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship. These cuts may be justified—indeed, targeted reductions in programs that no longer deliver make more sense than not replacing people who die, retire or move on.

Former clerk of the Privy Council Michael Wernick, a veteran of many public-service renovations, argues that attrition is “passive, lazy and random,” an approach the hardly produces the nimble, lean, task-oriented organization the new prime minister, himself a former public servant, favours.

So is it “attrition” in public-servant-heavy ridings and surgery elsewhere? Is Carney being subtle, or insincere?

On this, and on far more weighty issues, it is still hard to say. *Susan Riley writes regularly for The Hill Times.*

The Hill Times

OPINION

While an oil pipeline was not on the list of 'projects of national interest' that the prime minister released on Sept. 11, Energy Minister Tim Hodgson said the government is prepared to work towards such a project. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



“
THERE IS NO
MAGICAL
THIRD PARTY
WHO IS GOING
TO PICK UP
THOSE COSTS,
—Grant Sprague

says there is a “grand bargain” to be had as industry embraces carbon capture in return for quick approval of a pipeline.

However, the fossil fuel firms are demanding large government subsidies in order for them to invest in the \$16-billion Pathways carbon capture project.

In an open letter to Carney released on Sept. 15, oil industry leaders urged the government to repeal its environmental permitting law, kill the carbon levy on large industry, enact generous Indigenous loan guarantees so they participate in projects, and ensure approvals are provided “in months not years.”

(The CER toll review itself has already lasted nearly two years, and the parties have asked for delays due to the enormous mountain of documentary evidence. It's hard to imagine a serious review of a multi-billion-dollar project taking mere months.)

It's clear the Canadian industry is either unwilling or unable to fund its own environmental obligations.

The western Canadian operations are high-cost producers located far from export ports, though they remain highly profitable at current oil prices. Despite this, they insist that onerous environmental requirements render them uncompetitive on the global stage.

Alberta estimates the industry has nearly \$100-billion in unfunded liabilities from leaky, inactive wells and vast oil sands-tailings ponds.

The actual figure is more like \$320-billion, said Martin Olszynski, chair in Energy, Resources and Sustainability at the University of Calgary's Faculty of Law. Olszynski is hosting a conference on unfunded liabilities in the energy sector in Calgary on Oct. 3.

In an interview, he likened the industry's environmental performance to “dine and dash”—leaving the bill to be paid by someone else.

The CER hearing that begins this fall is a glaring example of an industry trying to cope with the high cost of transporting its goods, and offload risks.

The federal government should neither cover potential overruns, nor reduce project costs by weakening the safeguards meant to protect affected communities and the environment. The polluter-pay principle should prevail.

Shawn McCarthy is a senior counsel at Sussex Strategy, and a former national business reporter covering global energy for *The Globe and Mail*. He's also the past president of the *World Press Freedom Canada*, a volunteer advocacy group based in Ottawa. *The Hill Times*

Trans Mountain pipeline tolls could leave feds on the hook for billions in further costs

While approximately 70 per cent of the project's cost overruns will be borne by Trans Mountain, the remaining third—more than \$9-billion—is considered ‘uncapped costs’ which increase tolls based on a formula agreed to by shippers and approved by the Canada Energy Regulator more than a decade ago.

Continued from page 1

extra costs in the expansion project that ballooned to a final total of \$34-billion. Its customers argue the cost overruns were unreasonable, and the high tolls leave them uncompetitive against global peers.

At the heart of the debate is the oil firms' contention that they cannot afford to pay for the environmental regulations, Indigenous accommodations, and other risks that Trans Mountain faced in completing the line.

The companies extend that argument to future infrastructure that they and the Province of Alberta are pushing for: keep regulatory costs and environmental regulations to a minimum or projects won't get built.

Under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau, the Liberal government purchased the Trans Mountain project in 2018 for \$4.7-billion to ensure it would be finished amidst delays and rapidly rising costs.

Ottawa is now trying to sell it back to the private sector. Its value would be eroded by as much as \$9-billion if the oil companies can persuade the Canada Energy Regulator (CER) to adjust the toll payments, says a Sept. 16 report by the Institute for Energy Economics and Finance (IEEF) titled, *Trans Mountain Expansion pipeline project has financial issues despite government bailout*.

The producers' position would result in further federal subsidies for the industry, said Grant Sprague, a counsel at Calgary-based Blue Rock Law LLP and former deputy energy minister with the Alberta government.

“There is no magical third party who is going to pick up those costs,” he said.

Despite the shippers' complaints, Trans Mountain has been a boon to the industry—delivering higher prices and export diversification. In the first year of the pipeline's operation, oil companies saw a \$12.6-billion increase in revenues due to improved pricing, said Charles St. Arnaud, an economist with Alberta Central credit union, in an August report.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has kept alive Alberta's hope for an oil pipeline project that would contribute to expanded production and exports of crude. He has cut the regulatory process to accommodate concerns about high project costs.

However, any infrastructure project that crosses mountainous terrain and dozens of Indigenous territories faces enormous risks. Pipeline firms want assurances that they will not face the kinds of cost pressures that plagued Trans Mountain.

In its application with the federal regulator, Trans Moun-

tain said the overruns were from a variety of causes: higher-than-expected payments to accommodate with First Nations; steeper environmental protection requirements and engineering challenges in tough terrain; the onset of COVID-19 which shut down work; and the impact of severe flooding and wildfires in British Columbia.

While approximately 70 per cent of the project's cost overruns will be borne by Trans Mountain, the remaining third—more than \$9-billion—is considered “uncapped costs” which will increase tolls in accordance with a formula agreed to by shippers and approved by the Canada Energy Regulator more than a decade ago.

“Oil infrastructure development, once seen as a financial boon, is beset by rising costs and lower price trends,” Mark Kalegha, an IEEF finance analyst, said in the report.

While a new pipeline was not on the list of “projects of national interest” that Carney released on Sept. 11, Energy Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) said the government is prepared to work towards such a project.

As a “necessary condition” to approve more oil infrastructure, the oil sands industry must invest in reducing emissions, including a stalled carbon-capture project. Alberta Premier Danielle Smith

Shawn McCarthy

Opinion



COMMENT

Carney still has to tell us what kind of economy he's trying to create

What we need from the Carney government is a clear strategy to build up investments by the public and private sectors in the economy of the future, one based on increased investment in intangible assets and one where a large share of these assets is owned and controlled by Canadian corporations.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



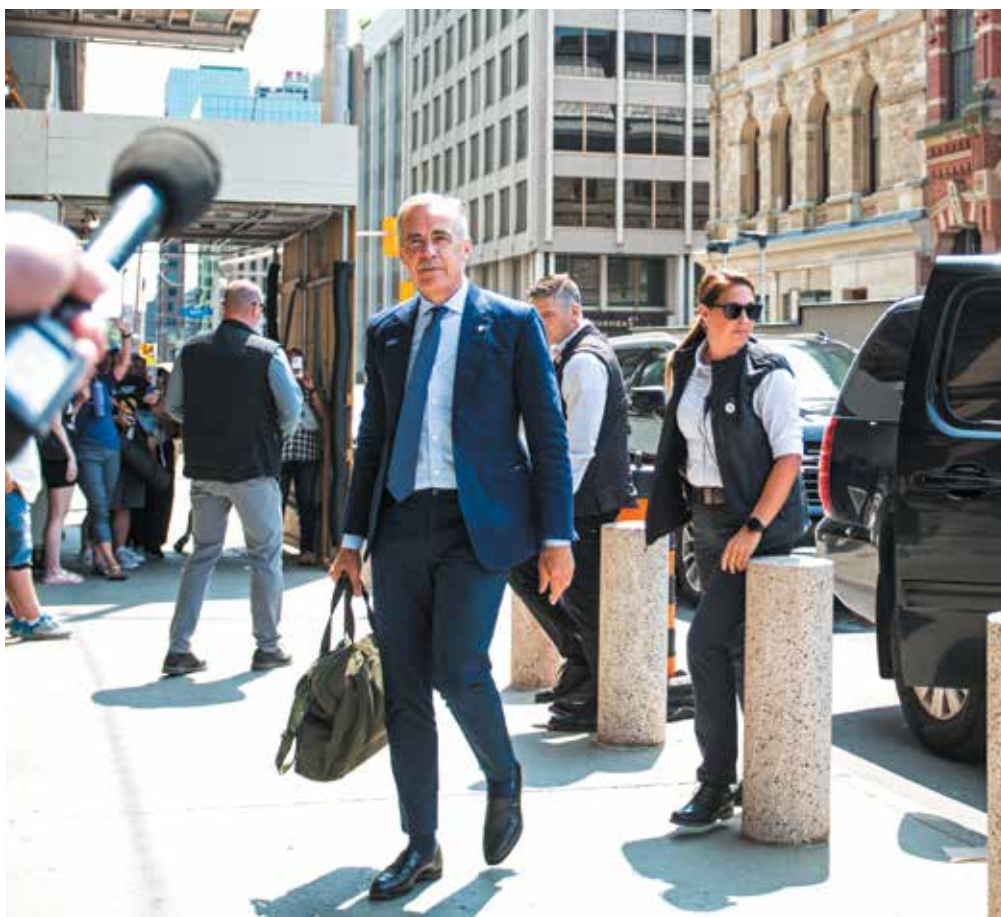
TORONTO—We have yet to hear from Prime Minister Mark Carney on what kind of economy he and his government are really trying to create. We are told we must adjust to a much more difficult, uncertain, and competitive world. But Carney also boasts that his government will make us an energy superpower and deliver the strongest economy in the G7.

What does that mean and what's needed to make it happen?

Government spending and priorities are set to shift from consumption—and hence social policies—to investment in infrastructure, defence procurement, and major projects of national benefit are all intended to deliver the promised results. But this is far from a far-reaching plan for transition.

To be sure, the seven government priorities listed in the group mandate letter that Carney sent to his cabinet ministers in May are worthwhile, yet insufficient. They fail to address Canada's terrible productivity performance.

The seven priorities are: establish a new economic and security relationship with the United States; remove barriers to inter-provincial trade; lower living costs for Canadians; make hous-



Prime Minister Mark Carney heads into the Prime Minister's Office in Ottawa on Aug. 6, 2025. The seven government priorities listed in Carney's mandate letter to his cabinet ministers are worthwhile, yet insufficient. They fail to address Canada's terrible productivity performance, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

ing more affordable; strengthen sovereignty and safety with higher defence spending, stronger borders, and improved law enforcement; attract the world's best talent while lowering immigration rates to more sustainable levels; and spend less on government operations so more can be invested in people and businesses.

But there was nothing about an innovation economy, or support for our ambitious entrepreneurs.

In fairness, there are some positive hints fostering innovation. The government says it will build a much stronger defence industrial base, which could open the door to Canadian companies to grow and participate in global value chains. We have a new government department of artificial intelligence and digital innovation, though little is known about its mandate. There is a pledge to put much greater focus on Canadian firms in government procurement—federal needs for enhanced cloud computing are one opportunity, for example.

But in its pronouncements and seeming priorities, the Carney government appears much more focused on the fossil fuel industry, touting oil and gas pipelines, LNG plants, and infrastructure projects to facilitate the oil and gas

“Oil and gas are going to define the next century?”

industry, with “critical minerals” an add-on.

The government's new Major Projects Office seems to exist to facilitate oil and gas projects, not review them for their environmental, climate and other impacts, or their commercial viability. Moreover, there's an implicit promise of generous subsidies. At least that's the impression created. It states that “this is Canada's opportunity to think big and deliver on projects that will define the next century.”

Oil and gas are going to define the next century?

The recent Global Innovation Index 2025 from the world Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) highlights the challenges facing this country if we are to successfully transition to an economy that can prosper and generate good jobs. This year, Canada ranks 17th in the index, falling from 14th place last year.

This suggests that other countries are outdoing us in creating a more innovative economy. The onus rests not only on government, though it has a big role to play. Canadian businesses have been too slow to invest in innovation—Canada ranks 13th in innovation inputs such as universities, colleges and in government programs, but ranks 20th in

innovation outputs, the extent to which businesses develop new knowledge and talent and use it to create new products and services.

One difficulty is that we are putting too large a share of our wealth and talent into the branch plants of foreign multinationals while doing too little—through procurement or access to long-term capital—to build up a new generation of Canadian-owned firms with scale and scope for the world economy.

One of the reasons is that policymakers and business groups have been slow to recognize the importance of investments in intangible assets. Canada ranks 34th in intangible assets as a share of GDP. The focus has been our underinvestment in tangible assets, such as machinery and equipment, while ignoring underinvestment in intangibles.

But our underinvestment in this area is an even bigger problem. The key to greater investment in productive capacity is more investment in intangibles. It's not an either/or situation: we need both. Even AI ultimately depends on investments in tangible investments to make everything from high-performance computer chips and ever-more powerful computers, to sensors, and clean and efficient electricity. But it starts with intangibles.

A recent report on investment in intangibles from WIPO underlined this new reality for economic success. “Today's most valuable companies,” it said, “derive their competitive advantage not from physical capital, but from intangible capital such as R&D, software, data, design, branding, organizational know-how and skilled talent, all creating substantial ecumenic value.”

These investments, it goes on to say, “drive competitive advantage, innovation and customer loyalty in a knowledge economy. Though intangible they fuel economic growth, create high paying jobs and improve living standards.” These investments represent a growing share of global GDP.

Clusters also matter. In its ranking of the world's top 100 innovation clusters, WIPO said there are three in Canada: Toronto ranked 33rd, Montreal 62nd, and Vancouver 66th. Innovation clusters, it said, “form the beating heart of national innovation systems. These hubs unite top universities, researchers, inventors, venture capitalists and R&D firms in driving forward breakthroughs.”

So what we need from the Carney government is a clear strategy to build up investments by the public and private sectors in the future economy, one based on increased investment in intangible assets, and one where a large share of these assets is owned and controlled by home-grown corporations. This is the new competitive world, and it is where much greater Canadian activity will be needed if we are to be prosperous and sovereign in the future—and able to afford the way of life we aspire to.

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The Hill Times

‘Devil in the details’: feds move to combine procurement regulations in a bid to cut red tape

The government’s goal of reducing complaints to the Canadian International Trade Tribunal might signal a further limitation of suppliers’ access to the dispute mechanism, experts agree.

BY IREM KOCA

The federal government says it plans to consolidate procurement rules stemming from trade agreements and domestic contracting regulations into one streamlined process, but experts warn this is a “complex” task that might not help Ottawa’s procurement woes, and may limit suppliers’ access to procurement dispute mechanisms.

Public Services and Procurement Canada’s (PSPC) red tape reduction review report, published on Sept. 8, outlines how the department is working with the Treasury Board Secretariat to develop what it calls “Harmonized Procurement Regulations” to replace a patchwork of contracting rules with a single regulation to lessen the “burden” on contracting authorities across government.

Federal procurement is subject to legal requirements under the Government Contracts Regulations (GCRs), the Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT) Procurement Inquiry Regulations, and 11 international trade deals, one domestic trade agreement, as well as common and civil law.

The proposed changes aim to better position federal procurement to “advance national interest and key policy objectives,” and to decrease the number of supplier complaints to the Tribunal by clarifying legal rights and obligations concerning procurement.

Creation of the harmonized procurement regulations will “greatly simplify the procurement framework, reduce risk,” and help the government achieve its procurement-related commitments, the government says. The review does not outline how such transformation would be executed, nor what the timelines are.

Experts say PSPC’s stated aim of streamlining procurement

processes through multiple action items—including establishing one framework to govern all procurement—is positive, but would be “complex” in execution, especially when reconciling trade-agreement obligations.

Laura Little, a lawyer who specializes in government procurement, said it would be “really helpful” for the feds to combine the patchwork of rights and obligations under different laws and regulations, but it won’t be easy.

“The objective to simplify, reduce complexity, and just make the procurement system easier to navigate is a good one. That said, we don’t know yet what it will look like,” said Little, a counsel at Cassidy Levy Kent who used to work at the Canadian International Trade Tribunal and the Treasury Board Secretariat.

“The devil will be in the details.” The report is one of many departmental reviews prepared in response to a directive from Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali (Brampton—Chinguacousy Park, Ont.) and Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.).

According to Ali, the government has identified nearly 500 initiatives targeting regulations within the federal bureaucracy in an effort to drive economic growth. Departments published their progress reports after the 60-day review process that began July 9, with proposed changes to regulations that they are expected to implement with the support of the Treasury Board.

Former ADM says PSPC’s plan unlikely to ease procurement burden

Sylvain Cyr, PSPC’s former director general in defence procurement who left the role in August 2024, said the government is “going after the wrong thing,” arguing that the real burden for public servants lies in the expanded objectives.

“I think they’re portraying this—which is the part I don’t like, let’s be clear—as ‘This will be fantastic, it’s reducing red tape,’ which to me is incorrect. It’s not doing this. It’s trying to make it simpler and easier for everybody to work with,” he said.

“Will it achieve huge reductions in time? Not really. There are so many other things that we’ve done to the procurement system and process in general that make it burdensome.”

Cyr has also served as acting assistant deputy minister for PSPC’s defence and marine procurement branch.

The policies looking to add social and economic benefits are what adds more layers of oversight leading to very cumbersome and complicated processes, Cyr argued.

“Politicians are trying to leverage procurement activities for doing all kinds of things which I’m not necessarily even arguing about whether they’re good or not, but the outcome is you have a complex procurement system,” he said.

Cyr said the CITT “has gone overboard” in claiming jurisdiction, launching reviews even when a national security exception (NSE) is invoked in a contract, which it isn’t supposed to do. Despite that, the government’s desire to reduce the number complaints to the tribunal was surprising, said Cyr, who argued it ultimately would not make a big difference.

Reducing CITT complaints might risk access to dispute mechanism

The department’s other goals, like the push to “reduce” CITT complaints could further limit suppliers’ access to recourse, according to experts. Little said this stated goal is a cause for concern for some suppliers.

According to Little, it’s not clear from the red-tape review if that would be the case, but she highlighted the feds have a history of introducing regulatory changes that have resulted in “a pretty serious impact on the rights of bidders to get access to remedies if they have a valid complaint to be able to bring that complaint.”

“What we don’t want with the proposed harmonized procurement regulations is to see ... further restriction of access to the procurement bid dispute mechanisms that are in place for suppliers that have a complaint or need recourse for an issue in the procurement process.”

“So we really would need to see more specifics,” she said.

Marcia Mills, a partner at Fasken National Security Group who specializes in government contracts, underlined that the GSRs, which outline how federal departments and agencies can award contracts, do not oppose CITT regulations, as they simply cover different things.

Mills pushed back on the idea that the CITT’s review process contributes to delays.

“It’s not as if those regulations are slowing the Tribunal’s decision-making process down,” she said.



Public Services and Procurement Canada, led by Minister Joël Lightbound, aims to reduce red tape by combining a patchwork of procurement regulations to boost productivity. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Instead, she said the delays and the “burden” are all tied to the policies themselves and their implementation, including when it comes to internal approvals.

“How many times do the procurement teams have to go back to the Treasury Board for approval?” she asked. “That is where the delay is.”

Mills also questioned the government’s definition of “red tape,” and said key regulations flagged in the report are not it. She said that government contracts regulations concern what rules a public servant must follow for contracting, so none of those regulations would constitute as a red tape for suppliers.

“There is no burden on the supplier community with regard to those regulations... The only burden that exists under those two sets of regulations [GCRs and CITT regulations] are the obligations of the government to do what it’s supposed to do.”

Little said there have been a series of changes made by the government to procurement regulations without any real public consultation, including July 2025 amendments and 2019 changes to the CITT procurement inquiry regime which limit who can complain.

The CITT has the authority to review procurement complaints by potential suppliers alleging the federal government violated free trade-agreement rules when procuring goods or services. However, the Tribunal has been required to dismiss procurement complaints involving properly invoked National Security Exception since 2019, when regulatory changes stripped away its authority to review the rationale or the fairness of the process.

NSE is a mechanism that frees the government from procurement obligations under Canada’s trade deals on the grounds of national security.

Mills agreed what is presented by the government as harmonized regulations may lead to reduced access to the Tribunal’s procurement dispute process.

“Based on the changes that we have seen to the GCRs and the CITT regulations lately, if they follow the same approach, they’re reducing access, they’re reducing the discretion of the tribunal to receive and hear cases, and

they’re reducing the access of suppliers,” Mills said.

The tribunal has 90 days to issue its determination and recommendations once a complaint is filed. While the CITT cannot force the government to rewrite a request for proposal, its ruling can lead to the procurement being reconsidered.

If the government pushes back on the CITT’s freeze order on the grounds that delaying the award would be contrary to the public interest, the tribunal must rescind its order, though the inquiry would continue. CITT does not have the power to delay any contract already awarded.

Mills also echoed Little’s point that there has been a pattern of Ottawa announcing policy changes without consultation or follow through, leading to delays or no progress.

Experts also said this specific review around reducing red tape doesn’t directly offer fixes to the government’s headline-making procurement woes, such as poor documentation to support procurement decisions, fraudulent billing cases, and misrepresentation of Indigenous suppliers.

In June, Canada’s Auditor General Karen Hogan said the federal government’s procurement problems may stem from “too many” overlapping rules, and urged it to streamline its processes. The government needs to figure out if there are “too many rules,” and if so, remove duplication or rules “that aren’t adding any value,” she said, “so that this can be a faster process in the future.”

PSPC is the federal government’s central purchaser, managing approximately \$37-billion every year on behalf of departments and agencies. Over the last couple of years, it has faced increased criticism due to a series of contracting controversies, political scrutiny, committee showdowns, scathing watchdog reports, a historic admonishment of a contractor, and multiple RCMP investigations.

Government Transformation and Public Services and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) previously told *The Hill Times* that streamlining the process is one of his top priorities.

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NEWS

Build Canada Homes is ‘duplicating the bureaucracy’: NDP critic Kwan slams feds’ new affordable housing entity

Independent Senator Toni Varone says the new entity is a ‘brilliant’ first step and can be a ‘traffic cop’ between the key bodies focused on home-building and infrastructure.

BY ELEANOR WAND

The launch of Build Canada Homes, the new federal entity which will oversee affordable housing starts on federal lands, is an “extremely disturbing” step, says NDP MP Jenny Kwan, pointing to an existing federal body already capable of overseeing affordable housing initiatives.

“Better late than never, but boy oh boy, the Liberals have been asleep at the wheel for at least the last 10 years if they haven’t realized ... you need to work in partnership with the non-profit sector, with the private sector, with provinces and territories in utilizing federal lands,” said Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.), her party’s housing critic, of the new agency.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) announced the creation of Build Canada Homes (BCH) on Sept. 14 saying it would come with an initial investment of \$13-billion, and a mandate to “build affordable housing at scale” by overseeing affordable housing builds on federal land.

It will do this by collaborating with all levels of government and Indigenous communities, according to the government. The agency will also work with the private sector, including developers, a press release reads, meaning the government itself will not act as a developer, as some homebuilders were previously concerned.

But Kwan said the new entity is “duplicating the bureaucracy,” pointing to the already-existing Crown corporation, the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), which has programs to finance affordable housing and was tasked in 2017 with overseeing the government’s \$115-billion National Housing Strategy.

Canada Lands Company has been moved from CMHC to Build Canada Homes, giving the new



NDP MP Jenny Kwan says the already-existing Crown corporation, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, is capable of overseeing housing affordability initiatives. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

body access to the government’s land portfolio, the government says. CMHC, whose total budgetary main estimates are valued at \$6.3-billion for 2025-26, will continue to operate its existing programs and products, according to the government’s release.

“Why is it that the CMHC, which is the entity that’s been set up to do this work, can’t do it?” Kwan said.

“And if there are problems within CMHC, why don’t they fix those problems and eliminate the barriers existing within CMHC so that they can deliver the program?”

She said the creation of a new agency—and its partnership strategy—indicates that the government hasn’t been meaningfully involved in housing affordability, calling the move “extremely disturbing.”

“You already have an existing agency who supposedly [was] meant to do this work for decades, and now all of a sudden, they’re not equipped to do so,” she said.

“And it just begs the question: if that was the case, where was the government in the last 10 years in ensuring that those problems are fixed within CHMC?”

She added that it’s a “mystery” to her why CMHC isn’t already mandated to address affordability.

“It doesn’t make any sense to me that you have a government

agency to deliver housing for Canadians, and in an affordability crisis, that they’re not mandated to ensure affordability is met,” she said.

Kwan said this could be why the feds opted for a new agency, but that she’s concerned that “scarce” resources will be used inefficiently by the new entity.

Broader housing market challenges need addressing

Kevin Lee, CEO of the Canadian Home Builders’ Association, welcomed the government’s approach to partnering with private-sector homebuilders.

“We’ve seen in experiences around the world, when governments try and become builder-developers, it’s not their expertise,” he told *The Hill Times*. “You have an industry set to respond to that.”

However, though he welcomed the new entity, Lee also emphasized that it would only address a fraction of the housing market.

The new entity’s builds are for low- and middle-income households, according to the government. It will “prioritize” six federal sites—located in Dartmouth, N.S.; Longueuil, Que.; Ottawa, Ont.; Toronto, Ont.; Winnipeg, Man.; and Edmonton, Alta.—where it will build 4,000 homes, with additional starts of up to 45,000 units a future possibility. Construction is expected to begin next year,

using “factory-built, modular, and mass timber” fabrication methods to reduce build time.

But Lee said the government can’t drop the ball on addressing the issues plaguing the broader market.

“Pretty much 95 per cent of Canadians ... live in market homes,” Lee emphasized. “And most Canadians still aspire to become homeowners one day. And we see that dream of home ownership slipping away.”

“There are lots of things we can do to help stem the tide on that. So we definitely hope the government continues to make that a focus.”

Lee said he was glad moves put in place by then-housing minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) aren’t being “undone,” but said the government needs “to continue to focus” on improving the market.

He pointed to the need to address development taxes, speed up permit times, increase infrastructure funding, and tackle labour shortages. Lee also said Bill C-4 “critically” needs to be passed into law. The legislation, which has passed second reading in the House, seeks to implement a temporary GST rebate for first-time home buyers for homes valued at under \$1-million, among other tax measures aimed at addressing affordability.

But, with the legislation stalled for months since the House rose

for summer break, it “had the exact opposite effect,” Lee said.

“There were all kinds of uncertainty,” he said. “So, lots of first-time buyers ended up not buying this summer, which means construction got held up.”

Kwan echoed Lee’s sentiments that the BCH doesn’t touch the broader housing crisis.

“This proposal that they’ve announced is only a drop in the bucket,” she said. “It really is miniscule to the magnitude of the crisis that we face.”

She highlighted the need to address the struggles facing renters in Canada, as well, pointing to the issue of “reno-evictions” whereby tenants are evicted to make way for property upgrades. These renovations often result in landlords raising the property’s rental price after construction is completed.

Kwan said the NDP has plans to introduce legislation this session aimed at addressing the housing crisis.

In June, Kwan reintroduced her private member’s bill, C-205, which aims to amend the National Housing Strategy Act to prevent the removal of encampments on federal land and include Indigenous people in the development of their own housing programs, among other changes to the act. It was originally introduced in November 2021.

Build Canada Homes needs be a ‘traffic cop,’ says Sen. Varone

Independent Senator Toni Varone (Ontario), who oversees companies in the hospitality, construction, land development, and property management sector as president of Varone Group Inc., said BCH is a “brilliant” first move.

Varone was included in consultations hosted by current Housing and Infrastructure Minister Gregor Robertson (Vancouver Fraser-view—South Burnaby, B.C.), prior to the agency’s creation.

He said it remains to be seen what role the entity will play. In Varone’s view, BCH needs to function like a “traffic cop” between the key bodies focused on home-building and infrastructure in Canada.

The Senator pointed to the entity’s CEO, Ana Bailão, who is Toronto’s former deputy mayor, as a “well-equipped” person to fill that role. Bailão is also the former head of affordable housing and public affairs at Dream Unlimited, a real estate and asset management firm.

Varone also said that BCH is not intended to address the whole the housing market.

“You’ve got to start somewhere, and that’s not for Build Canada Homes to address,” he said of the larger issues impacting this country’s housing market.

“There’s tons of other things this government needs to pivot and deal with.”

Varone highlighted that the “laundry list” of steps needed don’t lie solely with Ottawa, but with municipal, territorial, and provincial governments, too.

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At least three safe Liberal seats poised to open as high-profile contenders line up

Marco Mendicino, John Tory Jr., Mark Wiseman, and Liam Olsen are seen as some potential names to claim nominations in ridings soon to be vacated by Liberal MPs, say party sources.

Continued from page 1

N.B.) took over her internal trade minister duties in addition to his current role, while Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.), who will also keep this post, took over her transport minister duties.

According to government sources, former cabinet ministers Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) and Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver-Capilano, B.C.) will soon resign from their House seats for high-profile diplomatic appointments in Europe. Blair is said to be slated for Canada's high commission in the United Kingdom, replacing Ralph Goodale, and Wilkinson for the European Union in Belgium.

First elected in 2015, Blair carried his seat by 31 points in the last election. Wilkinson, who has also been in Parliament since 2015, retained his seat on April 28 with a 26 per cent margin.

Between 2018 and 2025, Blair served in several senior cabinet positions, including Border Security, Public Safety, King's Privy Council, and National Defence. Similarly, Wilkinson also held senior cabinet portfolios, including Fisheries, Environment, and Natural Resources.

Four-term Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith (Beaches-East York, Ont.) may step down from his seat in the coming months depending on the outcome of the Ontario Liberal leadership race. The top provincial Liberal leadership position became vacant after Bonnie Crombie recently announced her exit plans after she failed to win enough votes in the leadership review vote. Crombie won 57 per cent. Erskine Smith, who openly campaigned against Crombie in her leadership review, is now expected to run for the provincial leadership again, having lost to Crombie in the previous contest in December 2023. After that loss, Erskine-Smith initially announced he would not seek re-election as an MP, but later



Chrystia Freeland posted a letter on social media announcing her resignation from cabinet last week: 'A great strength of democracy is that no one holds political office in perpetuity. After 12 fulfilling years in public life, I know that now is the right time for me to make way for others and to seek fresh challenges for myself.' *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

reversed his decision after being promoted to cabinet by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau last December. If he were to win the Ontario Liberal leadership, he would have to step down from his federal seat. Even if he does not win, it is unclear whether he would seek re-election next time around either federally or not. Erskine-Smith won his riding by a margin of 44 per cent of the votes in the last election.

Heritage Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.) could also step down in the coming months, according to Liberal sources.

Even though numerous media reports have suggested that Blair and Wilkinson are expected to get diplomatic appointments, they are neither confirming nor denying these reports.

Since May, *The Hill Times* has reached out to Blair three times, but the former defence minister said he would not comment on what he described as "idle speculation" on Sept. 2.

"I'm not going to comment on it. That's for others to speak to, not for me," Blair told *The Hill Times* in a follow-up phone interview on Sept. 3.

"I'm not going to comment," Blair told *The Hill Times* after being asked that he was getting a diplomatic appointment.

The Hill Times also reached out to Wilkinson on June 2 by text to ask if he planned to complete his current term as an MP. He responded then that, "at this point," his intention was to "continue serving" his "constituents."

The Hill Times reached out to him again on Sept. 2 and Sept. 3, but did not hear back.

Even though none of these ridings have yet opened up, spec-



Former defence minister Bill Blair is expected to be appointed as Canada's high commissioner to the U.K. in the coming months. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

ulation is already underway about potential candidates. A prominent name repeatedly mentioned is former Liberal MP Marco Mendicino, who represented Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont., from 2015 to 2025 before choosing not to run again. Mendicino supported Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) in the last federal Liberal leadership race, and briefly served as his interim chief of staff until Marc-André Blanchard was hired to run the PMO. Mendicino was unavailable for comment last week. While rumours last year suggested he might run for Toronto mayor, and media reports this past May indicated he was considering switching to municipal politics, Liberal insiders now believe a mayoral bid is unlikely. Instead, speculation has shifted to the possibility of Mendicino seeking a Liberal nomination either in Scarborough Southwest or University-Rosedale. *The Toronto Star* also recently reported that John Tory Jr., son of former Toronto mayor John Tory, could be a contender for the Scarborough Southwest Liberal nomina-

tion, as well. Meanwhile, investment banker Mark Wiseman, a prominent business executive, is also seen as a potential candidate for the Liberal nomination in University-Rosedale, according to a well-connected Liberal source.

In North Vancouver-Capilano, B.C., Liberal ministerial staffer Liam Olsen will most likely run for the party's nomination to succeed Wilkinson, according to party sources.

More prominent Liberals are expected to enter the race to replace outgoing MPs in these safe ridings in the coming weeks.

Amid the jockeying for nominations, a prominent pollster is warning of challenges ahead for the governing Liberals. A new Ekos Research poll suggested last week that the Liberal lead is shrinking, with 42 per cent support compared to 34 per cent for the Conservatives, 12 per cent for the NDP, and three per cent for the Greens. The poll of 1,614 Canadians was conducted between Sept. 5-12, and had a margin of error of plus or minus 2.4 percentage points, 19 times

out of 20. The poll also found that 58 per cent of Canadians approve of Carney's performance, while 42 per cent disapprove. By comparison, an Ekos poll in July gave the Liberals a 13-point lead over the Conservatives.

"The Liberals have gone down a little bit, but the more impressive movement is the Conservatives. So the newly re-elected Conservative leader is showing some signs of life, and that has made the race considerably narrower than it was the last time we reported, when it was 13 points," said Graves. "In addition to the narrowing of the race, there is a somewhat larger decline in approval for Mr. Carney."

Graves said that it's chiefly because of the ongoing downturn in the economy and the gloomy outlook of Canadians. He said that only 20 per cent of Canadians think that their quality of life is better now than 25 years ago. The outlook is especially worse amongst Canadians under the age of 35, according to the poll.

Statistics Canada's August numbers stated that the unemployment rate rose to 7.1 per cent, and the economy has shed 66,000 jobs. This is the highest jobless rate since 2016. In July, Canada lost 41,000 jobs.

Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint-Maurice-Champlain, Que.) is set to table his first budget Nov. 4, and it remains unclear whether the Liberals can meet Canadians' high expectations. The budget vote will be a confidence vote, and the Liberals would need the support of at least one opposition party to win this vote. Currently, the Liberals have 169 seats, the Conservatives 144, Bloc Québécois 44, the NDP seven, and the Greens one seat.

Graves said that the Liberals' slippage in the polling number is not alarming, but is enough that the Liberals should pay attention as it's a minority government and the opposition parties can defeat the government at any time. The average age of a minority government in Canada is 19 months.

"These things may have implications for how opposition would weigh the risks and benefits of something which nobody's thinking about but pulling the plug on the government in the next election, in the confidence measure around the budget," said Graves. "I don't think it's a likelihood, but I wouldn't rule it out either, if these things [Liberal slippage in the polls] continue."

Graves said that the last election happened only five months ago, and it's highly unlikely that the opposition parties would pull the plug. However, he cited the example of the Joe Clark government that lasted less than nine months and was defeated on a budget confidence vote in 1980.

"It's a low probability, but it's something I don't think you could eliminate entirely," said Graves. "The longer term problem is, if these problems persist, economic anxieties continue to be extremely gloomy, and the situation with the economy doesn't recover, then I think this will then start weighing heavily on the government."

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NEWS

Hodgson, Dabrusin top-lobbied cabinet ministers last month as energy, environment lead the lobby charts

According to the federal Lobbyists' Registry, top communications last month with the energy and environment ministers dealt with major international pacts, such as trading critical minerals and addressing the plastic pollution crisis.

Continued from page 1

the lead in August as the federal cabinet minister listed in the most communication reports, appearing in 26. He was followed by Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.), who was listed in 20 communication reports, based on a search of the federal Lobbyists' Registry on Sept. 16.

August was an important month for environmental advocacy as Canada took part in another round of talks regarding the planned development of a legally-binding global treaty to end plastic pollution. The fifth Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee on Plastic Pollution (INC-5.2) was held in Switzerland from Aug. 5 to 14, although the talks ended without an agreement.

Anthony Merante, senior plastics campaigner for Oceana Canada, told *The Hill Times* he's not surprised that the energy and environment ministers were among the top-lobbied ministers in August. Regarding Dabrusin, he said his group was reaching out last month to encourage her to "really prioritize fighting plastic pollution," with a level of resolve similar what he saw during the Liberal government under then-prime minister Justin Trudeau.

"Under the former Liberal Trudeau government, they had a very clear mandate on ending plastic pollution, and they were supportive of single-use plastic



Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin, left, and Energy Minister Tim Hodgson were the top-lobbied cabinet ministers in August. Dabrusin recently said 'more work is needed to secure an effective global treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics.' *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

bans [and] upstream measures to end plastic pollution, and they were quite vocal about it," said Merante.

"We are directly lobbying the minister ... to maintain that previous level of ambition."

More than 460 million metric tons of plastic are produced every year, of which an estimated 20 million end up polluting the environment, according to the World Economic Forum. INC-5.2 was the latest in a series of negotiations intended to address the issue through the creation of the world's first plastic pollution treaty. The talks saw more than 2,600 participants, which included more than 1,400 member delegates from 183 countries, according to the United Nations Environment Program.

Major issues holding back a deal included disagreements about plastic production, chemicals of concern, and the design of a finance mechanism and means of implementation, according to the World Economic Forum.

Delegations agreed to resume negotiations at a future date yet to be determined.

"Plastic pollution is devastating on our environment. It impacts agriculture, it impacts aquaculture, it impacts seafood, it impacts the quality of our oceans, rivers, lakes, our forests ... and

it's highly impactful for biodiversity," said Merante.

"Pre-election, we did really deep polling with Abacus Data to show that plastic pollution was a non-partisan issue across Canada. There's broad support for things like single use plastic bans and ending plastic pollution. And we were there to remind the minister that that is something that Canadians prioritize, and it should be something that this government should prioritize."

Dabrusin said that Canada is "firmly committed to securing an ambitious, effective, and fit-for-purpose global treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics," in a press release on Aug. 15.

"Canada did not accept a treaty that only focuses on cleaning up the problem. Any global treaty on plastic pollution must prevent the problem from continuing. It also must recognize the right of Indigenous Peoples to be protected," said Dabrusin in the press release.

"Despite the efforts and hard work of thousands of delegates at INC-5.2, more work is needed to secure an effective global treaty that addresses the entire lifecycle of plastics."

Oceana Canada communicated with Dabrusin on Aug. 11 and on Aug. 12. The organization is represented on the registry

in-house by its executive director, Joshua Laughren.

Keith Brooks, program director for Environmental Defence, told *The Hill Times*, that his group's advocacy in August also included pushing for Canada to express "a high level of ambition" regarding a global plastics treaty.

"We use a lot of plastic. Actually, we produce more waste than most other countries on a per capita basis. Canadian plastics have been found in the Philippines and Malaysia and all kinds of places over the years, and that put a lot of attention here domestically on fighting plastic pollution," said Brooks.

"We wanted Canada to also join with international allies in fighting around plastics, building off of the domestic action that the country had already committed to. It's a global problem really, right? I mean, a lot of this plastic ends up in the oceans because it gets into the air, it gets into rivers and streams, and it all runs downhill."

In August, Environmental Defence was also discussing the recently passed One Canadian Economy Act, or Bill C-5. The bill, which received royal assent on June 26, intends to remove interprovincial trade barriers, and also streamline the approval process for major projects. The One Canadian Economy act has been a source of controversy, with environmental groups including Ecojustice arguing the legislation grants "sweeping and potentially unconstitutional powers to the federal cabinet to bypass environmental laws" for projects deemed to be of "national interest."

"Projects that are reviewed under C-5 don't have to undergo rigorous environmental assessments. The minister has the power to deem that certain projects have met certain environmental conditions as required under statute, and we think this is an issue," said Brooks.

"Those environmental laws ... were put in place for good reason, and we think that those laws should be respected, though we appreciate the desire to build projects quickly."

Environmental Defence communicated with Dabrusin on Aug. 8. The group is represented on the registry by consultants Don Moors and Brian Klunder of Temple Scott Associates, consultant Aaron Freeman of Pivot Strategic, and represented in-house by Tim Gray, Environmental Defence's executive director.

Dabrusin also communicated with the Canadian Beverage Association (CBA) on Aug. 25.

Erich Schmidt, CBA's director of communications and public affairs, told *The Hill Times* that his organization was interested in discussing how Canada can develop the circular economy, and drive action and sustainability amid a climate of business uncertainty.

"This year has been challenging for members of the Canadian Beverage Association," he said in an emailed statement on Sept. 17.

"While the remissions for aluminum cans and lids announced by the Department of Finance and the removal of retaliatory tariffs

were welcome news, beverage producers continue to navigate an environment of increased EPR [extended producer responsibility] costs and trade uncertainty. A national recycling framework would increase efficiency in the recovery of beverage containers, improve consistency in reporting, and enable a more stable market for recycled materials."

In energy and natural resource lobbying, organizations that communicated with Hodgson in August include Siemens Energy Canada Limited. Siemens communicated with the energy minister on Aug. 26, along with Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and Industry Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.).

The Hill Times reached out to Siemens to ask about its advocacy priorities in August. Jake Rubin, a Siemens Energy spokesperson in North America, directed *The Hill Times* to an announcement from the Prime Minister's Office from last month regarding a new partnership between Canada and Germany for critical minerals and energy.

On Aug. 26, Canada and Germany signed a Joint Declaration of Intent to deepen co-operation to secure critical-mineral supply chains, increase collaboration on research and development, and to co-fund new critical mineral projects, according to the press release.

"Canada and Germany share a deep commitment to democracy, security, and sustainability—and German industry needs resources Canada can offer amidst global uncertainty," said Hodgson in the press release.

"We are seizing this moment to build, secure, and compete together, in order to show the world that countries like Canada and Germany punch above their weight and lead as pillars of partnership and prosperity."

Hodgson also communicated with Bruce Power on Aug. 19 and Aug. 29. *The Hill Times* reached out to Bruce Power to ask about August advocacy priorities, but an interview could not be arranged before press time.

On Aug. 19, Hodgson, on behalf of Joly, announced the installation of a medical isotope production project at the Bruce Power nuclear plant facility in Tiverton, Ont. The isotope production system installed at Bruce Power's CANDU Unit 6 reactor will allow for a significant increase in the plant's ability to produce the medical isotope lutetium-177, used in targeted cancer therapies, according to an Innovation press release.

Other groups that communicated with Hodgson last month include Enbridge on Aug. 14 and on Aug. 27; Cerberus Capital Management on Aug. 1 and on Aug. 21; and Global Automakers of Canada on Aug. 21.

Organizations that communicated with Dabrusin last month also include the Mining Association of Canada on Aug. 8; the Forest Products Association of Canada on Aug. 14; and World Animal Protection on Aug. 13.

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Struggling auto sector promises deep engagement as wheels set to turn on CUSMA consultations

Brian Kingston, president and CEO of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association, said 'There's simply too much at stake' regarding CUSMA negotiations.

Continued from page 1

president and CEO of the Canadian Vehicle Manufacturers' Association.

"We need this agreement renewed, and we need the Sec. 232 tariffs taken down, and that will restore certainty to an industry that is under a great deal of pressure right now."

United States President Donald Trump's government put the wheels in motion on Sept. 16 to discuss the future of the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA), leading up to the pact's scheduled review in 2026. The Office of the U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) posted a preliminary notice online saying that it would begin 45 days of public consultations, with hearings planned for this November.

The office of Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.) said on Sept. 17 that Canada would launch its own public consultations "in the near future," as reported by Global News, but no announcement had been made as of Sept. 18.

Also on Sept. 16, U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra, speaking at an Ottawa event hosted by the Ottawa International Council, said that the White House had hoped that a deal larger than CUSMA—one which encompass subjects such as defence—could be reached, but then said it was "obvious, at least at this point in time," that such a deal is "not going to happen" soon. He did not fully explain why such a deal cannot be reached.

Kingston told *The Hill Times* that he considers it encouraging that Canada's federal government will soon launch public consultations on CUSMA.

"It makes sense to undertake a consultation, given the importance of the U.S. market and the broader North American market for the auto industry. You can expect that we'll be deeply engaged in the coming months," he said.

"When it comes to CUSMA, we're urging the government to



Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc's office said on Sept. 17 that Canada would launch public consultations for CUSMA 'in the near future.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ensure that there's a successful review that results in a renewal of the agreement. We understand, of course, that there will be issues raised by the various parties with the operation of the agreement—and that's standard in any trade deal—but let's not let these issues ultimately become stumbling blocks to renewal."

Although Hoekstra dismissed the possibility of a grander deal, Kingston argued that anything is still possible. If a larger deal cannot be worked out, he said the objective of removing current tariffs on the auto sector remains critical. Earlier this year, Trump hit Canada with a 50-per-cent tariff on steel and aluminum, 25 per cent on autos, and 35 per cent on any goods traded outside CUSMA, with the exception of oil, gas and potash, at 10 per cent.

Kingston said that, in the first two quarters of 2025, Trump's tariffs have inflicted almost US\$12-billion (C\$16.6-billion) in losses on global automakers, citing an Aug. 7 report in *The Wall Street Journal*.

Canada's auto sector has been the most highly represented in advocacy with the federal government so far in 2025 with regards to CUSMA. Auto manufacturer Stellantis (FCA Canada) has filed 29 communication reports mentioning CUSMA as a topic for discussion, for advocacy activity that occurred between Jan. 1 and Aug. 31, according to the federal Lobbyists' Registry. Also prominent in CUSMA-lobbying is Honda Canada, which filed 23 communication reports on that subject in that time frame.

FCA Canada communicated with Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.), Finance Minister François-Philippe Champagne

(Saint-Maurice—Champlain, Que.) on July 7. Honda Canada communicated with Energy Minister Tim Hodgson (Markham—Thornhill, Ont.) on June 27 and with Industry Minister Mélanie Joly (Ahuntsic-Cartierville, Que.) on July 18.

Overall CUSMA-related lobbying, based on communication reports listing that subject, reached its highest point back in February, with 42 reports filed that month. The next highest volume of communication reports mentioning CUSMA was reached in June, with 40 reports filed.

Canada's dairy sector is also highly prominent in CUSMA-related communications so far this year. The Dairy Farmers of Canada (DFC), which represents more than 9,000 Canadian dairy farms, has so far filed 28 communication reports that mention CUSMA in 2025.

A DFC spokesperson told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on Sept. 18 that the organization's advocacy efforts related to CUSMA are focused on conveying to parliamentarians the importance of standing up for this country's national food security and sovereignty, as well as protecting the more than 270,000 jobs and rural communities the dairy sector supports.

"We sincerely appreciate the commitments made by all parties to keep supply management 'off the table' in any future trade discussions, and want to ensure a shared understanding that this means 'no more supply management concessions,'" reads the emailed statement.

Carney pledged in his April election platform to keep supply management "off the table" in any negotiations with the U.S.

Following the launch of the CUSMA consultations in the U.S., the Canadian Chamber of Commerce released a statement on Sept. 17 calling those talks an "important milestone on the path to the 2026 CUSMA review—the success of which will be integral for the future prosperity and security of North America."

"Drawing from our national network of chambers, sectoral associations, and businesses, the Canadian Chamber of Commerce looks forward to sharing our recommendations with USTR for strengthening CUSMA and ensuring a durable partnership that benefits all three countries," said Candace Laing, president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, in the statement.

"Our message for the Trump administration is clear: Higher costs and new barriers are not a winning strategy for businesses on either side of the border. After decades of success under free trade enabled by CUSMA, our economies are deeply integrated. Manufacturers, supply chains, and service providers in both countries depend on this partnership to remain competitive and prosperous."

The Chamber's statement argued that Canadian businesses have been "plagued for months with uncertainty" by the U.S. administration's trade policy approach, and that CUSMA is the only way to restore confidence.

The Chemistry Industry Association of Canada (CIAC) has filed 14 communication reports so far in 2025 related to CUSMA. CIAC's CEO Greg Moffatt told *The Hill Times* that he doesn't disagree with the Chamber's stance on the importance of CUSMA for

restoring confidence to struggling businesses.

The compliance rate of Canadian chemical and plastics products with CUSMA are high, meaning those exports are able to enter the U.S. tariff free. However, the chemical sector remains indirectly affected, according to Moffatt.

"The sectors that we sell into are very much under pressure, and so [for] the goods that we sell into the U.S., there's less demand, and there's price pressure. That uncertainty has definitely damaged market conditions," he said.

"The tariff action has definitely created uncertainty that's affecting investment. It's also affecting market returns from manufacturers here in Canada. But there are other items and elements within that that are also putting pressure on the global chemistry industry."

Canada's chemistry and plastics products represent about \$115-billion a year in trade with the U.S., according to Moffatt.

The CIAC's communications about CUSMA included contact with Patrick Halley, assistant deputy minister for international trade and finance at Finance Canada, on March 6; and with Michael Vandergrift, deputy minister at Natural Resources Canada, on Feb. 28.

Canada last held public consultations regarding CUSMA between August and October in 2024.

Adam Legge, president of the Alberta Business Council, told *The Hill Times* that additional consultations this year is a prudent move because of how the trade situation with the U.S. has changed since last year.

"The reality is that we put in our proposals and ideas in an environment where we weren't expecting the severity of change in the trading relationship with the United States, and so it's important to continue to evolve the ideas," he said.

"It's important to keep that as real time as possible, given how the nature of the relationship is unfolding."

The Alberta Business Council's big message to the federal government regarding CUSMA negotiations is the importance of continued free trade, according to Legge.

"Our primary exports out of Alberta are oil and gas, agriculture products, petrochemical products and some machinery and manufacturing products. We recognize that in the immense grand scheme of things, energy and food are two critical elements of security that the United States has talked about, and we hope that can play a critical role in ensuring some tariff-free or low-end of the tariff scale, if there are going to be tariffs for Alberta products," he said.

"But really [our message is] to just continue to encourage the Canadian government to position Canada's exports to the U.S. as vital to U.S. security. I think that's the way which we should be framing the work that we do with the Americans."

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NEWS

Ontario Conservative EDAs slam nomination process in last election at recent meeting, say party sources

Kicking off the Sept. 11 meeting, Ontario national councillor Christina Mitas invited all EDA presidents to share things that went well in the nomination process and there was silence, according to Conservative sources.

Continued from page 1

The exchanges took place at a Sept. 11 virtual meeting held by the Conservative Party's national council's nomination rules committee to get feedback from riding presidents. The national council set up a seven-member *ad hoc* committee on nomination rules back in June, which is headed by Ontario national councillor Christina Mitas.

Other members include: Matthew Conway (Quebec), Aaron Scheewe (Ontario), Robert Boyd (British Columbia), Amber Ruddy (Alberta), Judy Manning (Newfoundland and Labrador), and Tim Syer (Northwest Territories). Conservative MP Warren Steinley (Regina-Lewvan, Sask.), the caucus-party liaison, is a non-voting member of the committee which is tasked to make recommendations about rules and procedures for the next election cycle.

Currently, the committee is conducting virtual meetings with electoral district association (EDA) presidents across the country, region by region.

In the invitation sent out to Ontario EDA presidents for the Sept. 11 meeting, committee members said the discussions would be open, aimed at identifying what worked and what didn't in the nomination process during the most recent election cycle.

"The nomination rules committee has begun our work in earnest. As part of this process, we are emailing to invite you to join a Zoom call with our committee," said the email sent out to Ontario EDA presidents and obtained by *The Hill Times*.

"The purpose of this call is to listen to your feedback on the recent nomination process in order to ensure our work is

informed by the membership. Your experiences are exceptionally important in helping us to strengthen future nomination processes, and we hope you'll join us. This will be an open conversation where you can share your experiences, highlight what worked well, and suggest areas for improvement."

Mitas told EDA presidents in the second phase of consultations that the committee would invite rank-and-file party members to submit their feedback in writing.

At the start of the Sept. 11 meeting, Mitas outlined the meeting format, saying participants would discuss what went well, what did not, and offer suggestions for improvement. She set a two-minute limit per speaker to ensure broad participation. When she asked EDA presidents to share positives from the nomination process, there was no reply. But when she turned to what went wrong, the feedback came quickly and abundantly.

Several EDA presidents said their ridings had been ready for nomination contests for months, with candidates actively preparing and EDAs repeatedly asking the party to fix dates. Instead, no nomination votes were held, and the party ultimately appointed candidates. One president noted they were told that 80 to 90 candidates were appointed just before or after the writ was issued, using a constitutional clause that allows the party to abridge the process in case of a snap election. But with the April 28 election, there was no emergency. These presidents argued that if the party intended to appoint candidates, riding associations should have been informed earlier so potential candidates wouldn't waste months preparing, and appointees could have been named well in advance to begin campaigning, introducing themselves, and raising funds.

A suburban Toronto EDA president pointed to Carleton, Ont., where Liberal Bruce Fanjoy ultimately won the riding formerly held by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre after Fanjoy and his army of volunteers campaigned door-to-door from mid 2024 until election day. The president contrasted this with their own riding, which was excluded from the nomination process. One candidate who had sold 600 memberships was instead told to run in downtown Toronto, where Liberals dominate and Conservative chances were

slim. They argued that fair nominations energize members, attract new sign-ups, and boost fundraising, since a nominated candidate becomes the party's face in the riding. Some raised concerns over the party's use of the abridgment rule, which abruptly closed the application process without the standard two-week notice, leaving potential candidates shut out.

Riding presidents said that bypassing democratic nominations at the riding level damages the morale of grassroots members. One riding president said that even if a fair nomination vote had been held in their riding, the party's preferred candidate would most likely have won—but appointing them outright has left a poor impression on both prospective candidates and the grassroots party base. The president added that they had written to the party president about the issue, but have yet to receive a response.

Another riding president said that the national council can draft strong rules, but the real issue lies in how those rules are applied. They said that unless the party headquarters executes those rules in their letter and spirit, nothing will change.

Some riding presidents said they were told by national councillors and regional organizers that the party lacked the resources to hold multiple nominations at once. But they questioned why, after raising record sums in 2023 and 2024, the party didn't hire more staff to manage the process. According to a Conservative Party press release, the party raised \$41.7-million in 2024 alone.

Another president said that volunteers supporting different nomination candidates asked how a party that can't organize a nomination meeting could be expected to run a government and demanded accountability.

At one point in the meeting, a president shared the story of the appointment of a candidate in their riding. The manner in which they were appointed created the perception that the national council had a preferred candidate. To dispel that impression, Manning—the Newfoundland national councillor—clarified that while the national council sets the rules, it is party headquarters that implements them. She said that although the national council has a candidate selection committee, it plays no role in choosing who runs in specific ridings.

She, however, did not acknowledge that all nomination decisions by the party headquarters must first be cleared with the party president and the elected national council, which has the power to intervene if rules are not followed. Some potential candidates told *The Hill Times* before the election that they raised concerns with the national councillors about party officials violating the rules, but nothing was done. They now plan to hold those councillors accountable at the next meeting when they seek re-election at the January 2026 convention.

The National Candidate Selection Committee is chaired by Kevin Price, and the vice chair is Leona Aglukkaq. Other members include Heather Feldbusch, Matthew Conway, Mani Fallon, and Stewart Kiff. Conservative MP Steinley is the non-voting member of this committee.

In every election cycle, both the Conservatives and Liberals face allegations of not following the nomination rules, and of playing favourites. In the spring election, the Conservatives were expected to win a landslide majority of more than 220 seats. In the lead up to the April 28 vote, a Conservative nomination was seen by potential candidates as a guaranteed seat in the House. So an unusually high number of potential candidates were interested in seeking the party nomination. To improve their chances of getting the Conservative nomination, they raised hundreds of thousands of dollars to show their fundraising prowess, and signed up thousands of new members. In the end, most were disappointed because the party chose to either not follow the rules and played technicalities and the leverage they have in the rules to get their preferred candidates, or outrightly appointed the candidates at the last minute.

In not-for-attribution-based interviews, senior Conservatives involved in the decision making process told *The Hill Times* that their priority was securing winnable candidates, which meant the rules could not always be followed. They acknowledged that the last election cycle saw the most centralized nomination process in the party's history, but argued the stakes were high, and they did not want to risk losing by leaving outcomes to chance.

"You can have a fair [nomination] process, or you can have the candidates you want," a senior Conservative told *The Hill Times* recently.

"But, you can't have both."

Senior Liberals echo that sentiment when unsuccessful potential candidates in their party question the fairness of nomination elections. The Liberals faced numerous similar allegations in 2015, when they were widely expected to win—and did. Since then, unsuccessful Liberal hopefuls have, from time to time, publicly spoken up during general elections and byelections that the party was not following its own rules. They faced very few complaint in the last election because, up until this January, most expected the Liberals to end up in third or fourth place because of then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's unpopularity and Canadians' cost of living concerns. The political landscape changed dramatically after Trudeau's departure, and United States president Donald Trump's threats of tariffs and talk of making Canada the 51st state.

Complaints of unfair nominations most often surface against the Conservatives and Liberals, as they are the parties that have formed government.

Meanwhile, Mitas did not reply to an interview request, but Sarah Fischer, communications director for the Conservative Party, sent a written statement to *The Hill Times* for this article.

"After every election, National Council reviews our governance documents to ensure they meet the needs of the moment. Consequently, National Council struck an *ad hoc* sub-committee to review our Candidate Nomination Rules to make sure that these Rules are relevant and timely to the work ahead," wrote Fischer.

"The committee is looking at a number of ways to streamline, improve and refine our process, which is the most democratic by far, to add to the wonderfully talented caucus we have after the next election. At this time, they are listening and speaking to many people, but certainly, it is too early to outline specific improvements that will be made to the process."

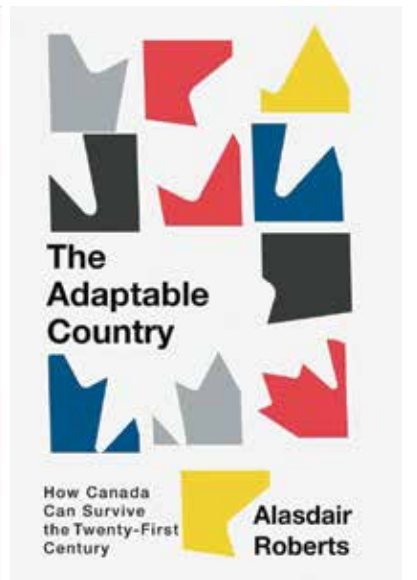
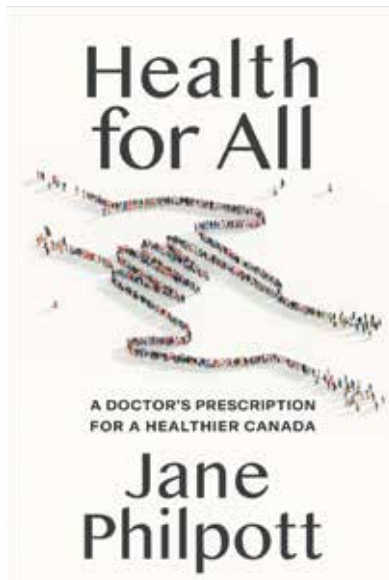
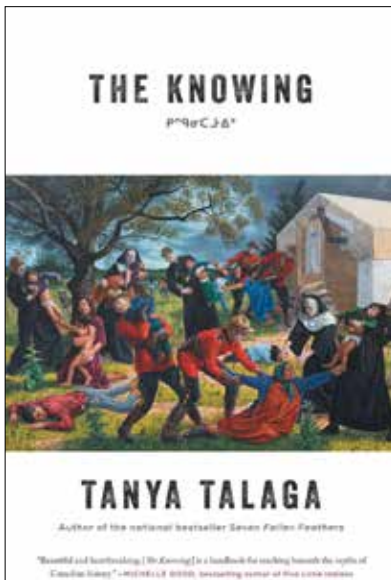
Although the Conservatives failed to form government on April 28, they garnered 41.3 per cent or nearly 8.1 million votes nationally, while the Liberals won 43.7 per cent or 8.6 million votes. This was the best election result for the Conservatives since 1988. The party also increased its total vote count compared to the 2021 federal election when they received 33.7 per cent or 5.7 million votes.

In the current Parliament, the Liberals have 169 seats, the Conservatives 144, Bloc Québécois 22 seats, the NDP seven and the Greens one seat. In comparison, after the 2021 federal election—when the House had 338 seats—the Liberals won 160 seats, the Conservatives 119, the Bloc 32, the NDP 25, and the Greens two.

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Books & Big Ideas

Shaughnessy Cohen finalists talk about their books



And the nominees are: *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, by Stephen Maher; *The Knowing*, by Tanya Talaga; *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity*, by Raymond Blake; *Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada*, by Jane Philpott; and *The Adaptable Country: How Canada Can Survive the Twenty-First Century*, by Alasdair Roberts. Book covers courtesy of Penguin Random House Canada, UBC Press, Harper Collins Canada, McGill-Queen's University Press and Simon and Schuster

The \$25,000 prize will be handed out on Sept. 24 in Ottawa at the Politics and the Pen event, the annual fundraiser for the Writers' Trust of Canada.

BY KATE MALLOY

This year's five finalists for the prestigious Shaughnessy Cohen Prize For Political Writing, the best non-fiction political book of the year, talk about why their books are important and who should read them. The \$25,000 prize will be handed out on Sept. 24 in Ottawa at the Politics and the Pen event, the annual fundraiser for the Writers' Trust of Canada. The event has so far raised more than \$5-million for the Writers' Trust literary programs.

'It's time for a generational reset, this time, based on universal access to team-based primary care': Jane Philpott

Jane Philpott, a medical doctor, former federal Liberal cabinet minister, and author of *Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription For A Health-*

ier Canada, published by Penguin Random House Canada, says she wrote her book so that people could understand how to create better health systems in this country.

Why did you want to write this book?

"Without health, little else matters. Without health for all, everyone suffers. Yet even in a country as affluent as Canada, we have not designed a health system that works for everyone. We can and should do better. I've observed health care from multiple perspectives over four decades—as a family doctor (in Niger and in Canada), as federal minister of health, and an academic—and I have some ideas about how we could improve. So, I wrote this book to describe what we can learn from other places and how we can create health systems that are more functional and fairer for all.

"While Canada's health-care laws do promise universal insurance, we did not construct, let alone implement, a primary care system guaranteeing a health home for everyone. Today, millions lack access to primary care, emergency rooms are closing, and health workers are overwhelmed. It's time for a generational reset, this time, based on universal access to team-based primary care.

"In addition to health system reform, I wanted to describe some of the other roots of well-being—including spiritual, social, and political factors. These are unique contributions to the national dis-

course on health policy, drawing on a range of personal stories and experiences. Overall, I hope the book shows that fixing health care demands political courage and a renewed commitment to the public good. The path forward lies in leadership that prioritizes the well-being of all Canadians."

Why is this book important?

"It is more important than ever that Canada has health systems

we can rely on, but we have been underperforming compared to our peers on metrics such as access to a regular doctor to manage our ongoing health care needs. Over six million Canadians don't have a family doctor or primary care nurse practitioner. This means people are missing out on prevention and screening for serious illnesses. They are being diagnosed later than necessary and experiencing worse health outcomes.



Jane Philpott: 'Without health, little else matters. Without health for all, everyone suffers.' Photograph courtesy of Penguin Random House Canada

"If there's one thing we know for sure about high-performing health systems, it is that they are rooted in primary care. Countries or regions that have built a primary care system for everyone are known to have better population health and lower per capita costs. Until now, no province in Canada has intentionally designed or implemented such a universal system—and we have been paying the price—in dollars and in worse health outcomes.

"The great news is that this book has helped to change the story about primary care in Canada. I used the book to describe what's possible. What if we were to organize primary care the way we organized public schools? What if there were a guarantee that no matter where you move in Canada, you would automatically be offered a primary care home—a place that provides ongoing, comprehensive, and convenient care for you and your family?

"The concept was very well received. In fact, among all those who contacted me about the ideas in the book, I heard from the Ontario government. To make a long story short, I was hired by Ontario last fall to chair the Primary Care Action Team—with a mandate to ensure that 100 per cent of the people in Ontario would have a family doctor or primary care team. Nothing could be a happier result for a book than having it help to shape a better health care future for our country."

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Books & Big Ideas

‘This is political writing at its most personal’

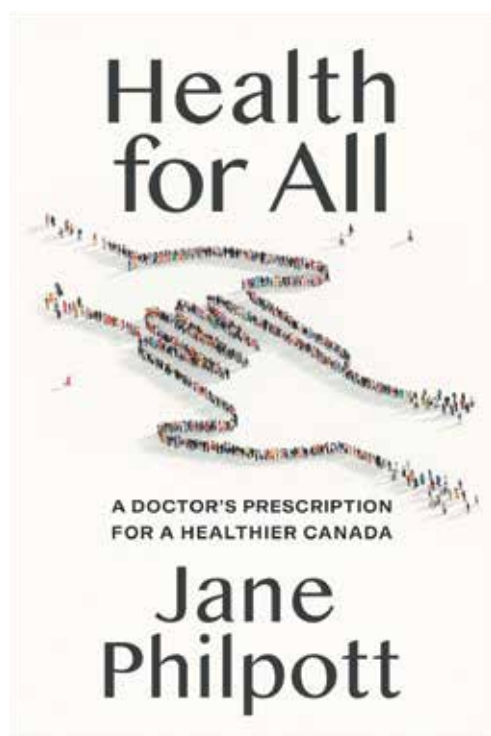
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Who should read it?

“The book is written for a wide and diverse audience. People who are interested in health policy and politics should find many interesting anecdotes. I tried hard to explain health policy ideas in everyday language so that anyone can understand both the history of health care in Canada as well as how we can improve for the future. It also offers some ‘behind the scenes’ views of how policy ideas can be translated through political processes to change health systems in positive ways.

“The book is also of interest to anyone who has pondered the question of what makes people sick and how we can help more people to be well. The bulk of the book focuses on health from a population and systems level, but I also inserted many ideas about personal well-being. This comes through particularly in the section on spiritual well-being. This is the part of the book I was most nervous about including, but for which I have received the most positive feedback. It includes some personal anecdotes about concepts like hope, belonging, meaning, and purpose. These chapters resonated strongly for many readers.

“Finally, I’ve heard from many clinicians and even learners in the health sector who enjoyed the book because it aligned with some of the sentiments they share about how we can improve health care in Canada. I wanted the book to give people reasons for hopefulness about the future of health systems in Canada—and I’m happy to say that impact is happening.”



Health for All: A Doctor's Prescription for a Healthier Canada, by Jane Philpott. Image courtesy of Penguin Random House Canada

Tanya Talaga: ‘I think every Canadian should read this book.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



‘I never intended to rewrite history when telling this book but I had to, to tell Annie’s story’: Tanya Talaga on writing *The Knowing*

Tanya Talaga, an award-winning author, *Globe and Mail* newspaper columnist, and filmmaker, won the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize-winner in 2018 for her bestselling book, *Seven Fallen Feathers: Racism, Death, and Hard Truths in a Northern City*. Her latest book, *The Knowing*, has been nominated for this year’s award.

“This story begins with an unmarked grave. But thanks Tanya Talaga’s relentless journalism, the mystery of a missing loved one is elevated into an unforgettable account of Canada’s relationship with Indigenous people. With unflinching honesty and a forensic eye for detail, Talaga provides a searing new perspective on how this country’s most fundamental institutions are weaponized against Indigenous communities, a historical legacy that lives on today. This is political writings at its most personal—and its most compelling,” wrote the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize jury Jennifer Ditchburn, Sara Mojtahedzadeh, and Christopher Waddell.

Why did you write this book?

“In 2016, when I first met with an editor to discuss writing my first non-fiction book, I had two ideas. One was to write about the First Nations youth dying in Thunder Bay, Ont., with little police investigations. The second idea was to write about the 3,200 Indigenous kids who did not come home from Indian Residential School. The TRC [Truth and Reconciliation Commission] had just come out, one year prior and it had a small volume on the missing and dead children. My editor suggested I write *Seven Fallen*

Feathers first, then come back to the other idea.

“She wanted me to set the table with the contemporary reality, which was the right call. In the intervening time, Kamloops, B.C., happened [the discovery of unmarked graves at a former residential school] and I realized I could not tell this story without telling my own.”

Why is this book important?

“For too long, the true history of this country wasn’t told, or, it was not told through an Indigenous perspective and eyes. While researching this book, I realized the current history of Canada everyone uses and refers to was incredibly one-sided, the perspective skewed to a colonial viewpoint. I never intended to rewrite history when telling this book, but I had to, to tell Annie’s story.”

Who should read it?

“I think every Canadian should read this book.”

‘The prime ministers studied in my book all engaged in nation building’: Raymond Blake

Raymond Blake, author of *Canada’s Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity*, published by McGill-Queen’s University Press, talks about why his book is an important read. Blake is a professor of history at the University of Regina and co-author of *Where Once They Stood: Newfoundland’s Rocky Road Towards Confederation*.

Why did you want to write this book?

“My book, *Canada’s Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity*, shows that a nation’s identity and national solidarity take effort; nations, national identity, and the national narrative that helps to build solidarity are constructed, they do not simply emerge on their own. National identity and national

stories can occur in many ways—through the school system, promotion of national symbols, sports teams in international competition, the media, and literature.

Why is this book important?

“National identity matters to a nation. They show people that they belong to a unique community and help them connect to a diverse citizenry, fostering imaginative forms of collaboration and collective action. Public surveys have found historically that a vast majority of Canadians have been proud to be Canadian even in moments of economic stress or

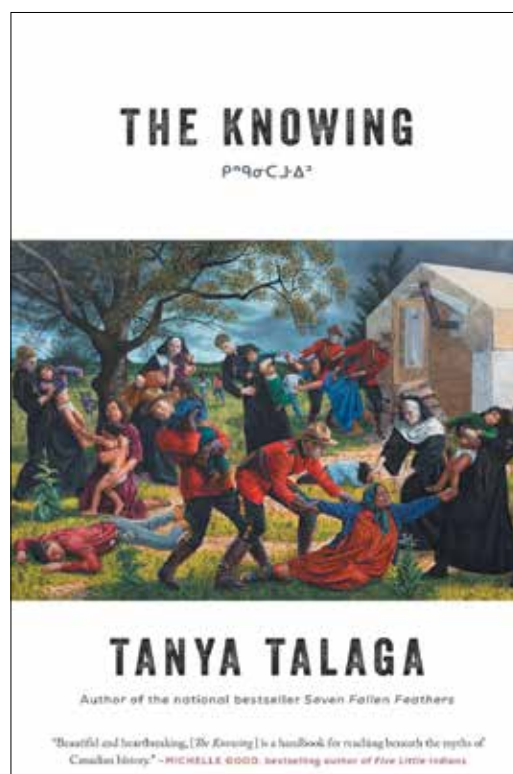
when there were serious threats to national unity. Since pollsters have been asking Canadians about their attachment and pride in being Canadian, well over 90 per cent were either very or somewhat proud to be Canadian. That number had dipped a bit by 2015 but in the decade following it plummeted: from 73 per cent in 2015 to 53 per cent in 2024 some polls found.

“Over the same period—2016 to 2024—those who were either ‘not very or not at all proud to be a Canadian’ jumped three-fold from four per cent in 2015 to 12 per cent in 2024. The trend was concerning. [United States] President Donald Trump’s threat of tariffs and his words that Canada should be the 51st state certainly reversed the trend (although I did not foresee this when I completed the manuscript), and we saw patriotism reaching levels rarely seen in Canada.

“But can Canada and its national identity and citizens’ sense of attachment to the nation be sustained over the long period by heightened anti-Americanism or a rampant, aggressive patriotism in response to President Trump? I suspect not and if political leaders attempt to leverage hyper-nationalism against a former friend as a way to rally the nation, it is a dangerous—even un-Canadian path to walk. What I show in the book is that in moments of national crisis such as economic depression, divisions over war, questions of regional fragmentation and Quebec sovereignty, Canada’s prime ministers have strived to rebuild national identity and what it means to be Canadian and have do so by remaking the national narrative and the national identity and how Canadians should create a new sense of Canadianism.

“The national identity and the Canada story are not static even if some aspects of the identity and that story remain constant—they change to remain significant. We have to work, especially in difficult times, to maintain national solidarity. It is not easy, and the prime minister plays a critical role in the process. [William Lyon] Mackenzie King did so by embracing social citizenship and social programs, Pierre Trudeau by embracing rights and freedom, John Diefenbaker by embracing regional development and a bill of rights, and Brian Mulroney by telling Canadians they are strong and mature enough a nation to not fear free trade with the U.S., [Stephen] Harper by apologizing to Indigenous Peoples and appointing a royal commission on residential schools and Truth and Reconciliation. We can recognize historical wrong, but at the same time we have to rebuild the national narrative that will sustain the nation.

“Shortly after being sworn in as prime minister on Nov. 4, 2015, then-prime minister Justin Trudeau proclaimed in Canada there was ‘no core identity, no mainstream’; Canada was, he insisted, the world’s first ‘post-national state.’ For 10 years, Trudeau told the story of Canada



The Knowing, by Tanya Talaga, Harper Collins Canada, 480 pp., \$39.99.

Continued on **page 27**

Books & Big Ideas



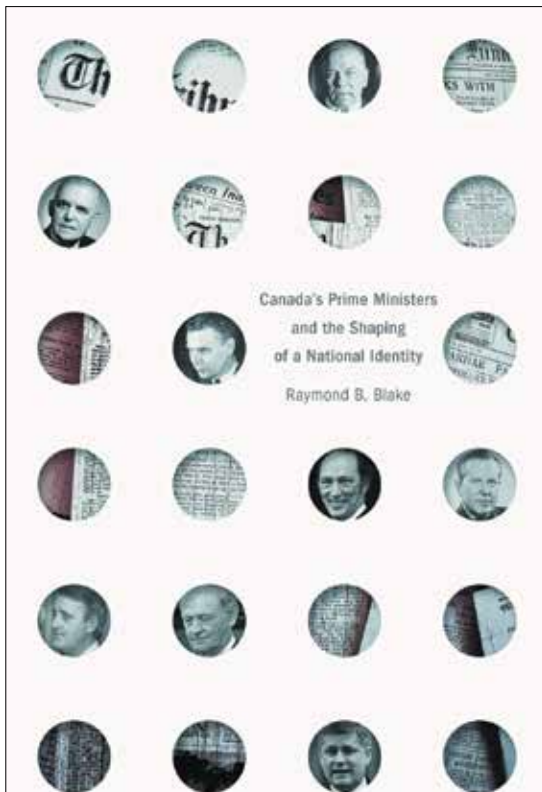
Raymond Blake: 'My book, *Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity*, shows that a nation's identity and national solidarity take effort; nations, national identity, and the national narrative that helps to build solidarity are constructed, they do not simply emerge on their own. National identity and national stories can occur in many ways—through the school system, promotion of national symbols, sports teams in international competition, the media, and literature.' Photograph courtesy of Philip Charrier

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as a nation disconnected from any sense of national pride or loyalty. Trudeau's story of Canada was a reaction—perhaps a progressive and needed reaction—to the old nationalisms that had sustained the nation for more than 150 years, but Canadians needed to rebuild a new national identity and reconstruction the national story that Canadians could share. One was not provided until tariff threats came from President Trump.

"Canada has survived for so long because prime ministers usually understood the importance of national unity and have worked to unite Canadians. We might throw a particular prime minister out of office, but we have not thrown out the ideas that they promoted. Free trade with the U.S. is a good example. Canadians defeated Mulroney's party, but they came to embrace his story of Canada. Nations deal with many difficult issues, but the sense of nation cannot be undermined. Most prime ministers have certainly understood that, as all of them were concerned, in the first instance, with national unity. Canada is not an easy nation to govern, but scrutinizing the stories that prime ministers created offers an innovative approach to understanding Canada, one that reveals both the continuities and the changes in its self-understanding.

"The prime ministers studied in my book all engaged in nation building. They did so by articulating the idea of a national community binding Canadians together, encouraging citizens to share in national ideals. Of course, they were politicians, so they kept an eye on winning the next election. Yet, they were not merely self-serving, seeking political power at any cost. They were committed to enhancing the prosperity and unity of the nation and were motivated by principle as much as ambition. Even when



Canada's Prime Ministers and the Shaping of a National Identity, by Raymond B. Blake, UBC Press, 414 pp., \$49.95.

citizens turned against a particular prime minister and voted him or her and their party out of office, they did not necessarily reject their narrative. And a new prime minister could—and did—borrow ideas from a previous one, even if he belonged to a different party."

Who should read it?

"The book undermines much of the partisan rhetoric around distinct 'Liberal,' 'Progressive Conservative,' and 'Conservative' views of Canada. It disputes the myth that there will be an enormous difference if it is a Liberal or Progressive Conservative or Conservative party leader becomes prime minister of Canada. The book shows that all of Canada's prime ministers have been engaged in nation-building,

and they are all building a similar story of what Canada is.

"The story of Canada, as told by its prime ministers since the 1940s, displays considerable continuity even if aspects of Canada's national identity and elements in the narrative of Canada have often been added incrementally. Perhaps we should not take political labels and political parties too seriously. Prime ministers gave meaning to the idea of Canada through their focus on several themes—unity, social citizenship and inclusion, domestic policy, and international policy—weaving them into the national narrative and through those themes built the image and story of Canada. Collectively, all prime ministers articulated a similar national identity as they sought to adjust Canada to changes both within and outside the country. They promoted the notion of a liberal, caring, compassionate nation, one that embraced diversity (even if the notion of diversity changed over time) and recognized the differences that existed among Canadians.

"Prime ministers promoted the notion of a distinct nation and a national identity that, on the whole, transcended their

personal agendas and partisan views. For example, Mackenzie King worried privately coming out of the Second World War about the cost of new social programs but publicly he spoke in favour of them as part of a new Canadian story. Free trade with the United States had been the objectives of Canadian prime ministers for a long time. In the 1940s, Mackenzie King almost had a free trade deal but pulled back at the last moment.

"His successor Louis St. Laurent welcomed American capital to develop Canada as did John Diefenbaker, but he also warned of increasing dependence of the U.S. Lester Pearson negotiated a free trade in the auto sector with the U.S. and despite Pierre Trudeau's hopes to reorient Canada's trade

away from the U.S. as Diefenbaker had, he realized doing so was not possible. While Mulroney embraced free trade, the Liberals campaigned against it only to accept it later. Many of the speeches of prime ministers illuminated the great questions of their day.

"Often, existing narratives and identities were challenged and reconstructed by new political and cultural developments, by new international ideas, by immigrants and minorities—and in Canada's case, by its Indigenous Peoples—new ideas, philosophies, and values were embraced even while some national ideas proved enduring. Canada's national identity was continuous being built. Each prime minister, regardless of party, have accepted changes, for instance, to immigration and same-sex marriage.

"On Canada's relationship with Indigenous People, there has been a slow recognition since the 1950s that that relationship had to change and the story of Canada as two nations (French and English) is now the story of Canada as three founding nations that made room for many others, even if reconciliation with Indigenous people remains a work in progress. What the books shows is that new ideas about Canada and the national identity remain a work in progress. The national identity changes to meet new realities and if it does not continue to do so, Canada's very existence may be in trouble."

Alasdair Roberts says he wrote *The Adaptable Country* because he's worried the political class is not doing enough to ensure the country survives

Alasdair Roberts, author of *The Adaptable Country*, published by McGill-Queen's University Press, is a professor of public policy at the University of Massachusetts, and says he wrote the book because he's a proud

Canadian and is worried about the country's future.

Why did you write *The Adaptable Country*?

"Because I am a proud Canadian and I am worried about the country's future. Specifically, I worry that Canada's political class is not doing enough to ensure that the country survives and thrives in coming decades."

Who should read your book, and why is it important, especially right now?

"This is not intended as a book for university professors. I have tried to write plainly. Of course, I hope that the people who make government policy will read it. But I also hope that other citizens will read it, especially in this election year, so that they can decide whether candidates are living up to the moment. This is a book about the capacity of all Canadians to determine the future of their country. In other words, it is a book for Canadians who want to take back control."

How can Canada survive in the 21st century? Can you lay it all out?

"Canada is a big and complicated country. For good reasons, we share power widely and celebrate diversity. But a system built this way also has vulnerabilities. People and governments may go off in different directions, and they may have trouble working together in moments of danger.

"If you build a political system like this, you have to recognize and manage these vulnerabilities. To be clear, you don't want to re-centralize power or crush diversity. Instead, you have to find clever ways of promoting dialogue, building shared priorities, and improving co-ordination. This is especially true as the world, in general, becomes a more dangerous place.

"Canadian leaders have not paid as much attention to managing these vulnerabilities as they should have. Worse still, they dismantled institutions and practices that helped us pull together.

Continued on [page 28](#)



Alasdair Roberts, author of *The Adaptable Country*, says 'this is a book about the capacity of all Canadians to determine the future of their country. In other words, it is a book for Canadians who want to take back control.' Photograph courtesy of McGill-Queen's University Press

Books & Big Ideas

‘Canada embodies values that need to be preserved’

Continued from page 27

Twenty or 30 years ago, this might not have seemed like much of a problem. At that time, the world was relatively calm. Obviously, we are in a different place today.

“In the book, I outline four ways that we are falling short. First, we don’t invest enough effort into big thinking about long-term challenges and priorities. We abandoned institutions that used to do this, like the Macdonald Commission of the 1980s. Today’s political parties do not have the capacity or motivation to do this kind of big thinking. They worry more about short-term promises to win the next election.

“Second, we are not protecting a space for Canadians to have a civil and informed conversation about national priorities. This space has been undermined by the digital revolution, inadequate civic education, different forms of foreign influence, and other factors. Our response to these developments has been piecemeal and inadequate.

“Third, we are not doing enough to promote regular conversation among Canadian leaders about long-term priorities. Years ago, we abandoned the practice of regular and robust first ministers’ conferences. The Council of the Federation is really just a council of provinces and territories. The federal government spends millions to meet annually with other G7 leaders, but our own country’s leaders meet only after a crisis hits. We do not have a Team Canada approach. Real teams practice before the puck drops.

“And fourth, our federal bureaucracy is suffering from a decades-old problem of deferred maintenance. Since the 1970s, we have layered on political and

administrative controls and watchdogs. Usually this was done with good intentions. But we have not looked at the cumulative cost of all these controls. The system has become inflexible and risk-averse.”

What kind of leadership does Canada need right now at this point in our history?

“We need more than quickly-improvised policy responses to current U.S. threats. We need an informed national conversation about the future. To do this, we need to rebuild institutions and practices, as I suggested above. In other words, preserving sovereignty means building political and civic infrastructure, as well as other kinds of infrastructure. This will not get done overnight.”

You say that there’s no guarantee that Canada will escape the collapse of its political systems. How could that happen?

“Before a political system collapses, it usually experiences a period of stagnation and confusion. Problems pile up, interact with one another, and become unmanageable. That period could last a long time, or it could be quite short. Next, Canada could break into pieces. Those pieces could be annexed by other powers, either voluntarily or by force. Or Canada as a whole could be annexed. Or the political system called Canada could be completely restructured, so that it has the same label but works in a completely different way.

“All this may seem overdramatic, but it is not. Many political systems have collapsed over the last century. Most countries that exist today are less than 80 years old. Experts classify most of today’s countries as fragile or very fragile.”

How can this be prevented?

“No political system lasts forever, so in that sense collapse cannot be avoided. But we can try to keep the game going as long as possible. That might be a very long time. Moreover, it is important to keep the game going. Canada matters because it is a political system that produces a good life for tens of millions of people. Moreover, Canada embodies values that need to be preserved in this world.

“Will the political system called Canada still exist 200 years from now, roughly in the same form as today? Hard to say. Nevertheless, we should work hard to ensure that Canadian ideals carry on, one way or the other.”

What do you think will be the end result of Trump’s time in office?

“We can make three predictions. First, the American system of government—I mean the whole apparatus, not just the federal government—has serious structural weaknesses, none of which will be fixed by Trump’s policies. These structural weaknesses will contribute to performance failures and political instability inside the United States long after President Trump is gone.

“Second, players inside and outside the United States are learning that the U.S. federal government is no longer a reliable actor, in the sense that its behaviour is not predictable one way or the other. All these players will look for ways to manage that unpredictability, either by becoming less dependent on the federal government, or buffering against policy reversals. This will be costly for all players.

“Third, we can no longer assume that the United States sees the promotion of democratic values and human rights as a central goal of its foreign policy. We will have to build other alliances to promote those values.”

How should Canada deal with Trump?

“Other people will have better advice on the diplomatic aspects of dealing with Trump. My key message is this: Canada’s problem isn’t just Trump. It isn’t even just the United States. It is an array of risks that we will face in this century. Right now, you see a lot of politicians coming up with one idea or another for how to deal with the Trump threat. Some of these ideas would be very costly. This sort of event-driven policy improvisation is not good enough. We need to invest in serious long-term thinking and conversation about Canada’s future.”

The Adaptable Country: How Canada Can Survive the Twenty-First Century, by Alasdair Roberts, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 192 pp., \$24.95. This Q&A was originally published in *The Hill Times* on March 1, 2025.

Maher’s biggest take-away from his Trudeau book: ‘politics is hard’

Stephen Maher, author of *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*—also nominated for this year’s Shaughnessy Cohen Prize, and published by Simon & Schuster Canada—talks about his bestselling book. Maher, who used to work as a reporter on Parliament Hill for Postmedia News, *iPolitics*, and *Maclean’s* is a columnist and an investigative reporter.

What’s your biggest take-away from the book?

“Politics is hard. I am impressed by almost all of the



Stephen Maher says he hopes his book, *The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau*, ‘will help readers understand how they are governed, how political support is won and lost, how elections work, how the people who work in politics see the business. I hope everyone will read it.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

people I interviewed from [Justin] Trudeau’s government. They are intelligent, resourceful. A lot of them have game in one way or another. And in spite of their hard work, the government is in a state of permanent near-crisis. Running the country is hard.”

You run with “The Prince” theme throughout your book, and run a different quote from Machiavelli’s *The Prince* at the beginning of each chapter. Why did you choose this theme for your book about Trudeau, and what’s the significance of each quote?

“When I was getting started, Kevin Hanson, who was then the CEO of Simon & Schuster, suggested I reread [Niccolò Machiavelli’s 1532] *The Prince*, which I hadn’t read since I was a student. It is full of insights into politics, things that haven’t changed since the Medicis were running Florence. I thought the quotes I picked distilled a lesson from the chapters they precede.”

How will Trudeau’s record as prime minister go down in history?

“When I started working on the book, in October 2022, I thought he would be seen as more significant than Jean Chrétien or Stephen Harper, less significant than his father, perhaps on the same level as Brian Mulroney.”

How will he be remembered?

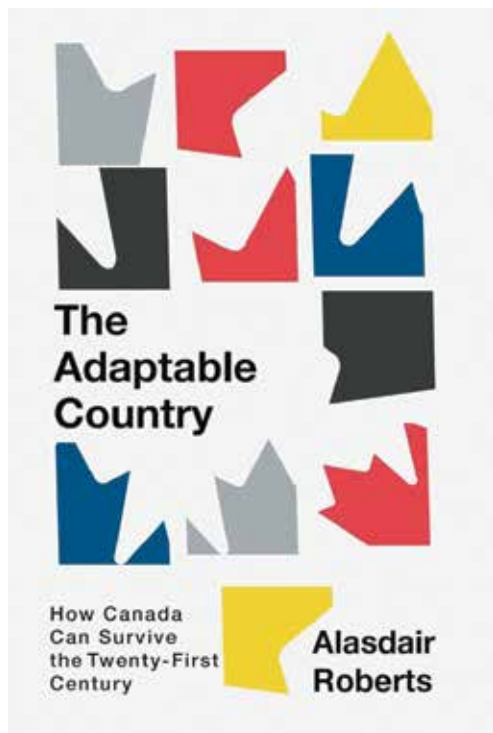
“He legalized marijuana, worked hard on reconciliation, reduced child poverty, and greenhouse gas emissions, but also let a housing crisis develop, a decline in productivity. Our relations with China and India could not be worse. I

interviewed Mr. Mulroney for the book, and he said that Trudeau would be remembered for handling the pandemic well, and renegotiating NAFTA. I think that is right, but it is too soon to tell how the whole thing will look.”

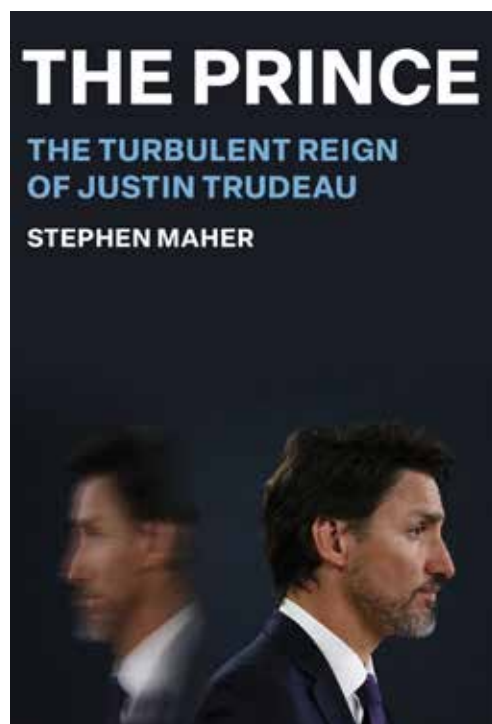
Why is this book important, and who should read it?

“I hope it will help readers—whether or not they support[ed] Trudeau—understand how they are governed, how political support is won and lost, how elections work, how the people who work in politics see the business. I hope everyone will read it.”

The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau, by Stephen Maher, Simon & Schuster Canada, 400 pp., \$39.95. This interview was originally published on May 27, 2024, and this is an excerpt from that interview. *The Hill Times*



The Adaptable Country, by Alasdair Roberts. Image courtesy McGill-Queen’s University Press



The Prince: The Turbulent Reign of Justin Trudeau, by Stephen Maher. Image courtesy Simon and Schuster

Gilmore says she received a 'tsunami' of hate following social media post about Charlie Kirk's murder

NDP MP Heather McPherson calls out former Conservative leader Andrew Scheer for allegedly fuelling rage.

BY CHRISTOPHER GULY

Independent Montreal-based journalist Rachel Gilmore says her investigative work on far-right extremism means she is regularly harassed and stalked—both online and off—particularly from members of the right-wing extremist militia network called Diagon, some of whom were involved in the 2022 trucker Freedom Convoy protest.

But the 31-year-old, Ottawa-born Gilmore said she has never faced such widespread threats as those she's received after she posted two paragraphs on X after American conservative political activist Charlie Kirk was murdered on Sept. 10 while speaking at a university in Orem, Utah.

"Terrified to think of how far-right fans of Kirk, aching for more violence, could very well turn this into an even more radicalizing moment," she wrote.

"Will they now believe their fears have been proven right and feel they have a right to 'retaliate,' regardless of who actually was behind the initial shooting?"

Labelled a "Canadian Influencer," Gilmore's name subsequently appeared at the top of a list on a website called "Expose Charlie's Murderers," which is no longer online, and was replaced by the "Charlie Kirk Data Foundation," which boasted on X last week that it had received more than 63,000 "data entries" from "people happy about an innocent man's death?" A link to its website also did not work last week.

In an online video, Gilmore shared a sample of some of the messages she has since received, including one from "LordBuddha," who wrote "You will be raped. We're coming for you," and another one from "getsmacked69," saying "You're [sic] address is out there, we know everything about you. Can't wait to meet you in person."

Gilmore, who has previously worked for Global News, CTV News, *iPolitics* and CPAC, told *The Hill Times* that she had also received death threats and that she had filed a report with Montreal police, but was told it was almost impossible to identify the sources of the online threats, and that she should track posts—"and if I get killed or assaulted, then at least we'll have something to draw back on."



Rachel Gilmore, pictured on Dec. 1, 2022, taking part in a panel discussion hosted by Carleton University's school of journalism about online hate targeted at women journalists. Today, Gilmore describes herself as 'your least favourite person's least favourite journalist.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Gilmore said she was shocked when former federal Conservative leader Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu'Appelle, Sask.), the Conservative House leader, responded to her X post about Kirk's murder.

"Imagine how twisted she has to be that this is her first thought after a man was shot in the neck for expressing his views," Scheer wrote on X, which had received about 1.6 million views last week.

"So much hate in her."

Anaïda Poilievre, wife of Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.), reposted Scheer's comments on her X feed, as well as those from Sebastian Skamiski, the leader's former director of media relations, who posted a message on X about Gilmore that read: "You are a profoundly sick, demented, and vile person. A man with a young family is fighting for his life and this is your takeaway?"

In statements from MPs last Monday in the House, Conservative MP Rachael Thomas (Lethbridge, Alta.) highlighted that, in the aftermath of Kirk's murder and the response to it, "silencing voices, whether for a moment or forever, is never the answer. We must protect a society where people can hold beliefs and share opinions without fear of losing their jobs, being censored, or worse."

A former member of the Canadian Parliamentary Press Gallery, Gilmore noted that on CBC Radio's *The House*, which aired three days after Kirk was killed, Poilievre told host Catherine Cullen that "disagreement and debate is necessary in a free and open democracy," and responded

to Cullen's question about threats politicians, like him, face.

"I worry for my family," Poilievre said. "We have had very serious threats to the point where the RCMP decided that it merited protection for my family and I for a prolonged period of time."

Gilmore said that she wants "Poilievre and his family to be safe, and don't want them to deal with threats. But I also think that people in positions of power, particularly Poilievre, need to recognize that they need to not only be preoccupied with their own safety, but also the safety of their critics."

On both X and TikTok, where Gilmore describes herself as "your least favourite person's least favourite journalist," she said that after Scheer posted his message about her, "the hate massively escalated" toward her and became a "tsunami" when her name appeared on the virtual database and "massive American right-wing accounts with hundreds of thousands of followers" shared a screenshot of her original post "saying I deserved it."

The X comments were vicious. "Calling you a piece of shit is an insult to feces," posted "Edward Teach." Another post, by "Wicked-witchofthewheat," self-described as a "white culture enthusiast," had a message for Gilmore: "shut up cunt."

To clarify her position, Gilmore also posted on X that Kirk's killing was "horrifying in several ways," and that "political violence is always wrong."

She added that "His murder is also already being used among

bad actors to fan the flames of further division, hatred and violence."

The Hill Times reached out to Scheer, Poilievre's office and Anaïda Poilievre for comments about Scheer's Gilmore-related post, which was written by an unidentified staffer in his office.

Only Kenzie Potter, Scheer's chief of staff, replied with an email that she sent *The Hill Times* with a screengrab of an X post by columnist Erica Ifill following Kirk's assassination with the question: "Do you think this kind of rhetoric is appropriate for a *Hill Times* contributor?"

Ifill wrote: "Why are politicians giving Charlie Kirk fanfare and condolences. Who gives a shit? Why are we commemorating a guy as who's the big reason we are seeing the rise in fascism? This guy was a wet, rectal stain on society."

NDP MP Heather McPherson (Edmonton Strathcona, Alta.), who serves as her party's arts culture and sport critic and is considering a run at the federal NDP's leadership next year, responded to Scheer with her own X post.

"Andrew, Just stop. The violence that has become a reality in politics in the U.S. and in Canada is unacceptable and terrifying," she wrote on the platform, which also drew significant criticism, including a post from "Mario Zelaya," self-described as a "proud Canadian, who wrote: 'Your moral compass is so f***ed up, I'm surprised you know what gender you are.'"

McPherson's post also stated: "Minimizing (and belittling) that fear only makes things worse. A healthy democracy welcomes people in, it doesn't use violence to scare people away."

In an interview, she was more pointed in her criticism of Scheer.

"He's trying to rev up the far-right parts of the Conservative Party that, frankly, he should be trying to tamp down because this sort of hateful rhetoric, this sort of violence is not appropriate in any scenario, in any situation," said McPherson.

"Targeting journalists who are trying to do their jobs is the absolute opposite of what Andrew Scheer should be doing as a parliamentarian."

She found a "disconnect" between Scheer's X post which Gilmore said jeopardized her safety and Poilievre's comments to CBC about his concern for his family's safety, which has amounted to "a shutting down of political debate in this country, which is what the Conservatives have always wanted. It's the silencing of journalism that makes our democracy weaker and makes politicians, including myself, less accountable to Canadians—and that's wrong."

McPherson said that social-media platforms also have the responsibility to block vitriolic postings.

"If Facebook and Twitter [X] and Bluesky know to sell me Adidas when I say the word 'Adidas' in a shopping centre, they can figure out how to stop the violence and the threats that come online," she said.

"I'm a female politician. I receive my fair share of death threats and hatred, and it is unacceptable—regardless of what side of the political spectrum you fall on," said McPherson, added that she, like "every female journalist and politician in this country receive death threats, rape threats and threats of violence every single day—and I can't imagine what Rachel goes through."

McPherson said that "people doing their jobs should not have their lives threatened and not be at risk and not be silenced from doing the work that is so vital for our country and for our democracy," said McPherson.

"Rachel Gilmore has been an outspoken person fighting for democracy and for justice, and has been trying very hard to hold political figures to account—to hold those that are in positions of power accountable, as is the role of journalism in this country, the third leg of any strong democracy. She is being targeted, in part, because a senior Member of Parliament, who should effing know better, decided to put a target on her back. That is unacceptable and he needs to apologize, and he should probably consider whether this is the right career for him," said McPherson.

David Beers, editor-in-chief of *The Tyee*, along with Tyee reporter Jen St. Denis, wrote an editorial on "the dangerous targeting of a Canadian journalist" in defence of Gilmore, who recently contributed two columns for the Vancouver-based online news site.

"We've crossed a dangerous line when it comes to threats against journalists for doing their jobs," they wrote "It shouldn't take an immense amount of bravery to state well-grounded views, and journalists should not have to fear for their lives after speaking up."

In an interview, San Diego-born Beers, a former senior editor at both the *San Francisco Examiner* and *Mother Jones* magazine in San Francisco during the "hot-button social and political" climate during then-U.S. president Ronald Reagan's administration in the 1980s, said the reaction to Gilmore's initial post, particularly from Scheer, is both "an important inflection point in the civil discourse" and "a worrisome trend."

"Rather than hate, she expressed a fear that people who have hate might be emboldened to be violent and place people at risk," said Beers, who noted that St. Denis, who also reports on the conservative right and extremists, "receives a lot of threats and trolling."

Gilmore said that in the wake of all the threats she has received against her and her family, she has had to deploy "rigorous safety practices every single day," including not posting photos of her personal life online.

The Hill Times

Party Central

By Stuart Benson



Earnscliffe and Politico pack the Métropolitain for second 2025 Housewarming, plus a plethora of day two Hill parties

The annual post-summer reunion had stiff competition for attendees on Sept. 16, including a British High Commission barbecue, Mexico's Independence Day, and Catherine McKenna's book launch.

Despite stiff competition for RSVPs on Sept. 16, for hundreds of staffers, strategists, and assorted politicians, the only place to be was at the annual Housewarming at the Métropolitain Brasserie.

Returning to the Mét for the second time in less than four months, the normally annual party hosted by *Politico* and Earnscliffe Strategies is an unofficial reunion for denizens of the Ottawa Bubble returning from summer vacation. The party, which took place on the second day of the fall parliamentary sitting, also brought plenty of repeats to keep attendees chatting.

Between the now-former Transport minister **Chrystia Freeland's** second resignation in exactly nine months—her first happened on Dec. 16, 2024—also coincidentally the morning of the Liberals' annual holiday caucus party—and the news of Green Party Leader **Elizabeth May** in another power struggle to retain control of her party, **Party Central** is hoping the next 50 or so sitting days in 2025 will bring some fresher scripts.

Last Tuesday evening also brought more parties than this reporter could dream of attending in one night, with several only being learned of after arriving at the Mét.

Thankfully, **Party Central** has eyes, ears, and cameras all over this city, so that no precinct-related festivity can occur without this reporter's awareness.

Over on Sussex Drive, British High Commissioner **Rob Tinline** held one last end-of-summer barbecue. At the same time, Mexico's Ambassador **Carlos Gonzalez** hosted his country's "El Grito" Independence Day bash at his official residence on Brennan Avenue, where attendees were sent off with a goodie bag of Mexican avocados at the end of the night.

While **Party Central** learned of Tinline's shindig too late, *The Hill Times'* **Sam Garcia**—this column's go-to photographer for the diplomatic social circles—was on-site for Gonzalez's event, and reported appearances made by Agriculture Minister **Heath MacDonald**, Public Safety Minister **Gary Anandasangaree**, and Liberal MPs **Julie Dzerowicz**, **Rachel Bendayan**, and **Mona Fortier**.

Across the street from the Mét, in the Senate Building, Canada Pride, Queer Momentum and other 2SLGBTQIA+ and civil society groups held a reception with the Parliamentary Pride Caucus in the Senators' lounge, with appearances from Women and Gender Equality Minister **Rechie Valdez**; Liberal MPs **Hedy Fry**, and **Ernie Klassen**; Conservative MPs **Scott Aitchison** and **Greg McLean**; NDP MP **Heather McPherson**, and Senators **Kristopher Wells** and **Mary Coyle**.

The Canadian Apprenticeship Forum and Build a Dream were also hosting a parliamentary reception at the Rideau Club's Pearson

Room, which sources say drew dozens of industry VIPs alongside several parliamentarians and staffers, including Jobs and Families Minister **Patty Hajdu**, SecState for Labour **John Zerucelli**, Deputy Government House Leader **Arielle Kayabaga**, Liberal MPs **Leslie Church** and **Zoe Royer**; Conservative MP **Garnett Genuis**, Bloc Québécois MP **Andréanne Larouche**, and Senator **Sandra Pupatello**.

Yet, it was the former Liberal cabinet minister **Catherine McKenna's** book launch at the National Arts Centre for her book, *Run Like a Girl: A Memoir of Ambition, Resilience, and Fighting for Change*, that drew the bulk of her former Liberal caucus colleagues, including Prime Minister **Mark Carney** and a large cohort of current PMO staffers, cabinet ministers, caucus members and many more that *Politico's* Ottawa Playbook has already listed in lengthy detail.

But for thirsty staffers, lobbyists, and journalists looking for an absolute rager, only the Mét would suffice. Of course, the party could not be contained solely to the confines of the establishment itself.

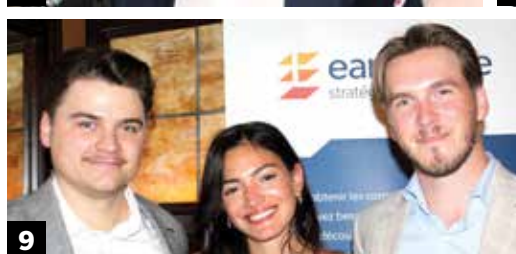
With the party scheduled too early for the organizers to benefit from **Party Central's** advice on how to avoid the usual logjam of attendees in front of the bar due to the huge turnout—even with the use of the outdoor patio for extra space—navigating for photos was rather tricky, and attempting to name everyone in attendance would be nearly impossible and a waste of precious column inches.

However, for efficiency's sake, **Party Central** spotted cohorts of strategizers from Proof, Crestview, North Star, KAN, Catalyze4, Earnscliffe, Bluesky, Summa, Rubicon, PAA Advisory, Global Public Affairs, Counsel Public Affairs; lobbyists and government relations professionals from Grain Growers of Canada, Oxfam, the Canadian Medical Association, and Consumer Products of Canada, Cermaq, and many more, particularly given the large number of new faces to the Hill this fall alongside the more familiar ones.

There was also a strong showing from the Parliamentary Press Gallery, including reporters from *iPolitics*, *The Globe and Mail*, *The National Post*, Bloomberg, *The Toronto Star*, *The Ottawa Citizen*, *The National Observer*, Reuters, CBC, CTV, and CPAC.

Finally, there were also a handful of parliamentarians in attendance, with several arriving after the conclusion of the last party they were at, including Justice Minister **Sean Fraser**, SecState for Defence Procurement **Stephen Fuhr**, and SecState for CRA **Wayne Long**, and MPs **Nate Erskine-Smith**, **Charles Sousa**, and former Grit MP **Francesco Sorbara**; Conservative MPs **Aaron Gunn**, **Stephanie Kusie**, **Shuv Majumdar**, **Clifford Small**, and **Aitchison**; Bloc MP **Sébastien Lemire**, and NDP MPs **McPherson**, and **Gord Johns**, who was spotted demonstrating his new party-trick of reciting his entire list of critic files from memory. The math gets a little complicated when you're dividing nearly 40 files seven ways.

After nearly six hours of partying, the Mét finally began to empty just before 11 p.m., primarily due to the bar's declaration of "last call." While there were still several dozen hangers-on scattered outside, smoking on the patio, and making bets on how many Liberal byelections will have been called by this time next year, **Party Central** heeded the directive to vamoose, so as to have enough energy to enjoy the Speaker's Fall Garden Party the next night.



The Hill Times photographs by Stuart Benson

1. The CBC's Olivia Stefanovic, Chris Rands, Sussex Strategy's Liam Daly, and CBC's Kate McKenna at the Métropolitain Brasserie on Sept. 16. 2. Pendulum's Yaroslav Baran, left, North Star's Fred DeLorey, and Catalyze4's Anne McGrath. 3. CBC Indigenous' Joy Spearchief Morris, left, and GTAA's Blair Ostrom. 4. Matteo Cimellaro, left, Colby Jeffries, Paula Tran, and Natasha Bulowski. 5. Counsel Public Affairs' Kait LaForce, left, and John Delacourt, and Summa Strategies' Claire Smith. 6. McGrath, left, Cermaq's David Kiemele, Proof Strategies' Matthew Dubé, KAN Strategies' Greg MacEachern, Microsoft's Marlene Floyd, and Creative Salmon's Tim Rundle. 7. New Democrats Erin Burchett, left, MP Gord Johns, and Jennifer Pedersen. 8. Liberal ministerial staffer Alyson Fair, left, City News' Glen McGregor, and Pendulum Group's Heather Bakken. 9. Grain Growers of Canada's Jarrett Garlough, left, and Hana Sabah, and Consumer Products Canada's Dylan Hellwig. 10. Conservative staffer Sam Parker, left, Crestview Strategy's Ashton Arsenault, and Innovative Medicines' Sophie Normand. 11. The Toronto Star's Mark Ramzy, left, Stefanovich, and CPAC's Rémi Authier. 12. Bluesky Strategy Group's Jordan Paquet, left, Conservative staffer Steve Kent, and North Guide's Anton Sestrityn.



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.

Peter Buttigieg to speak at Canada 2020 Summit dinner on Sept. 22 in Ottawa

On the eve of its Future Forward Summit, Canada 2020 will host a dinner event with special guest Pete Buttigieg, former United States Secretary of Transportation. Monday, Sept. 22, at 5:30 p.m. ET at The Westin Ottawa. Photograph courtesy of Wikipedia



MONDAY, SEPT. 22

House Schedule—The House of Commons will sit Sept. 22-26; Oct. 1-3; Oct. 6-10; Oct. 20-24; Oct. 27-31; Nov. 3-7; Nov. 17-21; Nov. 24-28; Dec. 1-5; and Dec. 8-12. In total, the House will have sat only 73 days this year. Last year, it sat 122 days, and in 2023, it sat 121 days. In 2022, it sat 129 days, and in 2021, it sat 95 days.

Book Launch: *The Prime Ministers*—McGill University and Sutherland House Books host the launch of J.D.M. Stewart's new book, *The Prime Ministers: Canada's Leaders and the Nation They Shaped*, an accessible chronicle of Canada's leaders, from Sir John A. Macdonald in 1867 to Mark Carney in 2025. Monday, Sept. 22, at 4 p.m. at the Faculty Club, 3450 McTavish St., Montreal. Details: mcgill.ca.

One Hill of a Party—The Tourism Industry Association of Canada members are invited to "One Hill of a Party," the biggest reception on the Hill showcasing the power of Canadian tourism, featuring regional cuisine, an Indigenous ceremony, live entertainment, and connections with parliamentarians, industry leaders, and TIAC members. Monday, Sept. 22, at 5 p.m. ET at Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register: tiac-aipc.ca.

Future Forward Pre-Summit Dinner with Pete Buttigieg—On the eve of its Future Forward Summit, Canada 2020 hosts a dinner event with special guest Pete Buttigieg, former United States Secretary of Transportation. Monday, Sept. 22, at 5:30 p.m. ET at The Westin Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

Ottawa Centre September Trivia Night

The Ontario Liberal Party hosts an evening of trivia and fun downtown with fellow Liberals. Each ticket includes snacks and a drink cover, and new Future Fund sign-ups will be accepted at the door. Monday, Sept. 22, at 5:30 p.m. ET at 3 Brewers Restaurant, 240 Sparks St., Ottawa. Details: ontarioliberal.ca.

Build Canada Ottawa Reception—Build Canada hosts a gathering of entrepreneurs and policy thinkers focused on building a more prosperous Canada. The evening will feature a special sneak-peek product demo and networking. Monday, Sept. 22, 6-8 p.m. ET at The Metropolitan Brasserie, 700

Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Register: luma.com/7bvfabwu.

Panel: 'Elbows Up!'—David Moscrop, Carol Off, and Elamin Abdelmahmoud will gather to discuss the new book *Elbows Up! Canadian Voices of Resilience and Resistance*, edited by Abdelmahmoud and featuring essays by Off, Moscrop, and others. Monday, Sept. 22, at 7 p.m. ET at Christ Church Cathedral, 414 Sparks St., Ottawa. Register: writersfestival.org.

MONDAY, SEPT. 22—FRIDAY, SEPT. 26

UNESCO World Congress of Biosphere Reserves—UNESCO hosts the fifth World Congress of Biosphere Reserves, a once-a-decade gathering where global experts, policymakers, Indigenous leaders, and youth will shape the 10-year strategy for more than 750 UNESCO Biosphere Reserves across nearly 140 nations. Monday, Sept. 22, to Friday, Sept. 26, in Hangzhou, China. Details: unesco.org.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 23

Senate Returns—The Senate will return on Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 2 p.m., and is scheduled to sit Sept. 23-25, but could also sit on Sept. 26. It's scheduled to sit Oct. 1-2 (possibly Oct. 30); Oct. 7-9 (possibly Oct. 6 and Oct. 10); Oct. 21-23 (possibly Oct. 20 and Oct. 24); Oct. 28-30 (possibly Oct. 27 and Oct. 31); Nov. 4-6 (possibly Nov. 3 and Nov. 7); Nov. 18-20 (possibly Nov. 17 and Nov. 21); Nov. 25-27 (possibly Nov. 24 and Nov. 28); Dec. 2-4 (possibly Dec. 1 and Dec. 5); Dec. 9-11 (possibly Dec. 8 and Dec. 12); and finally Dec. 16-18 (possibly Dec. 15 and Dec. 19). And that will be it for 2025.

Co-operative Networking Breakfast—ISG Senators Lucie Moncion and Mary Coyle join Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada to mark the International Year of Co-operatives for a breakfast celebrating 150 years of co-operatives. Learn about the co-operative solutions shaping Canada's future. Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 7:30 a.m. ET in the Senate of Canada Building, 2 Rideau St., Ottawa. RSVP: claudia.julespierre@sen.parl.gc.ca.

Future Forward Summit—Canada 2020 hosts its annual policy summit on the topic "Future Forward: Shaping Public Policy in Canada." At a time

when the world is shifting fast, this summit asks the question: how can Canada shape—not just react to—the forces defining our future? Tuesday, Sept. 23, at The Westin Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

Welcome Back to Parliament Reception—The Canadian Medical Association hosts its Welcome Back to Parliament Reception, an evening of conversation with parliamentarians, physicians, and Patient Voice advocates, focused on how we can create a better, more sustainable health care system. Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 6 p.m. at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register online.

Liberal MP Erskine-Smith to Deliver Remarks—Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith will take part in "The Power of Animals: How Animal Welfare is Key to a Sustainable Future for All," hosted by The Walrus Talks. Tuesday, Sept. 23, at 7 p.m. ET at the Isabel Bader Theatre, 93 Charles St W, Toronto. Register via Eventbrite.

Gender Equality Week Reception—The Prosperity Project, Mothers Matter Canada, and Informed Perspectives host a cocktail reception for Gender Equality Week. Honour the contributions of women and gender-diverse communities, celebrate the progress made, and reaffirm our shared commitment to advancing gender equality in Canada. Tuesday, Sept. 23, 5 p.m. ET at The Metropolitan Brasserie, Ottawa. Contact: arobichaud@mothersmatter.ca.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 24

Bacon and Eggheads Breakfast—The Partnership Group for Science and Engineering hosts its first Bacon and Eggheads breakfast of the 2025-26 parliamentary year featuring Dr. Jackie Dawson from the University of Ottawa, who will speak on "Through the Melting Ice: Ship Traffic in Canada's Arctic." Wednesday, Sept. 24, at 7:30 a.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Lunch: 'Growing Canada's Defence Capabilities'—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a lunchtime discussion, "Homegrown Strength: Growing Canada's Defence Capabilities." Is Canada ready to strengthen its military and defence industrial base? Leaders from government, defence, and industry will talk readiness, procurement, and building a strong

domestic supply chain. Wednesday, Sept. 24, at 12 p.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Register: canadianclubottawa.ca.

Ottawa Santis Soirée—Santis Health hosts its 2025 Ottawa Soirée, an annual celebration of partnerships, growth, and the inspiring people who help shape Canada's health system. Wednesday, Sept. 24, at 5 p.m. at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register: santishealth.ca.

Politics and the Pen Gala—The Writers' Trust of Canada hosts the Politics and the Pen Gala, its annual fundraiser where the \$25,000 Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing will also be presented. Location to be announced. Details: writerstrust.com.

THURSDAY, SEPT. 25

Lunch: 'Canada Builds on Oil and Natural Gas'—The Halifax Chamber of Commerce hosts a lunch event, "Canada Builds on Oil and Natural Gas," featuring Lisa Baiton, president and CEO of the Canadian Association of Petroleum Producers. Thursday, Sept. 25, at 11:30 a.m. AT at The Prince George Hotel, 1725 Market St., Halifax. Details: business.halifaxchamber.com.

FRIDAY, SEPT. 26

Orientation for New MPs—The Parliamentary Centre and Carleton University host the first session of an Orientation for New Members of Parliament. Programming includes a comprehensive overview of legislative responsibilities, ethical frameworks and protocol not covered in the official orientation include the role of the Speaker, the Privy Council, public engagement strategies, and public opinion dynamics. Lunch and refreshments provided. Spouses welcome. Friday, Sept. 26, at 8:30 a.m. ET in Room 425, 180 Wellington St. Register: parlcent@parlcent.org.

Minister Solomon to Deliver Remarks—Minister of Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Evan Solomon will deliver remarks on "Building the Economy of the Future and The AI Nation: The Urgent Mission to make Canada AI and Quantum Strong," hosted by the Empire Club of Canada. Friday, Sept. 26, at 11:30 a.m. ET at 401 Bay St., Simpson Tower, 8th Floor, Toronto. Register: empireclubofcanada.com.

MONDAY, SEPT. 29

Welcoming the House Back—The Government Relations Institute of Canada and *Politico* host an exciting evening of networking and trivia, free for GRIC members. Monday, Sept. 29, at 5 p.m. ET at the Métropolitain Brasserie Restaurant, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details: gric-irgc.ca.

MONDAY, SEPT. 29—TUESDAY, SEPT. 30

Couchiching 2025—The Canadian International Council and the Aga Khan Museum host the two-day Couchiching annual conference on the theme "Securing Canada's Atlantic Future." This high-level strategic dialogue bringing together policymakers, thought leaders, and experts to provide insights into how to navigate Canada's role in an era of global upheaval. Monday, Sept. 29, to Tuesday, Sept. 30, at the Aga Khan Museum, 77 Wynford Dr., Toronto. Details: thecic.org/couchiching2025.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1

Michigan Governor to Deliver Remarks—Governor of Michigan Gretchen Whitmer will deliver remarks, "The Canada-Michigan Relationship," followed by a fireside chat moderated by journalist Steve Paiken, hosted by the Empire Club of Canada and the American Chamber of Commerce in Canada. Wednesday, Oct. 1, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre 255 Front St. W., Toronto. Details: amchamcanada.ca.

Coffee Association of Canada Reception—The Coffee Association of Canada hosts its annual Parliamentary Reception. This event will mark the official launch of the Parliamentary Coffee Caucus, a new non-partisan forum designed to foster engagement between Members of Parliament and Canada's dynamic coffee sector. Wednesday, Oct. 1 at 6 p.m. ET at Little Victories Coffee, 44 Elgin St.

THURSDAY, OCT. 2

Fireside Chat: 'Energy, Ambition and Canada's Future'—Former Liberal cabinet minister Seamus O'Regan will moderate a fireside chat entitled "Compete or Retreat: Energy, Ambition and Canada's Future," featuring Greg Ebel, president and CEO of Enbridge Inc. Thursday, Oct. 2, at 11:30 a.m. ET, at The Carlu, 444 Yonge St. #7, Toronto, happening in person and online. Details: empireclubofcanada.com.

Empowering Women Through Food Security—Compassion Canada, World Renew and Thrive for Good host "Empowering Women and Girls to Build Stronger Communities Through Food Security," an event highlighting how conflict, extreme climate events, and economic shocks interact to deepen vulnerabilities, including unequal access to the livelihood resources required for recovery and growth. Thursday, Oct. 2, at 3 p.m. ET at the Delta Hotel, 101 Lyon St. N, Ottawa. RSVP: adebor@beaconnorthstrategies.com.

Ex-CBC Reporter Brian Stewart to Discuss New Book—The Balsillie School of International Affairs hosts former CBC foreign correspondent and award-winning reporter Brian Stewart who will discuss his new book *On the Ground: My Life as a Foreign Correspondent*. Thursday, Oct. 2, at 7 p.m. ET at CIGI Auditorium, 67 Erb St. W., Waterloo, Ont. Details: balsillie-school.ca.

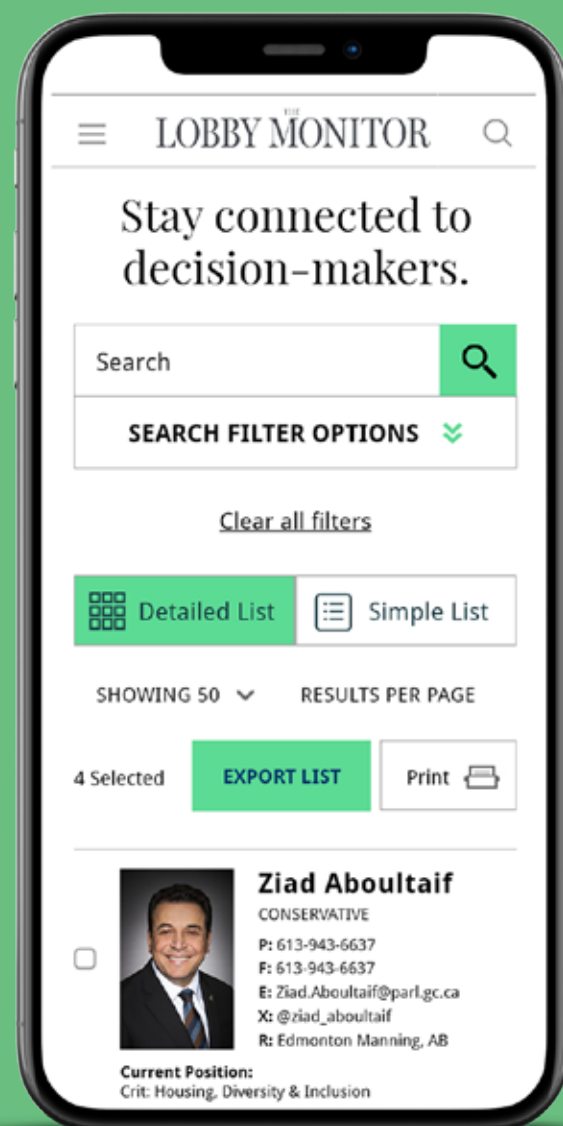
FRIDAY, OCT. 3

Book Event with Catherine Lang—Author Catherine Lang will discuss her 2024 book, *Embedded: The Irreconcilable Nature of War, Loss and Consequence*, at an event hosted by the Canadian International Council's National Capital chapter. Friday, Oct. 3, at 5:30 p.m. ET at The Bridge Public House, 1 Donald St., Ottawa. Details: thecic.org.

MONDAY, OCT. 6

An Evening with David Peterson—The Pearson Centre hosts an evening with David Peterson, celebrating the 40th anniversary of his becoming premier of Ontario in 1985. Monday, Oct. 6, at 6:30 p.m. ET at One King West, Toronto. Details: thepearsoncentre.ca.

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