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NEWS

Carney calls Indonesia trade deal 'game changing,' but labour says it is a 'step backwards'

BY NEIL MOSS

The Carney government is celebrating a new trade deal with Indonesia, but labour voices are sounding the alarm over a weakening of worker protections compared to recent deals that Canada has inked.

In a press release, Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) office described the Canada-Indonesia Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement as "game changing," noting that it is the first bilateral agreement with a member of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Finalizing the deal was a pillar of Canada's Indo-Pacific strategy, and part of a growing effort to diversify the country's trading markets.

But Canadian Labour Congress senior researcher Elizabeth Kwan told *The Hill Times* that the pact is a "step backwards" to a few decades ago.

"Looking at the text, I would say that it certainly doesn't meet the standard or meet the bar of the CUSMA [Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement], or of

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NEWS

Conservatives seize on Liberals' 'law-and-order vacuum' as Trump anxiety wanes, but 'MAGA North' comparisons still a concern, say strategists

BY STUART BENSON

The Conservative Party is attempting to fill the "law-and-order vacuum" as Canadians' concerns over the economy and crime begin to overtake the worry about threats from the American president that dominated the last general election, say politicians.

But one progressive strategist notes that United States President Donald Trump is "not going anywhere" anytime soon, and the official opposition is still vulnerable to accusations that it's trying to cultivate "MAGA North."

"There's going to be ebbs and flows, but a lot of Canadians are still very concerned about Trump and tariffs," said Matt Chilliak, who has worked for progressive candidates on both sides of the border, including for the federal NDP and provincially in Saskatchewan and British Columbia, as well as for American Democratic campaigns during

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NEWS

Without clarity, Kneecap ban appears as a 'politically motivated PR stunt,' say critics, civil liberties, and immigration experts

BY STUART BENSON

More than a week and a half after Liberal MP Vince Gasparro declared Irish rap group Kneecap were barred from entering Canada over allegations of supporting terrorism and political violence, the ongoing lack of clarity from the government about who approved the decision—or if one was even made—is leading civil liberties and immigration experts to say that it appears to be a "politically motivated PR stunt," and evidence of intra-caucus interference in cabinet mandates.

"This isn't normal, and it just feels more like trying to push the government into making a decision," Jamie Liew, an expert on citizenship and immigration law at the University of Ottawa, told *The Hill Times*. "This isn't just an issue of privacy. It looks like interference in the [immigration minister's] mandate."

On Sept. 29, Gasparro (Eglinton-Lawrence, Ont.), the parliamentary secretary to the

Continued on page 17



More than half of the 19 bills Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and his House caucus have introduced so far in the 45th Parliament have focused on crime and public safety. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Verbal fight night: Chrétien and Harper to spar at Regent Debate on Oct. 21



Former prime ministers Jean Chrétien, left, and Stephen Harper will take part in the Regent Debate in Toronto on Oct. 21. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Former prime ministers **Jean Chrétien** and **Stephen Harper** will take part in the Regent Debate on Oct. 21.

Happening in Toronto at the Fairmont Royal York and hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute, this year's debate is on the topic "Canadian Unity in a Fractured World."

"For those of us worried about our country's future, insights of the kind two of Canada's pre-eminent statesmen can offer will be most welcome," wrote the

C.D. Howe Institute's president and CEO **William Robson** on LinkedIn on Sept. 23.

Chrétien was Liberal prime minister from 1993 to 2003, crowning a career in federal politics that began in 1963 when he was first elected to the House of Commons. Harper was Conservative prime minister from 2006 to 2015, capping his political career which started in 1993 when he co-founded the Reform Party and was one of its first elected MPs.

NDP MP Johns one of FPAC's forestry champions for 2025

NDP MP **Gord Johns** is one of three recipients of this year's **Jim Carr Forest Community Champion Award**, organized by the Forest Products Association of Canada.

The other two laureates are **Spencer Coyne**, mayor of Princeton, B.C.; and **Crystal McAteer**, mayor of High Level, Alta.

Named in honour of the late former natural resources minister and Liberal MP, the award recognizes "individuals who have demonstrated outstanding commitment to supporting Canada's forest sector and the families and communities that depend on it," FPAC posted on X on Sept. 22.

"MP Johns, Mayor Coyne, and Mayor McAteer are among Canadian forestry's greatest ambassadors. They are public servants



NDP MP Gord Johns is one of this year's Jim Carr Forest Community Champion Award recipients. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and advocates who walk the talk in supporting forest sector jobs in their communities," said **Derek Nighbor**, FPAC's president and CEO, in a press release.

Johns said he is "deeply honoured" to receive this recognition. "Forestry has always been at the heart of our communities and our economy, and I

believe its future lies in sustainable practices, innovation, clean energy and respect for the land and waters that sustain us," said the four-term MP from Courtenay-Alberni, B.C., in the same release.

"I share this award with the workers, Indigenous partners, and communities who continue to lead the way in making forestry more sustainable for generations to come."

Inuit-led exhibit opens at Nature Museum

Governor General **Mary Simon** and Minister of Northern and Arctic Affairs, and Minister responsible for the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency **Rebecca Chartrand** were on hand for a sneak peak of a new Inuit-led exhibition at Ottawa's Canadian Museum of Nature last week.

Titled *Qikiqtait*—pronounced "Hik-a-tay," the Inuktitut name of the Hudson Bay archipelago of Belcher Islands—the exhibition focuses on the science and the voices of Inuit in the Arctic, offering a unique look at how Inuit from these islands are combining traditional knowledge and modern technology.

The show is a collaboration between the Museum of Nature, the Arctic Eider Society, and Polar Knowledge Canada, which is celebrating its 10-year anniversary.

In a press release, Chartrand acknowledged that both Polar Knowledge's anniversary and the new exhibition "are powerful reflections of how the future of a thriving and secure Arctic depends on collaboration and knowledge-sharing to support conservation and self-determination." *Qikiqtait* will be on display until September 2027.



Joel Heath, executive director and co-founder of the Arctic Eider Society, left, and Northern Affairs Minister Rebecca Chartrand at the Nature Museum on Sept. 25. *Polar Knowledge Canada* photograph by Elizabeth Binette

Ex-Hill staffers Jenkins, Cummings join private sector



Cyndi Jenkins, left, and Katelin Cummings. *Photographs courtesy of LinkedIn*

Two former parliamentary staffers have found new gigs off the Hill recently.

Cyndi Jenkins, a former senior strategic adviser in Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** office, is now vice-president of public affairs at Hill & Knowlton/Burson Canada. In her more than 20-year career on the Hill, Jenkins worked as a senior staffer to five ministers across six portfolios, most recently helping to set up and establish the Carney PMO.

"Cyndi is an incredible addition to our federal public affairs team and a tremendous asset to our clients navigating Canada's complex political and regulatory



landscape," reads a Burson press release from Sept. 22.

Former Senate staffer **Katelin Cummings** is now at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.

"I'm happy to share that I'm starting a new position as Director, Government Relations at Canadian Chamber of Commerce," she posted on Sept. 22 on LinkedIn. A handful of Senators including **Krista Ross**, **Marnie McBean**, **Colin Deacon**, and **Tony Dean** wished her all the best on LinkedIn. Cummings had worked in ISG Senator **Paula Simons'** office since 2021.

Originally from New Brunswick, Cummings had worked for the provincial government there before arriving in Ottawa.

Bhupinder Liddar ties the knot in B.C.



Former Canadian diplomat and publisher **Bhupinder S. Liddar**, left, and **Vanita Rani** married on Sept. 24 in Richmond, B.C. *Photograph courtesy of Facebook*

Former Canadian diplomat and journalist **Bhupinder Liddar** married **Vanita Rani** in Richmond, B.C., on Sept. 24, he posted on Facebook.

Former **Jean Chrétien**-era cabinet minister **Herb Dhaliwal** spoke at the reception, and former Conservative MP **Gurmat Grewal** was among the wedding guests.

"Our forever story begins here," the 78-year-old Liddar wrote alongside a video of him and his bride walking across a wooden pathway on Instagram on Sept. 28.

A dapper fixture on Ottawa's party scene in the early 2000s, Liddar is the former publisher/editor of *Diplomat & International Canada* magazine. He was appointed Canada's first consul general in Chandigarh, India, in 2004; and went on to serve as Canada's deputy permanent representative to the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements; to the UN Environment Program in Nairobi, Kenya; and as a former special representative of Canada to the World Urban Forum.

The Hill Times wins four awards at Canadian Community Newsmedia Awards

The Hill Times won four awards in the 2025 Canadian Community Newsmedia Awards competition, including first in the categories of Best Editorial Page, and Best Local Cartoon for **Michael de Adder's** sketch "That looks like my wallet." It came in second in the categories of Best Feature Series for "Senate bill seeks to criminalize forced sterilizations" by **Laura Ryckewaert**, and columnist **Rose LeMay** placed second in the field of Outstanding Columnist.

Organized by News Media Canada, the Canadian Community Newsmedia Awards is an annual awards program featuring 30 unique categories honouring outstanding editorial, photography, multimedia and overall excellence in community news media publishing. This year's winners were selected by a team of 33 volunteer judges from 1,020 entries for work published in 2024.

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THE GAME-CHANGER MAKING GLOBAL TRAVEL EFFORTLESS FOR MILLIONS

Amid strong global economic momentum, international mobility is emerging as one of the strongest indicators of prosperity, aspiration, and connectivity. Global real GDP is projected to expand at around 3.1% CAGR (Compound Annual Growth Rate) between 2024 and 2028, and the global travel and tourism industry is set to touch CA\$4.68 trillion by 2029. International airline passengers are expected to rise from 4.8 billion in 2024 to 5.6 billion by 2029. For fast-growing economies, this surge reflects higher disposable incomes, lifestyle shifts, and a strong appetite for cultural discovery, wellness, and exploration.

Technology is powering this transformation. AI-driven personalization, biometric verification, and digital-first service models are reshaping how people interact with governments, airlines, and visa centers. From instant language translation to predictive data insights, the journey is becoming more seamless, secure, and citizen-centric. Alongside shifts like eco-tourism, wellness travel, and workcations, one critical enabler stands out: simplified visa and consular services.

The global visa outsourcing market is expected to nearly double from CA\$2.34 billion in 2024 to CA\$4.4 billion by 2029, reflecting the growing need for efficiency, transparency, and trust in citizen services. Against this backdrop, GovTech companies like BLS International are emerging as strategic partners, bridging government systems with citizen expectations through cutting-edge, secure, and compliant technology solutions.

A Journey of Two Decades

Founded in 2005, BLS International has grown into a trusted partner for governments and citizens worldwide. The company has processed more than 360 million applications to date and works with over 46 client governments. Its unique positioning as the only publicly listed company in the sector—traded on BSE, NSE, and MSE—reflects its leadership and accountability in a domain where trust is paramount.

From a modest beginning, it has become India's leading multinational in government-to-citizen services. In Canada, operations began around 11 years ago, and the company has 12 centres across the country, including Brampton, Mississauga, Vancouver, Regina, and Toronto, among others.

Over the past five years, the organization's revenue multiplied 4.6 times, operating profit surged more than fifteen-fold, and margins improved significantly—an outcome of disciplined strategy, operational excellence, and technology-driven innovation.

A Global Footprint of Scale and Trust

Today, BLS International operates in more than 70 countries with a network of over 50,000 centers and a workforce of 60,000 employees and associates. This presence ensures accessibility across continents, from major economies in Europe and North America to emerging destinations in Africa and Asia.

The company's ability to process millions of sensitive applications with precision and care has positioned it as one of the most dependable players in the sector. Its scale reflects not just operational strength but also the confidence that governments and travellers place in its ability to deliver secure, efficient, and citizen-friendly services.

Leading with Technology and Innovation

Global mobility is no longer just about moving people; it is about creating secure, scalable, and seamless digital ecosystems that protect data, reduce fraud, and improve citizen convenience. Here, technology is the differentiator.

BLS International has anchored its innovation strategy around the 3Ts—Technology, Trust, and Transparency—and the 4Ss—Speed, Scale, Security, and Sustainability. Its digital-first architecture integrates AI-driven process automation, cloud-native micro services, biometric identity verification, and real-time analytics, enabling governments to deliver citizen services with speed and accountability.



Shikhar Aggarwal, Joint Managing Director.

Key innovations include:

- Facial Biometrics & Liveliness Detection – ensuring authenticity of applicants during appointment booking.
- Automated Document Checks & OCR – eliminating fraudulent applications and reducing error rates.
- AI-Powered Client Excellence Solutions – providing instant, accurate information and seamless escalation to human agents.
- Multilingual AI Chatbots & Virtual Assistants – facilitating real-time query resolution and inclusive access.
- Predictive Dashboards & Smart Analytics – giving governments live visibility on service delivery performance and KPIs.

A landmark example of this tech-first approach came in Canada, where BLS International became the first company in the visa processing and consular services industry to introduce this new AI-powered customer excellence solution in Canada, demonstrating BLS International's investment and commitment to the Canadian market. Designed to provide immediate, accurate, and human-like responses, this innovation saves time, eliminates queues, and offers 24/7 support, especially valuable in urgent travel situations. Canada's adoption is the first step in a multi-phase rollout that will soon expand to multiple countries, languages, and service formats, including AI-driven email and chat responses, as well as advanced quality management for client interactions.

With the Canadian Government focused on supporting AI champions and scaling adoption across sectors, this innovation is perfectly timed to shape the country's economic AI story.

Trusted Partner for Governments

The company's strongest differentiator lies in its long-term B2G partnerships. It has consistently won high-profile contracts that underscore its reliability and global stature. Recent milestones include renewed and exclusive agreements with Spain and Slovakia in the Schengen region; contracts with Germany, Italy, Portugal, the Czech Republic, and Hungary; and expanded attestation services for Qatar across multiple African nations. It also re-secured its mandate with the High Commission of India in Canada, reinforcing its reputation for service excellence in critical markets.

Back home, BLS International recently secured a significant contract with UIDAI (Unique Identification Authority of India), which manages the country's foundational digital identity framework—an endorsement of its compliance and governance capabilities. Collectively, such contract wins stand as a testament to the deep trust governments place in BLS International and the credibility it has built through innovation, technology, and service excellence.

Recognized Excellence, Certified Trust

BLS International's performance and credibility have earned it recognition across global platforms. It has been named one of "India's Most Valuable Companies" by Business Today, ranked in

Fortune India's Next 500, and, in 2025, featured among Forbes Asia's 200 "Best Under a Billion".

It also stands apart as the only publicly listed company in its sector, with shares traded on BSE (540073), NSE (BLS), and MSE (BLS)—a reflection of transparency and resilience in a domain where accountability is critical.

Commitment to international standards further strengthens its reputation. The company holds globally recognized certifications, including:

- CMMI DEV ML5 V2.0 & SVC ML5 V2.0 for process maturity and service excellence
- ISO 9001:2015 for Quality Management Systems
- ISO 27001:2013 for Information Security Management
- ISO 14001:2015 for Environmental Management Systems

These certifications, combined with a strong ethos of passion, customer focus, and integrity, underscore BLS International's ability to scale securely and sustainably.

Strong Financial Performance

Fiscal Year 2025 was the company's strongest ever, with revenues touching CA\$356.84 million and operating profit growing 15 times compared to FY21. The momentum has continued into FY26. In Q1FY26, revenue rose 44% year-on-year to CA\$115.69 million, EBITDA surged 53% to CA\$33.17 million, and net profit grew 50% to CA\$29.45 million. With a net cash balance of CA\$183.16 million as of June 2025, the company enters its third decade on a strong financial footing.

The Visa & Consular business remains its largest segment, contributing significantly to growth through a shift from partner-run to self-managed centers and the acquisition and consolidation of iDATA. Meanwhile, the Digital Business has emerged as a new growth engine, with revenue from this segment growing over 200% in Q1FY26. Acquisitions such as Aadifidelis Solutions and initiatives like land record digitization, Aadhaar enrollment services, and nationwide courier tie-ups with Delhivery are driving this momentum.

Shaping the Future of Global Mobility

Looking ahead, global mobility will be shaped by AI-first service delivery, integrated digital identities, and zero-trust security ecosystems. BLS International is investing heavily in this vision—pioneering unified digital identity platforms that integrate biometrics, MRZ passports, ePassports, eVisas, and national ID databases. These innovations will allow governments to not only streamline service delivery but also make policy decisions backed by predictive analytics and fraud-proof processes.

As Joint Managing Director Shikhar Aggarwal observed, "Our vision for the next five years is to build on our legacy of impact by deepening our role in global mobility and citizen services. The aspiration is clear: to become the first Indian-origin company to lead this sector at scale, setting new benchmarks in trust, innovation, and service delivery."

NEWS

Advance voting in Canada continues to

With more and more Canadians locking in their votes early, campaign rollouts have had to adjust, or ‘miss the window,’ says former Liberal strategist Brett Thalmann.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

This past spring, 44 per cent of voters who cast a ballot in the federal election did so before election day itself—the highest such rate in any Canadian election to date—and this shifting voter behaviour is changing how parties approach campaigning, and presenting new challenges to Elections Canada.

Brett Thalmann, a former Liberal strategist who served as the party’s national Get Out the Vote director in the 2021 election, said the “steady rise in advance voting election after election,” both provincially and federally, is something parties have “definitely” taken note of and for which they’ve had to account.

“We adjusted in the 2021 campaign in terms of moving up the dates of when we want mail to get delivered to our supporters—reminders to vote—and ensuring that we did our outreach ahead of [the] advanced vote because we knew such a high percentage of voters would take advantage of the convenience of advanced voting,” said Thalmann, now a founding partner of Nexus Strategic Consultants and Next Campaign Technologies. “You have to, or you kind of miss the window.”



Longtime NDP strategist Anne McGrath, now with Catalyze4, has been working on political campaigns since the 1990s, including as national campaign director for the NDP in 2015, and as a spokesperson and senior strategist for this year’s race. More and more, she said, campaigns are focused “on getting their advanced vote out and getting people to vote early.”

Previously, “you would spend probably the last two weeks—maybe—of a campaign planning and executing your election day Get Out the Vote effort,” from lining up scrutineers, to ensuring people have the information they need to get to the polls, she said.

“But in the last few campaigns, it’s been earlier and earlier,” said McGrath.

Her former NDP colleague, Jordan Lechnitz, an ex-dep-



Some 44 per cent of voters in this year’s federal election cast their ballots before election day, including the 7.5 million people who made their way to vote at advance polls. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

special ballot, a category that includes people who opted to vote by mail from within or outside of their ridings, at local Elections Canada offices, and Canadians living abroad.

By comparison, roughly 40.5 per cent of votes in the 2021 election were locked in before election day—34.2 per cent at advance polls specifically—compared to 30.2 per cent in the 2019 election, 24.3 per cent in 2015, and just 16.2 per cent in 2011.

“These figures underscore a significant evolution in voting behaviour: the assumption that most electors will vote on election day is increasingly outdated,” reads Perrault’s report, highlighting that this “evolution has implications for electoral administration.”

“Processes that were once peripheral have become central, requiring more resources, training and co-ordination than ever before,” continues the report.

Elections Canada set up 7,295 advance polling stations this year—compared to 6,429 in 2021—but there were nonetheless reports of voters facing long lines, and according to Perrault’s report, three ridings even “experienced ballot shortages at advance polls,” leading to delays.

In a Sept. 15 press conference with reporters, Perrault said along with more Canadians voting earlier, “the task of finding accessible and available polling locations and of finalizing the leases is increasingly difficult.” Some 60 per cent of voter information cards were delayed this year due to difficulties in finalizing leases to secure polling locations, he said.

The shorter time period to get things lined up also “increases the risk of errors,” said Perrault. As an example, more than 100 voters received special ballots with the wrong return postal code in the riding of Terrebonne, Que., which was later subject to a recount and was ultimately won by a single vote—the result of which is now being challenged in court by the Bloc Québécois.

In his report, Perrault warned that the “marked trend” of more and more Canadians voting at advance polls “has reached a point where it threatens the agency’s ability to meet the expectations of electors for this particular service, at least for general elections that are not held on a fixed date.”

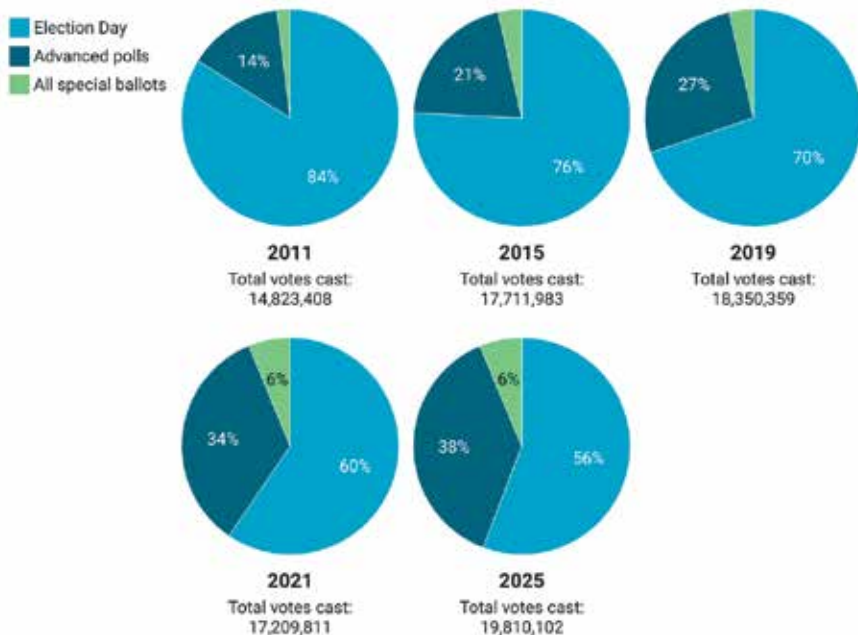
“While only 7.5 per cent of Canadians voted before election day 25 years ago, Elections Canada now anticipates that over 50 per cent of electors will do so at the next general election,” reads the report.

Perrault told reporters that increasing the minimum length of a federal campaign period could be one fix to help his agency respond to shifting voter habits, and parties establishing longer campaigns when calling a snap election could be another.

Currently, election laws set out that election day must fall at least 36 days and no more than 50 days

How Canadians voted, 2011-2025

The following figures reflect total ballots cast in each category.



Source: Elections Canada

uty chief of staff to then-NDP leader Thomas Mulcair and now Canada director with the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, agreed.

“Campaigns are increasingly focusing their Get Out the Vote efforts on turning out strong supporters early, because it frees up resources on election day to turn out others who might be less likely to vote,” Lechnitz told *The Hill Times* by email. “Rather than thinking about one election day, advance votes are treated as mini-election days in their own right.”

McGrath, Lechnitz, and Thalmann all said they see a mix of reasons for Canadians’ rising use of advance voting options. On one hand, political parties are increasingly driving people to lock in their votes early, but it’s also seen as more convenient, and voters are increasingly polarized and decided well before election day. This past race was also seen as particularly consequential amid the looming threat of United States President Donald Trump’s tariff and annexation threats, contributing to an uptick in turnout overall.

“We’re seeing people make up their minds on how to vote earlier and earlier—often even before the writ is dropped for the campaign,” said Lechnitz.

Lechnitz said as habits continue to shift, so, too, will campaign strategies.

“Campaigns will have to adapt their communications to recognize that the critical campaign period extends well before things officially kick off, and that events and messages voters get between campaigns can form lasting impressions,” she said.

As detailed in Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault’s report on the 45th general election, published on Sept. 15, roughly 69 per cent of registered voters—19.8 million people—cast a ballot this year.

That marks a notable jump from the 62.6 per cent turnout rate of the 2021 election, and is the highest turnout in a federal election since 1993 when 69.6 per cent of registered Canadians voted. And while a slim majority waited until election day—April 28—to lock in their votes, 44 per cent did so days or weeks in advance.

An estimated 7.5 million people—or 37.9 per cent of those who cast ballots—turned out at advance polls between April 18 and April 21, while another 1.2 million (6.3 per cent) voted by

rise—and it’s changing campaigning

after the day the writs are issued. This year, the election took place 36 days after it was called.

While voting behaviours may be shifting, not all aspects of traditional campaigning are keeping up.

The official Leaders’ Debates Commission scheduled its English and French tee-offs for April 16 and 17—the day before advance polling began.

The first major federal party to release a platform this year was the Greens on April 17, followed by the Liberals and NDP on April 19, and the Conservatives on April 22—just six days before election day, and after the close of advance polls.

Western University professor Laura Stephenson said as a result of this timing, “the public is not getting any clear picture of what the politicians or parties have on offer, and it’s unclear at what point the information is going to come forward.”

“It’s kind of changing the nature of political decision-making,” she said.

Thalmann said parties need to continue to adapt.

“The voting trends need to be watched closely, and we should

adapt, whether it’s debates or analysis of party positions, and preparing information for voters” to ensure they have such details early enough to take into account when deciding how to vote, said Thalmann.

Stephenson said while “it’s very hard to kind of legislate the nature of a strategic campaign,” she suggested one possibility could be requiring platforms to be released in order for a party leader to be allowed to take part in the debates.

That said, amid an increasingly polarized electorate, voters aren’t seen to pay the same kind of attention to policy platforms as they once did.

Stephenson recalled conversations with friends during the spring election: “People were saying, ‘listen, I want to vote. It makes more sense for me to vote when I can at the advanced poll, far more convenient.’ ... None of them seemed concerned that they would be missing out on information that might have swayed

their decision if they waited until the end.”

She noted, however, that this year’s election was unique amid threats from the U.S., as a result of which “the issues in this election were pretty firm.”

Leichtnitz agreed: “Debates and platforms aren’t central to political decision-making for most voters in the way they were a generation ago, and that has a lot to do with our fragmented media environment and very online ways that younger

generations get their political information.”

Previously only available to certain groups of voters—like those unable to vote on election day due to religious beliefs, or age, infirmity, or advanced pregnancy—all Canadian voters have been able to vote in advance in 1993. In 2014, the Canada Elections Act was amended to add a fourth day of advance polling, and in 2018, advance voting hours were extended.

Also in 2018, the requirement that Canadians living abroad must not have been absent from the country for more than five years in order to vote was lifted.

While expats continue to make up only a small fraction—less than one per cent—of votes cast in a federal election, there was a notable uptick in interest this year. The number of Canadians abroad who requested special ballots almost doubled from 55,000 in 2021 to 102,000 this year, and while only a fraction (once again) returned them, altogether 57,440 Canadians living abroad voted this spring, compared to 27,035 the election prior.

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The Hill Times

Voting in Canadian elections, 2011–2025					
The following figures reflect total ballots cast in each category.					
	2011	2015	2019	2021	2025
Canadians living abroad (by special ballot)	6,332	11,001	34,144	27,035	57,440
All other special ballots	278,702	607,800	625,876	1,041,508	1,192,331
Advanced polls	2,111,542	3,677,217	4,879,312	5,895,072	7,504,283
Election Day	12,426,832	13,415,965	12,811,027	10,246,196	11,056,048
Total votes cast	14,823,408	17,711,983	18,350,359	17,209,811	19,810,102
Voter turnout (%)	61.1%	68.3%	67%	62.6%	69%

Source: Elections Canada

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NEWS



Centre Block’s multibillion-dollar renovations are expected to be completed by 2031. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

More than a third of steel used in Centre Block reno is non-Canadian

PSPC encouraged contractors to prioritize Canadian sources of steel at the government’s expense. No premiums have yet been incurred.

BY NEIL MOSS

Thirty-four per cent of the steel used for the Centre Block renovations is from foreign sources, reveal recent documents tabled in the House of Commons.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has increasingly pledged to crack down on foreign steel to protect the domestic industry.

The ongoing Centre Block remodel has used more than 4.2-million kilograms of steel. Of that, more than 2.7-million kilograms originate from Canada, and more than 1.4-million kilograms—or 34 per cent—is foreign sourced, including more than 180,000 kilograms from the United States.

Canada’s steel industry has been subject to a 50-per-cent levy for exports to the U.S. When an initial 25-per-cent tariff—which has since been doubled—was imposed in March, then-Public Services and Procurement (PSPC) minister Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale,



Prime Minister Mark Carney has prioritized the development of the domestic steel industry over foreign imports. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Ont.) issued a letter to suppliers telling them to prioritize Canadian sources, according to PSPC spokesperson Michèle LaRose.

The PSPC documents indicate that contracts awarded after the imposition of the U.S. tariffs include a clause to enable contractors to procure steel from Canada when possible. In such a case, PSPC would pay any premiums that come with the change.

LaRose told *The Hill Times* that no premiums have yet been incurred.

She noted that the “largest structural steel tender for the project recently closed” with all bidders being Canadian.

The documents were released in response to an Order Paper question by Conservative MP Ned

Kuruc (Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, Ont.).

In a statement to this newspaper, Kuruc’s office said that “Conservatives do have concern that Prime Minister Carney and this Liberal government fail to stand up for Canadian industries,” remarking that “they’re forfeiting Canadian steel and aluminum to foreign countries.” Kuruc’s office called for the passage of the Canada Sovereignty Act—an initiative floated by Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) in August—noting that it would “remove the barriers that still exist which block our industries,” citing Bill C-69, the emissions cap, and the industrial carbon tax.

Centre Block is in the midst of a more-than-decade-long renovation. Construction is expected to be completed by 2030 or 2031, with a cost of \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion. As of June 14, \$1.27-billion has been spent, according to the most recent PSPC release.

In June, Carney announced tariff rate quota changes on non-U.S. steel that was intended to give domestic supply a larger chunk of the market. Canada imposed tariffs on U.S. steel in response to the American levy in March.

The PSPC documents don’t indicate when the contracts were signed with the steel manufacturers.

Use of foreign steel ‘too high,’ says union

United Steelworkers researcher Guio Jacinto said

that, ideally, all steel used in the renovations would be sourced from Canada.

“I would think that 34 per cent [of foreign steel] is too high,” he said. “Saying that, we do obviously recognize that there are some limitations to Canadian steel production and production capacity in terms of certain products in Canada.”

He said some products aren’t made at all in the country or in enough quantity to satisfy the need.

“So we understand that if some of the steel being used in the Parliament renovations are not fully front made in Canada and that there are some imports,” he said. “But our desire and wish is that content would be maximized.”

Jacinto said, ideally, Parliament should be constructed with fully Canadian steel, but that may not be realistic given the current state of the market.

“That part speaks to the need to retool and to make sure that we do have that domestic capacity in place,” he said, remarking that the federal government does recognize the need to retool the domestic steel industry.

“But that’s not in place right now,” he added.

Jacinto said this work should have been done before the start of the latest trade war with the U.S.

“We’ve consistently pushed that Canadian taxpayer-funded projects should privilege Canadian-melted and -poured and -processed steel,” he said. “It’s unfortunate that it took a trade war with the United States for the federal government to—by necessity—prioritize Canadian-sourced steel in procurement.”

Canadian Steel Producers Association vice-president of trade and industry affairs François Desmarais said that the current level of foreign steel being used in the renovations is “not as bad as it could have been.”

He noted that 65 per cent of steel consumed in Canada comes from a foreign source.

He said that PSPC did what it could to have a “decent ratio” of Canadian steel used in the construction.

“So that’s not bad. It makes me very optimistic about the whole ‘Buy Canadian’ policy,” he said.

He said that the federal government should be using Canadian-sourced steel to the “maximum of our capacities.”

“We’re not expecting the Canadian government to reinvent the wheel or to procure Canadian when you don’t have that production in the country, but for the goods that we make in this country, it should be Canadian,” he said.

A question of how ‘Canadian’ the steel is

Jacinto said that the amount of the steel used in the Centre Block remodel that is melted and poured in Canada could be lower than what PSPC is listing as originating domestically.

He said that being of Canadian origin doesn’t necessarily mean that steel was melted and poured in Canada.

“There is a distinction between country of origin and country of melt and pour,” he said.

PSPC didn’t respond before publication deadline to a question about the quantity of the steel used in the Centre Block renovations that was melted and poured in Canada.

Jacinto noted that some of the manufacturers that are listed as having steel that is Canadian sourced don’t produce raw steel, and the question is whether the steel they roll is from within the country.

The Hill Times asked the seven manufacturers that are listed on the PSPC documents as supplying Canadian steel. Only Gerdau and Stelco responded, indicating that their steel is poured and melted in Canada

Jacinto said he wants the government to be buying steel that is not only rolled in Canada, but also melted and poured domestically.

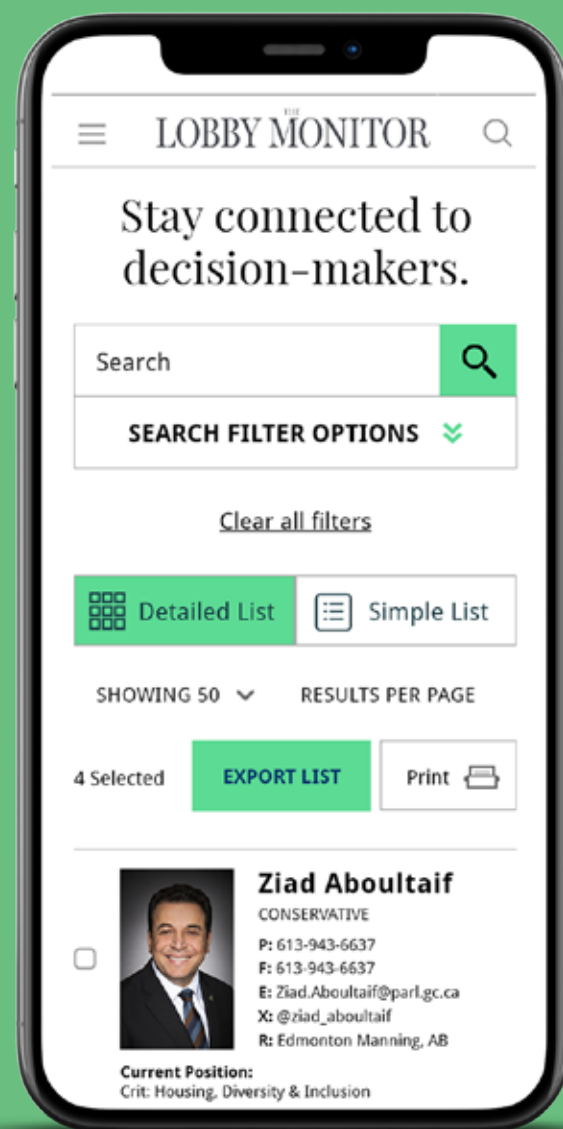
“That’s how you protect our crude steel-making capacity. It’s not as beneficial if that stuff is coming from overseas or even from the U.S.,” he said.

nmooss@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

Steel used in the Centre Block renovations	
Country	Weight (kg)
Canada	2,780,167
Bulgaria/United Arab Emirates/ Other	452,113
Italy	386,122
United States	180,983
Luxembourg, Spain, Germany, United Kingdom	167,829
United Arab Emirates/Turkey/ Egypt	130,022
Korea	128,366
Japan	17,726
Mexico	14,823

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Editorial

Editorial

Now is not the time for Zoom diplomacy

Prime Minister Mark Carney is back home this week after spending a couple of days in the United Kingdom where he met with a gaggle of world leaders in his ongoing quest to have Canada branch out from its overreliance on the United States.

His four-day trip abroad didn't conclude with any deals signed or agreements made, but the prime minister says that's not the point.

According to The Canadian Press, Carney told reporters his travel "was about telling the investors about major infrastructure projects being built in Canada and the ways the country is looking to court more global capital."

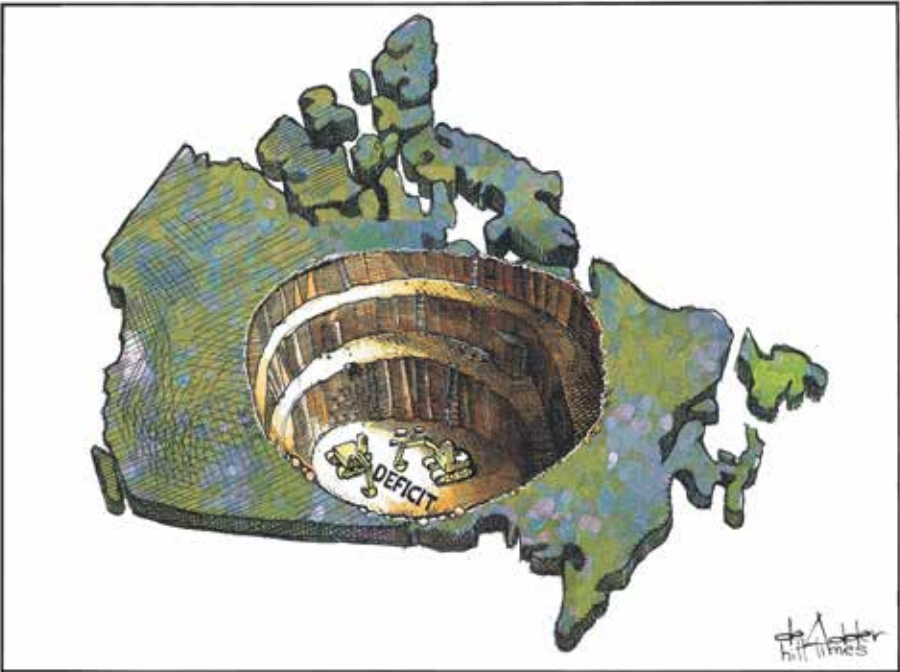
"The discussions I had in New York, and here, are discussions about the overall investment climate, not specific transactions or investment deals," Carney said, according to CP.

The frequency of Carney's travel overseas—he's made 13 foreign visits since his swearing in this past March—and the apparent "lack" of tangibles those trips have generated has been fodder for the opposition Conservatives.

In a Sept. 28 post on X, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre had this to say: "I'd be the first to cheer if Carney's globetrotting opened new markets. But the more he travels, the more markets shut & tariffs rise:

1. Carney met with Chinese leaders = new tariffs on our farmers & fisherman;
2. Carney texts with President Trump = more concessions, existing U.S. tariffs double & elbows lost;
3. Two glamorous trips to the UK = British blockade on [Canadian] beef remains & no free trade deal."

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

Harry H.J. Tseng, the representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada, says Canada should be advocating for Taiwan's inclusion in the International Civil Aviation Organization. The Hill Times photograph by Sam García



Safe skies at risk: why ICAO should include Taiwan

Every day, international flights—including those carrying Canadian travellers—cross East Asia's skies through the Taipei Flight Information Region (FIR). Managed by Taiwan, this single airspace is among the busiest in the world, handling more than 1.6 million flights and some 64 million passengers in 2024, reaching 89 per cent of the pre-pandemic level, with an outstanding record of safety and professionalism.

That safety is now under growing strain. Since 2022, the People's Republic of China has carried out at least six large-scale military exercises in and around the Taiwan Strait, repeatedly declaring exclusion zones or conducting live-fire drills without proper advance notice. In the most recent three exercises, warning times shrank from two hours, to two minutes, to none at all. Guidelines from the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) call for ample lead time—often up to seven days—to alert civilian pilots of hazards.

Beijing has instead chosen surprise and intimidation. This rising danger made the 42nd ICAO Assembly on Sept. 23 especially critical. As host state of the organization's Montreal headquarters, Canada has a special responsibility to protect ICAO's vision of safe skies. Aviation helps connect people and economies, and prevents any nation or community from being cut off from the world. The management of every segment of global airspace deserves participation in that system—Taiwan included.

Taiwan's air-traffic professionals already meet or exceed ICAO standards. Their expertise and real-time data are indispensable to the safety of every airline crossing East Asia. Yet, despite managing the strategically vital Taipei FIR, Taiwan remains excluded from ICAO because of Beijing's pressure. The paradox is stark: the authority that actually ensures regional safety is denied a seat, while the violator sits inside the system.

The international community must see this clearly: China's military drills are not only an assault on Taiwan, but a direct threat to global air travel, international trade, and Canada's own economic interests in the Indo-Pacific. In the wake of the ICAO Assembly convening, member states—including host country Canada—should affirm that Taiwan's meaningful participation is essential to safe skies and a sustainable future.

Harry H.J. Tseng
Representative of the
Taipei Economic and
Cultural Office in Canada
Ottawa, Ont.

COMMENT

A peek into the Rock's political race



Newfoundland and Labrador Liberal Premier John Hogan, left, Progressive Conservative Leader Tony Wakeham, and NDP Leader Jim Dinn are facing off in a provincial race. Photographs courtesy of Facebook and Wikimedia Commons

Newfoundland and Labrador voters will go to the provincial ballot box on Oct. 14, but all is quiet on the polling front.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—You wouldn't know it because it has been arguably one of the quietest political campaigns that anyone can recall in a while, but there is a general election happening in Newfoundland and Labrador. Voters go to the polls on Oct. 14 just after Thanksgiving weekend.

Equally strange, to date, halfway through the campaign, not one public opinion poll has been released. So, it is hard to get a true bearing on how the race is going. You can only imagine the level of tall tales of great political fortune and loss that exist in that vacuum.

The provincial Liberals have been in power since 2015. They are on their third premier, John Hogan, and they are seeking their fourth mandate. In other jurisdictions, that might mean change is inevitable; while anecdotally, there is some murmuring of change, it is unclear whether there is an outright shriek.

Hogan just became premier this past May, succeeding Dr. Andrew Furey. Hogan had previously served as a senior minister in that administration, and got into the provincial legislature by beating then-Progressive Conservative leader Ches Crosbie in the last provincial election. In Hogan's brief tenure as premier, he has had some controversy to deal with around a departure allowance for retiring ministers, but, beyond that, most of his time in the office was focused on managing the wildfires that ripped through the province this past August. He also had the benefit of overseeing a very successful Canada Summer Games. Hogan's major policy focus has been moving forward the memorandum of understanding (MOU) between Quebec and his province on the future of Churchill Falls—an agreement originally

struck by Furey with Quebec Premier François Legault.

Unsurprisingly, the MOU has become a hot topic in Newfoundland and Labrador, though in the absence of opinion data, it is unclear whether it will be a primary vote driver among the base electorate. Former premier Danny Williams—still a polarizing figure in the province—and other prominent politicians as well as business leaders decry the deal, and say it is not in the province's best interest to proceed. Other community and corporate leaders have come out in support of the MOU.

The current arrangement has conditional support of the provincial NDP, and two independents in the legislature. The Progressive Conservative opposition say they would put the agreement to the test of a public referendum to determine next steps.

While the high-level talk has been about Churchill Falls, the day-to-day policy announcements from each of the three main parties have focused on measures to address community safety, health care, and other affordability matters.

A word on Progressive Conservative Leader Tony Wakeham. He succeeded Crosbie and has proven to be an able politician, if not a bombastic one. Not unlike Crosbie before him, Wakeham has worked to rebuild relationships with the federal Conservatives that were non-existent during most of the Williams era. Wakeham is hoping that the successes the federal Conservatives had in the last national vote—going from one to three seats—are transferable, and that he holds or picks up many of the provincial districts represented in those three federal ridings. He needs people to want change—can he make them feel it?

Finally, NDP Leader Jim Dinn has done something no other provincial leader has done in recent memory: run a full slate of candidates in the province's 40 districts. Dinn is likeable, but barring some bizarre plot twist, he might be able to take the NDP from its current seat count of two to a handful, and exercise some influence in the legislature, but not much more.

Going on Newfoundland and Labrador tall tales is not a safe way to predict an outcome here, so for now I am going to firmly sit on the fence. Ah, those splinters. Somebody give us a poll!

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

The Hill Times

The Canadian Armed Forces is a shrinking tribe

With only roughly one in 684 Canadians serving in the regular forces, thinking that the country could mount any meaningful deployment to either Ukraine or Gaza on short notice is reckless.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Last week, at the United Nations General Assembly, Prime Minister Mark Carney spoke at a conference about peace in Palestine and a two-state solution where he discussed Palestinian statehood.

It was not a surprise that Carney would commit Canada to help implement a two-state solution; however, it was a bit of a shocker that Carney would pledge the use of Canadian troops to help enforce such an agreement.

Acknowledging that the dismantling of Hamas as a military and political force would be necessary before the implementation of a formal Palestinian statehood, Carney noted on Sept. 22 that Middle Eastern and European countries were already in discussions regarding the establishment of an international military force to accomplish this goal, "to which Canada will be a party to if that were to come to pass," adding "to enforce a peace and drive that process."

Now, beyond the question of committing Canadian soldiers to a Middle East quagmire that does not have consent from either faction, one has to wonder where exactly Carney thinks he is going to find the troops to deploy.

On Aug. 24, Carney also made a pledge to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv that, in the wake of a ceasefire agreement with Russia, Canada would be prepared to deploy troops to Ukraine as part of an international security guarantee. Again, where does Carney think he is going to find the troops and weapon systems to deploy as a deterrent to a very tangible Russian aggressor?

At a recent House committee, Major General Robert Ritchie revealed that the Canadian Army presently has more serviceable modern weaponry and vehicles forward deployed to the NATO mission in Latvia than it has based on Canadian soil.

The Canadian battlegroup at Camp Adazi in Latvia was initially comprised of 850 soldiers deployed in 2017 as part of NATO's Operation Reassurance. That number of personnel deployed has steadily grown to the current 2,200, and is set to increase to 2,600 by 2026. For Canada's

woefully under-strength Army, which consists of three Combat Brigades, supporting the Latvia mission requires a maximum effort.

To think that Canada could additionally mount any meaningful deployment to either Ukraine or Gaza on short notice is reckless in the extreme.

At present, the Canadian Armed Forces have a combined regular and reserve force shortfall of roughly 13,000 personnel. This is a crippling number, especially when it comes to specialized trades and technicians. The Navy cannot put even half of the fleet to sea, the Royal Canadian Air Force cannot fill all of its cockpits, and roughly half of the Army's vehicles are off road at any point in time due to a shortage of trained mechanics.

When we talk about the total number of regular and reserve force authorized strengths it needs to be noted that, in many cases, Canada is already leaning heavily on reservists to fill in the gaps in the regular force's ranks. The mission to Latvia would not be possible without full-time contracts to reservists to serve a tour.

This, of course, drains the militia armories of experienced personnel who would otherwise be part of the training cycle. In other words, even if the recruiting centres enlist the requisite numbers, the training system is unable to process them into trained personnel as long as the CAF remains operationally over-committed. It is tough to plant the next crop if you have already eaten your seed potatoes.

But, I digress. For those who wish to wax nostalgic, this was not always the case. In earlier times, Canada was actually a respected middle power when it came to our military forces.

In terms of the representation as a percentage of the general population, the downward trend has been staggering over the decades. For instance, in 1962 Canada fielded 126,474 regular force personnel while our nation's population stood at 18.6 million. Which means one in 147 Canadians was in uniform.

By 1986, the population had increased to 26.1 million while the regular forces had shrunk to 84,373, representing one service member for every 309 Canadians.

Today, with a population of more than 40 million, the Canadian regular force stands at an understrength 58,500 personnel, which means just one in roughly 684 Canadians is serving in the King.

The problem with this lack of visibility and public connection means that the Canadian military will be pressed for recruitment. At present, the CAF is almost a tribe with one in five married to a fellow service member, and 40 per cent of recruits having one or both parents serving in the military.

All of which brings me back to the point of Carney thinking he is going to deploy Canadian troops to Gaza and Ukraine. To attempt either such mission would break the camel's back.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Emergency wait times are a threat to our health

A June study by the Montreal Economic Institute revealed wait times across Canada have increased in the past five years, and that Quebec has the worst wait times in the country.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



MONTREAL—Health care is regularly in the headlines, for obvious reasons: it will cost \$375-billion in 2025, more than two-thirds of that from taxpayers. About 6.5 million Canadians don't have a family doctor, more than 2.3 million of them in Quebec. This means many people—including me—must go to an emergency room for primary care or a severe health emergency.

In an unintended piece of investigative journalism, I spent

close to a day in the emergency department of the McGill University Hospital Centre (MUHC) in Montreal. The hospital, completed in 2015 for \$1.3-billion, claims to be one of the most modern in the world. It's a five-minute walk from my Montreal pied-à-terre.

Early last week, I was feeling some fatigue and discomfort in Kamouraska, Que. Thinking I might have COVID, I took a test, which proved negative. The fatigue continued, and I became constipated. Then the pain began. I no longer have a family doctor, so I decided to put off a trip to the hospital in Rivière-du-Loup and try the MUHC.

Driving 400 kilometres to Montreal, the pain intensified; I was constipated, urinating frequently, and sweating. I thought it could be anything from my chronic diverticulitis, kidney stones, or my gallbladder as my father and sister had theirs removed later in life.

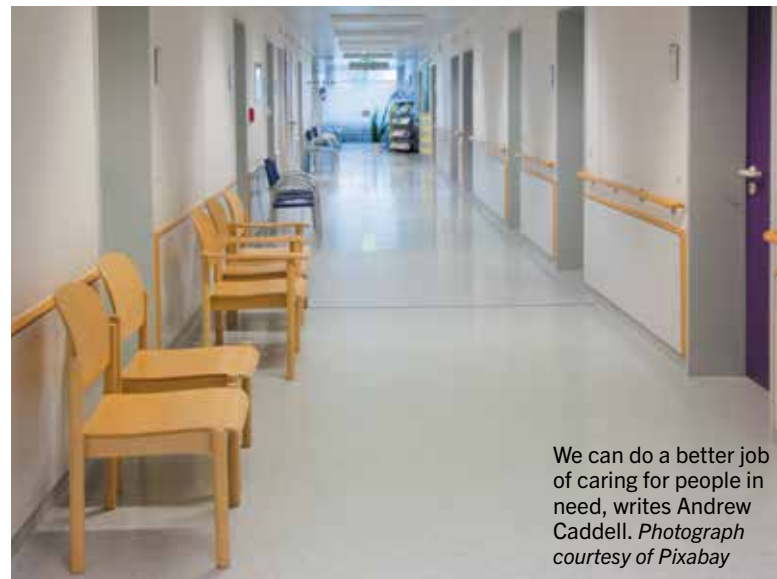
When I arrived in Montreal on the evening of Sept. 24 at 7 p.m. I immediately went to the MUHC emergency. There were about 60 people in the waiting rooms; I was rapidly triaged, with a note that I was "ambulatory." Within half an hour, I saw a nurse who took my blood pressure and asked for a urine sample. There were people

on stretchers being brought in, and I watched and waited.

As the night went on, I spoke to other patients, many of whom had been waiting since noon that day. I slept on a row of three airport-like upholstered bench seats. At 2 a.m., the pain had increased, and I took a number to see a nurse. He told me there were people dying in another part of the ER, and he offered me morphine, which I refused. He also could not tell me what the earlier exam had revealed, as nurses are not permitted to divulge that information to patients.

I went back to my bench seat bed, took some Advil, slept a while, and was awakened at 5 a.m. by a woman moaning from the pain of kidney stones. I wandered around and discovered the CT scan area, which was deserted. At 9 a.m., I was assigned to a doctor, and spoke to her at 10:15 a.m. I had blood taken, and my urine and blood tests were fine.

At 2 p.m., I had a CT scan in the now-busy examination rooms. At 5 p.m., I met with the doctor who said I had a lesion on my liver, which could have already been there, but there were no signs of gallbladder or kidney issues. She suggested the pain could be a back problem or severe constipation. I was



We can do a better job of caring for people in need, writes Andrew Caddell. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

discharged around 5:15 p.m.—a total of 22 hours. The pain had diminished, but not much. I took more Advil.

A June study by the Montreal Economic Institute (MEI) revealed wait times across Canada have increased in the past five years, and that Quebec has the worst wait times in the country with a median time of five hours and 23 minutes. The MUHC emergency average wait is almost eight hours. A September MEI study showed more than a million would-be ER patients across Canada left in frustration without receiving care.

What I learned from this experience is to prepare for the worst at an ER. I would support the idea of clinics to deal with non-acute medical emergencies, as is the

case in many European countries. That way, CT scans would be available before 7 a.m. Nurses in the ER should also have the power to tell a patient their status. And we need more family doctors to take the pressure off ERs.

All the patients I spoke to were aware the system has difficulties, and dealt with them stoically. The doctors, nurses, and staff were calm and professional. But it was clear everyone knew we could do a better job of caring for people in need.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at psn52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

The United States: calculating things to come

I'd be less confident about saying 'no' to an American civil war than I was in the old Soviet Union because there I couldn't figure out how people would choose sides. In the U.S., unfortunately, I can.

Gwynne Dyer

Global Affairs



LONDON, U.K.—A Danish proverb says, "Predictions are hard, especially about the future," but still we make them, especially when we care about the future. Here are some about the future of the United States in the next three-and-a-bit years, expressed as probabilities, although you should not trust the numbers.



Portland, Ore., residents protest the U.S. president's deployment of troops to the city to 'protect' an Immigration and Customs Enforcement facility on Sept. 28. Screenshot courtesy of YouTube/KPTV Fox 12

We can, for example, calculate the probability that a person will die within X years if we know their age, their sex, and a few other details. According to U.S. actuarial tables, a 79-year-old male American with a body mass index of around 30, like President Donald Trump, stands a 10-per-cent chance of dying before the end of 2028. But the tables can't tell you whether Trump is in that 10 per cent.

Prediction is hardest when events have complex causes and more than two possible outcomes, but that includes most historical events you might be interested in. However, you can start by deciding whether an event is zero probability or non-zero probability.

If an event has zero probability, then we need not waste any further time on it. If some development seems at all possible, we

can investigate the probability further by creating scenarios and considering their plausibility. For example, is there going to be a civil war in the U.S.?

"*Budyet grazhdanskaya voyna* (Will there be a civil war?)" was the question every foreign journalist got asked daily by ordinary Russians in the last years of the old Soviet Union. I would always say "no," and that turned out to

be right. I'm hearing the same question now with an American accent, so let's try it again.

Like the civil war of 1861-1865, an American civil war in the 2020s would technically be about states' rights. It would also have elements of religious war, race war, and old-fashioned left-right ideological struggle, but the main division would be between large blocs of "red" and "blue" states.

Most cities are "blue," and one by one, they are coming under siege by the red-controlled federal government. The reds (Republicans) are hard right, and the blues (Democrats) are centre-left, although Trump and his friends call them a "radical left terror group."

The U.S. army is generally complying with orders of questionable legality from the White House to assist in occupying blue cities. (The Judge Advocate General's Department, which would normally provide soldiers with legal reasons to refuse illegal orders, has been gutted in recent months.) But National Guard citizen soldiers are no good for the hard stuff.

Trump's shock troops are the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) troopers, a

Continued on page 12

COMMENT

At the UN, Zelenskyy urges action to avert a world of war

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy addresses the UN General Assembly on Sept. 24. Photograph courtesy of the Office of the President of Ukraine



In his Sept. 24 UN General Assembly address, the Ukrainian president gave a stark warning about the collapse of international law.

Les Whittington



Need to Know

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, who has become the conscience of the free world, used an epoch-defining speech to the UN General Assembly on Sept. 24 to condemn member states for their failure to stop Russia's invasion of his country. At the same time, he warned that the war started by Moscow is the leading edge of what is becoming a more dangerous world for all—a world dominated by great power aggression and AI-driven drone warfare that will leave no one safe.

Here is his speech, edited for length:
Dear leaders!

Dear friends and all those who can become our friends—because you want safety and peace just as much as we do.

Today, no one but ourselves can guarantee security. Only strong alliances. Only strong partners. And only our own weapons. No Ukrainian chose this kind of reality. And knowing our people, they would have chosen a different priority. Ukrainians are peaceful people. But they are people who want to live—to live freely, in their own independent country. That's why we invest in defence. For many nations, there is simply no other way left.

Nations can speak about their pain from stages like this, but even during bloodshed, there isn't a single international institution that can truly stop it. That's how weak these institutions have become.

And as Russia's war against my country goes on, people are still dying every week.

Yet there is no ceasefire—because Russia refuses.

Last year at this assembly, I warned the world about the risk of radiation disasters—especially due to Russia's occupation of our Zaporizhzhia Nuclear Power Plant, the biggest in Europe. But nothing's changed. Nothing. And yesterday, the plant went into blackout again. And Russia hasn't stopped shelling—even in areas near a nuclear facility. And because international institutions are too weak, this madness continues.

We must not forget about protecting the rights of people—and the rights of nations—in regions where these rights are under threat. The UN Charter and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights must apply everywhere. But the Taliban in Afghanistan dragged a whole country back into the dark ages. Cartels in some Latin American countries are more powerful than the governments there. This is all about the collapse of international law and the weakness of the international institutions. And so it's about the rise of weapons. Weapons decide who survives.

Now, there are tens of thousands of people who know how to professionally kill using drones. Stopping that kind of attack is harder than stopping any gun, knife, or bomb. This is what Russia has brought with its war.

Dear leaders! We are now living through the most destructive arms race in human history—because this time, it includes artificial intelligence. And if there are no real security guarantees—except friends and weapons—and if the world can't respond even to old threats, and if there's no strong platform for international security, will there be any place left on Earth that's still safe for people?

We need global rules—now—for how AI can be used in weapons. And this is just as urgent as preventing the spread of nuclear weapons. We need to restore international co-operation—real, working co-operation—for peace and for security. A few years from now might already be too late. And none of this would have happened if [Russian President Vladimir] Putin had not started this full-scale aggression, full-scale war. And every year that this war goes on, weapons become even more deadly. And only Russia deserves to be blamed for this.

for critical infrastructure later. Stopping Putin now is cheaper than trying to protect every port and every ship from terrorists with sea drones. Stopping Russia now is cheaper than wondering who will be the first to create a simple drone carrying a nuclear warhead.

So we must use everything we have—together—to force the aggressor to stop. And only then do we have a real chance that this arms race won't end in catastrophe for all of us. If it takes weapons to do it, if it takes pressure on Russia—then it must be done. And it must be done now. Otherwise, Putin will keep driving the war forward—wider and deeper.

And we told you before: Ukraine is only the first. And now, Russian drones are already flying across Europe. And Russian operations are already spreading across countries. Putin wants to continue this war by expanding it. And no one can feel safe right now.

So it depends on you—whether you help peace or continue trading with Russia and helping Russia to fund this war. It depends on you—whether prisoners of war will be freed, whether abducted children will come home, whether hostages will be free. It depends on you what will define existence: war, like now, or our joint strong actions, as it should be.

But in the end, peace depends on all of us—on the United Nations. So don't stay silent while Russia keeps dragging this war on; please, speak out and condemn it. Please join us in defending life, and international law and order. People are waiting for action. Thank you so much!

Glory to Ukraine!

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Dear leaders! The facts are simple: stopping this war now—and with it, the global arms race—is cheaper than building underground kindergartens or massive bunkers



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OPINION

Is PM Carney abandoning women, girls, and queer people in his austerity agenda?

With anticipated cuts to Women and Gender Equality Canada, advocates are concerned Prime Minister Mark Carney is turning his back on women and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights.

Fae Johnstone

Opinion



We are at a critical juncture in Canadian history as we witness a global backlash to women's equality and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights. Hate and violence are rising, and two Canadian provinces have passed anti-trans legislation that critics argue violate Charter-protected rights. South of the border, the United States is becoming an increasingly hostile nation when it comes to women's rights and 2SLGBTQIA+ equality. The beautiful and imperfect consensus on equality and human rights has become fragile. In some places, it has shattered completely.

In Canada and around the world, women, girls, and queer people are looking for leadership—for governments to stand up to rising hate, and safeguard the progress we have made. The question becomes: is Prime Minister Mark Carney up to the challenge? Or will Canada's commitment to equality and human rights be sacrificed in the name of austerity?

Carney was elected on an economic agenda, where he positioned himself as the best option to deal with U.S. President Donald Trump and unlock Canada's economic potential. But at what cost? And borne by whom? Under Carney's austerity agenda, women's advocates and 2SLGBTQIA+ activists are sounding the alarm that Women and Gender Equality Canada (WAGE)—the federal department responsible for advancing women's rights and 2SLGBTQIA+ equality—may be on the chopping block.

An updated departmental plan published by WAGE this past August shows that the department faces an 81-per-cent budget reduction by 2027-28 if new funds aren't invested. Such a cut would make the department a shell of

Prime Minister Mark Carney, centre, and Women and Gender Equality Minister Rechie Valdez, centre right, raise the Pride flag on Parliament Hill on June 10. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



its former self with devastating, long-term repercussions to women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

WAGE is a small, but mighty, department that plays numerous roles: it provides advice to other departments on issues of gender equality and 2SLGBTQIA+ rights, advances anti-discrimination efforts, and, perhaps most importantly, channels funding into local women's and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations across Canada. With costs rising, those funds have been a lifeline—helping keep services open and ensuring local support for vulnerable community members.

If funding is reduced by 81 per cent, WAGE will be unable to effectively carry out its mandate, and the funding it channels to women-serving and 2SLGBTQIA+ organizations across the country will be cut. That means that your local women's shelter, your local queer community organization, and a ton of other programs aimed at supporting vulnerable community members, advancing equality, and unlocking the economic potential of marginalized communities will be placed in an untenable financial situation. Organizations will shutter, services will close.

These organizations aren't just a "nice to have." They're critical to those affected by violence, poverty, discrimination,

and homelessness who rely on their services. They also play a longer-term role—tackling the discrimination that leads to lost economic output and worse health outcomes. Lost economic output and worse health outcomes mean lost economic activity (and thereby, lost tax dollars) and more costs to taxpayers through greater need for health and social services.

Morally, we should support these services because we care about those whose lives are made harder and harsher by discrimination. Pragmatically, we should support these services because they're in our long-term economic best interest. More equality and less discrimination leads to stronger economies.

The unpleasant, accompanying truth? You can't tackle equality overnight, and progress can't be achieved without real, sustained, investment. But it is well worth the cost. The previous prime minister understood that, which is why the women's department saw significant growth during his tenure.

Under Carney, the future of women's and 2SLGBTQIA+ equality funding is much more uncertain. He's definitely less showy on social issues than Justin Trudeau was, but there's no proof that means he's less committed to them. But if WAGE is reduced to a shell of itself

in this budget, we'll know his priorities do not include equality and human rights for women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people.

Cuts will be taken as a sign that Canada—like America—is turning its back on equality and human rights for women and 2SLGBTQIA+ people at the exact moment we need our government to step up. As hate and violence grow, as misogyny and homophobia make a comeback, Canadians will need their local queer and women's organizations more than ever.

In this economic landscape, we as advocates aren't asking for more. We understand budgets are tight for Canadians and our governments. But services can't survive on less. They've been made to do more with less, time and time again. They're stretched to breaking already, even as local demand continues to increase.

The prime minister still has time to correct the course, and to listen to women and queer people across Canada and pledge to maintain funding at existing levels. Let's hope he does the right thing and the smart thing, and shows he won't leave women, girls, and queer people behind.

Fae Johnstone is the executive director of *Queer Momentum*, and a leading 2SLGBTQIA+ human rights advocate.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The United States: calculating things to come

Continued from page 10

20,000-strong masked-up private army directly answerable to Trump. The fourth blue city to be picked off, just last week, is Portland, Ore., which Trump described as "war ravaged" (i.e. there were demonstrators).

So what should Oregon Governor Tina Kotek do? (She told Trump "we don't need help," to no avail.) She and her fellow blue-state governors are the only source of constitutional authority that has not fallen under MAGA control. If they are arrested, it's all over, and there are ICE offices in every state.

The governors almost certainly have contingency plans in place already to avoid arrest and work from hiding. They might not exercise that option if push came to shove, but they'd be foolish not to keep it in reserve.

This is not a *likely* scenario, but it is certainly *plausible*. And it's America, where most people have guns, so the civil war could kick off right there. People find it hard to believe that it could come like that, practically overnight, but, in fact, big changes of that kind usually happen overnight. You wake up in a different world.

I'm not predicting that this will happen, but it is a non-zero possibility. Maybe a 10-per-cent probability, maybe less. But I'd be less confident about saying "no" to an American civil war than I was in the old Soviet Union because there I couldn't figure out how people would choose sides. In the U.S., unfortunately, I can.

There are lots of less awful scenarios we could imagine, but few good ones. Turning the U.S. into an authoritarian state on the model of Hungary, with "free" but entirely predictable elections, would be a betrayal of a quarter-millennium of American history. (Probability 30 per cent?)

Invading the neighbours—Canada and Greenland—rarely works out well in the 21st century. (Ten to 15 per cent.) Tariff wars end in tears all round. (Seventy per cent.) But the most depressing scenario suggests that the U.S. has begun a high-speed recapitulation of the past century of Argentinian history. That would deliver it to the state Argentina is in now in only 20 or 30 years.

I'm not suggesting a probability for that, because I cannot believe how high it seems.

Gwynne Dyer's new book is *Intervention Earth: Life-Saving Ideas from the World's Climate Engineers*. The previous book, *The Shortest History of War*, is also still available.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Carney's so-called Combatting Hate Act is an attack on pro-Palestine expression

Pro-Palestine protesters routinely face specious allegations of hate that conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism.

Arash Ghiassi & Riaz Sayani

Opinion

We are lawyers who regularly defend protesters facing criminal charges. Our experience shows that no good will come from Bill C-9, the Combatting Hate Act. The Carney government is giving the police enhanced tools that could be used to criminalize dissent against Israel's genocide in Gaza under the guise of combatting antisemitism.

The government claims this bill, introduced on Sept. 19, is meant to "more clearly address

and denounce hate-motivated crime." The bill limits protest at certain locations, echoing the City of Toronto's likely unconstitutional bubble zone bylaw, and makes it a crime to display symbols "associated with" listed terrorist organizations in certain circumstances.

The bill also empowers the police to unilaterally lay "hate propaganda" charges, removing the existing requirement that the attorney general approve such charges, which could undermine freedom of expression.

But police don't need these new powers to address hate crimes. Much of the conduct the bill targets—like "threats or acts of violence"—is already illegal. And despite the government's claims to the contrary, the new offences seem designed to specifically muzzle pro-Palestine speech.

Pro-Palestine protesters routinely face specious allegations of hate that conflate criticism of Israel with antisemitism. Toronto Metropolitan University law students who signed an open letter in support of Palestine in 2023, for example, were widely accused of antisemitism, but an independent inquiry cleared them of that charge. The University of

Toronto similarly accused its own students of antisemitism in a lawsuit over a protest encampment. A judge rejected that allegation in July 2024, agreeing with the students about the risk of "a new form of McCarthyism against those who express support for Palestinian rights."

In our experience, police have been at the forefront of this new McCarthyism. In Toronto, the Hate Crime Unit is responsible for policing all protests related to Palestine. This assignment assumes that all pro-Palestine protesters are potential hate criminals—an assumption that smacks of anti-Palestinian racism.

In the case of the Indigo 11 (which we helped defend), the Hate Crime Unit directed SWAT-style nighttime raids on the homes of people who were alleged to have engaged in peaceful posterage. In widely reported press releases, police said they were investigating this incident as a potential hate crime. In fact, the evidence was to the contrary—Indigo was posteraged because of the CEO's support of the Israeli army, not because she is Jewish. The case ended with zero convictions, but not before severely

disrupting the lives of those subject to the police's baseless and devastating insinuations.

The Indigo 11 are far from the only victims of the police's heavy-handed response to pro-Palestine expression. According to community organizers supporting arrestees in the GTA, at least 133 pro-Palestine protesters have been charged in the last two years alone. Many of these charges are still pending; the rest have either ended in withdrawals or discharge. None have stuck.

The new bill makes this situation worse. For example, Jews Say No to Genocide have led peaceful protests outside of synagogues hosting the real estate sale of occupied Palestinian land, and the speaking tour of Israeli soldiers who participated in the Gaza genocide. This bill will criminalize these protesters and stigmatize them as hate criminals.

The bill's prohibition on symbols "associated" with terrorist groups will lead us down a dangerous slippery slope. One of the prosecutors initially assigned to the Indigo 11 case, for instance, had liked a social media post suggesting that Keffiyehs were "symbols directly associated with terrorist groups" (he

was eventually removed from the case). New York Police Department training materials have similarly classified the watermelon as an antisemitic symbol.

The very notion of the state making a list of "terrorist organizations" is rife with the potential for overreach. In Canada, the process for listing such organizations has long been criticized as "an arbitrary political tool that undermines freedom of association, freedom of expression and due process in the courts." International trends suggest the same. In the United Kingdom, for example, hundreds of people have been detained for silently holding signs supporting the activist group Palestine Action, which has been dubiously listed as a terrorist organization. In the United States, President Donald Trump's decree about Antifa is no less dubious.

The Combatting Hate Act will undermine our civil liberties. And far from combatting hate, it will—paradoxically—further institutionalize anti-Palestinian racism in Canada.

Arash Ghiassi and Riaz Sayani are Toronto-based criminal defence lawyers.

The Hill Times

Why are political leaders so complacent about our poor performance on women in politics?

Although Canada ranked in the top 30 for the percentage of women in Parliament at the start of the millennium, we've since dropped to 71st place in the world.

Shari Graydon

Opinion

Why have otherwise ambitious Canadian political leaders been so complacent about

our poor performance when it comes to women's representation in politics?

Yes, we've witnessed impactful women performing at every level of government, from then-Mississauga, Ont., mayor Hazel McCallion to then-Alberta premier Rachel Notley to a raft of impressive federal cabinet ministers in both major parties. But from a sheer numbers perspective, Canada is not even close to the most equitable nations.

Although Canada ranked in the top 30 for the percentage of women in Parliament at the start of the millennium, we've since dropped to 71st place in the world, in league with Latvia and Zimbabwe, not Iceland and Australia.

Recent polling conducted by Abacus Data shows Canadians aren't happy about it. Four in five Canadians are surprised or disappointed to learn how poorly we rate compared to other nations.

In fact, a significant majority (86 per cent) across party lines believe equal representation of men and women at all levels of government is important. This is consistent with the response in 2022 when the question was first asked.

Most Canadians (84 per cent) see gender parity as a way to achieve policies that better reflect the realities and needs of the broader population. The same proportion believe balancing power between men and women also increases respect in political dialogue.

Research in other jurisdictions bears out those perceptions, and provides evidence for the policy benefits that result when women play a larger role in governing. For example, a study looking at African countries found that more women in power resulted in greater investment in public health. A separate long-term analysis of 100 countries

found that a greater proportion of women in office translated into greater consumption of renewable energy.

Meanwhile, a review of governor effectiveness in the United States reveals that women were 20 per cent more likely than their male counterparts to pass their proposed legislation. In Congress, data show women sponsor and co-sponsor many more bills, and are more successful at securing funds for their districts.

As—or more—importantly, voter trust in institutions increases when power is more balanced. An international study that assessed attitudes towards the state of democracy in 35 countries found that in places with higher proportions of women in Parliament, citizens were more likely to feel confident that elections reflected their views.

In fact, recognizing these benefits, more than 130 countries around the world have implemented electoral reform or party rules to ensure that women are included as candidates or representatives. Canada's failure to do so poses a continuing and growing risk capable of undermining public trust.

Interestingly, recent research has found that even when gender parity is achieved through legally imposed quotas, people still see governments that benefit from the talents and contributions of both men and women as more legitimate than those dominated primarily by men.

Last fall, when Americans once again rejected an intelli-

gent, experienced, competent woman in favour of a convicted felon with a deeply compromised relationship to the truth, it was hard not to wonder: is Canada's willingness to tolerate women holding fewer than a third of the seats because we're adjacent to the U.S., which, at 78th in the world, does even worse?

Consider Mexico, where women hold half of the seats. It rewrote its constitution to acknowledge that in a democracy, women were entitled to parity. Similarly, Iceland introduced mandatory gender quotas and today women in its parliament exert equal legislature power by virtue of occupying 46 per cent of seats.

So, it's fair to wonder: if Canada were bordered by these countries, instead of the U.S., would we be more likely to insist that our political parties and governments put in place measures to ensure women hold the balance of power?

Canadians keen to see systemic, rather than incremental, change might urge their federal representatives to act now. Dozens of other countries have demonstrated a variety of paths to parity, and with sufficient encouragement, Canadian political parties could make a lot of progress before the next election.

Shari Graydon is the catalyst of *Informed Perspectives*, which has been leading *Balance the Power*, a collaborative advocacy initiative since 2022.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Canada's exploding wealth inequality requires tax changes

Our current tax code is not asking the wealthy to reinvest in our economy, and that failure is weakening services and programs working Canadians may use to get ahead.

Ratna Omidvar & Sabina Vohra-Miller



Opinion

Statistics Canada recently released a report on the growing income inequality in Canada. The report stated that income inequality—defined as the gap between the top and bottom 40

per cent of income earners—was at a record high, but that trend does not reveal the true depth of inequality in this country.

Now, a new report from the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) has given us a clearer picture of the wealth distribution in Canada. One of us is a former member of the Canadian Parliament, and the other is a current member of the 1%, so we're well-positioned to tell you that our current level of wealth inequality is threatening the stability of our economy and democracy, and is partially the result of a failure to tax extreme wealth.

The top one per cent of wealth holders now hold 24 per cent of total wealth, and close to half of that is held by just the top 0.1 per cent. More than a trillion dollars is held by just 1,800 families, the top 0.01 per cent of wealth holders.

For many Canadians, these numbers feel impossible to grasp. To be considered "middle class," i.e., among the middle 40 per cent of wealth holders in Canada, a household needs a net worth of

just \$300,000. Meanwhile, just 100 billionaires control nearly as much wealth as the poorest 7.32 billion households combined.

So why, when facing a deficit in a country this wealthy, is the government determined to focus exclusively on cutting services and jobs instead of examining how the tax code has fuelled this inequality?

Our economy should generate wealth, reward innovation and risk-taking, allow Canadian companies to grow, and employ Canadian workers. However, at the moment, neither the wealth nor the opportunities it creates are being shared. Our current tax code is not asking the wealthy to reinvest in our economy, and that failure is weakening and sometimes destroying services and programs that working Canadians may use to get ahead.

The current tax code is rocket fuel for expanding wealth inequality. While most Canadians are paying income tax on their paycheques, wealthy Canadians are only paying taxes on half of their capital gains income, or

borrowing against their assets and completely avoiding taxes, or inheriting huge sums of wealth tax free to ensure each wealthy generation starts with an even bigger head start than the one before. We are losing an estimated \$15-billion annually to the use of tax havens, and the Canada Revenue Agency is projected to raise hundreds of millions of dollars annually through efforts in combatting tax evasion and aggressive avoidance, but this could potentially be undermined if the agency faced significant cuts.

So, while working Canadians are paying higher rates than their ultra-wealthy fellow citizens, and while wealth inequality has exploded to historic levels, the government is currently considering a so-called "austerity budget" that is almost certain to make these problems worse. What the updated High-net-worth Family Database makes clear is that our problem isn't a lack of wealth, it's wealth inequality.

Prime Minister Mark Carney wants to cut tens of billions of

dollars in spending, but why not look at the other side of the ledger? The PBO estimates a small wealth tax, asking for very modest taxes on wealth over \$10-million, could raise close to \$121.5-billion over the next five years. Patriotic Millionaires Canada recently estimated that a three-per-cent tax on wealth over \$100-million could raise roughly \$25-billion annually. Before it was abandoned by the Liberal government, a modest increase to the rate on capital gains for the very wealthy—designed to bring it closer to the rate paid by working Canadians—would have raised \$19.4-billion over five years.

Beyond the revenue it generates, reforming our tax code is an essential first step in confronting the dangers of extreme wealth inequality. History shows that extreme wealth inequality often precedes societal collapse, as economies are made fragile and top heavy, and political power is concentrated in too few hands. To build a strong and resilient Canada, addressing this threat must be a top priority. The most effective tool available to the government to address extreme inequality is to tax the ultra-wealthy.

Ratna Omidvar is a retired senator and academic. Sabina Vohra-Miller is a public health scientist, philanthropist, and board member of Patriotic Millionaires Canada.

The Hill Times

Innovation as deterrence: how Canada's new NATO target can thrive in a tech-driven world

A robust innovation economy can be a deterrent against the economic and security threats facing the country.

Tracey Forrest, Michael P.A. Murphy & Paul Samson



Opinion

Canada's entire defence system was disrupted over the summer through the unveiling of a sharp increase in defence spending, the proposal of a new defence procurement agency, and the rollout of *Inflection Point*, a plan to restructure the Canadian Armed Forces. Not everyone has gotten the memo of this overhaul though, which needs to reach an audience far beyond Ottawa.

The changes coming to Canada's defence sector and its many related ecosystems—including Canada's entire research and development, and manufacturing sectors and foreign supply chains—will be transformational for the country.

This time, Canada won't get away with ignoring NATO commitments or its own internal targets. The new geopolitical order—high on instability and low on trust—won't allow for excuses from Canada, and there will be zero tolerance for backsliding from the Americans. Despite a tight fiscal framework, defence spending targets are going to the moon in Canada (from less than two per cent now towards five per cent of GDP over the next 10 years). Instead of collecting a peace dividend—where a peaceful world lets countries focus on their economy and society—the new challenge for governments is to ensure that military spending delivers its own "defence dividend."

Strategically, this disruption provides a huge opportunity for Canada to drive innovation,

growth, and productivity, all currently in serious short supply. Impactful innovation will mean Canada putting dual-use technologies—those with both potential civilian and military applications—at the heart of its approach. There are many of these dual-use technologies, such as quantum, cyber, and artificial intelligence, that new defence spending can tap into and also boost across R&D, startups, commercialization, and new products. As argued in a recent report published by the Centre for International Governance Innovation, the government must urgently change its approach to dual-use technology.

In the previous model, regulations and incentives led technology innovators to minimize potential military applications for fear of incurring export limitations without clear benefit. A new "dual-use first" approach can provide cohesion for existing government strategies while also ensuring that new research and development efforts support Canada's new NATO commitment to spend five per cent of

GDP on defence and defence-related expenditures. The first step is recognizing where existing programs—from the \$360-million National Quantum Strategy to the \$2.4-billion AI funding package announced in the 2024 federal budget, and across many research grant programs—are already dual-use in their impacts, and accounting for this contribution to Canada's defence spending framework. Connecting research and development efforts on dual-use technologies will also help build relationships between Canadian innovators and the defence community.

As the Carney government continues to develop its Bureau of Research, Engineering, and Advanced Leadership in Innovation and Science, further steps can be taken to ensure that dual-use programs maximize benefits for Canadian defence and society. R&D funding streams targeted for dual-use projects can expand capacity in priority areas for defence acquisition of advanced technologies while also developing technologies with wide civilian applicability across society.

Participating in joint dual-use initiatives with like-minded countries and within alliance frameworks can help connect Canadian researchers with best-in-class talent from around the world and support their work. Commercialization supports through Canada's regional development agencies and regulatory reviews can help startups and scale-ups reach their full potential. And finally, the development of an intellectual property strategy to shore up technological sovereignty will help bolster Canada's readiness to compete in the "intangibles" economy.

Robust investment in emerging dual-use technologies will ensure that the CAF have access to world-leading technology developed at home, while also bringing much-needed economic development. In an increasingly technology-driven world, a robust innovation economy can be a deterrent against the economic and security threats facing the country. But this will require a wider recognition that the relationship between technology and security has transformed.

Tracey Forrest is research director of transformative technologies at the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

Michael P. A. Murphy is the director of the Centre for International and Defence Policy at Queen's University.

Paul Samson is the president of the Centre for International Governance Innovation.

The Hill Times

OPINION

Climate collaboration with China serves Canada's national interests

Canada and China share a stake in mitigating climate change, and leveraging each other's strengths can lead to faster progress.

Wenran Jiang

Opinion



Amid complex geopolitical currents, Prime Minister Mark Carney's government faces a precarious "two-front trade war" with the United States and China. With Washington imposing sweeping tariffs, and Beijing retaliating against Ottawa's trade barriers, provincial premiers have unanimously called for pragmatic re-engagement with China.

Their urgency stems from economic losses: agricultural sectors crippled by Chinese tariffs, manufacturing disruptions, and stalled clean energy transitions. Premiers like Saskatchewan's Scott Moe and British Columbia's David Eby have urged Ottawa to drop its 100-per-cent tariff on Chinese electric vehicles in exchange for China lifting retaliatory measures.

During his recent address at the Council on Foreign Relations, Carney emphasized the need for a clear-eyed engagement strategy, noting Canada could "engage deeply" with China on energy and basic manufacturing. He highlighted China's sincerity on climate change, pointing to Beijing's "standing offer" to partner on climate issues. The recent meeting between Carney and Chinese Premier Li Qiang at the UN General Assembly marks



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, met with Chinese Premier Li Qiang on the margins of the UN General Assembly on Sept. 23. Screenshot courtesy of X

a significant step toward resetting bilateral relations. Both leaders acknowledged constructive dialogue at August's Joint Economic and Trade Commission meeting, and committed to high-level exchanges.

Framing China solely through a security lens risks overshadowing pragmatic co-operation on climate change. For Canada, engaging with China on clean energy is not merely optional—it is strategic. Canada aims to reduce emissions by 40 to 45 per

cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and achieve net-zero by 2050. China leads in renewable technology, producing more than half of the world's solar panels and dominating wind turbine and EV supply chains. Their complementary strengths are clear: Canada possesses critical minerals like lithium, nickel, cobalt, and copper, while China excels in processing and manufacturing clean technologies.

Two areas offer immediate potential. First, critical mineral

supply chains. Canada's mineral reserves align with China's manufacturing scale. Joint ventures in processing, battery production, or rare earth refining could bolster Canada's value-added industries while securing China's supply needs, aligning with Canada's Critical Minerals Strategy. Second, clean technology innovation. Collaboration on carbon capture is underway, with memorandums of understanding between Canadian entities and Chinese firms like Sinopec and China Huaneng Group. Partnerships in renewables—wind, solar, green hydrogen—could accelerate cost reductions. Canada's nuclear expertise also complements China's expanding sector.

Yet political headwinds persist. Bilateral relations are strained by diplomatic spats and security concerns. Canada's foreign investment reviews have blocked Chinese-linked projects in critical minerals. This was reflected in Li's remarks that Ottawa must "adopt a correct perception of China," and respect Beijing's core interests, showing gaps in mutual perceptions.

These challenges are compounded by trade tensions. China retaliated against Canada's EV tariffs with anti-dumping investigations into Canadian canola, a sector generating \$5-billion annually in exports to China. The trade war hurts farmers, disrupts supply chains, and makes EVs less affordable for Canadians.

Simultaneously, Canada's domestic climate policy has faltered. The federal government recently paused its ambitious EV sales mandate, which required 20 per cent of new vehicles sold to be zero emission by 2026, rising to 100 per cent by 2035. With EV sales stagnating at around eight to nine per cent of the market, Canada's transition to clean transportation risks stalling. The tariff war exacerbates this situation by limiting affordable EV options.

Investment remains a hurdle. While two-thirds of global clean

energy investment comes from China, its presence in Canada is limited due to regulatory barriers. Canada forced Chinese investors to divest from a rare earth mining project, hindering capital flow for scaling clean energy.

Despite tensions, opportunities persist. Bilateral business councils promote investment dialogues. Quebec's 30 per cent zero-emission vehicle sales success shows policy stability drives adoption. Canada's strengths in hydrogen and green ammonia could attract Chinese technology and scale.

To advance co-operation, Ottawa must clarify investment frameworks to reduce ambiguity. It should expand joint research and development in solar power and battery storage, leveraging China's technical expertise. Both nations should prioritize multilateral climate forums to build trust.

The New York meeting underscores that Canada and China are navigating a pivotal juncture. By addressing trade disputes through dialogue and leveraging multilateral platforms, both countries can transform climate collaboration into a stabilizing force.

The trade war and retreat from EV targets underscore a broader dilemma: Canada cannot achieve its climate goals alone. Protective tariffs ultimately slow the clean transition by isolating Canada from global supply chains. Carney's "tiered engagement" approach offers a pragmatic path forward. Treating climate collaboration as a technical, rather than geopolitical, issue could unlock synergies.

Canada and China share a stake in mitigating climate change. By leveraging each other's strengths—Canada's resources and innovation, China's technology and scale—they can advance decarbonization faster than going it alone. Pragmatic co-operation is not a concession; it is a strategic necessity for a secure, sustainable future.

Wenran Jiang—the founding director of the China Institute, and MacTaggart Research chair emeritus at the University of Alberta—is the president of Canada-China Energy and Environment Forum, and an adviser at the Institute for Peace and Diplomacy.

The Hill Times

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NEWS

Public servants urge data sovereignty in recent survey, while AI minister says ‘data isn’t gold in Fort Knox’

Ninety-four per cent of public servants surveyed this summer say citizens’ data must be stored within Canada, and 86 per cent worry about public trust eroding if such data is stored outside of the country.

BY MARLO GLASS

Canada’s minister of artificial intelligence says the government needs to grow its capacity to store highly sensitive data inside the country, but will continue to use the data storage infrastructure of American-based tech giants in some cases, while a new survey shows public servants fear that a lack of data sovereignty may contribute to the public’s distrust of the new technology.

“Data is not gold in Fort Knox where you lock it up,” Minister Evan Solomon (Toronto Centre, Ont.) told reporters at All In, an event in Montreal dedicated to artificial intelligence, on Sept. 24. “There has to be use cases for it.”

Solomon mapped out three different scenarios for how data should be stored: a “highly secure, totally sovereign” storage system for highly sensitive and top secret government data; a storage system for “public” data; and a “hybrid model” that blends the two.

He acknowledged Canadians are “concerned” about the storage of sensitive data related to their health and finances, among other personal topics.

“So how do we make sure that information stored is under Canadian law, and yet we’re still trading with the world?” Solomon said. “We need to use those American companies.”

As the Canadian government begins adopting AI tools among daily work practices, with many departments encouraging both public servants and the public to take part, it still relies—at least in part—on United States-based tech giants like Google, Microsoft, and Amazon for cloud storage.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has promoted the



AI Minister Evan Solomon says ‘we need to use’ the data storage infrastructure of U.S.-based tech giants in some cases. But the majority of public servants surveyed this summer by KMPG in Canada say citizens’ data must be stored in the country. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

idea of building Canada’s own sovereign cloud, saying in early September that such a project would “build compute capacity and data centres that we need to underpin Canada’s competitiveness, to protect our security and to boost our independence and sovereignty.”

Under U.S. law, data hosted on servers owned by American companies could be turned over to U.S. law enforcement upon request.

Public servants feel strongly that data used in large language models (LLMs) must be stored within Canada, and fear that a lack of data sovereignty may contribute to the public’s distrust of AI, according to results from a recent survey about AI use in the public service.

Ninety-four per cent of public servants surveyed this summer by KMPG in Canada say citizens’ data must be stored within Canada, and 86 per cent worry that public trust is eroding if such data is stored outside of the country. Additionally, 87 per cent say more must be done to establish and provide incentives for private industries—like large cloud service providers—to ensure sensitive or personal citizen data remains within Canada.

The results come from a nationwide survey of 349 public servants in federal, provincial, and municipal governments. Of the respondents to the survey, which targeted leaders and senior professionals, 41 per cent work for the federal government, 29 per cent for provincial governments,

and 24 per cent work for municipalities, with the remaining six per cent employed at Crown corporations.

Ven Adamov, a partner and data analytics leader with KPMG in Canada, said there is a drive for this country to build its own sovereign cloud infrastructure to safely host and store Canadian data.

“We can see the world today is in quite a boiling point,” which highlights the importance of sovereign cloud, and the ability to control digital infrastructure and data, Adamov told *The Hill Times*.

“Just like critical physical infrastructure, so we have critical data infrastructure, in the digital domain,” Adamov said.

“Do we have complete control over those [American] companies? We don’t. They’re foreign companies. They’re big companies. I think there is a drive within the federal government to start working with Canadian providers.”

Shared Services Canada (SSC) is the department responsible for much of the information technology infrastructure across the federal public service. SSC provided *The Hill Times* with a list of six AI models used within the department, three of which are processed in Canada, and three of which are processed in the U.S.

When SSC uses LLMs in generative AI, the data is stored in an SSC-certified cloud data centre, “adhering to stringent policy and legislative requirements for security and privacy of data,” said spokesperson Nick Wells via email.

He said the department launched its own generative AI chatbot to assist its own employees, and the tool “adheres to [Government of Canada] policies and standards while enhancing Canada’s digital sovereignty,” but some process requests outside of the country.

“Models hosted outside of Canada are clearly identified, ensuring CANChat users are informed about the model location and can select the most suitable model for their task. All of this is done within a controlled environment that ensures appropriate security and data integrity,” said Wells.

While the department’s data is stored in an SSC-certified cloud service provider in Canada, “SSC cannot speak to the location of LLMs used by other departments.”

Wells said SSC recently launched a “request for information” to explore a sovereign cloud option with domestic providers to “complement existing hosting solutions and further strengthen Canada’s digital sovereignty.”

Additionally, the department has also begun the procurement process for “next-generation High Performance Computing systems,” he said. These systems “will underpin sovereign AI capabilities by securely scaling AI workloads across Canadian-operated environments, ensuring that sensitive data remains protected and under Canadian control.”

Earlier this summer, the federal government signed an agreement with Canadian AI firm

Cohere to identify where AI can be used to improve the public service.

Sofia Ouslis, a spokesperson for Solomon, said the agreement “emphasizes the importance of privacy, security, and digital sovereignty, and any future use of government data would be subject to strict safeguards and compliance with federal data governance standards.”

Adamov said AI carries risks because the models mimic how humans operate, simulating “the breadth, depth, variety of human output in terms of speech, code, video, audio generation.”

Aside from data sovereignty, Adamov said widespread use of AI in the government and public service is associated with different risks, including privacy and security breaches and fights over intellectual property rights, as well as cyberattacks, misinformation, and disinformation.

“That will be one of the biggest [issues] in the public sector when we talk about policy and political process,” along with “the risk of privacy and security, information being put into public bots that can be included in bots training, retained by the bots or those behind them, is one of those biggest risks,” he said.

AI anxiety is real, survey says

Just under 70 per cent of the survey’s respondents reported anxieties surrounding the use of AI within their organization, with concerns ranging from job security and ethical dilemmas to privacy, fake content, deepfakes, and disinformation.

Additionally, 77 per cent of respondents said they fear “losing control over the AI system and the results of its work.”

Adamov said he believes a lot of anxiety stems from the fact that AI is a novel technology, and the level of understanding among the general public is low. And while data scientists may have a better view of the future of AI, “even they cannot predict exactly where the technology will go, how it will impact everyone’s lives,” he said, adding “but that’s the case for any emerging technology.”

Anxiety also stems from the breakneck pace of AI technological developments, he said, with models able to “write new code and create new solutions in the blink of an eye, so to speak, as opposed to what a human would take to develop.”

“To me, the anxiety comes mostly from misunderstanding, or a lack of understanding and awareness as to the possibilities that these technologies can provide,” Adamov said, likening the new technology to the way computers and smartphones reshaped daily life and work habits.

“There is a level of anxiety each time when new technology comes around,” he said. “We had the same level of anxiety and turmoil when machines appeared in the manufacturing process in the 1800s, right?”

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Without clarity, Kneecap ban appears as a ‘politically motivated PR stunt,’ say critics, civil liberties, and immigration experts

‘At a time when people’s constitutional rights are under threat and routinely stripped ... Canada must be vigilant in protecting our freedoms and not mimic or be influenced by’ the U.S., says NDP MP Jenny Kwan.

Continued from page 1

secretary of state on combatting crime, announced on social media that the Irish rap trio Kneecap had been deemed “ineligible to enter our country.”

“Kneecap has engaged in actions and made statements that are contrary to Canadian values and laws that have caused deep alarm to our government,” Gasparro said in a video. “[Kneecap] have amplified political violence, and publicly displayed support for terrorist organizations such as Hezbollah and Hamas.”

According to Sections 34-37 of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, the federal government can deny entry due to suspicion of participation in espionage, violence, terrorism, or attempts to overthrow a government; the commission or conviction of war crimes or crimes against humanity; criminal conviction including intoxicated driving; or membership in a criminal organization, among others related to health and financial status. Sec. 32 also states that facts related to inadmissibility include those that lead officials to believe those acts “have occurred, are occurring, or may occur.”

At the time of Gasparro’s announcement, one of Kneecap’s members, Liam Óg Ó aHannaidh, who performs under the stage name Mo Chara, had been facing terrorism charges in the United Kingdom after footage emerged of him waving a Hezbollah flag while performing in London last November. That case was dismissed on Sept. 29 due to a technical error in the way the charges were laid.

U.K. Chief Magistrate Paul Goldspring ruled the proceedings had been “instituted unlawfully and are null,” after finding that the prosecutors had missed the deadline to lay charges by one day.



Liam Óg Ó aHannaidh, centre, a member of the Irish rap trio Kneecap, leaves a U.K. court on Sept. 26, following the dismissal of his terrorism charges for waving a Hezbollah flag. Photograph courtesy of X

Following Gasparro’s video, Kneecap responded on social media, calling his comments “wholly untrue and deeply malicious,” and stating that the band had instructed its lawyers to initiate legal action against him.

As Gasparro’s comments were not made inside the House of Commons, they are not legally protected under his parliamentary privilege.

Kneecap has also stated that it has yet to receive an official notification of the ban, other than Gasparro’s social media video, but has cancelled its Canadian tour dates scheduled for this October.

While Gasparro declined to comment on the video on several occasions after it was released, following Question Period on Sept. 29, he did stop to speak with reporters to comment on the legal threat.

“Let me be very clear on that. I’ve done a lot of things in my private sector career. I’ve never been sued. If they want to sue me, I look forward to it,” Gasparro said, but declined to comment on the terrorism charges getting tossed or provide further comment on the ban.

“I made the video based on the information that was available, but look, in terms of the actual commentary, I’ve nothing further to add, and any further comments, immigration officials will answer,” Gasparro said, adding that he would leave the “rollout” to the public service and Immigration, Refugees, and Citizenship Canada (IRCC).

However, while Gasparro stated that the announcement had been made “on behalf of the Government of Canada” and “on

the advice of our officials,” none of those officials or associated ministers within the government have been willing to comment or even confirm the ban.

Just hours after Gasparro’s announcement, Justice Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) declined to comment on the decision following his press conference on the tabling of the Liberals’ new anti-hate legislation, Bill C-9.

“I’ve only just become aware of this in the minutes before I’ve come out to the microphone,” Fraser said, redirecting reporters’ questions to “the appropriate department to find an answer.”

However, both IRCC and Immigration Minister Lena Diab (Halifax West, N.S.) also declined to confirm whether a decision had been made to ban Kneecap, citing “privacy reasons.”

When asked by reporters on Parliament Hill to confirm the ban, Diab said she was unable to comment on individual cases, and did not respond to shouted questions from *The Hill Times* regarding how Gasparro would have been allowed to make the original announcement video given her department’s stated privacy concerns.

Heading into caucus on Sept. 24, Liberal MP Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre–Don Valley East, Ont.) said she would be seeking that clarity once inside. She said she had not received any answers two days later.

While Zahid noted that entry into the country is a “privilege and not a right,” she added that those decisions should be made based on the “provisions within the immigration act by public service visa officers.”

“While there are obviously limits, I think we need to be careful restricting entry to Canada based on speech, and such decisions need to be made fairly and consistently, without political interference or bias,” Zahid told *The Hill Times*.

Speaking on background to share their opinions freely, senior Liberal sources also expressed concern over how the announcement had been made, and similarly remained in the dark over whether the ban had indeed been implemented. However, none were willing to offer Gasparro the benefit of the doubt that the announcement was entirely above board, with one source describing him as a “loose cannon.”

One senior Liberal source told *The Hill Times* that they think Gasparro’s tenure as parliamentary secretary is now in jeopardy, and that the announcement could cost him his position.

On Sept. 28, CBC News reported that Gasparro had not alerted the offices of Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough–Guildwood–Rouge Park, Ont.), or the federal privacy commissioner before the announcement, and that the former had only learned of the situation once the video was posted to social media.

Canada’s Privacy Act stipulates that the head of a government institution must notify the privacy commissioner in writing before disclosing private information, provided that “the public interest in disclosure clearly outweighs any invasion of privacy that could result from the disclosure.” However, that legislation does not generally apply to parliamentarians acting in an official capacity.

Following the CBC’s reporting, Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.), took to social media to post a gif of a dumpster fire, followed by her own request to IRCC and Diab to confirm whether Kneecap had been banned while tagging Gasparro’s account.

NDP MP Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.) said the lack of clarity from Gasparro or any of the involved ministers calls into question whether the announcement was “actually government sanctioned.”

“When actions are taken haphazardly and without accountability, it comes across as politically motivated and can be viewed as censorship,” Kwan told *The Hill Times*. “At a time when people’s constitutional rights are under threat and routinely stripped, as is the case south of

the border, Canada must be vigilant in protecting our freedoms and not mimic or be influenced by the likes of [U.S. President Donald Trump].”

Several sources also noted the incongruity with the decision to ban Kneecap when the Government of Canada had allowed Christian singer and “MAGA superstar” Sean Feucht to perform multiple legs of a Canadian tour this summer—despite his documented associations with a listed terrorist entity, the Proud Boys, members of whom he engaged as security detail in 2021, post-designation. Feucht has also previously denounced what he calls “gender confusion [and] sexual perversion” among young people, abortion as “the slaughter of the unborn and the newborn,” and described Pride Month as a “demonic agenda seeking to destroy our culture and pervert our children.”

Anais Bussi eres McNicoll, director of the fundamental freedoms program for the Canadian Civil Liberties Association told *The Hill Times* that the handling of the ban has made what should have been a legal decision by a border officer into a political determination.

“The decision to grant or deny access to Canada should not be a political one, and it should not be about whether the government agrees or disagrees with the applicant’s views,” Bussi eres McNicoll said. “But the way in which the announcement was made was very obviously a political statement.”

Liew said that while the way the announcement was handled was “extremely unusual,” the lack of clarity was not, given her experience attempting to receive answers from IRCC.

Liew explained that, in some high-profile cases or when an applicant is already working with a lawyer, an individual may be notified of their ban. However, in many cases, they would only be informed upon arrival at a port of entry.

Liew also noted that, despite the recent charge dismissal, the current regulations would still permit the band to be barred from the country, particularly given the publicly available video evidence.

However, Liew said regardless of whether Kneecap is indeed banned from entry, the announcement made by a parliamentary secretary to an unrelated ministerial file appears more as a “politically motivated public relations stunt” rather than a “considered legal determination.”

“This is unprecedented and raises questions about how the government is maintaining the lines drawn in cabinet,” Liew said.

Liew added that even if Gasparro’s announcement was in line with the IRCC’s own decision-making, the question remains as to how Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) would address Gasparro’s apparent “rogue behaviour.”

Prime Minister Carney did not respond to questions regarding Kneecap’s ban following his bilateral meeting with Ireland’s Taoiseach Miche al Martin on Sept. 25, and his office has directed all questions to IRCC.

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NEWS

Conservatives seize on Liberals' 'law-and-order vacuum' as Trump anxiety wanes, but 'MAGA North' comparisons still a concern, say strategists

Pierre Poilievre will remain in a difficult spot since the U.S. is touchy for many Canadians while Trump is backed by some Tory supporters, says Matt Chilliack.

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the 2020 election cycle, and as a director for a political action committee in 2024.

"Trump isn't suddenly going to become a friendly player to Canadian interests, and there's still another three-and-a-half years, God willing," Chilliack said, pointing to Trump's musings on running for an additional third term. "The lesson for the Conservatives from the last election should have been to shelve anything that helps those comparisons, but it increasingly seems it's the opposite."

Although there's still an overall Grit lead, recent polling from Abacus Data and the Angus Reid Institute suggests the Conservatives are either tied with or leading the governing Liberals.

In an Angus Reid survey published on Sept. 23, the Conservatives held a three-point lead over the Liberals, 41 per cent to 38 per cent, due in part to a mixed reaction to Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) initial list of major national projects, and the negative perception of the action his government has taken to address immigration levels, government spending, and housing affordability.

Abacus Data's Sept. 21 survey also found that while the cost of living (57 per cent), the economy (37 per cent), and housing affordability (34 per cent) continue to dominate as Canadians' central issues, the concern over crime and public safety has risen by four points in just over two weeks to 20 per cent, while worries over Trump have fallen from the mid 40s during the election to 34 per cent.

Nanos Research's national issue tracking also demonstrates a similarly significant drop for worries about the U.S. president, down from the top issue at 41 per



Conservative Party Leader Pierre Poilievre holds a press conference on rising food prices at the Fire of God Ministries food bank in Ottawa on Sept. 29. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

cent at the beginning of April to just 12.4 per cent as of Sept. 26, while "jobs and the economy" has remained steady at just below 20 per cent.

Ashton Arsenault, vice-president at Crestview Strategy and a former ministerial staffer in the Harper government, told *The Hill Times* that alongside the Conservatives' criticisms of the Liberals' attempts to address housing, the cost of living, and government spending, there is a large political void on crime and public safety that the opposition is more than happy to fill.

"The Carney government has definitely been a little more ambitious and moved faster on some of those issues compared to the Trudeau government, but there is still a big law-and-order vacuum," explained Arsenault.

Of the 19 pieces of legislation the Conservatives have put forward in the House since the election, 12 are primarily focused on crime or changes to the Criminal Code, including Bill C-242, the Jail not Bail Act, and private members' bills focused on victims' rights, parole review, and intimate partner violence.

Arsenault said that while some may frame the focus as a return to the "red meat" social issues that energize the Conservative base, he instead views it as responding to the increasing appetite among the majority of Canadians for "justice and an end to the persistent lawlessness on Canadian streets."

"This is less of a social issue and more about what society deems as right and wrong, and I don't know how many more

examples of these exceptionally violent offenders committing heinous crimes while on bail that need to hit the headlines or the news reels before something actually gets done about it," he said.

Arsenault said the Liberals received somewhat of a "free pass" following the election and into the summer as Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.) focused on winning his August byelection. However, with Poilievre's return to the House, the pressure will only increase.

Conservative strategist Cole Hogan said that the focus on crime is an especially effective issue for the party as it is not only one of the few issues the Liberals have yet to address meaningfully, but it is also one of the main issues on which the Conservatives have retained the most trust from Canadians.

According to the Abacus survey, 66 per cent of respondents indicated that the Conservatives were the best party to address crime and public safety, compared to just 17 per cent who said the Liberals were best placed.

"If you're someone who is immersed in American news or social media, Trump might still be omnipresent for you, but if you're going about your day to day in any major city in Canada, what you're seeing is crime and addiction," Hogan said. "It makes total sense for the Conservatives to stake out this position because that's where Canadians are at, and the Liberals will have to play defence on why they haven't done anything to address it."

In early September, prior to Parliament's return, Carney told reporters that his government would table a bail-reform bill this fall, putting it on the agenda alongside the Liberals' recently introduced anti-hate legislation, and plans to address intimate partner violence, and online exploitation.

During the spring election campaign, Carney said the Liberals would tighten bail laws for individuals accused of home invasion, car theft, and violent or organized crime.

Speaking with reporters on Sept. 10, Justice Minister Sean Fraser (Central Nova, N.S.) said the government is aiming to table the bail reform legislation in October.

"It's important that we not only advance these measures to improve the public safety outcomes for communities, but ... ensure that people actually have faith in the justice system," Fraser said, adding that the Liberals are willing to work with the Conservatives "if they are willing to work alongside us to advance reforms that will help keep communities safe without necessarily aiming solely to gin up dissent for a political purpose."

However, Arsenault and Hogan said that introducing legislation and making a compelling case to Canadians regarding its efficacy are two separate things, and Carney's ministers have not demonstrated a high level of aptitude in the latter.

As one example, Hogan pointed to Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree (Scarborough-Guildwood-Rouge Park, Ont.) "blowing up" the Liberals' introduction of the gun buyback program pilot before it even happened after an audio recording of a private conversation was released online in which the minister cast doubt on his confidence in the program.

"If you've got ministers doing double-speak and admitting to doing things they don't believe in, that's going to hurt whatever credibility the Liberals have left," Arsenault explained. "And if ministers are going to keep making mistakes, that's going to add up and test whether or not this government's in it for the long haul."

Hogan said that while Carney is most comfortable addressing his international agenda, "the prime minister of Canada is ultimately going to be judged on domestic issues."

"Carney likes to do the jet-setting international stuff, but he is either going to have to start deploying his ministers more effectively at home, or start handling these domestic issues himself," Hogan said.

However, both Ashton and Hogan noted that the Conservatives need to remain vigilant and not get distracted by the more fringe issues.

As one recent example, both noted the focus some Conservative MPs have given in support of the ostrich farm in B.C. that is currently embroiled in a dispute with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency over a planned cull of its more than 300 birds due to avian flu. Other prominent right-wing supporters of the farm include Robert F. Kennedy Jr., the U.S. secretary of health and human services.

"I would prefer if no one brought up the ostriches because it's, quite frankly, one of the dumbest stories I can recall," Arsenault explained, adding that—thankfully, he said—Poilievre has yet to wade in.

Hogan said that there will always be segments of any party's base that will inevitably get excited over one issue or another, no matter how niche, and will put pressure on their local MPs to speak out, but advised the Conservatives to maintain some level of message discipline.

While the Conservatives seem less concerned about comparisons to Trump or the Republican Party since the election, Chilliack said three-and-a-half years is a long time to hope the president stays quiet.

"The concern over Trump may have receded slightly, but it won't take much for him to ramp it back up," Chilliack said. "And from what we know about Trump, there's no predicting when that will be, what it will be on, and just how crazy the issue that it's going to be on is going to be."

While Chilliack said he's confident Poilievre will easily pass his leadership review in January 2026, he will remain in a difficult position so long as Trump remains a concern for a large swath of Canadians, while at the same time enjoying support from a significant number of Conservative supporters.

Additionally, while Poilievre himself will be vulnerable to comparisons with Trump, his tenure as leader has also been buoyed by a significant number of supporters who like that comparison.

"There's always been a split between the small-c progressive conservatives and the further-right Reform side, but currently, you can argue that Reform is winning," Chilliack explained. "They may have retreated somewhat under Harper's minority governments and had to moderate many of their positions, but I don't know if the moderates will be able to do the same for long."

"They may want those moderates to think Trump is going to go away and the comparisons will stop, but it's hard to see that side coexist with the side that wants to be MAGA North."

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Carney calls Indonesia trade deal ‘game changing,’ but labour says it is a ‘step backwards’

Canadian negotiators faced opposition to convince their Indonesian counterparts to accept enforceable labour chapters.

Continued from page 1

the modernized Canada-Ukraine trade agreement, which is disappointing,” she said.

She said the language for the labour chapter isn’t “as strong” as past deals, nor are its enforcement mechanisms.

Kwan highlighted the language in the provisions against forced labour and violence against workers, which she said focuses more on co-operation as opposed to a reverse-onus system that puts the burden of proof on the party that is alleged to have breached the obligation and not the victim.

“Canadians should be wary of that because there are reports that there is forced labour in the country and child labour,” she said. “Regardless of whether the Indonesian government is doing or not doing anything about it, the fact is that there is. That affects the value of Canadian labour and Canadian workers under the trade agreement.”

In Canada’s objectives for a trade agreement with Indonesia that were tabled in the House in 2021, the then-Trudeau government noted that Canada would “seek to uphold labour rights and standards,” which included a “comprehensive and enforceable labour commitments.”

The Hill Times previously reported on a stakeholder briefing from the fall of 2023 where negotiators explained that Indonesia was opposed to attaching enforceability to labour and environment chapters, according to information this newspaper received from the briefing.

Part of Global Affairs Canada’s inclusive trade agenda is a focus on improving labour and environment provisions through “innovative” provisions.

Kwan said there was a time during the negotiations that the labour chapter wasn’t advancing, and there was thinking that if there was no labour chapter—or barely much of one—then Canada should not proceed with concluding the trade pact.

“[The final one] is a little better than that,” she said, but remarked that the government shouldn’t be putting labour stan-

Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and Indonesian President Prabowo Subianto inked a free trade pact in Ottawa on Sept. 24. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



A spokesperson for International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu says the hope is to ratify Canada’s pact with Indonesia within eight months. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



dards and rights on the table to advance a diversification agenda.

She said that it could offshore cheap labour as part of the agreement and come at the expense of Canadian jobs.

Kwan said the labour chapter should be getting stronger with each trade agreement, and not weaker.

She said that no one has directly signalled that this is a trade-off that the government is making to advance a diversification agenda.

“But it is pretty clear that if the government wants more trading partners and to diversify as quickly as possible, [then] it would be a clear possibility that they would accept a weak and less enforceable labour chapter in upcoming trade agreements,” she said.

The work ahead

A spokesperson for International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu (Brampton East, Ont.) said the government will move an implementation bill through Parliament “as soon as possible,” with the hopes of ratification in eight months.

It could be a challenge for Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) to move a series of trade priorities through the Chamber. As previously reported by *The Hill Times*, in addition to the Indonesia pact, Canada has pledged to table implementation legislation for the United Kingdom’s accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership this fall. It has also completed negotiations with Ecuador on a trade agreement.

On Sept. 24, the Ecuadorian Embassy in Canada posted on X that it was “happy to announce Minister Sidhu’s clear political will to see the [Canada-Ecuador] Free Trade Agreement signed and ratified before the end of this year.”

Vina Nadjibulla, the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada’s vice-president of research and strategy, said Canada has a lot of things that will have to move at the same time.

“It’s important to show that we’re keeping the momentum and moving forward on the deals that we are making and ratifying them as quickly as possible,” she said. “I know there are a lot of demands and everything is moving at the same time, but that’s what we have to do.”

“The signing of the agreement was important,” Nadjibulla said. “Now we need to ratify it.”

She said the Indonesia pact is a “significant boost” to Canada’s

diversification agenda and its deepening ties with Southeast Asia.

There is symmetry between Canada’s strength and Indonesia’s needs, she said, and the trade agreement is a framework to “unlock” the potential that exists in the bilateral relationship.

According to Nadjibulla, given the modest commercial relationship currently between the two countries, there is a “lot of room to grow.”

“But we still need to be clear-eyed that doing business in Indonesia is not going to be easy—there are many issues still around corruption,” Nadjibulla said. “The effort is worth it because of the potential opportunity and the scale of the Indonesian market.”

While she said that the deal is the “game changer” that Carney described because of the potential that is being unlocked, it won’t be a straightforward path to maximize that potential.

“It will still require quite a bit of work,” she said, which will include regulatory work by Indonesia, as well as a better understanding of the market opportunities by Canadians. “Our awareness and knowledge of the market is fairly low.”

Nadjibulla said signing an agreement is the first necessary step, but now the onus is on businesses to take advantage of it, and for the government to create an ecosystem to support trade diversification and turn the potential into reality.

“While we’ve always talked about diversification, now there is a real imperative to do that,” she said, but noted that Canada isn’t the only country interested in diversifying at the moment.

An ‘old-school’ free trade pact

Stuart Trew, a senior researcher at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, said that whatever anyone thought about the inclusive trade agenda, it doesn’t fit what Canada signed with Indonesia.

“This is a pre-inclusive free trade agreement,” he said, remarking that when the Trudeau government set out to define inclusive trade, it made adjustments around the margins.

He said that the exception was CUSMA where there were significant changes to the labour chapter based on gains fought over by the Democrats who had control of Congress at the time of the NAFTA renegotiations.

Trew said that CUSMA is doing “very good things” to uphold core labour rights, especially with the rapid-response mechanism to protect collective bargaining and union association, and the ability for countries to block imports from specific facilities that breach obligations.

“Indonesia would have been perfect for that,” he said. “They could have come to some sort of arrangement on that, but they didn’t.”

“What we got instead is an expedient, very old-school Canadian free trade agreement [that is] signed on Indonesia’s terms for the most part where it comes to labour, environmental protection, gender, women’s empowerment, so on, and so forth,” Trew said.

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Diplomatic Circles

By Neil Moss



‘I’ve had to run to keep up’: U.K. envoy trumpets ‘new energy’ in Canadian relationship, but questions loom over trade talks

In a wide-ranging interview, U.K. High Commissioner Rob Tinline discusses his country’s renewed relationship with Canada, what happens next on trade, and the decision to recognize a Palestinian state.

Seven months into his job as the United Kingdom’s top diplomat in Canada, **Rob Tinline** has already been through a sea change in Canadian politics.

Just 15 days after Tinline presented his letter of introduction to **Justin Trudeau**, the outgoing prime minister’s nearly decade in charge had ended.

“It feels like there’s a new energy in the relationship,” said Tinline during an interview with *The Hill Times* from his interim residence on Lisgar Road.

“A lot of that comes from the fact that Canada was at the end of 10 years of a Trudeau government. The U.K. was coming to the end of 14 years—coalition at the start—of Conservative government,” he said.

He said that the change of governments has brought “new energy” on both sides of the Atlantic, with new mandates with two-, three-, or four-year horizons.

“What can we do over that period of time?” Tinline asked of the moment.

Since becoming prime minister, **Mark Carney** has made two visits to the U.K.—most recently from Sept. 26-28. U.K. Prime Minister **Keir Starmer** was in Ottawa ahead of the G7 Leaders’ Summit this past June.

Any “new energy” wasn’t seemingly apparent in the early days of Tinline’s tenure.

Carney had criticized Starmer for inviting United States President **Donald Trump** for a second state visit amid threats of absorbing Canada as a “51st” state. Starmer ruffled some Canadian feathers for failing to condemn Trump’s annexation rhetoric, seemingly taking a more fawning approach to dealing with Trump—a technique increasingly mirrored by Carney as of late.



U.K. High Commissioner Rob Tinline previously served as the foreign office’s director for the Americas. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Despite an all-encompassing focus on Trump and dealing with the Americans, Tinline said that hasn’t blunted any attempts to advance the Canada-U.K. relationship, noting the frequency of senior British officials being in Canada since the start of the year—in part owing to Canada’s current chairship of the G7 presidency.

“The G7 has provided a focus for an intensity of British ministerial time in Canada that you haven’t seen for many a year,” he said.

“I haven’t found that I’ve had to work to keep the focus on Canada,” he said. “If anything, I’ve had to run to keep up.”

Tinline said as a member of the foreign service, any diplomat wants to be where the action is.

“This is why you join the foreign service: to go to interesting places, at interesting times, do interesting things that aren’t available to most people,” he said.

The posting in Ottawa is one that Tinline sought out. Coming across the Atlantic Ocean with a national security background, he has held postings during consequential geopolitical shifts of the last two decades.

He was deputy consul general in Basra, Iraq, during the surge as the U.S.’s **George W. Bush** administration increased troop levels to address insurgents.

“Basra was clearly an absolutely fascinating experience at a really difficult time,” he said.

Tinline was also the U.K.’s deputy head of mission to the European Union just before his

country went through its Brexit referendum in 2016.

Prior to coming to Ottawa, he was the foreign office’s director for the Americas, which saw him play a role in the commonwealth’s first coronation in 70 years.

“I was involved in welcoming all the heads of states and governments from across the Americas,” he said. “You got to be part of something else really special that most people don’t get to be part of.”

Beef over cheese and meat

Still up in the air is to what extent the “new energy” in the Canada-U.K. bilateral relationship will reset trade negotiations.



International Trade Minister Maninder Sidhu started the legislative process for Parliament to implement the U.K.’s access to the CPTPP earlier this month. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The talks have been paused by London since January 2024 due to complaints over a lack of progress in allowing access for U.K. cheese to the Canadian market.

Canada-U.K. trade is governed by the Canada-U.K. Trade Continuity Agreement (TCA), which carried over much of the provisions that London had when it was a member of the EU and could access the Canada-EU Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

The TCA contained a side letter that Canada and the U.K. would “endeavour to reach an arrangement on cheese” by the end of June 2023—that never occurred. The pact also contained a provision to “strive” to finalize a follow-on comprehensive trade deal by April 2024, which also never happened.

“Trade negotiations are always tough negotiations,” said Tinline, but remarked that there is a trade deal in place, and that the U.K. is the latest country to join Canada’s Pacific Rim trade deal.

Carney had previously pledged to table legislation this fall for London’s accession to the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP). A protocol was tabled on Sept. 18, and there has to be a waiting period of 21 sitting days before implementation legislation is introduced.

The U.K. is already considered a member of the CPTPP as half of the pact’s members have ratified London’s accession. For the pact to apply between Canada and the U.K., it has to pass the Canadian Parliament.

Asked if he thought the legislative process would be a smooth one, Tinline said that is up to Parliament to decide.

Beyond the cheese issue, one of the main beefs in the Canada-U.K. trading relationship has been over meat and Canadian food safety requirements not being accepted as sufficient by British authorities.

Canadian meat exporters have called for the U.K.’s CPTPP accession to be thwarted until such changes are made.

There is seemingly little willingness on either side to come to a compromise on the cheese or meat issues. A resolution to the cheese dispute has only been made more difficult as Parliament recently passed a Bloc Québécois bill that made it unlawful for negotiators to negotiate away additional supply management access in trade talks.

Tinline said that Carney and Starmer agreed in June to have officials look into the trading relationship.

“They asked for a report back in six months—six months is in December. So that process is happening to look at what we can and should do together,” he said.

Asked about the lack of willingness to compromise on the cheese and meat issues, Tinline said that is what the officials are thinking about, remarking that there are also many other issues where trade can be expanded, including on digital trade.

“So the conversation needs to report back to the prime ministers on how you seize opportunities, potentially deal with where we disagree, and what the best route forward for that is that works for both countries,” he said.

“I’m not going to predict where we will come out,” he said. “But seizing the opportunities to build U.K.-Canada trade further and break down barriers is something where we need to keep the focus on alongside the areas where we’ve got differences.”

Asked if cheese could be left off the table, the high commissioner said he wouldn’t get into what may or may not happen.

Keeping a two-state solution alive

Tinline said that the recent recognition of the Palestinian state is an attempt by a number of countries to keep the prospect of a two-state solution alive.

“The fact that we made the announcement at the same time clearly isn’t a coincidence,” he said. “Clearly, we talk about this together with the Australians, with the French, obviously with the Americans, and a whole range of other countries.”

He noted that Israeli hostages must be released immediately, and that Hamas cannot play a role in Palestine’s future—conditions shared by Canada in recognizing Palestine.

“These are things that are pretty broadly shared amongst like-minded countries,” he said.

“What you saw was a set of countries coming together [at the UN General Assembly] and saying, ‘Actually, if we are going to keep a prospect of a two-state solution alive, we need to do something differently and recognition was part of that.’”

U.S. Secretary of State **Marco Rubio** described the recognition as a “vanity project” for world leaders who want to be relevant.

Asked if the recognition would stunt the work of the G7—as Rubio and other Group of Seven top diplomats are set to reconvene in Canada later this fall—Tinline said that there are things the body will disagree on, and they will talk those issues through.

“That’s part of the value of the meeting,” he said, remarking that it offers countries the opportunity to sit down and explain why they took certain positions even if it ran counter to the policy of another.

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FEATURE

Mexico shouts out independence

The Hill Times photographs by Sam Garcia



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1. Mexican Ambassador Carlos Manuel Joaquín González delivers the independence 'Grito' (shout) at his country's independence day party on Sept. 16. 2. The reception, held at the official residence, was filled with music and Mexican folk dances. 3. El Salvadorian Ambassador Ricardo Alfonso Cisneros Rodríguez, left, Argentine Ambassador Josefina Martinez Gramuglia, and Paraguayan Ambassador Raúl Antonio Montiel Gastó. 4. Ina Ozolina, wife of the Latvian ambassador, left; Vessela Georgieva, wife of the Bulgarian ambassador; Paola Masciadri, partner of the Mexican ambassador; Carine Kjelsen, wife of the Swiss ambassador; Betty Leon Ossa, wife of the Colombian ambassador; and Aigerim Bekenova, wife of the Kazakh ambassador. 5. Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Heath MacDonald, left, Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree, and Liberal MP Julie Dzerowicz.

Turkey marks Victory Day



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1. Turkish Ambassador Can Dizdar, left, his wife Demet Dizdar, Col. Hikmet Unal, and Sezen Unal attend Turkey's Victory Day reception on Aug. 29. 2. Guests filled the grounds at Turkey's official residence for the party. 3. Mexico's Capt. Jorge Romero, left, Romania's Col. Robertino Ciobanu, Unal, and Japan's Lt. Col. Takashi Ochiai. 4. The Canadian Armed Forces' director general of international security policy Maj.-Gen. Travis Morehen, Unal, and CAF section head Lt.-Col. James Fedewich.

Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

Who's who on Veterans Minister McKnight's team



Veterans Affairs Minister Jill McKnight, centre, with Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and Governor General Mary Simon at the cabinet swearing-in ceremony at Rideau Hall on May 13. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

Ontario regional affairs for the veterans minister. She joined McKnight's team fresh from Queen's Park where Mohanarajah had been working as an executive assistant for the last roughly year and a half.

Adam Rogers-Green has landed the role of director of communications to McKnight. Hailing from Toronto, he comes fresh from the private sector and was last working as a senior marketing consultant focused on the public sector for IT and business consulting firm CGI. He's also a former product and later content marketing manager with Swift Medical, and previously spent a little more than three-and-a-half years working for Think Research, last as its director of public procurement.



Adam Rogers-Green is director of communications. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Mike Hamm is in charge of policy in the veterans affairs office, while Colin Lalonde oversees parliamentary affairs, and Riya Khanna runs operations.

Veterans Affairs and Associate Defence Minister **Jill McKnight** has a relatively slim, 10-member team supporting her at present, including director of policy **Mike Hamm**.

As reported by *Hill Climbers* at the beginning of June, **Dilys Fernandes**, a former deputy chief of staff and director of policy to then-transport minister **Carla Qualtrough**, is chief of staff to McKnight, who is one of 16 first-time federal ministers in the current cabinet.

Hamm is a former chief of staff to Kings-Hants, N.S., Liberal MP **Kody Blois**. Hamm carried the Nova Scotia Liberal Party's banner in the riding of Kings South during the province's November 2024 election, but ultimately placed third in the race, with the formerly Liberal seat flipping to the Progressive Conservatives who were elected to a majority. Accord-

ing to his party candidate profile at the time, Hamm comes from a "close-knit military family." *Hill Climbers* understands his grandfather served, and died, in the Second World War.

Hamm is also a past director of research and legislative affairs for the Nova Scotia Liberal caucus, and a former aide to then-N.S. MLA **Leo Glavine**, including serving as Glavine's chief of staff during the MLA's time as Nova Scotia's health and wellness minister. Hamm's LinkedIn profile indicates he first became chief of staff to then-N.S. health and wellness minister **Randy Delorey** in 2018 before Glavine took over the role in 2020.

Reporting to Hamm is policy adviser **Dana Shami**. Up until this past spring, Shami had worked for then-Mississauga Centre, Ont., Liberal MP **Omar Alghabra** since the 2019 federal election. She also lent a hand to both Alghabra's 2019 and 2021 re-election campaigns (he did not seek re-election this year). Shami is a recent recipient of the King Charles III Coronation Medal, for which she was nominated by Alghabra.

Colin Lalonde has been tapped as director of parliamentary affairs to McKnight. He brings plenty of experience to the role as a Hill staffer since 2016 when he was hired

as deputy lobby co-ordinator in then-chief government whip **Andrew Leslie's** office. Lalonde left Leslie's team in January 2017 to instead work for then-deputy whip **Filomena Tassi**. Tassi was added to cabinet as minister for seniors in July 2018, and Lalonde subsequently joined her new ministerial office as a special assistant for operations and Ontario regional affairs. He later followed Tassi to the labour portfolio after she was shuffled in the wake of the 2019 election, with Lalonde becoming a senior adviser for parliamentary affairs.

Lalonde went on to again follow Tassi to a new portfolio—this time public services and procurement, to which Tassi was shuffled after the 2021 federal election—at which point he became director of operations. He stayed in the role after **Helena Jaczek** replaced Tassi as public services minister in August 2022, but exited in 2023 to become director of parliamentary affairs and appointments to then-heritage minister **Pascale St-Onge**—his most recent role.

On June 20, **Riya Khanna** started on the job as director of operations to McKnight. Khanna previously worked in then-prime minister **Justin Trudeau's** office as an outreach adviser for almost a year and

a half leading up to Trudeau's official exit this past March.

A former assistant to now-Secretary of State for International Development **Randeep Sarai** as the MP for Surrey Centre, B.C., Khanna has also worked as a special assistant in the Liberal research bureau. During the recent federal election, she played a key role in her former cabinet colleague, now-Liberal MP **Fares Al Soud's** successful campaign in Mississauga Centre.

Iqra Ishtiaq is in place as a regional adviser for the West and North. Ishtiaq is a former constituency assistant who helped handle casework Qualtrough's office as then-Delta, B.C., MP. She subsequently worked on McKnight's successful campaign to succeed Qualtrough as the MP for Delta, and briefly worked in the constituency office under McKnight before moving over to the veterans team.

Abina Mohanarajah, meanwhile, covers



Iqra Ishtiaq covers the West and North regional desks. *Photograph courtesy of Iqra Ishtiaq*

Rogers-Green has campaign experience under his belt—including from **April Engelberg's** (ultimately unsuccessful) 2022 run to represent Spadina-Fort York at Toronto city council—and has some experience from the provincial level as a former information management and Freedom of Information analyst with Ontario's Ministry of Economic Development and Growth.

Faith Ross is executive assistant to the minister. She graduated from Carleton University with a bachelor's degree in political science and government earlier this year, and volunteered for the Liberals during the spring election.

Finally, **Jacob Hiseman** is McKnight's driver. Hiseman is a former infantry soldier with the Canadian Armed Forces between 2012 and 2023. He spent his first two years with the Cameron Highlanders of Ottawa (Duke of Edinburgh's Own), and the rest with the 2nd Battalion Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry.

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The Hill Times



Abina Mohanarajah covers the Ontario desk. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Riya Khanna is director of operations. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Mike Hamm is director of policy. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Outgoing UN Ambassador Rae to speak in Montreal on Oct. 6



Bob Rae, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, will give a lecture on 'Where the Light Gets In — Why Canada's Global Engagement Matters' hosted by McGill University in Montreal on Monday, Oct. 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 1

Webinar: 'Trump, Trade and Foreign Policy'—The Canadian Global Affairs Institute hosts a webinar, "Trump, Trade and Foreign Policy," featuring Bruce Stokes, German Marshall Fund of the United States; Martha Hall Findlay, director of the University of Calgary's School of Public Policy; Perrin Beatty, former president and CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce; and former Canadian ambassador Louise Blais. Wednesday, Oct. 1, at 10:30 a.m. ET happening online. Register: cgai.ca.

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., Ottawa.

Global Nutrition Parliamentary Reception—The Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health, Action Against Hunger Canada, and Results Canada host a parliamentary reception on advancing Canada's commitment to global nutrition. Sponsored by Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi. Wednesday, Oct. 1 at 6 p.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register: rsvp@compassrosegroup.org.

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: adefor@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: balsillieschool.ca.

FRIDAY, OCT. 3

Press Gallery Mugging Lunch—The Parliamentary Press Gallery hosts a Mugging Lunch for members. Friday, Oct. 3, at 12:30 p.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa.

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.

SATURDAY, OCT. 4

Brunch with Minister Michel—The Papineau Federal Liberal Association hosts a special brunch with its MP, Health Minister Marjorie Michel. Saturday, Oct. 4, at 11 a.m. ET at Salle Roumaine de Montréal, 8060 Ave. Christoph-Colomb, Montreal. Details: liberal.ca.

MONDAY, OCT. 6

Ambassador Rae to Deliver Remarks—Bob Rae, Canada's ambassador to the United Nations, will give a lecture on "Where the Light Gets In — Why Canada's Global Engagement Matters" hosted by McGill University. Monday, Oct. 6, at 4 p.m. ET at the Mount Royal Centre, 2200 Mansfield St., Montreal. Details: mcgill.ca.

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.

TUESDAY, OCT. 7

Panel: 'The Aftermath of October 7'—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a panel, "The Aftermath of October 7." Leading experts Hussein Aboubakr Mansour, Casey Babb, and Einat Wilf will examine the ongoing conflict in Gaza, Israel's defence against escalating Islamist terror, and the global forces reshaping the region's future. Tuesday, Oct. 7, at 9

a.m. ET happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

Walrus Talks: 'Growing Canadian Productivity'—The Walrus Talks hosts a webinar, "Growing Canadian Productivity," featuring Tima Bansal, Canada Research Chair in Business Sustainability; Trevor Tombe, economics professor, University of Calgary; Akolisa Ufodiye, associate professor, School of Administrative Studies, York University; and Val Walker, CEO, Business + Higher Education Roundtable. Tuesday, Oct. 7, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: thewalrus.ca.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 8

World Mental Health Day—The Union of Safety and Justice Employees hosts its annual World Mental Health Day reception in support of Canada's frontline federal public safety personnel, and those who suffer from Occupational Stress Injuries. Members of Parliament, Senators, and staff are welcome. Wednesday, Oct. 8, at in Room 310, Wellington Building, 180 Wellington St., Ottawa. RSVP reem@kitpublicaffairs.ca.

Bike Day on the Hill—Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin and Senator Marty Deacon host Bike Day on the Hill 2025, spearheaded by national cycling advocacy organization Vélo Canada Bikes. This non-partisan event engages parliamentarians, local and national leaders, and cycling supporters in a celebration of everyday cycling in Canada. There will be a group photo, Parliamentary Slow Bike Challenge on the Parliament Hill lawn, and a reception in the Valour Building, 151 Sparks St., Ottawa. Wednesday, Oct. 8, at 5 p.m. ET. Register online. Contact: ed@velocanadabikes.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 8—THURSDAY, OCT. 9

Montreal Climate Security Summit—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute and NATO's Climate Change and Security Centre of Excellence host the two-day, invitation-only Montreal Climate Security Summit. This year's edition will focus on strengthening military adaptation in the face of climate risks, including technical, scientific, and operational discussions exploring how Armed Forces can plan and execute activities across all domains in an operational environment shaped by climate change. Wednesday, Oct. 8, to Thursday, Oct. 9, in Montreal. Details: cdainstitute.ca.

THURSDAY, OCT. 9

Bank of Canada Senior Deputy Governor to Deliver Remarks—Carolyn Rogers, senior deputy governor of the Bank of Canada, will discuss productivity, competition, and innovation in Canada's financial sector at a breakfast event hosted by the Canadian Club

Toronto. Thursday, Oct. 9, at 7:15 a.m. ET at The Hyatt Regency Toronto, 370 King St. W. Register: canadianclub.org.

Climate at a Crossroads—*The Walrus* magazine hosts "Climate at a Crossroads," a day-long event exploring how climate disinformation is restraining progress, and how to ensure democratic governance in this new and contested climate crisis landscape. Participants include former Liberal environment minister Catherine McKenna, with a keynote featuring Charlotte Scaddan, senior adviser on information integrity, United Nations Global Communications. Thursday, Oct. 9, at 9:30 a.m. at 50 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

CDANXT: Advancing Canada's Health Economy Conference—Research Canada hosts its national conference, "CDANXT: Advancing Canada's Health Economy Conference," featuring key speakers and stakeholders from the health research and innovation ecosystem to explore how a thriving health economy can transform our economy, productivity, and competitiveness. Thursday, Oct. 9, at the MaRS Discovery District, Toronto. Details: researchcanada.org/national-conference.

EDC President to Deliver Remarks—Alison Nankivell, president and CEO of Export Development Canada, will deliver remarks in English and French on "Reimagining Canada's Trade for a New Global Era" at the Montreal Council on Foreign Relations. Thursday, Oct. 9, at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Le Reine-Elizabeth Hotel, 900 Blvd. René-Lévesque W., Montreal. Register: corim.qc.ca.

CPAC's Fall Parliamentary Reception—CPAC celebrates its legacy of connecting Canadians to their democracy with an evening of insightful conversation, refreshments, and entertainment. By invitation only. Thursday, Oct. 9, at 5:30 p.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A. Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa.

REEL Politics Film Series—Tonight is the opening of an eight-night fundraiser for the Jaimie Anderson Parliamentary Internships. The REEL Politics Film Series presents thought-provoking films and engaging discussions screening today, with future screening dates on Nov. 6 and Dec. 4, 2025; and Jan. 8, Feb. 5, March 5, and April 2, 2026. The first screening is on Thursday, Oct. 9, at the ByTowne Cinema, 325 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, OCT. 10

North America's Nuclear Renaissance—Canada 2020 hosts "North America's Nuclear Renaissance," a gathering of nuclear advocates, clean energy financiers, policy architects, and system operators working to bridge ambition and deployment. Speakers include Jigar Shah, former director

of the U.S. Department of Energy Loan Programs Office; and James L. Connaughton, former chair of the White House Council on Environmental Quality. Friday, Oct. 10, at 8 a.m. ET, at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Details: canada2020.ca.

ParlSec Sudds to Talk Mental Health—Parliamentary Secretary Jenna Sudds will take part in "Courageous Conversations with Politicians," discussion on mental health. Other participants include former Ontario MPP Lisa MacLeod, former Ottawa city councillors Mathieu Fleury and Keith Egli, and current City of Brockville councillor Katherine Hobbs. Friday, Oct. 10, at 8:30 a.m. at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Register via Eventbrite.

Superintendent of Financial Institutions to Deliver Remarks—Superintendent of Financial Institutions Peter Routledge will weigh in on Canada's rapidly evolving economic landscape, and how the financial system is adapting to the pace of change in a morning presentation hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Friday, Oct. 10, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Hilton Toronto, 145 Richmond St. W. Details: economicclub.ca.

International Day of the Girl on the Hill—Elevate International host an International Day of the Girl celebration featuring students, emerging leaders, Members of Parliament, educators, and changemakers. Friday, Oct. 10, at 9 a.m. ET in Room 100, Sir John A Macdonald Building, 144 Wellington St., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, OCT. 14

Chief of Defence Staff at the Mayor's Breakfast—Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jennie Carrignan will be the special guest at the Mayor's Breakfast, hosted by Ottawa Mayor Mark Sutcliffe and the *Ottawa Business Journal*. Tuesday, Oct. 14, at 7 a.m. ET at Ottawa City Hall, 110 Laurier Ave. W. Details: businessottawabot.ca.

Lunch: 'Reimagining Canada's Trade for a New Global Era'—Alison Nankivell, president and CEO of Export Development Canada, will take part in a roundtable luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Oct. 14, 12 p.m. ET at C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, OCT. 15—FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Toronto Global Forum—The International Economic Forum of the Americas hosts the 2025 Toronto Global Forum. Among the speakers are Congo's Ambassador to Canada Apollinaire Aya, Ontario Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, Canada Infrastructure Bank CEO Ehren Cory, Business Council of Canada CEO Goldy Hyder, National Aboriginal Council Corporation Association CEO Shannin Metatawabin, and former Canadian ambassador to China Dominic Barton. Wednesday, Oct. 15, to Friday, Oct. 17, in Toronto. Details: torontoglobalforum.com.

FRIDAY, OCT. 17

Senator Richards' Retirement—Today is New Brunswick Senator David Adams Richards' 75th birthday, which means his mandatory retirement from the Senate.

MONDAY, OCT. 20

BDC President to Deliver Remarks—Isabelle Hudon, president and CEO of BDC, will deliver remarks in French on "SMEs and the 2025 Economy: Risks, Opportunities, and Growth Drivers," a lunch event hosted by the Chamber of Commerce of Metropolitan Montreal. Monday, Oct. 20, at 11:30 a.m. ET at Fairmont The Queen Elizabeth, 900 René-Lévesque Blvd. W., Montreal. Details: ccmm.ca.

Lecture: 'Transnational Making of UN Peacekeeping'—Carleton University hosts this year's Shannon Lecture, "The Transnational Making of United Nations Peacekeeping." Brian Drohan, associate professor of History at the U.S. Military Academy—West Point, explores how Canada has shaped the course and conduct of peacekeeping beyond its commitments to individual peacekeeping missions. Monday, Oct. 20, at 7 p.m. ET at Carleton Dominion-Chalmers Centre, 355 Cooper St., Ottawa. Details: events.carleton.ca.

INFRASTRUCTURE

POLICY BRIEFING

Publication date: Wednesday, October 8, 2025
Advertising deadline: Thursday, October 2, 2025

How can Canada attract private investment in infrastructure? What role can Indigenous communities play in that regard?

What are some of the infrastructure challenges in Canada's North? How can northern communities adapt?

What are the transportation infrastructure challenges in Canada, especially in regard to maintaining strong supply chains? How can these be improved?

Indigenous Peoples in Canada are disproportionately affected by infrastructure challenges, such as access to clean drinking water or inferior roads. What should the federal government be doing to properly address these issues?

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