

**HQH: CPAC'S THOMAS CLYDE has got that swing**

▶ CHRISTINA LEADLAY PAGE 2



**AVI LEWIS** should take a page out of Justin Trudeau playbook

▶ LORI TURNBULL PAGE 13



**WAR COVERAGE** without television

▶ CHRISTOPHER DORNAN PAGE 17

**Matt Gurney**  
p. 12



# THE HILL TIMES

**Rose LeMay**  
p. 5

**Susan Riley**  
p. 10

THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR, NO. 2309

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

MONDAY, APRIL 6, 2026 \$5.00

**NEWS**

Grits 'throwing everything at that seat' as 48 candidates and 'adapted ballot' could influence result of nail-biter Terrebonne byelection, say pollsters and Liberal sources

BY ABBAS RANA

The presence of 42 independent candidates—in addition to the five party-backed candidates—and the use of a "write-in" or "adapted ballot" could prove decisive in the tightly contested April 13 byelection in Terrebonne, Que., say some Liberal sources and pollsters, adding that a close

Continued on page 6

**COMMENT**

## Trump's threat to leave NATO is outrageous



U.S. President Donald Trump, pictured March 16, 2026, in the Oval Office. Photograph courtesy of official White House photographer Molly Riley

NATO has been the centrepiece of Western and European peace and security for 80 years. Also, former U.S. president Jimmy Carter passed a law making it illegal for any U.S. president to unilaterally leave NATO without Congress' approval. **Read Michael Harris' column on p. 9.**

**NEWS**

Feds' \$20-billion submarine choice must go beyond economic concerns, say experts: 'possibly one of the biggest defence procurement decisions Canada will make in decades'

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

As Ottawa moves into the final stages on the \$20-billion defence procurement decision between South Korean and German shipyards to replace its aging submarine fleet, sector experts argue that economic

Continued on page 21

**NEWS**

Medical organizations sound alarm on sterilization bill's potential impact on access to reproductive care

BY TESSIE SANCI

A bill that names sterilization without valid consent as a specific offence under the Criminal Code is raising concerns from multiple medical organizations, including the Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada and the Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Quebec, about the potential of unintended impacts for physicians who may hesitate to perform these procedures due to fear of prosecution. But the bill's sponsor, Independent Senator Yvonne Boyer, is defending the

Continued on page 19

**NEWS**

Feds' \$27-billion F-35 fighter jet contract remains top choice for defence experts, despite NDP push for Gripen

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Defence sector experts say Canada should follow through on the purchase of American F-35 fighter jets instead of the Swedish-built Gripen planes recommended by the NDP, arguing that the former offers superior capabilities that are more important than the political concerns of dealing with the United States in a time of strained relations.

"I'm thinking about what's best to defend Canada and the lives of pilots," said Andrea Charron, a professor and director

Continued on page 20

# Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

## CPAC producer Thomas Clyde aims for all-star swing dancer status



CPAC producer Thomas Clyde, right, and Amanda Brubaker placed first in the Advanced Jack & Jill at the Waterloo Ontario Open in February 2026. When he's not dancing, Clyde produces the 'Headline Politics' program. Photograph courtesy of Thomas Clyde

CPAC producer **Thomas Clyde** will be heading to Calgary later this week, but not to cover any political news.

Instead, the 32-year-old will be taking part in a swing dancing competition.

"I hope to get my final two points to qualify for the All-Star division," Clyde told **Heard on the Hill** by email a few weeks ago.

This year marks 20 years since Clyde first started swing dancing when he was 12 years old. "My dad introduced me to it, and I don't think he ever expected I would fall in love with the dance and that it would become my passion hobby," he said.

Clyde describes swing dancing's physicality, "exploring all kinds of cool shapes and rhythms" to music while in sync with someone else that he finds "both therapeutic and addictive."

He began teaching in 2012 with the now-defunct Swing

Dynamite, Ottawa's first full-time multi-style swing-dance school. These days, he's teaching at Westie Underground's Centre-town studio on Elgin Street.

Every Monday, Clyde and his teaching partner **Callie Gieck** lead two hours of group classes. The first hour's class is geared to beginners who, once they've completed the eight-week program, are ready for the second hour's class: 'Beyond the Basics.'

So when does a full-time producer for the CPAC program *Headline Politics* find time for his high-energy hobby?

"In my experience, Mondays are usually the quieter weekday in federal politics; politicians prefer dropping bombshells on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, and hiding skeletons on Friday evenings," Clyde tells **HOH**.

"Otherwise, it's just my efficient time management and keen editorial sense that keeps me on

track and always ready to teach by 7p.m."

In addition to teaching, Clyde competes in numerous swing dancing competitions, which are ranked and governed by the World Swing Dance Council.

"I have participated in four Advanced Jack & Jill competitions since May 2025, and I have won all four of them—that's pretty cool," said Clyde, who's hoping to break the coveted 60-point rank in Calgary to qualify for the All-Star division, the second-highest ranking in the world for West Coast Swing Jack & Jill competitions.

Then there's Swing in Bloom, a full-size convention complete with workshops and sanctioned competitions, taking place in downtown Ottawa from April 16-19.

"With a little luck I will get to compete in my first all-star contest on home turf."

## House of Commons is hiring a new executive chef, Judson Simpson is leaving

Job alert: the House of Commons is on the hunt for a new executive chef/chef de cuisine.

The permanent, full-time position comes with a salary range of \$107,314 to \$135,788, and a minimum of four weeks' vacation.

Requirements are having graduated from a recognized culinary school or program; professional training and certification received as a "Certified Chef de Cuisine" or equivalent; and certification in food handling and safety (e.g., Safe Food Handling or HACCP certification).

Plus being proficient in both French and English is required.

The House Speaker's Office has confirmed that it is hiring a replacement for executive chef **Judson Simpson** who is retiring soon. Simpson has been in this role for more than 30 years. Speaking with **Rid-dhi Kachhela** in January 2025, Simpson said one of his key legacies will be the staff he is leaving behind.

"They can put somebody else in this chair, no problem. But they cannot easily replace my cooks.



House of Commons executive chef Judson Simpson is retiring soon after more than 30 years. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

I've spent years developing these guys ... they do so much, and they need to be appreciated by more than just me."

The job posting's closing date is April 8.

## Joe Clark to revisit Canada's apartheid policy at April 27 book launch

Former prime minister **Joe Clark** will take part in the launch of **Daniel Manulak's** new book *Canada, Apartheid, and the Defence of the Liberal Order* hosted by the Bill Graham Centre in Toronto on April 27.

Follow a nine-month term as Progressive Conservative prime minister from 1979 to 1980, Clark served as **Brian Mulroney's** secretary of state for External Affairs from 1984 to 1991, a period during which policymakers in this country were strongly against apartheid.

"For Canadians, the struggle against apartheid was not just



Former prime minister Joe Clark in 2023. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

about South Africa or racial injustice, but defending a global system predicated on norms, rules, and institutions in which Ottawa had a real stake both geopolitically and, more significantly, ideologically," reads the event invitation on the University of Toronto's Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy's website.

Manulak is a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council postdoctoral fellow at the University of Toronto's Department of History. His book is considered a major scholarly history of the topic of apartheid.

## 'This man is a blessing': Joni Mitchell praises Mark Carney at the Junos



Singer-songwriter Joni Mitchell, left, and Prime Minister Mark Carney at the Juno Awards on March 29 in Hamilton, Ont. *Screenshots courtesy of YouTube and Instagram*

Prime Minister **Mark Carney** rubbed elbows with Canada's music royalty at the Juno Awards on March 29 in Hamilton, Ont.

Sitting next to legendary Alberta-born singer-songwriter **Joni Mitchell**—to whom Carney presented the Juno's Lifetime Achievement Award, the third recipient in Juno history, at the end of the night—host **Mae Martin** tricked the audience into thinking that Carney and Mitchell were their parents: "Thank you for believing in me, guys," said Martin, as the camera zoomed in on Carney and Mitchell.

"I am just kidding, those are not my parents! I am not a nepo baby."

In his bilingual remarks, Carney noted that his favourite Mitchell song is her own 2000 cover of her 1969 song, *Both Sides Now*, in which the "wistful levity of youth had been replaced

by the raw vulnerability of a woman who has lived, and, like so many of us, finds humility in the mystery of it all," he said before presenting Mitchell with the Juno statuette "on behalf of Canada."

Mitchell, 82, kept her words of thanks brief, but gave Carney her vote of confidence. "This man is a blessing. You guys are so fortunate," said Mitchell, who has lived in the United States for many decades.

Meanwhile, The Beaches, the first all-women band, won group of the year for the third year in a row. **Nelly Furtado** was inducted into the Canadian Music Hall of Fame. **Bgno\$** won the TD Juno Fan Choice award, and **Rush** performed at the Juno Awards, the first time with new drummer **Anika Nilles**. Drummer **Neil Peart** died in 2020.

cleadlay@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*

# Our plan to protect Ontario is diversifying our trade

As Canada stares down economic uncertainty, we're ready with a plan to protect Ontario. Diversifying our trade will connect our province to new markets.

That's how we protect Ontario.



[ontario.ca/ProtectOntario](https://ontario.ca/ProtectOntario)  
Paid for by the Government of Ontario



## NEWS

# Treasury Board report shows employment equity not affected by early phases of public service job losses in 2024-25

The most recent report on diversity in the public service says hiring dipped by 40 per cent last year as the bureaucracy began reversing course on a decade of significant growth. But this appears to have had limited impact on equity efforts.

BY MARLO GLASS

New data on employment equity in the federal public service shows initial attempts to shrink the population had a limited effect on the proportions of equity-seeking groups. But one expert on public policy and governance says coming job cuts are “agnostic” to these efforts, and a large public-sector union says the government isn’t doing enough to ensure diversity is maintained amid sweeping job cuts.

“I can’t see evidence that minority groups are being penalized compared to majority groups,” said Andrew Griffith, a former public servant who was a director general of citizenship and multiculturalism at then-Citizenship and Immigration Canada.

On March 26, the Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada, the employer of the public service, released its report on these populations for 2024-25. The report includes demographic statistics on the number of women, Indigenous people, members of visible minorities, Black people, and people with disabilities within the core public administration. More than 71 per cent of this population belongs to one or more of these equity groups, the report says.

This report pre-dates the sweeping comprehensive expenditure review the Carney government launched in summer 2025, but captures the early stages of the Liberals slowly reversing course after a decade of significant growth, with 10,000 jobs shed between 2024 and 2025. The report notes that, overall, hiring decreased by 40 per cent during the last fiscal year.

Treasury Board Secretariat President Shafqat Ali. A new report on the public service population for 2024-25 showed more than 70 per cent of employees are part of an employment equity group. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Population growth, meanwhile, presents as essentially flat from the year prior, with the core public administration totalling 266,935 staff by March 2025. Its employment equity population, however, totalled 190,301, an increase of 2,285 from the year prior.

The number of women, Indigenous people, and members of visible minorities within the public service outpaces the overall workforce availability among these equity-seeking groups, according to the new data. People with disabilities, however, are under-represented in the public service. The workforce availability of this group is 12 per cent, but they make up nine per cent of the public service.

Women make up 56.8 per cent of the public service while accounting for slightly under 55 per cent of the broader workforce availability; Indigenous people make up 5.5 per cent while being four per cent of the general workforce; and members of visible minorities represent just under 24 per cent of the public service compared to 22.7 per cent of the broader workforce.

“Historical trends for the designated employment equity groups show that they all experienced an overall increase in representation between March 2010 and March 2025,” the report says.

Griffith noted concerns about job cuts in the public service hampering progress in employment equity, but so far that doesn’t seem to be the case.

“Now, it might change in the current year, given the cutbacks are more significant this year,” said Griffith, referring to the approximately 24,000 public ser-



Former public servant Andrew Griffith noted concerns about job cuts hampering progress in employment equity so far aren’t showing in the data, but this year’s cuts could change that calculus. *Handout photograph*

vants who have already received notice that their jobs might be at risk, and the some 9,000 jobs expected to be cut.

## Large cohort of women civil servants in early-retirement bracket

Among executives, the report says, 55.9 per cent are women, compared to a workforce availability of 41.8 per cent. Indigenous people hold 5.6 per cent of executive roles, while people with disabilities hold 10.9 per cent, members of visible minorities have 17.3 per cent of executive roles, and Black employees make up just over three per cent.

Hiring and promotion for women decreased slightly last year, amid a broader slow-down of hiring.



Despite the number of women decreasing in the public service, professor Lori Turnbull noted their numbers are still larger than the demographic’s workforce availability, including a high number of women in executive positions. *Handout photograph*

Compared to 2023-24, the share of women hired within the public service decreased by 3.2 percentage points, making for the lowest share of overall hires since the 2018-19 fiscal year, the report says. It says in 2024-25, the public service hired 11,280 women. That makes for a year-over-year decrease of more than 35 per cent, as 17,530 women were hired into the federal public service the year prior.

The report, however, notes that the total number of hires for all employees in the public service decreased by 40.9 per cent between 2022-23 and 2024-25, as the massive bureaucracy slowly began to reduce some of the significant population gains that occurred from 2015 onward.

The number of women who received promotions decreased by 18.6 per cent between 2023-24

and 2024-25, though it remains relatively stable as a percentage of all promotions in the public service. The percentage of women leaving the public service decreased by 2.7 per cent during the same period, but also remained stable as a percentage of all “separations” from the bureaucracy.

“More research would be needed to determine whether the increase in the share of separations points to challenges with retention as the separation data includes departures due to retirements,” the report says.

Griffith said the hiring, promotion, and separation data “reinforces my overall sense that ... you can’t say there’s been any negative impact on the minority groups.”

The report notes 12.6 per cent of women in the public service are between 20 to 29 years of age, while nearly 30 per cent of women are between 50 and 69 years of age. That could be an important data point in the years to come, as the recently-passed early retirement incentive targets late-in-life public servants within 10 years of retiring, and allows them to retire early without penalty as a part of broad efforts to reduce the size of the public service.

“The numbers don’t tell the whole story”: Turnbull

Lori Turnbull is a political science professor at Dalhousie University, a senior adviser at the Institute on Governance, and worked in the Privy Council Office from 2015 until 2017. Speaking to *The Hill Times*, she said the high percentage of women “really makes it look like the public service is doing well,” in terms of equity among its ranks, but “that doesn’t really speak to what’s going on for other groups,” she said.

“I don’t think anybody would come away from that and think, ‘Oh, we better be worried because the share of women [being hired] decreased by three points,” Turnbull said, noting the high number of women in executive positions as well as the broader public service.

However, she noted the current spending review that is expected to shed thousands of jobs from the public service is “agnostic” to employment equity considerations.

“It just doesn’t really sound like there’s much co-ordination in that,” she said.

“The way they’re measuring [it] is by the numbers, by the money, and not by the function and the specific people,” she said. “You get the numbers, and it doesn’t tell the whole story.”

Sean O’Reilly, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, one of the largest federal public service unions, said the government isn’t doing enough to protect equity-seeking groups from cuts.

“There are big concerns,” he said. “Some of the correlation we’ve seen in the past with cuts, and we fear that, we do fear that these groups will be unjustly affected by but all by all these cuts.”

*mglass@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*

# ISC's increases to Emergency Management Assistance aren't enough

First Nations Elders and chiefs say the Earth is speaking to us, and it seems we have not heard the message. Climate change is already an existential threat to infrastructure, communities, and our sense of safety. Perhaps the federal government might reflect this in its budgets.

Rose  
LeMay



Stories, Myths, and Truths

Indigenous Services Minister Mandy Gull-Masty made an announcement last month of \$55.6-million in “new” funding for the Emergency Management Assistance Program.

But if the funding is for an existing program that everybody knows must continue, then it shouldn't be called “new”. It's really a crucially late announcement that the funding will continue on April 1.

Every time Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) makes an eye-watering multi-million-dollar announcement, it seems like great news and a cause for celebration. But let's pause and review.

There are 630-some First Nations communities, so each funding pot will be spread out so widely that it begs the question if it's really enough money.

If the Emergency Management Assistance Program supports emergency planning in every community, then there is even less available to support the communities that are facing emergencies in real time.

GC-Infobase, which details departmental spending, states ISC spent \$595.19-million in 2023-2024, and \$678.73-million in 2024-25 responding to emergencies.

But get this: the planned spending for this program in 2026-2027 is \$111.16-million.

So, the March 26 announcement from ISC about a brand-spanking new \$55.6-million for emergency response is either existing funds because this program must obviously continue, or some new funding because the department knows it doesn't have enough ready for emergencies.

Either way, this is an insulting amount that doesn't even close the gaps for the current costs, much less those that will come up in the future.

It's important to keep in mind that the Earth is changing drastically—so much so that multinational insurance companies worry that the old models of insurance won't be realistic in the very near future.

Here's the backdrop to keep it all real. The 2021 fire in Lytton, B.C., destroyed the village, 45 homes, and the band office of the Lytton First Nation. This one fire has racked up costs of over \$100-million, according to the Insurance Bureau of Canada.

In 2025, 73 First Nations were forced to evacuate due to wildfires. This impacted 45,000 First Nations people, which is more than half of the 85,000 people in Canada overall who were evacuated by wildfires.

Some called that year “unprecedented.” Well, here's a scary thought. It was unprecedented, and it was also the harbinger of the new world.

In 2025, more than 6,000 wildfires burned off land in Canada. Our only saving grace is that so few communities relative to the size of the country were impacted.

When ISC makes announcements about funding, some thought is required to consider if the needs are actually being met.

If the funding is meant to uphold reconciliation, then it must be about closing the gaps. This cannot be stressed enough.

Canada has said it's committed. So, walk the talk in covering the safety needs today for Indigenous Peoples.

The whole point of reconciliation is to serve Indigenous Peoples as if we're real citizens. Every single time that Indigenous Peoples are underserved, it is unethical and probably illegal.

How about we don't wait for the courts to intervene—as is now clearly the trend—to ensure that the feds are compelled to pay compensation for inequitable funding?

The fire and the flood, all in one year. First Nations Elders and chiefs say that the

Earth is speaking to us, and it seems we have not heard the message. Mother Earth is shifting because of human impact. Climate change is already an existential threat to infrastructure, communities, and our sense of safety. Perhaps the federal government might reflect this in its budgets.

Rose LeMay is Tlingit from the West Coast and the CEO of the Indigenous Reconciliation Group. She writes twice a month about Indigenous inclusion and reconciliation. In Tlingit worldview, the stories are the knowledge system, sometimes told through myth and sometimes contradicting the myths told by others. But always with at least some truth.

The Hill Times



## AI FOR REAL IMPACT

At Simon Fraser University, we believe in research for real impact. We're driving bold, positive change by leveraging our excellence in AI, quantum computing and more to engage in pressing global challenges and advance an inclusive and sustainable future.

From faster drug development and better cancer treatment to smart sensing systems for sustainable crop growth, our world-class research leads to tangible outcomes—innovative solutions that are already shaping health, climate and technology systems around the world.

Meet the people behind the work and learn how we're building a better future, one breakthrough at a time.

**#1 CANADIAN  
UNIVERSITY  
FOR INNOVATION**

World University Rankings for Innovation, 2025



**CONNECT TO  
EXCELLENCE**

Visit [sfu.ca/ai](https://sfu.ca/ai)

## NEWS

# Grits ‘throwing everything at that seat’ as 48 candidates and ‘adapted ballot’ could influence result of nail-biter Terrebonne byelection, say pollsters and Liberal sources

Two weeks before byelection day, pollsters Nik Nanos and Quito Maggi are predicting a Liberal advantage in the riding of Terrebonne, Que.

Continued from page 1

result could trigger another legal challenge.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has called three byelections for April 13. Two are taking place in the Toronto-area ridings of University–Rosedale and Scarborough Southwest, and one is in Terrebonne, Que.

While the two Toronto-area seats are considered safe for the Liberals, the real contest is expected in Terrebonne, a riding that’s being closely watched by political insiders. Long regarded as a safe Bloc Québécois seat, Terrebonne flipped in the 2025 general election when the Liberals won by a razor-thin margin of one vote. Auguste won 23,352 votes or 38.7 per cent of the vote, while Sinclair-Desgagné won 23,351 votes, or 38.7 per cent of the vote. There was no margin of victory.

It later turned out that a mail-in ballot cast for the Bloc candidate was returned due to an Elections Canada error. Although the agency acknowledged the mistake, it had no mechanism to correct it. Bloc candidate Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné, who held the riding between 2021 and 2025, challenged the result in court, and after a months-long legal fight, the Supreme Court annulled the election, triggering the byelection. Sinclair-Desgagné is running again, as is Liberal Tatiana Auguste, who was initially declared the winner and served as MP from April 28, 2025, until the court’s decision on Feb. 13, 2026.

Currently, the Liberals hold 170 seats in the House and need two more to secure a majority. A win in Terrebonne would give them a one-seat cushion. A majority would allow the government to pass legislation more easily and control most House committees, except for four. It would also mark the party’s first time holding more than 50 per cent

Liberal candidate Tatiana Auguste, centre, pictured on March 14, 2026, with more than 20 Liberal MPs at a campaign rally in Terrebonne, Que. Two weeks before the byelection day, pollsters Nik Nanos and Quito Maggi are predicting a Liberal advantage in the riding. *The Hill Times* photograph by Aidan Raynor



of seats since the 2015 election when Justin Trudeau first came to power with a landslide majority.

Both the Liberals and the Bloc Québécois are heavily invested in the Terrebonne race: for the Liberals, it is key to achieving a majority after narrowly unseating a Bloc MP by one vote last spring, while, for the Bloc, Terrebonne is a longtime stronghold it’s held since 1984.

## ‘As long as the elector’s intent is clear, their vote will be counted’: Elections Canada

A total of 48 candidates are running in the byelection, including 42 independents backed by the Longest Ballot Committee, an advocacy group which pushes for electoral reform by flooding ballots to highlight concerns about representation. In past elections with large candidate pools, Elections Canada has printed unusually long ballots—sometimes up to a metre in length—making counting more time-consuming and delaying results. In a recent Alberta byelection with more than 200 candidates, the agency used an “adapted ballot,” or a “write-in ballot” requiring voters to write their preferred candidate’s name.

Elections Canada will use the same approach in Terre-

bonne, meaning voters must write the candidate’s name and may include the party name, though party-only entries will not be counted. Given that the last result in the Quebec riding was decided by a single vote, the combination of an adapted ballot and a crowded field could further complicate the outcome.

“As long as the elector’s intention is clear, their vote will be counted, even if they misspell the candidate’s name,” said a March 25 Elections Canada press release.

According to polling aggregator 338canada.com’s projection on April 2, the riding of Terrebonne would be a toss-up between the Liberals and the Bloc. The ridings of University–Rosedale and Scarborough Southwest were projected to remain safe Liberal seats.

Nik Nanos, chief data scientist for Nanos Research, said last week that, based on his polling, the Liberals had gained an advantage by early last week, adding his modelling does not account for individual candidates or voter turnout. He said that while the race began as a toss-up between the governing party and the Bloc, it now appears to favour the Liberals. Nanos also said he understands the rationale for using an adapted ballot, but said he hopes the result is not close, warning that a tight finish could lead to disputes over voter intent

and significantly delay the final results.

“There’s just another level of complexity on that front,” said Nanos.

“On election night, there’s probably going to be a sense of how many ballots were difficult to decipher in terms of what their intent was.”

According to Nanos Research’s most recent poll released last week, the Liberals had a 32.1-per-cent lead over the Bloc in Quebec, home to 78 electoral seats. So, if a general election were to happen now, the Liberals would get 53.2 per cent of the vote, the Bloc 21.1 per cent, the Conservatives 20.1, and the NDP 2.8 per cent.

## Another close result could end up in court, says Jack Siegel

Liberal sources told *The Hill Times* that their party is “throwing everything” they have to win the byelection.

“The party is pushing very heavy on that seat,” said one Liberal source.

“The party is pouring in a lot of resources. They are throwing everything they have at that seat. They’re sending in resources. They are making phone banks.”

Last month, more than 20 Liberal MPs—including Health

Minister Marjorie Michel (Papineau, Que.)—were in the riding to support candidate Auguste, whom Michel had recruited to run in the riding last year. Party sources said the Liberals are taking nothing for granted and are providing full support to the campaign.

They also expressed concern that the write-in ballot could lead to a higher number of rejected votes compared to a standard ballot. At the same time, they pointed out that with 42 independent candidates in the race, even if each were to receive just one vote, that amounts to 42 votes, a number that could prove significant given that the last election was decided by a single vote.

Quito Maggi, CEO of Mainstreet Research, told *The Hill Times* that he conducted a poll in the riding about a month ago that showed the Liberals ahead by three points, and he expects the byelection to be a nail-biter.

“I would expect a fairly close outcome,” said Maggi. “I would lean towards saying the Liberals have a slight advantage there.”

He said the Liberals appear to have an edge, as byelections often are a referendum on the governing party, which is currently riding high in the polls. As the incumbent, the Liberals also have an organizational advantage over the Bloc Québécois, with several MPs regularly visiting the riding to support Auguste. At the same time, Maggi said that the provincial Parti Québécois is assisting its federal cousin, treating the byelection as a test run for its strategy ahead of the provincial election this fall.

“Organizationally, the Liberals have the advantage because they’re the incumbent government, because they have the infrastructure, the team, the volunteers, etc., that are being pumped into the these three byelections,” said Maggi.

“The entirety of the Quebec wing of the party is going into this riding every day.”

Maggi also said the Easter long weekend could play a key role in shaping voters’ decisions, as friends and families often gather and discuss politics, especially in a high-stakes race like Terrebonne, which could influence how people ultimately vote in the byelection.

Jack Siegel, who previously served as the Liberal Party’s legal counsel for many years, told *The Hill Times* that a close result could ultimately end up in court, adding that if 30,000 votes are cast and the margin is as small as 30 votes, it would automatically trigger a recount.

Given the use of an adapted ballot, he said, the number of rejected ballots could be higher than usual, and much will depend on Elections Canada’s guidance for interpreting ballots where voter intent is unclear.

“If I was organizing scrutineers in the polls for my party on election night, I would be sure to have as many scrutineers in there as possible objecting to every ballot that we don’t get to go our way ... where there’s a variation between the candidate name and what was actually written on the ballot,” said Siegel.

arana@hilltimes.com  
The Hill Times

# No 'real benefit' to prorogation for the government, say politicians, amid speculation option is on the table

The Liberals could use programming motions as a 'workaround' to speed up committees without rejigging party representation, which is locked in for the duration of Parliament, unless altered by a House motion, says former NDP staffer Anthony Salloum.

BY ELEANOR WAND

Proroguing Parliament isn't likely to benefit the government should it secure a majority, say observers, as the move wouldn't rejig the makeup of committees and could "cut into" Prime Minister Mark Carney's "anti-politician" brand.

The comments come amid speculation that the government is considering prorogation after unnamed Liberal sources told *The Globe and Mail* the option is on the table should the feds win three upcoming byelections which would secure them a majority government of 173 MPs, with one seat to spare. After publication, the government swiftly denied such plans were being considered.

"I don't see any real benefit," said former Conservative strategist Tim Powers, who's also the chairman of Summa Strategies and managing director of Abacus Data.

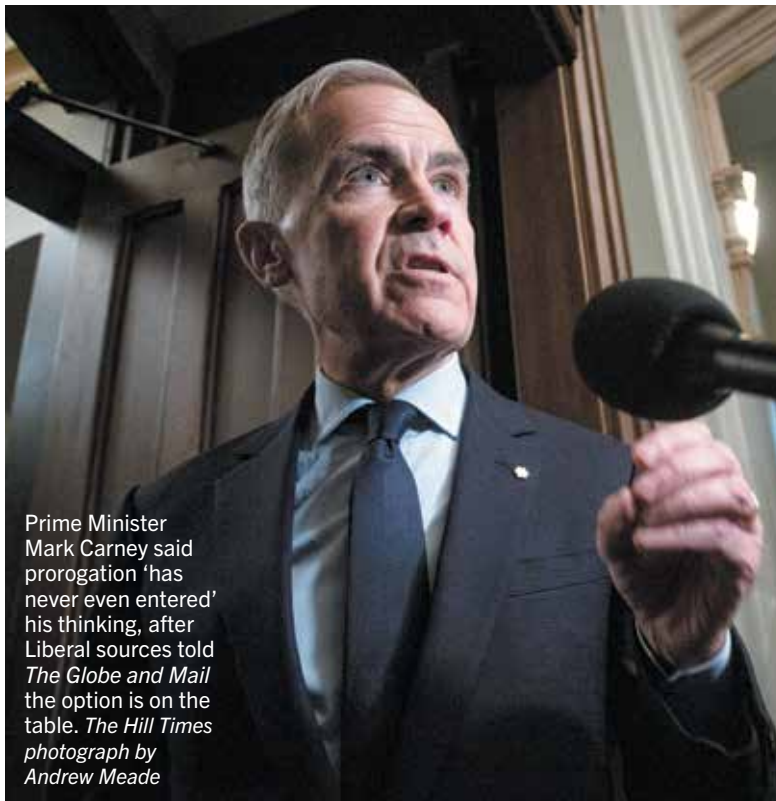
"If [Carney] wins those byelections on April 13, and has a slight majority, he's got political momentum and political capital."

Powers said Carney (Nepean, Ont.) would "waste" that capital by proroguing Parliament—a process that sends all legislation back to square one and resets all committee work.

Carney's brand has been "anti-politician politician," noted Powers, who added that, given Parliament is headed towards summer recess, autumn is a more "natural" time for the government to consider setting a new agenda.

"Prorogation doesn't seem like it's a tool he would necessarily be inclined to use right now because it might cut into his brand and challenge some of the credibility that he's built by not being like everybody else."

Thanks to defections from the Conservatives and the NDP, the



Prime Minister Mark Carney said prorogation 'has never even entered' his thinking, after Liberal sources told *The Globe and Mail* the option is on the table. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Liberals are just two seats short of a majority. Two of the three April 13 contests are in safe Liberal ridings, but if the third seat doesn't come through, the government would still need House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia (Lac-Saint-Louis, Que.) to break any ties in the House. And, at committee, the Liberals don't have a majority, giving opposition parties the power to slow debate at the committee stage.

Under the current structure, Liberals have five seats on committees, the Conservatives, four, and the Bloc, one. The NDP—which is below the 12-seat threshold for recognized party status in the House with a caucus of six—have none.

*The Globe and Mail's* unnamed sources said the government is considering proroguing Parliament in order to gain control of committees.

## Prorogation wouldn't restructure committees

But prorogation itself would not be enough to restructure committee composition.

The House passed a motion on June 5—which is valid for the duration of the 45th Parliament—setting out the breakdown of party members on each committee. Prorogation doesn't start a new Parliament, so that breakdown would still stand—unless the House were to change it.

Committee breakdowns are struck through negotiation when Parliament begins. If the Liberals want to rejig party representation—without starting a new Parliament—the House would

have to pass a motion to modify existing committee memberships.

The House Speaker's office told *The Hill Times* that such a motion would typically require written notice, debate, and amendment. The House could also unanimously agree to change committee makeups.

As former Conservative communications director Yaroslav Baran writes in *The Hill Times*, the government could force through standing orders changes with a majority vote, too, but that would be unconventional.

"In Westminster parliamentary systems, the standing orders function as a kind of internal constitution," Baran writes.

"While they do evolve over time, they are not supposed to be rewritten unilaterally by a temporary majority."

*The Hill Times* asked the Prime Minister's Office if the government is considering changing standing orders on committee membership, but was directed to an earlier statement.

Carney has been quick to deny any speculation his government is entertaining the idea of prorogation.

"It has never even entered my thinking, the possibility of that," Carney said on March 31, when asked by a reporter if he was considering it.

"So, I couldn't have been more surprised to see suggestion that that was under consideration."

House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) also said in a statement that the government has "no plans" to prorogue Parliament.

## If playing politics, 'place the ace' and call an election, says Jordan

Joe Jordan, a former parliamentary secretary to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien, noted that Carney was "very quick" to put the idea to rest.

Jordan said that—as someone who has spent his "entire life" in politics—he sees things through the lens of elections and partisan politics. But, Carney doesn't see things that way, he said.

"I don't think he's wired that way," said Jordan, a senior associate at Bluesky Strategy Group.

Still, Jordan said that the political argument for prorogation would be "a bit of a stretch," as it is not a "necessity" to rejig committees.

"I think he really is focused on his objectives," Jordan said of Carney. "And that's not a criticism. It's just, he, I think, would be a hard person to convince to do something for purely political reasons."

"Carney doesn't seem to chase the sort of low-level partisan politics stuff."

But Jordan said if the Liberals are "going to play politics," they should "hit the ground running," and call an election, instead of proroguing Parliament.

"What's the point of being half pregnant?" he said.

"If you're going to play that card, then I would suggest you place the ace. And the ace political card right now for the Liberals would be to somehow get a spring election where the Canadians aren't either blaming the Liberals or seeing the Liberals ... acting in their self-interest."

A March 25 poll by Abacus Data puts the Liberals at a seven-point lead, taking home 44 per cent of the vote share if an election were called today. The Conservatives are polling at 37 per cent, the NDP at nine, and the Bloc Québécois at six per cent.

Jordan added that the "halfway measure" of prorogation "never made any sense from the start."

## Programming motions a 'workaround' to speed up committees, says Salloum

Former NDP staffer Anthony Salloum noted that though prorogation has its "purposes," when it comes to committee composition, it wouldn't help.

Salloum, a former senior adviser to then-NDP MP Claude Gravelle, said one "workaround" would be for the Liberals to put forth "programming motions" that set out limited debate times for bills at second readings, report stages, and third readings.

Those motions could also detail how many hearings and meetings a committee can hold on a particular piece of legislation.

Programming motions could speed up specific committee processes without rejigging their memberships, and would require only a majority vote of the House to pass.

These questions won't matter if the Liberals fail to secure the majority in the April 13 byelections, of which University-Rosedale, Ont., and Scarborough Southwest, Ont. are considered strong Liberal seats. But in Terrebonne, Que., the margin is razor thin. The federal election results there were recently overturned by the Supreme Court after a Bloc voter's ballot was not counted due to a clerical error and rookie Liberal MP Tatiana Auguste won the seat by only one vote.

If the Liberals were to win just two seats, that would bring the Speaker in the mix to break any ties. As Salloum explained, the Speaker, "by tradition," votes to maintain the status quo.

"The Speaker will vote against the government's programming motion to maintain the composition of committees as they stood before the by-elections," Salloum speculated. "So, it's a risky move for the government."

Therefore, three more seats is the sweet spot for the feds.

But Salloum said programming motions are "definitely an option" even if the Liberals don't swing all three seats red, as the government could negotiate with an opposition party to gain support for specific motions.

He said that the Liberals can use the threat of an election as a bargaining chip to restructure committees more broadly, or to win support in passing programming motions.

"The government's biggest threat all the time is, either we co-operate, we get Parliament working, or we're going to have to go to the voters and call an election," he said.

"They, in a negotiating stance, will probably ... say, look, 'Canadians clearly approve of what we're doing. Canadians clearly approve of the prime minister. We've won these by elections, so we feel we have a mandate from people to implement the government's agenda, and part of the implementing of our agenda requires us to have majority membership on the committees now that we have a majority government.'"

Power said having control of committees saves the government some time and avoids "a lot of unnecessary nonsense and showboating."

"But in the matrix of key performance indicators for government, I think it's well below the top 20 irritant," he said.

"Without being disrespectful to the role of committees, who cares? I mean, this isn't what Canadians are focused on. They're not focused on 'MP X' and the Conservative Party getting to ask a number of questions that he or she thinks important."

ewand@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*

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

#### EDITORIAL

##### NEWS REPORTERS

Stuart Benson, Jesse Cnockaert, Riddhi Kachhela, Irem Koca, Neil Moss, and Eleanor Wand

##### ENGAGEMENT EDITOR

Christina Leadlay

##### PHOTOGRAPHERS

Sam Garcia, Andrew Meade, and Cynthia Münster

##### EDITORIAL CARTOONIST

Michael de Adder

##### COLUMNISTS

Andrew Caddell, John Chenier, Sheila Copps, David Crane, Jim Creskey, Gwynne Dyer, Matt Gurney, Michael Harris, Erica Ifill, Joe Jordan, Rose LeMay, Alex Marland, Arthur Milnes, Tim Powers, Susan Riley, Ken Rubin, Josie Sabatino, Bhagwant Sandhu, Evan Sotiropoulos, Scott Taylor, Lori Turnbull, Nelson Wiseman, and Les Whittington

#### ADVERTISING

##### VICE PRESIDENT MARKETING AND MULTIMEDIA SALES

Steve MacDonald

##### DIRECTORS OF BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Craig Caldbick, Erveina Gosalci, and Martin Reaume

#### DIGITAL AND DESIGN

##### CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

David Little

##### SENIOR WEB DEVELOPER

Nick Vakulenko

##### DIGITAL AND PRODUCTION MANAGER

Joey Sabourin

##### SENIOR GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Neena Singhal

##### GRAPHIC DESIGNER

Naomi Wildeboer

#### ADMINISTRATION

##### HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGER

Tracey Wale

#### SUBSCRIPTIONS

##### MARKETING DIRECTOR

Chris Rivoire

##### LOYALTY AND SUBSCRIPTION MANAGER

Melanie Grant

##### SUBSCRIPTION SALES EXECUTIVE

Sean Hansel

##### OFFICE AND CIRCULATION MANAGER

Irma Guarneros

##### SALES CONSULTANT

Puran Guram

#### DELIVERY INQUIRIES

circulation@hilltimes.com  
 613-688-8821

Published every Monday and Wednesday by Hill Times Publishing Inc.

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

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

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

# Editorial

## Editorial

### Here's to the Hill staffer and the two PPS guards who helped save Hill staffer Stefan Kapuran's life

It's not every day someone's life is saved on Parliament Hill, but that's what happened four weeks ago. Thanks to a Liberal staffer and two Parliamentary Protective Service constables, Conservative Hill staffer Stefan Kapuran's life was saved on March 9, after he suffered a cardiac arrest in the Confederation Building on his way to his office. He's a lucky man.

Ellena Yazdani, who works for Housing Minister Gregor Robertson, also in the Confederation Building, was the first person to find Kapuran collapsed in the stairwell that morning, and she counts herself also lucky that she found him. She told *The Hill Times* that she was late getting to work, realized she had forgotten her Hill pass, got a temporary pass in the building, and decided to take the stairs instead of the elevator as usual. That's when she found Kapuran.

She ran down to tell the two PPS guards on duty in the main lobby, constables Maxime Patry-Lavigne and Matthew Sargeson. They sprang into action: someone called an ambulance, one of them grabbed a defibrillator, and the two took turns performing CPR on Kapuran, who was rushed to the Ottawa Civic Hospital and admitted to the Ottawa Heart Institute.

Kapuran's boss, Conservative MP Ned Kuruc, drove to the hospital where the doctor told him that it was "a miracle" he was alive. "He was actually dead for about five-and-a-half minutes. And they saved his life," Kuruc told *The Hill Times*, referring to Yazdani, Patry-Lavigne, and Sargeson.

Kuruc formally thanked all three in his member's statement in the House

on March 11. "Because of their courage, quick thinking, and medical training, a life was saved. I am happy to report he is doing very well. In the hospital, the doctor told me that if there had not been a defibrillator on site, a tragedy would have occurred," Kuruc said.

The PPS, meanwhile, said it's responsible for about 55 defibrillators in the Parliamentary Precinct and others deployed in PPS vehicles. Kapuran says he's thankful for everyone who saved his life: "I am extremely grateful for everybody who acted fast to save a stranger." He also said he was grateful to Conservative MP Scott Reid, who pushed to have defibrillators installed in federal buildings.

Yazdani said she's thankful she was there at the right time. "This experience serves as a reminder and captures the meaning of humanity: that we are all human, and we need to look out for each other. You never know when you will be able to change or save someone's life."

The AED Foundation Ontario, meanwhile, had this to say about the story: it's "a remarkable reminder that cardiac arrest does not care about politics. On Parliament Hill, a Liberal staffer and Parliamentary Protective Service officers helped save a Conservative staffer's life. AED awareness, fast action, and preparedness save lives."

What happened that morning is not only a good-news story of how a young person's life was saved, it also reinforces the notion that miracles do happen, that we need to look out for each other, and that lives can change in an instant.

*The Hill Times*

## Letters to the Editor

### Access Act requires lobbying commissioner to disclose records of completed investigations within 30 days: Duff Conacher

Re: "Conacher criticizes lobbying office's 'secret rulings,' but federal lobbying commissioner cites privacy in probes," (*The Hill Times*, March 16). Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger is quoted saying that her office had to keep secret 80 to 90 per cent of its investigation records in 13 completed cases of Lobbying Act violations because the Access to Information Act "precludes the commissioner of lobbying and her office from disclosing at any time any information obtained during an investigation."

This statement is false. Subsection 16.2(2) of the Access to Information Act requires the commissioner to disclose records of completed investigations within 30 days (with a reasonable extension

of a few months allowed). The records in the 13 cases show that all the cases have been completed.

Scott Thurlow is also quoted saying of the commissioner redacting 80 per cent to 90 per cent of her records: "All agents of the government take this responsibility incredibly seriously, and they don't redact things willy-nilly." There is no evidence for that statement. In fact, several information commissioner annual reports and rulings and Federal Court rulings show clearly that many federal government institutions regularly redact information that the public has a clear right to know under the Access to Information Act.

**Duff Conacher**  
 Co-founder,  
 Democracy Watch  
 Toronto, Ont.

### Dear Canadian Nuclear Society, ditch the silly banana trope: Lynn Jones

Re: "Opinion piece on radioactive waste misleading: Canadian Nuclear Society," (*The Hill Times*, March 23). If the Canadian Nuclear Society wishes to protect and advance the fortunes of the nuclear industry in Canada, it might find the following advice helpful.

Don't say bringing high-level waste to the seismically-active Ottawa Valley and putting it into silos beside the Ottawa River is making Canadians safer. This defies common sense. Also, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) recommends disposing of high-level waste in deep geological repositories, well away from drinking water sources and seismically-active zones. As a member state, Canada is supposed to follow IAEA guidance.

Get up to speed on what would go into the million-ton megadump, the NSDF. Your letter suggests you may have fallen for the biggest myth about the radioactive waste mound upstream of Ottawa—that it would contain "only

low-level waste" including protective clothing and construction debris. It is still being promulgated on the Canadian Nuclear Safety Commission's website.

Experts formerly in charge of the Chalk River waste say it contains a mishmash of low- and intermediate-level waste and will remain radioactive and hazardous for millennia. The IAEA says waste from research facilities like Chalk River Laboratories generally is "intermediate-level," and in some cases "high-level." Highly-radioactive commercial wastes are also destined for the giant mound; some of these have been shipped from outside of Canada.

Ditch the silly banana trope. Comparing the radiation in a banana to radiation given off by a plutonium atom suggests lack of knowledge about different types of radiation and their dangers.

**Lynn Jones**  
 Past-president,  
 Ottawa River Institute  
 Ottawa, Ont.



# Politics

## Trump's threat to leave NATO is outrageous



U.S. President Donald J. Trump, pictured in West Palm Beach, Florida, on March 23, 2026. Trump started a war with Iran that is neither legal, moral, nor provoked. There was no imminent threat to the U.S., writes Michael Harris. Photograph courtesy of White House photographer Molly Riley

For one thing, NATO has been the centrepiece of Western and European peace and security for 80 years. For another, then-U.S. president Jimmy Carter passed a law making it illegal for any U.S. president to unilaterally leave NATO without Congress' approval.

Michael Harris

Harris



**H**ALIFAX—There is a lesson for Canada in United States President Donald Trump's recent attempt to intimidate NATO into joining the feckless Iran war.

Law means nothing to this man, and his idea of negotiation is stamping his foot, pounding his fist, and getting his way. Trump is, as Milton Friedman of *The New York Times* writes, "a man-child playing with matches."

Sadly, it is worse than that. The president's threat to leave the alliance is outrageous. For one thing, NATO has been the centrepiece of Western and European peace and security for 80 years. For another, then-U.S. president Jimmy Carter passed a law making it illegal for any U.S. president to unilaterally leave NATO without the approval of Congress.

And then there are the basic facts of the current debacle. Trump started a war with Iran that is neither legal, moral, nor provoked. There was no imminent threat to America.

The obvious fact? Before Trump started dropping bombs, the Strait of Hormuz—which delivers 20 per cent of the world's oil to market—was open to international shipping. Now it is closed, and motorists in the U.S. are forking over an extra dollar a gallon after just a few weeks of war. Spikes in food prices will be next.

So what does the embattled U.S. president do? He doubles down on his disastrous policy. He expects—as only a deluded narcissist can—America's allies to come to his aid.

He expected the European Union and the United Kingdom to join in a war, that they were never consulted on before it began. Not surprisingly, there were no takers. Because the allies would not join in this belligerent folly, Trump's basic instinct kicked in—the lust for getting even.

That process began, as it often does, with insults. The EU was a "paper tiger" that ought to "build up some delayed outrage" and join his war. If they didn't,

Trump raised the threat of leaving Europe to "go it alone" on the vital issue of their security.

It is not an empty threat. Although Trump can't legally ditch NATO on his own, he can hurt the alliance in other ways. He could, for example, reduce the number of troops the U.S. has stationed in Europe. That number currently stands at more than 85,000, a contingent that was bolstered after Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Or, Trump could reduce America's financial contribution to the alliance, which runs to \$567-million annually—16 per cent of the common budget.

And there are other threats. Trump has warned Europeans that the U.S. will no longer protect their vessels coming through the Strait of Hormuz. "Go get your own oil," he insolently wrote on TruthSocial.

Trump was especially upset with France and the U.K. for not getting involved in the "decapitation" of Iran. He openly belittled Britain's Prime Minister Keir Starmer. In an interview with *The Telegraph*, Trump cast aspersions on the British military. "You don't even have a navy. You are too old," he said.

Faced with Trump's childish provocations, Starmer did the adult thing. He refused to roll around in the mud with the U.S. president, ignoring his taunts. But Starmer did express unequivocally Britain's stance on the war. "I have been absolutely clear that this is not our war and we're not going to get dragged into it." Instead of caving to Trump's bullying, Starmer also stood four square behind NATO.

"NATO is the single most effective military alliance the world has ever seen, it has kept us safe for many decades, and we are fully committed to NATO," Starmer said.

In making his remarks, Starmer no doubt understood that Trump has many ways to punish the U.K. for rebuffing his wishes. But he also understood something far more important. Getting involved in Trump's war was not in the U.K.'s interests.

There is a strong argument to be made that Prime Minister Mark Carney did not act in Canada's best interests when he gave his support—albeit with regret—to Trump's war in Iran. That was wrong because the war was both illegal and unprovoked. And Trump's claim that it was all about stopping Iran from getting nuclear weapons was patently false. After all, the president had already claimed to have "obliterated" Iran's nuclear program before the current war started.

Since Carney's initial blunder on this file, his government has moved steadily toward a much sounder policy: reopening the Strait of Hormuz by diplomatic means.

Foreign Minister Anita Anand has made clear in her recent trip to Saudi Arabia that Canada will be there to assist in restoring shipping through the Strait as soon as a ceasefire is declared. Defence Minister David McGuinty has said that might include vessels, mine-sweeping, and cyber capacities. That is Canada at its best: world-class peacekeeper.

And it will take the world—not just Canada at its best—to rein in the U.S. at its worst under Trump. It means every country reminding this president that international relations and diplomacy are not a one-way street. Part of that is not bowing to every demand made by the Trump administration. And part of it is demonstrating that countries like Canada have other options.

Carney has done a good job of reaching out to potential new trading partners to lessen this country's unhealthy reliance on trade with the U.S. But he should also consider doing a little tougher negotiations with Trump on matters that mean something to him.

There is an excellent opportunity to do that as Canada contemplates how to modernize its aging jet fighters fleet. Carney had it right when he ordered a review of the decision to purchase 88 U.S.-made F-35 Stealth fighter jets from Lockheed Martin.

It might be worthwhile to remind the Americans that Canada has an option to the F-35; Sweden's Saab Gripen fighter jet. Buying the Gripen would provide 72 fighter jets and six GlobalEye surveillance aircraft assembled here, and also include 12,000 high-tech jobs in Canada.

So Donald, if you really want Ottawa to buy the F-35, how about a sweetener—like dropping your greedy tariffs against Canada?

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT

# Avi Lewis and redefining 'radical'

Avi Lewis is unlikely to become prime minister any time soon. But the new NDP leader wants to urgently jump-start our transition from oil to green technologies with the new revenues and jobs they promise. Pragmatist-in-chief, Prime Minister Mark Carney, made similar arguments before he became a politician. These are not 'crazy' ideas.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—Long before his convincing victory last week, Avi Lewis, the brand new federal New Democratic Party leader, was widely portrayed as too "radical" for the country, for his party, for the times.

He would doom the NDP to further irrelevance, torpedo the electoral prospects of provincial NDP premiers and party leaders, frighten ordinary voters with his "wild-eyed" ideas and intemperate rhetoric. He would, in his spare time, destroy the fossil fuel industry; "nationalize" everything from grocery stores, to Netflix, to Canada Post; and, if he ever got the chance, reverse the sudden avalanche of money flowing to the ragged Canadian military. Or, as he styles it: the "bottomless money pit for war."

Most alarming to some, he would name what is happening in Gaza a "genocide" and encourage, overall, a more forthright, morally coherent foreign policy.

Which raises the question: what, exactly, is the problem?

The problem is our narrow definition of radical. It's a bit like "transformative," the adjective Prime Minister Mark Carney artfully applied to United States President Donald Trump. That one word contains multitudes.

So here is another definition of "radical": encouraging more oil



Newly elected New Democratic Party of Canada leader Avi Lewis, left, with his wife Naomi Klein after after winning the leadership in Winnipeg on March 29, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Matthew Merkel

production and more pipelines at a time when climate change is breathing heavily down our collective necks. (Maybe "crazy" is a more accurate descriptor.)

Our northern communities might be burning on the regular summer wildfire season, which is now an uncomfortable and destructive commonplace and the North is melting, and adjusting, adapting. It's costing us more money, more lost crops and communities (driving up food costs) and more human displacement and anxiety every year.

But, isn't it worth pumping more oil out to the world, keeping those carbon emissions rising, all to protect a shrinking number of jobs in a time-limited industry? Apparently the sane, responsible, non-communist answer is "yes." Spare a thought for our poor oil industry, nearly strangled by environmental regulation, understandably reluctant to invest in serious mitigation measures for fear of interrupting the gush of record profits of recent years.

Lewis' wild-eyed alternative: more heat pumps, an east-west electricity grid, investments in public transit and electrification of transportation, a transition for oilsands workers into green jobs, thereby exploiting the country's abundant clean hydro, wind, and solar power.

This may sound more familiar than radical. Many of these out-

landish notions were embraced by then-prime minister Justin Trudeau—anyone remember the "just transition"?—only to fail in the face of hysterical opposition from Big Oil and its political proxies. That, and Trudeau's meandering commitment, all but doused the long-promised green shift.

Indeed, there was a time when oil companies pretended to buy into net zero and promised technologies to produce "decarbonized" oil—which is a bit like desalinated salt—and even accepted imposition of an industrial carbon price, pioneered by former Alberta NDP premier Rachel Notley. Gone, or all but gone. In recent months, some oil producers are even complaining that more rigorously limiting powerful methane emissions (once broadly considered an inexpensive fix) would be financially ruinous.

They are also picking away at the (already weak) industrial carbon pricing regime, and insisting that governments largely finance a costly and questionable carbon capture and storage pipeline north of Edmonton intended to reduce emissions (if not by much.) The proponents of this venerable fig leaf, the six Big Oil patch giants, recently changed their name from the Pathways Alliance to the Oil Sands Alliance.

Make of that what you will.

And now, rumours are circulating that the federal government might put public money into an oil pipeline to British Columbia's northwestern coast after all. Talk about "nationalizing" key sectors!

But back to Lewis: he is unlikely to become prime minister any time soon, and, even if he did, he is not proposing to shut off the taps instantly. But he wants to urgently jump-start Canada's transition from oil to green technologies with the new revenues and jobs they promise. Our pragmatist-in-chief, Prime Minister Carney, made similar arguments before he transitioned into a politician.

Nor is the notion of moving away from fossil fuels considered "radical" in many parts of the world. Europe, South America, China (communist, of course) are already weaning themselves off of oil and not suffering economically as a direct result. On the contrary—and radical as this may sound—the current Middle East war makes a strong case for accelerating the availability of green energy, and freeing ourselves from the constant fluctuations in global oil prices, rather than doubling down on domestic oil production.

Those deeply invested in protecting the status quo will say "no" to many of Lewis' ideas, from public grocery stores, to a repurposed Canada Post, to cheaper

telecommunications options, to bolstering child care, promoting head-to-toe medicare—all aimed at "a dignified life for every working person in this country, awash in wealth." Their reasons: it's new, it's risky, we can't afford it.

It is Lewis' challenge to address that skepticism, that caution, which infects our national character, for better and for worse, and has only deepened in the Trump era. Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has been effective in platforming some of the economic victims of our lop-sided economy: the homeless, the young people who can't afford rent, rural Canadians facing joblessness and poverty. But he seems more invested in point-scoring, tax cutting and shrinking government than offering tangible help.

Lewis will never convince the beneficiaries of the current economy to change, but they are a minority. Meanwhile, everyone else hears only one version of events because of the misleading, omnipresent propaganda of the right, the Liberals' limp, bureaucratic response, and the tendency of the shrinking mainstream media (not everyone) to write what they are told.

As Lewis told reporters after his March 29 win, right-wing populists imagine "conspiracies of immigrants, or Jews, of a tiny class of puppeteers who control the world." Left-wing populists—also known as "left-wing radicals," like himself—believe "that capitalism concentrates wealth and power in the fewest hands and we need ... policies that actually respond to the 99 per cent." Government on the side of the people, in other words; a venerable and threatened ideal.

Warmth, humour and straight talk—an ability to simplify complicated arguments—will always trump slogans and shouting. Lewis is personable, articulate, and intelligent, with some of his late father's ability to command a crowd and his feminist journalist mother's clear progressive vision. If he can stay "hard on the problem, soft on the people" he may prove more than a shooting star.

The country needs his voice. The current Parliament—our skilled and affable prime minister, our negative and shopworn opposition leader—are too much in the thrall of powerful interests, such as oil executives, big banks, or telecommunications giants—or, perhaps, just too comfortable with the way things are—to go to the mat for the public interest, be it fighting climate change or saving medicare.

If Lewis can get elected—even before then—he could be a much-needed prod, an antidote to complacency, a hopeful voice for disaffected and discouraged Canadians, including some currently drawn to Poilievre's politics of resentment.

He hopes, he said, "there is some curiosity in the storytelling class in Canada about what left-wing populism can offer."

Some of us are all ears.

Susan Riley is a veteran political columnist who writes regularly for *The Hill Times*.

*The Hill Times*

## COMMENT

# New NDP Leader Avi Lewis' 'winnability factor' in doubt

Canadians generally like to govern from the centre. Most electoral victories have been precipitated by the winning leader showing balance and moderation. Lewis' victory was not based on moderation, but on exploding the status quo.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—One thing is certain. The new leader of the federal New Democratic Party has the overwhelming support of his party.

Avi Lewis swept to victory on the first ballot last weekend, and, coincidentally, was also the second choice of most voters who backed other candidates.

With more than 71,000 ballots cast, Lewis secured an easy victory announced at the convention in Winnipeg on March 29. That was the easy part.

Translating that into electoral victory is another story.

Provincial New Democratic leaders kept their distance from Lewis.

British Columbia Premier David Eby did not attend the convention. Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew gave a speech to the convention on the winnability factor.

That was seen as a slap at Lewis because he has already lost two elections while his closest leadership rival, MP Heather McPherson, is one of only a handful non-Conservative Albertans sitting in the House of Commons. There are three Liberals in Alberta, while the Conservatives hold 33 of the 37 seats.

Kinew did join other supporters on stage with Lewis after his victory was announced, and embraced the new leader.

Following the convention, Kinew said: "I just love Avi ... and

we don't have to agree on everything to get big things done."

Other NDP icons were not as effervescent.

Former Alberta premier Rachel Notley introduced McPherson to the convention with a passionate call for "realistic plans." She focused on McPherson's capacity to build bridges, in contrast with others.

Notley did not name Lewis, but the inference was there.

In the moments after Lewis' victory, current Alberta NDP leader Naheed Nenshi issued a statement making it very clear that his provincial party does not include Lewis.

"It is clear that the direction of the federal party, under this leader, someone who openly cheered for the defeat of the Alberta NDP government, is not in the interest of Alberta," Nenshi said.

Before Lewis won the leadership, former national NDP leader Tom Mulcair was equally critical, suggesting a Lewis landslide would create a "huge problem," particularly his plan to shut down fossil fuel development.

Mulcair also criticized Lewis for his decision not to run in a byelection and get into the House as soon as possible.

Mulcair told CTV News that he has spoken to dozens of NDP supporters who are worried that Lewis' radical positions on issues would likely cost them even more seats.

With only six members in the House, the NDP currently do not have party status and would lose their only Quebec member if Alexandre Boulerice quits the party to run in the provincial election for Quebec Solidaire, as he's hinted.

The "winnability" factor did not appear to influence the voters at the convention.

Rob Ashton, the labour-endorsed candidate at the convention, ran a poor fourth, behind Indigenous social worker Tanille Johnston.

That was a shock because most observers thought labour would deliver more than the 5.91 per cent of the votes Ashton secured on the first ballot.

That number should be concerning for the party because past support in ridings across the country has depended on the involvement of labour workers and funding.

If only five per cent are active at the NDP's national organizational level, it does not augur well for labour influence in a general election.

Canadians generally like to govern from the centre. Most electoral victories have been precipitated by the winning leader showing balance and moderation.

Lewis' victory was not based on moderation, but on exploding the status quo. His call for an

end to all fossil fuel extraction, coupled with the establishment of government-run groceries stores, is not going to sit well with the majority.

He will definitely bleed support from the Green Party, which is already on life support. But McPherson would have cut into Liberal support by attracting voters who see Carney as a more conservative-Liberal.

With Lewis, there is little chance that left-wing Liberals will move to his party. And that is bad news for the Conservatives.

The way Tories win in Ontario is by Liberals bleeding votes to the left. The split secures victory for the right. Probably the most disappointed leader following the Lewis victory was federal Conservative Pierre Poilievre.

On a sombre but serendipitous note, Lewis' father, former Ontario NDP leader Stephen Lewis, lived to see his son's victory. The 88-year-old elder Lewis passed away less than 48 hours after the win was announced.

Avi Lewis is a third-generation NDP leader, following in the footsteps of his father and grandfather, federal leader David Lewis.

Lewis told the convention his grandfather predicted an NDP prime minister in the next generation, and his father the same. Lewis vowed that, with his victory, his own son will not have to wait.

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

The Hill Times

# Conservatives deal with bad polls

So far, it seems the Conservatives are not exactly dismissing the polls like John Diefenbaker once did, nor are they talking about their own internal polls, but they are trying to make it clear that all the bad numbers splashing around the media aren't causing them to panic.

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Politicians are always put in a difficult spot when their polling numbers are weak.



Conservative national campaign manager Steve Outhouse, left, and Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre. Outhouse recently told the media, "Polls are polls, and they do what polls do. What you need to do, if you're talking about the long game, is to not worry about them on a day-to-day basis." The Hill Times photographs by Amir Said and Andrew Meade

That's to say, a politician needs to look confident even when the polls are telling the whole world that his or her ship seems to be sinking.

The easiest way to do that, of course, is to simply dismiss the polls.

For instance, former Canadian prime minister John Diefenbaker once declared, "polls are only good for dogs."

Others might say, "The only poll that matters is the one on election day."

Or you can simply proclaim, "Forget the public polls. Our own internal polls are showing us as being much more competitive."



I'm bringing this up because Canada's Conservative Party currently needs to deal with bad polls.

Indeed, many polls show the Conservatives are trailing the Liberals by double digits.

So how are they handling it?

Well, so far it seems they're not exactly dismissing the polls like Diefenbaker, nor are they talking about their own internal polls, but they are trying to make it clear that all the bad numbers splashing around the media aren't causing them to panic.

As the Conservative campaign manager, Steve Outhouse, recently told the media, "Polls are

polls, and they do what polls do. What you need to do, if you're talking about the long game, is to not worry about them on a day-to-day basis."

Outhouse also noted how, in the past, he ran provincial election campaigns in Alberta and Newfoundland where he came from behind in the polls to win.

As he put it, "Going into that, led our opponents there actually to get quite complacent, and so we just have to keep charting our course and talking to Canadians every day—talking about issues that matter to them, and that's the long game."

These are not bad talking points when dealing with adverse polling numbers; they acknowledge that things may not be great today, but they also point forward to a brighter future.

They're realistic, yet optimistic.

Mind you, it's easy enough to believe that Outhouse is just "whistling past the graveyard," that he's putting on a brave face, despite the disastrous state of his party.

After all, bad polls do hurt political parties; they make it harder to raise donations, harder to energize their bases, and most importantly of all, they make it harder for parties to attract non-aligned voters to their cause.

Simply put, nobody wants to board a train that isn't moving. And right now, it's difficult to see how the Conservatives can turn their fortunes around.

Yet, I suspect that Outhouse's internal polling might be telling him that while the Liberals currently enjoy a huge lead, their support also lacks intensity.

In other words, it's possible that many Canadians who say they support the Liberals don't have a strong emotional attachment to the government.

If that's the case, they might become easily disillusioned with the Liberal government if it hits a bump in the road; i.e., the economy suffers a downturn.

Outhouse might also be counting on the NDP, which just elected a new leader, to gain a slight bounce in the polls, which could siphon voters away from the Liberals.

All things considered, then, in the not-too-distant future, it's possible the Conservatives could close the polling gap between them and the Liberals.

And even if that gap just closes by a smidgen, it would give the Conservatives an opportunity to proclaim that they now possess momentum, that they're heading in the right direction and that the Liberals are the ones losing steam. Then it would be the Liberals' turn to dismiss the polls.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant.

The Hill Times

## COMMENT



Justice Minister Sean Fraser is responsible for Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

# We're a grownup country or we aren't, fix the courts

Legal experts have sounded the alarm over a provision in Bill C-16 and say if it were to pass into law as written, automatic stays of proceedings if trials take too long to complete would no longer be an option, or at least would only be an option of last resort.

Matt Gurney

Opinion



TORONTO—We have clearly now arrived at the stage

where our court system has become so dysfunctional that we are slapping Band-Aid solutions on top of Band-Aid solutions, and are expecting that to work.

Last week in *The Hill Times*, Jesse Cnockaert reported on Bill C-16, the Protecting Victims Act, a bill which seeks to improve protections for victims of serious crimes. But legal experts have sounded the alarm over a provision in that bill. If Bill C-16 were to pass into law as written, automatic stays of proceedings if trials take too long to complete would no longer be an option, or at least would only be an option of last resort.

Ever since the Supreme Court's so-called Jordan ruling, serious crimes that cannot be brought to trial in under 30 months have the charges stayed, as the delay is deemed to have violated the accused's rights to a speedy trial (the limit is 18 months for lesser crimes). Bill C-16 wants to remove that automatic stay to address the very real problem of serious crimes going unpunished, something that everyone recognizes is already

happening due to chronic backlogs in the system.

It's worth zooming out just for a minute and considering here the problem that we face in its full glory. The Jordan ruling itself was already an attempt to force a kind of solution onto a serious problem. By setting hard constitutional limits on what could be considered a reasonable delay, the ruling sought to give the court systems across the land a firm kick in the rear end, and to also create a solution to the genuine problem for the accused that massive and systemic delays were creating.

Setting a deadline is, in theory, often a way to improve efficiency. It has a way of focusing the mind. But what it actually ended up doing was creating a situation where people accused of various serious crimes—including organized crime and violent sexual assault—were simply being let go because the clock ran out before the Canadian state, in its manifest competence, could organize a trial for them.

In other words, the Jordan ruling was already an attempt to solve a problem. The problem

has not been solved. And now, to address the problems that are being created by the attempted solution of the Jordan ruling, we are looking at creating a new solution. To fix the old solution.

Sigh.

If this were not such a serious issue, it would be funny. The fundamental problem is what it has always been. It takes the Canadian courts a shockingly large amount of time to organize and execute trials. This isn't new. Everybody knows this. We've been talking about it for years. That's why we had the Jordan ruling in the first place.

Can we please just fix the actual problem? Can we get our courts working properly? Or nah?

Alas, the evidence to date is pointing pretty decisively toward "nah." The provinces, which handle much of the actual backbone of the justice system at their level, have underinvested. We don't have enough courts or staff, and the various systems have been slow to adopt technological reforms that would introduce efficiencies to the system. (An old friend of mine who was crazy enough to pursue a career in

law has a darkly funny story of injuring her back while trying to lug a massive stack of boxes full of documents into a courthouse. Her injury itself became the cause of that trial's delay.)

The feds, for their part, utterly fell down on the job when it came to their critical role in keeping the justice system running: they stopped appointing superior court and appeals court judges, which is something that is both necessary and solely in the federal jurisdiction. Huge numbers of vacancies accumulated under the former prime minister.

The problem has begun to be addressed, and the process seems to be running better now, but the breakdown in that most basic element of federal responsibility remains one of the more baffling, unexplained failures of the Trudeau era. Real people were hurt by the government's incompetence and no one seems quite sure what the hell happened. We just mostly stopped talking about it.

So let's keep talking about it. It's absurd that we have this problem. It's a disgrace that we are so bad at this that C-16 contains a solution to the solution to delays theoretically contained in the Jordan ruling. We're a grownup country or we aren't. Fix the courts.

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

## COMMENT

# Avi Lewis should take a page out of the Justin Trudeau playbook

There's very little—if anything—stopping the new NDP leader from making it the Avi Lewis Party and infusing it with the values and priorities that he holds dear, just as former prime minister Justin Trudeau rebuilt the Liberal Party in his own image.

Lori Turnbull

Opinion



Now that Avi Lewis has taken over the leadership of the federal New Democratic Party, he has the daunting task of saving a party which, in the last election, had a near-death experience.

As he navigates the days, weeks, and months ahead, he might take a page from former prime minister Justin Trudeau's book. Though the circumstances are obviously different, Trudeau is an example of a leader who brought a beleaguered party back to life. He achieved this goal by doing two things: making strategic changes to the governance of the party and making the party's values synonymous with his own.

Lewis might be exactly the right person to stand the NDP back up, given that generations of his family have devoted themselves to the party and to social causes. His grandfather, David

Lewis, led the federal party in the 1970s and his father, Stephen Lewis—who sadly died just two days after Avi won the leadership—led the provincial NDP in Ontario, and was one of the most universally respected political leaders in Canadian history.

Avi Lewis has democratic socialism in his blood and, as leader, could revive the federal party by fighting for those struggling to live with the consequences of capitalism. The fact that Prime Minister Mark Carney has pulled the Liberal Party to the centre, and his emphasis of economic growth over social programs leaves Lewis and the NDP with a ready-made constituency on the left of the ideological spectrum.

But to connect to this constituency, Lewis needs to earn its trust. He needs to give voters a reason (or, ideally, many reasons) to place their support with him despite Carney's popularity, and the fact that the Conservatives have made a special effort to appeal to workers, young people, and those who are working hard but can't get ahead.

Lewis has come to the leadership at a time when the party is facing an existential crisis, just as Trudeau came to lead the Liberals at the worst time in its life in 2013. Fortunately for Lewis, as was the case for Trudeau, this is in no way his fault.

Lewis represents both continuity with the party's history, and a clean slate. But the fact that his hands are clean does not make the task ahead any easier.

Here's where the NDP is in a different situation than the Liberals in 2015. The party is deep in debt. The caucus is down to six people, including one flight risk who might depart soon in pursuit of a seat in the Assemblée nationale du Québec.

Lewis himself doesn't have a seat in the House of Commons, which means he can't truly show up to work in Ottawa. On top



Avi Lewis addresses the NDP national convention at the RBC Convention Centre in Winnipeg on March 28, 2026. Lewis should look to former prime minister Justin Trudeau for tips on how to rebuild a political party after Trudeau brought the Liberals back to life in 2015, writes Lori Turnbull. *The Hill Times* photograph by Matthew Merkel



Avi Lewis and Heather McPherson embrace after Lewis won the NDP leadership in Winnipeg on March 29, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Matthew Merkel



Manitoba Premier Wab Kinew scrumms at the NDP leadership convention in Winnipeg on March 29, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Matthew Merkel

of this, there's dissension in the ranks. Before Lewis could even walk onto the stage to accept his victory, Alberta NDP Leader Naheed Nenshi was on social media loudly distancing himself from Lewis. Saskatchewan NDP Leader Carla Beck did the same. Both cited Lewis' objection to pipelines and fossil fuel developments as reasons they could not support him.

To say Lewis has got his work cut out is the understatement of the year.

Therefore, no one could blame him for taking matters into his own hands and taking a decisive approach to the path forward. Frankly, there's very little (if anything) stopping him from making this the Avi Lewis Party

and infusing it with the values and priorities that he holds dear, just as Justin Trudeau rebuilt the Liberal party in his own image.

Trudeau's progressive values became the focus of the party's work, with business Liberals feeling left out in the cold. He didn't look back. He led the party to three mandates before retiring (under pressure) after almost 10 years in office early last year.

Trudeau achieved all that he did by maintaining a tight grip on the party's governance. Decisions were concentrated in his hands and those of his closest advisers from the very start, even before he became prime minister in 2015. He kicked Senators out of the Liberal caucus. He changed the rules so that voting

in leadership contests was open to "supporters," not members, who could affiliate with the Liberals for free. This governance change had the effect of making the party itself a more nebulous entity, and cemented his power even when he started slipping in the polls.

Lewis might find lessons in Trudeau's strategies that could help him steer the NDP ship. While there are differences between the two cases, Trudeau's success in moving the Liberals from a third-place party to a majority government is proof that, in Canadian politics, nothing can be taken for granted.

Dr. Lori Turnbull is a professor in the faculty of management at Dalhousie University.

*The Hill Times*

# OPINION



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and new NDP Leader Avi Lewis. The NDP puzzle is that the federal ballot polarized into a two-party race, where Poilievre, though losing the 2025 election, still managed to gain 24 seats, 12 of them from the NDP, writes Ken Polk. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Matthew Merkel

## Now Avi Lewis has his very own Pierre Poilievre problem

As long as these Pierre Poilievre-driven dynamics remain in place, the NDP seems destined to be squeezed out in two-party Liberal-Conservative contests.

Ken Polk

Opinion



**O**TTAWA—Congratulations, Avi Lewis. As the newly minted leader of the federal NDP, you now have to find a way to deal with the party's biggest problem: Pierre Poilievre.

Much has been written since last April's election about the political anchor that the Conservative leader has become on his party's fortunes. Poilievre's once-potent political spell now seems to enthrall few beyond the 85 per cent of the Conservative base who endorsed his leadership back in January.

With a Liberal majority now a seeming certainty after the April 13 byelections, Poilievre and his team will have a decent interval of time to grapple with their "Mark Carney problem."

Less commented on has been the NDP's own "Pierre Poilievre problem," one that the new leader has little control over, but which—beyond a renewed policy set or a new energized leadership—will undoubtedly shape and likely limit its prospects for a recovery in the next federal election.

### Conservatives not the only victims of Carney's political larceny

One of the neat political tricks that Carney has pulled is to pick up much of the Conservative leader's agenda. Less commented on is the way the prime minister has also cornered the market on many ideas and rhetoric that have, for decades, been the NDP's almost exclusive domain.

The dangers of corporate globalization, Canadian economic sovereignty, a made-in-Canada industrial strategy—all of these ideas that have been core NDP messages that, until Carney made them his own, were mostly treated as quaint left-wing nostalgia for the 1960s. That they have become mainstream just as the NDP itself collapsed must be deeply galling to the party.

The meaning of all of this is, of course, profound for Canada's domestic and international economic strategies. The search for self-sustaining domestic economic tools that are resilient in the face of this change is quite rightly what the Carney government is seized with. The steadily widening economic impact of the United States-Israeli assault on

“Were this an ordinary political time for the NDP, their comeback strategy would be built on biding their time until voters' attachment to the Liberals ebbs enough for the party to find a viable place to the Liberals' left. But this is no ordinary time.

Iran is, in some ways, just more evidence of the need for this country to depart from the optimistic globalization orthodoxy of the last half-century.

Canadians have little interest in the ramifications of this tectonic shift. Right now, for instance, they care more about the skyrocketing price of gas than they do about the NDP's future. But the party can at least say it's been a champion of Canadian economic sovereignty long before it suddenly became cool again.

Carney's larceny only built on Poilievre's populist outreach to union and young voters, traditionally core NDP constituencies, forcing the party to fight a near-fatal, two-front war that cost them 70 per cent of their seats and official party status in the House of Commons in 2025.

The first step toward finding a distinctive message that can bring its progressive voters back home. And, like the Conservatives, the apparently imminent Liberal majority will give the new leader and brain trust more time to land a new message and policy suite.

### Even in defeat, Poilievre hammered the NDP

As a rule in modern federal politics, the NDP's seat potential in elections has been defined by the chance for a Conservative government, the avoidance of which seems to be Job No. 1 for most progressive voters. If there is a chance the Liberals can stop the Conservatives, many voters who would otherwise vote NDP tend to migrate to the Liberals at the close of an election. For example, the NDP achieved its highest number of seats when the Liberals had no chance to stop a Conservative win in 1984, 1988, and 2011.

The Liberals under Justin Trudeau, on the seeming verge of political vaporization at the hands of the Poilievre Conservatives in 2025, should have shaped up as a solid one for the NDP. That it didn't obviously can be initially attributed to U.S. President Donald Trump's unprovoked attack on Canada after he won a second term in the White House.

But the NDP puzzle is that the federal ballot polarized into a two-party race, where Poilievre, though losing the election, still managed to gain 24 seats—12 of them from the NDP.

This suggests that, even as his lead over the Carney-led Liberals rapidly collapsed amid the Trump churn and the perception of him as a Canadian version of Trump, Poilievre's populist message and issue set retained some staying power.

The quandary for the NDP is that Poilievre's recent ringing endorsement from his party leaves them in the worst of political worlds. Absent some unforeseen rebellion, Poilievre is not going anywhere. The broad mass of Canadian voters indicated that they don't think enough of him to make him prime minister, given a credible alternative in Carney. But enough voters supported him to remain a threat to the NDP base.

### No ordinary time

Were this an ordinary political time for the NDP, their comeback strategy would be built on biding their time until voters' attachment to the Liberals ebbs enough for the party to find a viable place to the Liberals' left.

But this is no ordinary time. Unless he can change how Canadians broadly perceive him, Poilievre will remain a human get-out-the-vote machine for the Liberals in the next election. Unless the NDP can match Poilievre's populist appeal, he will remain a threat to their core vote.

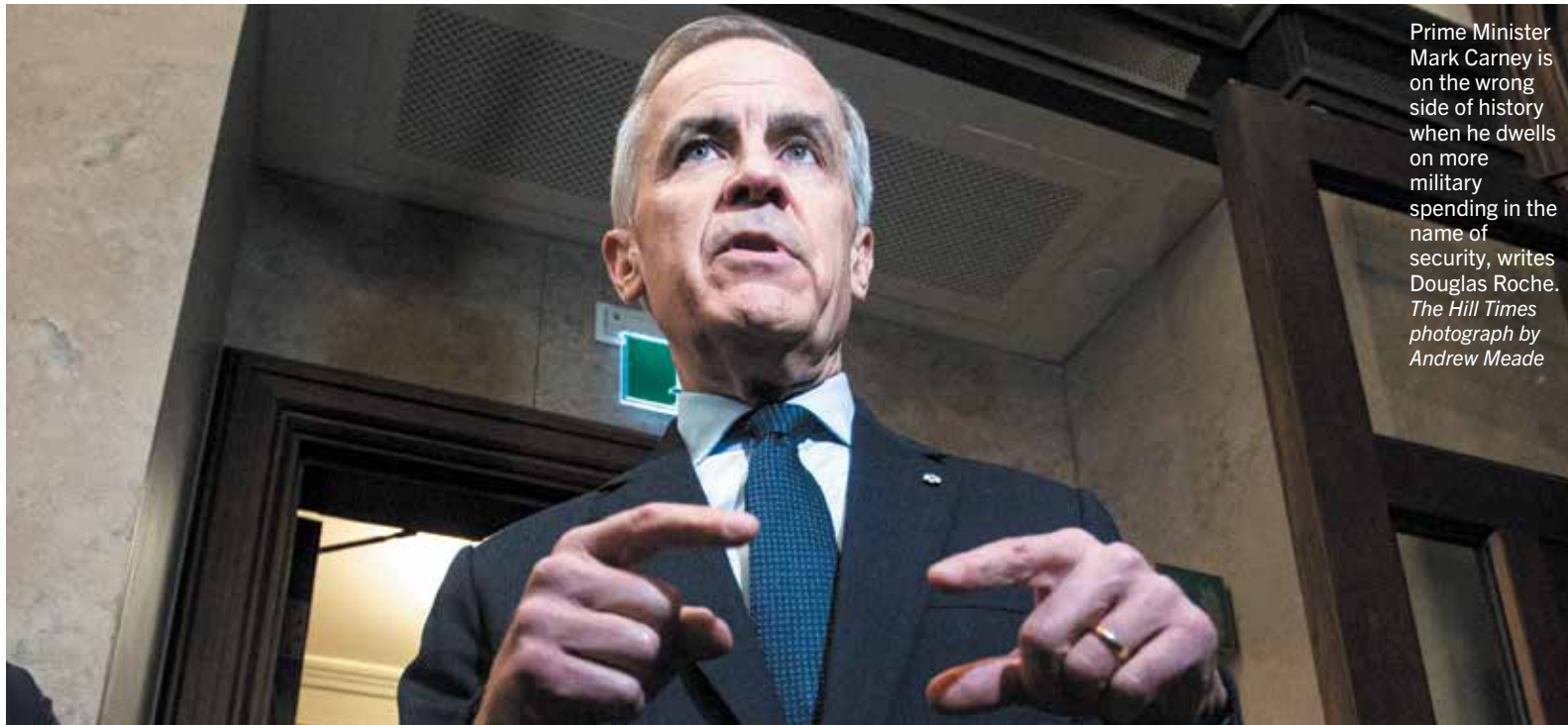
Judging by the far left-wing rhetoric that Lewis laid on in his convention address and victory speech on March 29, which seemed tuned to an audience living within a couple of miles of the CBC Toronto headquarters, he has some work to do yet.

As long as these Poilievre-driven dynamics remain in place, the NDP seems destined to be squeezed out in two-party Liberal-Conservative contests.

Ken Polk is a strategic adviser at Compass Rose. Previously, he served as chief speechwriter, deputy director of communications, and legislative assistant to then-prime minister Jean Chrétien.

*The Hill Times*

# Diplomacy now plays second fiddle to Canada's voracious military



Prime Minister Mark Carney is on the wrong side of history when he dwells on more military spending in the name of security, writes Douglas Roche. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Mark Carney, who revealed himself as a man of conscience on his way to the Prime Minister's Office, now needs to push back against the militarists demanding never-ending increases in defence spending and start pushing the UN's agenda for peace.

Douglas Roche

Opinion



EDMONTON—It is a regrettable juxtaposition that Prime Minister Mark Carney's triumphal announcement that Canada is now spending two per cent of its GDP on defence came in the same week that United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres warned, "The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock," and Pope Leo lamented that the death and pain caused by today's wars "are a scandal for the entire human family, and a cry that rises to God."

The air is filled with war, the tragedies of war, and preparations for more war.

There is no doubt that Carney is riding a wave of public opinion supporting the government's jump to \$63-billion for defence



Diplomacy is now second fiddle to the voracious military, despite Foreign Minister Anita Anand's protestations at Chatham House in London that it is Canada's 'mission' to provide leadership that benefits the world and 'this is our moment to lead,' writes Douglas Roche. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

this fiscal year. Canada does face real pressures: Russian aggression, rising Arctic vulnerability, instability in Europe and the Middle East, and the growing unpredictability of the United States. But recognizing those dangers does not require accepting militarization as the primary expression of Canadian leadership.

Carney is on the wrong side of history when he dwells on more military spending in the name of security. He is misleading the Canadian people by pointing to more military equipment as the way to increase this country's influence in the new groupings of nations trying to fend off the political and eco-



Pope Leo recently lamented that the death and pain caused by today's wars 'are a scandal for the entire human family, and a cry that rises to God.' Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

nommic coercion of U.S. President Donald Trump.

It is not a stronger military that will enable Canada to be heard in the councils of peace, rather it is raising our voice and diplomatic work to exercise a rising global conscience against war. It is not Trump's zeal for militarism Canada should be imitating, rather it is the secretary-general's and the pope's pleas to save humanity by addressing the root causes of conflict and strengthening international law.

What happened to the Canada that invented peacekeeping, created the Anti-Personnel Landmines Treaty, developed the International Criminal Court,



UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned, 'The world is staring down the barrel of a wider war, a rising tide of human suffering, and a deeper global economic shock.' Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons

and stayed out of the infamous 2003 Iraq war? I find it shocking that the Carney government is actually imposing a 20-per-cent cut in this year's budget for Global Affairs Canada, charged with implementing his vision of middle-power countries forging a new consensus for a more equitable world, yet posting unheard of sums for the military. Contrast the \$7-billion Global Affairs receives with the \$63-billion for the Defence department: that's nine times greater.

Diplomacy is now second fiddle to the voracious military, despite Foreign Minister Anita Anand's protestations at Chatham House in London that it is

this country's "mission" to provide leadership that benefits the world and "this is our moment to lead." The contradictions in Canada's priorities are puzzling.

Canada is accused of being a "laggard" because it has taken so long to reach the two per cent NATO target. This charge is a canard. Even before Carney's announcement, Canada was the seventh highest spender by volume in the 32-nation NATO. Moreover, our country, with one-half of one per cent of the world's population, ranks 16th in world military spending.

Some laggard.

Carney claims that our economy will be greatly strengthened by forthcoming military production and, therefore, domestic benefits are an important reason to make the quantum jump in the defence budget. However, economic studies in both the U.S. and the United Kingdom show that defence expenditure is among the least effective forms of government spending for economic growth. Economists at the University of Massachusetts found that a billion dollars spent on a variety of domestic priorities—mass transit, green energy, education, and health care—would each produce more jobs than the same amount spent on the military.

Of course, Canada needs a military force, particularly to strengthen the ever-vulnerable Arctic, but following Trump's imperious demands for huge jumps in military spending—the goal is now five per cent of GDP by 2035—will wreck havoc on Canada's health, education, housing, and other social needs.

For all his talk of values on the way into office, Carney has instead made a virtue out of pragmatism in promoting his new credo: "values-based realism." I don't really know what that means except perhaps as the basis for his quick statement of support when the U.S. and Israel struck Iran in contravention to the UN Charter.

The global conscience, which shows up not just in religious efforts, but in the struggle to regain a standing for international law and norms, is best expressed in the Charter of the United Nations. Building up the sustainable development of peace, as outlined in the UN's *The Pact for the Future*, is a surer route to stability in the world than following the demands of NATO.

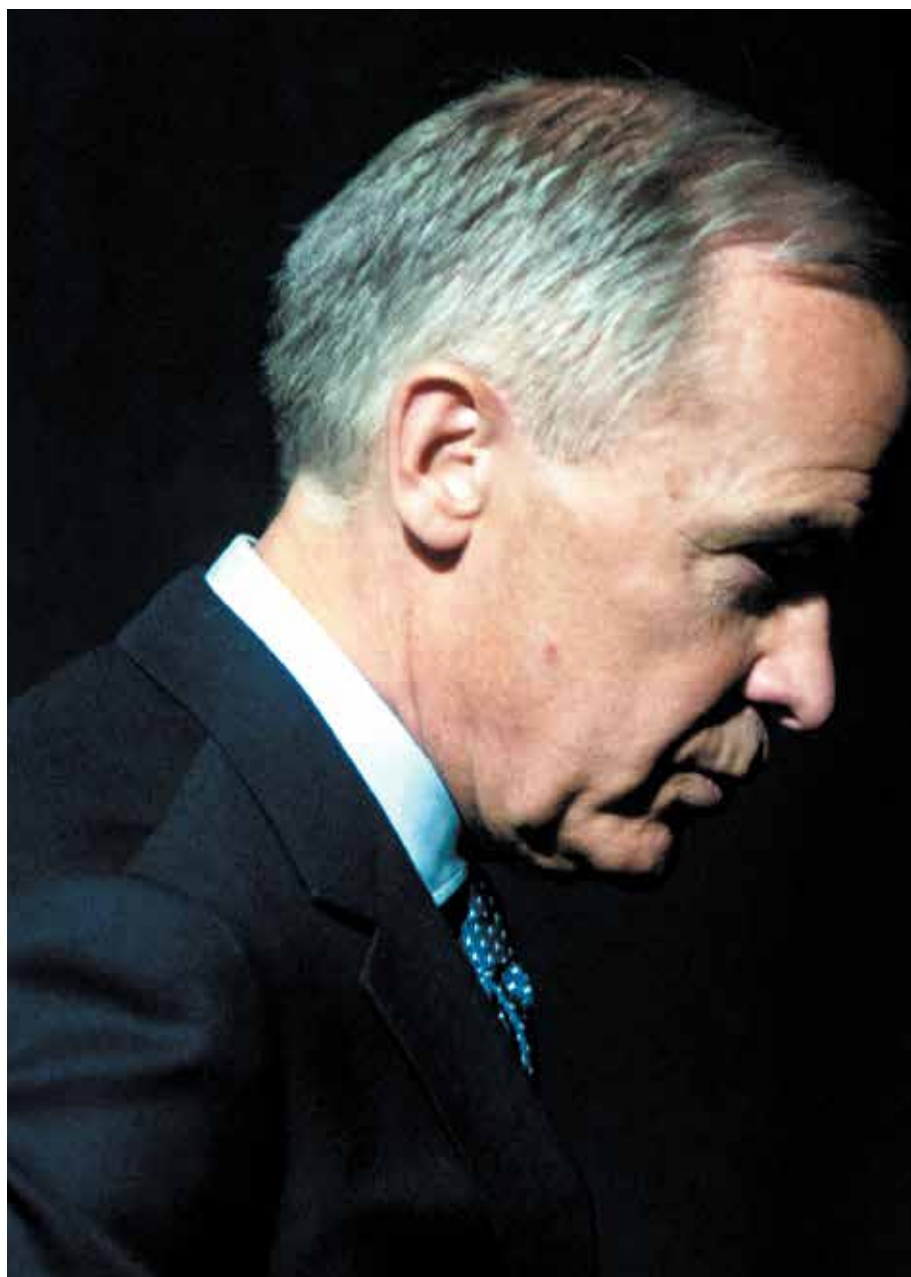
The world is now in a truly epic struggle of the consciences of untold millions of people who reject war and all its trappings versus the power structures of the world. Carney, who revealed himself as a man of conscience on his way to the Prime Minister's Office, now needs to push back against the militarists demanding never-ending increases in defence spending and start pushing the UN's agenda for peace.

It takes courage to lead political processes of dialogue to strengthen international law today. Carney must show that courage.

Douglas Roche is a former Canadian Senator whose forthcoming book is *Discovering Mark Carney in a Chaotic World*.

*The Hill Times*

# OPINION



# Ottawa should reform, rebuild, and reinforce Canadian diplomacy, not relegate it to the sidelines

Prime Minister Mark Carney at the National Prayer Breakfast at the Rogers Centre in Ottawa on March 24, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

If Ottawa is serious about ‘taking the world as it is,’ it must invest in a stronger diplomatic capacity. Without it, Canada risks making cautious or poorly informed decisions that weaken its position abroad and undermine the partnerships it needs to remain safe, stable, and secure.

Andrew Erskine



Opinion

With Canada firmly recognizing the need to enhance its national power, Ottawa has put forward serious plans to strengthen its military and economic capabilities in the face of an ever-shifting geopolitical landscape.

While Prime Minister Mark Carney has boosted military

spending, implemented a Defence Industrial Strategy, and sought new opportunities to diversify our economic outlook as central components of Canadian power, his Liberal government has not given the same attention to this country’s diplomatic capabilities.

Whereas the expansion of our diplomatic capacity was a 2025 Liberal electoral promise, the Carney government has reversed course, announcing plans to cut the diplomatic budget by 20 per cent and slash 1,240 jobs at Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

In response to these cuts, GAC indicated a slew of refocusing programs to ensure that Canada’s diplomatic capacity can be sustained to match the government’s foreign policy objectives. One of the most interesting cost-saving strategies is to oversee greater use of artificial intelligence for assignment management and policy analysis.

Yet, these remarks miss the central benefit of having a robust and wide network of diplomatic personnel.

Aside from connecting Canadian leaders with their foreign counterparts or managing territorial and trade disputes, and preventing or ending armed conflicts, diplomacy is a key pillar for gathering and analyzing intelligence.

In having the ability to understand a country’s culture, history, and politics, Canadian decision-makers will have height-

ened advantages by possessing on-the-ground intelligence that is key in making better choices on strategic partnerships, security, and trade issues.

Should the prime minister reverse course and provide increased funding for GAC, several actions must be taken to maximize the impact of this investment.

First, a structural shift must occur to change GAC into a more serious branch of national power. Currently, GAC is a club of executives, with too many senior managerial roles and too few lower-level officers, resulting in a slow-moving organization that prioritizes the institution’s work in Ottawa, instead of its more important work abroad.

To reform GAC, Ottawa should decentralize the institution, fostering flexibility and resilience from the ground up. Lower-level officers abroad would form independent networks that use local political knowledge and gather tailored intelligence to supply Ottawa with information essential for shaping diplomatic strategies toward allies and adversaries.

Second, Canada’s diplomatic capabilities require the same level of attention Ottawa has afforded the Armed Forces on recruitment and the procuring of modern equipment and infrastructure.

On recruitment, attention must shift toward attracting more foreign service officers (FSOs), with

a key focus on cultivating more specialized expertise. Currently, Canada’s diplomatic corps can best be described as generalists: having the minimal skills and fortitude to be interchangeably deployed to varying diplomatic posts for shorter-terms.

While this generalist model served this country’s past diplomatic interests, in a more complex multipolar geopolitical environment—where populism, nationalism, and a skepticism towards globalization complicate geopolitics—Canada will require more specialized expertise to avoid amateurish and nescient advice which can hinder Ottawa’s foreign policy calculations.

More specialized expertise should, therefore, focus on deepening knowledge of local culture, history, and community dynamics. With more specialized expertise, Canadian FSOs can increase their on-the-ground intelligence collection, contextualizing a country’s political design, attitude, and disposition on key diplomatic items.

Expanding expertise should also include a space for sub-national diplomacy where FSOs increasingly look at how a country’s provinces, territories, state regions or municipalities impact political thinking on trade, technology, innovation, defence, and security matters.

Specialization will also need to include in-house expertise on

the niche areas of international relations like power politics, coalition-building, international law, and trade negotiations.

When it comes to infrastructure and equipment, Canadian embassies, consulates, and high commissions need up-to-date infrastructure to receive and deliver reports and briefings of classified information. This will require better investments and sovereign ownership in encrypted network layers, satellite fallbacks, encryption hardware and devices, protected transmission systems, and zero-trust architecture.

Infrastructure improvements must also ensure better connectivity and transparency among GAC, CSIS, DND, and the PMO to generate more coherent interactions and briefings, which will lead to better policy decision-making.

If Ottawa is serious about “taking the world as it is,” it must invest in a stronger diplomatic capacity. Without it, Canada risks making cautious or poorly informed decisions that weaken its position abroad and undermine the partnerships it needs to remain safe, stable, and secure.

Andrew Erskine is a research fellow at the Institute for Peace & Diplomacy, a non-resident Vasey fellow at the Pacific Forum, and a fellow at the Canadian Maritime Security Network.

*The Hill Times*

# Media

## War coverage without television



An Al Jazeera reporter reports from Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on March 31, 2026. So far, Operation Epic Fury has kept the U.S. news media far, far away, writes Christopher Dornan. Screenshot courtesy of Al Jazeera

They will record everything they observe. Some of that footage is going to leak out, one way or another. A military that records everything is eventually going to record a war crime. In 2007, U.S. Apache helicopters strafed 10 people on a street in Baghdad, all of whom, it turned out, were civilians, and two of whom worked for Reuters. Three years later, the gunsight footage of this came to light, along with its soundtrack of the American pilots laughing at the people they were killing.

All soldiers in combat say terrible things they wouldn't say otherwise. But the fact remains that these American warriors were caught on audio and video spraying death from above in a way that looked bad on television.

It is a difficult thing to make war look good on television because war is the worst thing human beings can do to one another. In wartime propaganda, everyone on our side is heroic and the enemy are people who deserve to die. We must kill them before they kill us. But actual footage of that, in real time? Witnessing how the killing happens? The only reason most of us in our zones of safety are not traumatized by war is that we have never seen a six-year-old girl's head explode right in front of us. Footage like that exists, and worse, but we don't want to see it, and the networks won't show it to us.

So far, Operation Epic Fury has kept the U.S. news media far, far away. There is a battle group of warships in the Gulf waters and more on the way and U.S. military bases dotted around the region, but there is not a single network TV journalist reporting from any of them. The Americans are waging war in full view of the world, but without war correspondents. No cameras, no witnesses.

If they do assault Kharg Island or invade mainland Iran, will journalists be accredited to hit the beaches with the assault waves? Probably not. But even if they were, whose reporting would you trust? Newsmax, NBC, or *The New York Times*? *The Daily Caller*, *The Daily Beast*, or *MrBeast*? We are now well into a world where what you want to be told is what you want to believe.

There is a war going on out there. What we're being told about it is fragmentary, tenuous, highly politicized, highly policed and highly contested, as the coverage of war always is. But if a country going to war takes measures to make sure there are no frontline correspondents, that tells us something. Of all the things they may not have thought of in planning this war, they thought about this.

Let's watch.

*Christopher Dornan taught for 33 years in the school of journalism and communication at Carleton University, and served two terms as the program's director.*

*The Hill Times*

What we're being told about it is fragmentary, tenuous, highly politicized, highly policed and highly contested, as the coverage of war always is. But when a country going to war takes measures to make sure there are no frontline correspondents, that tells us something. Let's watch.

Christopher Dornan



Opinion

OTTAWA—Do you remember war in the TV age? CNN reporting live from Baghdad by satellite in 1991, embedded with the enemy, showing us the nighttime bombardment of the city in flashes of black and green. Later, in the Iraq war in 2003, journalists with cameras and satellite phones embedded with front-line American and coalition troops racing in Humvees across the desert.

We're not getting any of that now, are we? This war is not happening on television.

Whatever images we receive from inside Iran we cannot trust because the regime controls what the outside world will see. Ditto, the United States of America.

The Trump/Hegseth War Department narrates the conflict with triumphant propaganda memes laced with footage from video games, but otherwise releases next-to-no footage from the combat theatre. The Iranian regime responds with its own crude, mocking memes, also conspicuously lacking real-time images of how the war is going.

So, whatever the TV cameras can see of the conflict comes from places on the periphery, like Qatar and Kuwait, from local news coverage of drones hitting

luxury hotels, and oil depots burning off in the distance. And even images from the periphery are highly policed. In the United Arab Emirates, when an Iranian warhead detonates, every smart phone in the vicinity gets an alert in English and Arabic: "Photographing or sharing security or critical sites, or reposting unreliable information, may result in legal action and compromise national security and stability." It is illegal to record the results of a drone strike, and even more illegal to share the images, as scores of Westerners in the UAE have discovered, having been taken into custody and charged for doing so.

The TV news channels in North America are full of the war, but not live reporting from the streets of Tehran as missiles strike the city, or from the flight deck of the *USS Abraham Lincoln*. Mainly just maps of the Strait of Hormuz and talking heads talking their heads off.

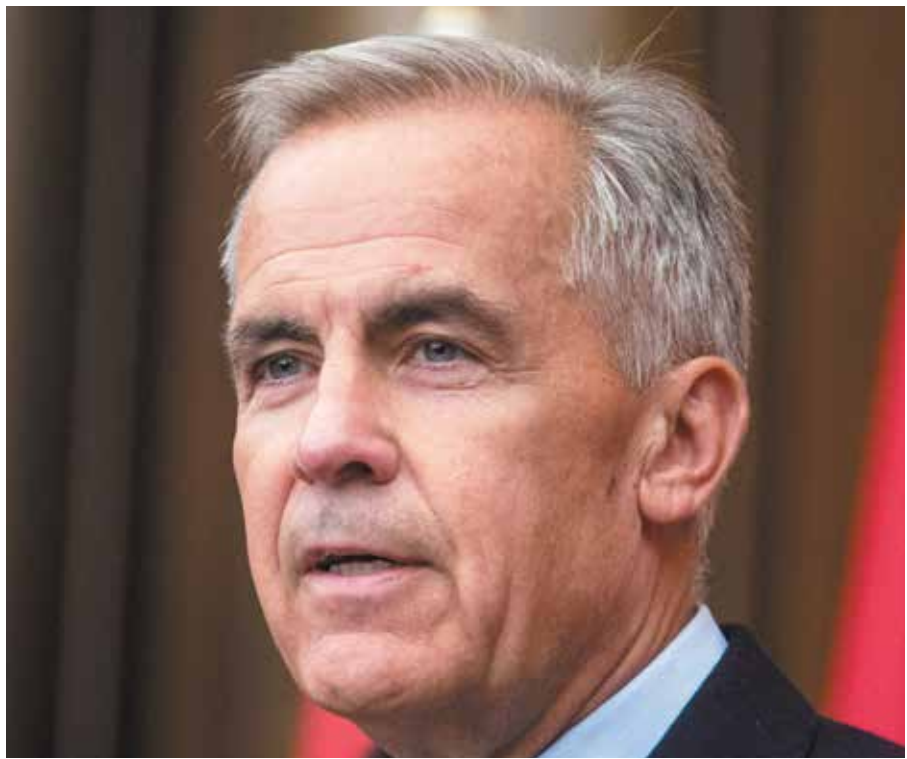
Back in the days of Gen. Norman Schwarzkopf, the U.S. military went out of its way to provide the TV networks with footage they could use. Watch this laser-guided missile blow up this bridge. See how we are being

as responsible as we can to limit civilian casualties as we degrade the enemy's resolve by exploding things from afar. Back then, footage of a Tomahawk missile fired from a warship was an awesome display of U.S. military might. Today, every missile launch shown on television is another reminder to the American public of just how costly this war is. There goes another \$4-million.

If there is a signature television image of war in this century it comes to us from Ukraine, and it is the view from the kamikaze drone. We see what the drone sees as it targets and destroys armoured columns, ships at harbour, power stations. And unlike the launch of a cruise missile or an F-35, every drone strike shows something cheap destroying something very expensive. We're not seeing that sort of footage yet from the theatre of war in Iran, at least not on the news networks. But the tech that gave us those spectacular point-of-view drone shots of hurtling bobsleds at the Winter Olympics is the same tech that that will witness this war from the air.

There will be drones. Hosts of them. Some of them on kill missions. Some of them loitering.

## COMMENT



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and PM Mark Carney. The Liberals and Conservatives are clearly giving Canadians a choice on the future of the auto industry. But both need to acknowledge that the industry is in long-term decline in both Canada and the U.S. Investment is flowing to the strongest growth markets, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

# Survival of Canada's auto industry will be a critical issue in southern Ontario ridings in next federal election

But the bigger question is: if the auto industry is not a growth driver for Canada, what will replace it? The answer is not oil and gas. This is where we need much greater thinking and acting.

David Crane

Canada & the 21<sup>st</sup> Century



**T**ORONTO—In the battle for crucial ridings across southern Ontario in the next federal election, the auto industry's future will be a critical issue. It's not hard to see why. It provides good jobs in many communities in the province. Even in today's troubled times, it employs directly about 100,000 Canadians, and more in the steel and aluminum, plastics and chemicals, software and electronics industries.

Yet, what is its future? And how best can the industry survive? It has been in decline

since its peak year of 1999, with both production and employment falling over time.

Assembly plants have been closed and the number of establishments manufacturing auto parts has shrunk significantly. And with that, jobs have fallen as well. In 1999, Canada produced 3.1 million vehicles, but last year, just 1.2 million, while in 1999 the industry had 150,000 workers, now it employs about 100,000 workers.

Both the Liberals and Conservatives have come up with strategies they contend will strengthen the industry and its future prospects, though much depends on the outcome of current negotiations on the future of CUSMA. Since last year, the Trump administration has imposed a 25-per-cent tariff on auto imports that are not CUSMA-compliant, while at the same time there is strong pressure from the United States on automakers to produce and invest in the U.S. rather than Canada, leading to production cutbacks in this country.

U.S. automakers have three assembly plants in Canada that recently closed: Stellantis in Brampton, General Motors in St. Thomas, and Ford in Oakville. The Ford plant is slated to begin production again this year, after a \$3-billion retooling, but there are no immediate plans to restart operations in either Brampton or St. Thomas.

This past February, the Carney government unveiled its auto-

motive strategy. It appears to be counting on a successful renegotiation of CUSMA, its Budget 2025 incentives for investment, investment tax credits for clean technology, and EV manufacturing and reduced tax rates for zero-emission technology manufacturers. Up to \$3-billion has been allocated in the Strategic Response Fund, and up to \$100-million to support investment in the industry.

But—and this is the key strategic bet—it is assuming the future of the industry is electric, despite current cutbacks by many automotive manufacturers. In 2024, EVs captured a 15.4 per cent market share in Canada, compared to 3.1 per cent in 2019. This share fell last year when incentives were withdrawn, but consumer incentives have now been restored. Globally, a big transition is already underway.

The Liberal policy announcement said "Canada is positioning as a global leader in vehicle electrification, autonomous and self-driving technologies and the battery supply chains that will power the future of mobility." The entry of Chinese vehicles into the Canadian market—hybrids and battery-only vehicles—will help the transition by driving competition, just as the earlier entry of Japanese and Korean manufacturers decades ago intensified competition, delivering benefits for consumers in price, choice and product quality. Likewise,

the restoration of incentives for consumers to buy EVs will also help (the incentives will not be available for Chinese EVs). As part of the strategy, a new national charging infrastructure program will be introduced this fall, including \$1.5-billion at the Canada Infrastructure Bank to help expand the availability of charging systems.

For his part, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, with much fanfare, recently unveiled his party's plan to reinvigorate Canada's auto industry.

The Conservative plan—perhaps not surprisingly—is much more partisan, with Conservative MPs seeking to blame the Liberal governments of Justin Trudeau and now Mark Carney for the loss of auto industry jobs and production. In fact, there was an even greater loss of auto industry jobs when the Conservative government of Stephen Harper was in office.

The Conservatives contend that their plan would double automobile production through a tariff-free auto pact that would bring production to this country by "implementing a rule where for every car produced in Canada, the same manufacturer would get to sell a car in Canada duty-free, from a CUSMA partner, on a dollar-for-dollar basis, similar to the 1965 Canada-U.S. Auto pact."

Under the plan, the GST would also be removed for all Canadian-made vehicles. In addition, the

Conservatives would eliminate EV consumer incentives, and harmonize policies on environmental control with those of the U.S. The Conservatives would impose tariffs on Chinese EVs in line with those of the U.S., which currently are at 100 per cent, and would ban vehicles with software connections to China.

While there are questions about the Liberal plan's potential success, there are much more serious doubts about the Conservative plan and how it would double auto production in Canada. There's no assurance the U.S. would ever accept the strategy while its proposal to limit duty-free access only for cars from CUSMA partners could contravene Canada's free trade agreement with the European Union and the Comprehensive and Progressive Trade Agreement with Asia, as well as the free trade agreement with Korea. As well, the GST exemption for car made in Canada would be contrary to WTO rules on national treatment, which bans discrimination based on country of origin.

The Liberals and Conservatives are clearly giving Canadians a choice on the future of the auto industry. But both need to acknowledge that the industry is in long-term decline in both Canada and the U.S. Investment is flowing to the strongest growth markets, notably Asia and South America, and to the cheapest production locations, including Mexico. Moreover, there are compelling new competitors, notably China, while aging populations in Canada and the U.S. could even mean a decline in future demand for automobiles in both countries.

So the bigger question is: if the auto industry is not a growth driver for Canada, what will replace it? The answer is not oil and gas. This is where we need much greater thinking—and acting.

David Crane can be reached at [crane@interlog.com](mailto:crane@interlog.com).  
*The Hill Times*

# Medical organizations sound alarm on sterilization bill's potential impact on access to reproductive care

The national and Quebec groups representing obstetricians and gynaecologists say a bill naming coerced sterilization in the Criminal Code could lead to physicians hesitating to provide critical care during emergencies for fear of prosecution. But Senator Yvonne Boyer, the bill's sponsor, and Justice Department officials say doctors have legal protections in these situations.

Continued from page 1

proposed legislation, saying that while others are talking about hypothetical situations, her office has the stories of thousands of Indigenous women who have had sterilizations forced on them.

The Society of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists of Canada (SOGC) is one of the organizations voicing concerns, arguing in a brief to the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee that Bill S-228, an Act to amend the Criminal Code (sterilization procedures), could cause physicians to hesitate in providing necessary care during medical emergencies, and could reduce access to reproductive care.

"You never want to be in a position where you're hesitating ... 'Should I go ahead and do this? And what's the legal culpability going to be?' You don't want to practise medicine that way," said SOGC president Dr. Lynn Murphy-Kaulbeck in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

Murphy-Kaulbeck said coerced sterilization needs to be addressed by regulatory colleges and is "something that should never happen past or present or moving forward, but this bill is not going to fix this."

But Boyer (Ontario), who, since 2022, has spearheaded legislation to include non-consensual sterilization against women as a specific Criminal Code offence, said her office has counted 12,000 people as having been forced into the proce-

dures since 1970, and "not one has been an emergency situation."

"What does that tell you? It's great to talk about, 'What if? What if?' But it just doesn't happen," she told *The Hill Times*.

The Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice, which raises awareness about non-consensual sterilization and maintains a registry to collect the stories of impacted Indigenous women, counted more than 10 cases in 2024. But the organization told *The Hill Times* in an email that this is likely not the true number and that it is working to increase knowledge of the registry and the importance of sharing these stories.

Bill S-228 proposes an amendment to Sec. 268 of the Criminal Code, which defines aggravated assault. If passed, the bill would modify that section to include a specific offence for non-consensual sterilization, with sterilization defined as the "severing, clipping, tying or cauterizing, in whole or in part, of the fallopian tubes, ovaries or uterus of a person or any other procedure performed on a person that results in the permanent prevention of reproduction."

During a March 26 meeting of the Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee, which is studying the bill, Morna Boyle, an official with the Department of Justice, explained that the proposed amendment would "clarify" that a sterilization procedure performed without legal consent is a form of aggravated assault.

"These amendments would not alter the law of assault as it currently applies to [non-consensual] sterilization procedures," said Boyle, counsel for the department's Criminal Law Policy Section.

*The Hill Times* asked Boyer why it is important to have a clause in the code specifically naming non-consensual sterilization as a form of aggravated assault.

Boyer said she believes it will spur educational efforts from the medical community to strengthen procedures on obtaining informed consent and it will motivate "that second thought" for medical professionals considering the procedure.

## Bill already amended in response to concerns, Boyer says

Boyer, a member of Métis Nation, has spent her career—she was a nurse and practising lawyer before being appointed to the Senate in 2018—fighting to shed light on the non-consensual sterilization of Indigenous women. She co-authored a 2017 review looking at reports of coerced sterilization in hospitals in the Saskatoon Health Region.

Her very first bill as Senator was S-250, introduced in 2022, which aimed to name non-consensual sterilization as a specific Criminal Code offence. Boyer said S-250 was amended in response to similar concerns.

This includes a decision to remove a reference to Sec. 45 of the Criminal Code as not being available as a defence for non-consensual sterilization. This section currently exempts surgical operations from criminal liability if "it is reasonable to perform the operation" and in consideration of "the state of health" of the patient, referring to the need to provide emergency care.

The final version of S-250—which died on the Order Paper when the 2025 election was called—ensured that the Criminal Code's Sec. 45 would be applicable to non-consensual sterilization. Sec. 45 continues to be applicable through Bill S-228.

"There's fear, but there's no reason to have that fear because Sec. 45 protects the doctor in emergency situations," said Boyer.

After last year's election, Boyer quickly reintroduced her bill once Parliament returned in June. It passed unanimously at third reading in the Senate last October, and at second reading in the House of Commons this past February. Its House sponsor is Conservative MP Jamie Schmale (Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes, Ont.), his party's critic for Crown-Indigenous relations.

## Doctors' worries take over recent committee meeting about bill

But concerns from multiple medical groups have followed the bill's study. During a March 26 meeting of the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee, those worries became the focus of the two-hour meeting.

The Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Quebec, the Collège des médecins du Québec, and the Federation of Medical Women of Canada condemned the practice of forced sterilization, but also highlighted their reservations about what the bill could mean in practice for reproductive health care and the ambiguity around the concept of valid consent.

Dr. Liliane Brassard, vice-president of the Association of Obstetricians and Gynecologists of Quebec, said in French during the meeting that there's a risk of a "deterrent effect" on doctors, and that the bill introduces a new criminal offence without explicitly using the term "consent."

The bill's sole reference to "consent" is in its preamble, which states that the "sterilization of persons without their consent is a legacy of systemic discrimination"

that disproportionately affects Indigenous and racialized persons. The term is not used, nor is it defined in the text that would be added to the Criminal Code if S-228 is passed.

"In medicine, hesitation harms the patient," she said.

Brassard also argued that forced sterilization is already covered under the Criminal Code and the problem is, therefore, a lack of investigations into the situations that occur.

"In emergency situations, my question is, who determines sufficient consent?" said Dr. Modupe Tunde-Byass, an obstetrician-gynecologist and medical professor appearing on behalf of the Federation of Medical Women of Canada.

"In some cases, consent is usually obtained from family members. Is this adequate or not?"

The bill will have "unintended consequences" on the delivery of women's health services, including consensual sterilization, Tunde-Byass said: "Politicization and criminalization of women's health will decrease access and result in loss of bodily autonomy and reproductive rights. This is what women have fought for."

Dr. Mauril Gaudreault, president of the Collège des médecins du Québec, described the regulatory college's work on new training programs on the subjects of culturally safe health care and informed consent as a way to regain women's trust—particularly Indigenous women.

On Bill S-228, he said in French his organization "ideally" would like to see written consent be required unless it's an emergency situation. He also said that communications about Bill S-228 following its adoption should specifically state that physicians who perform a tubal ligation or sterilization without consent because of a medical emergency should be protected from criminal liability if the procedure is necessary for the patient's well-being.

The second half of the March 26 meeting saw officials from the Department of Justice trying to dispel concerns. Nathalie Levman, senior counsel for the department's Criminal Law Policy Section, said that situations where a patient regrets a tubal ligation after providing valid consent or where an accident occurs during a procedure would not be captured by either the Criminal Code in its current form, or Bill S-228. She also said nothing in the proposed legislation impacts the application of Sec. 45 in situations where life-saving care is required.

SOGC president Murphy-Kaulbeck told *The Hill Times* that the justice official's testimony did not alleviate their concerns.

"Even though there is coverage in the Criminal Code's [Sec.] 45 ... to be in a real-life context, in a real-life situation, it's completely

different. It's very hard to lay that out for someone who's not dealing with this in real time and with real patients," said Murphy-Kaulbeck.

She said access to the procedure is already difficult, and that the attention to the issue will make some more reluctant to offer this type of care.

The bill has seen support from others in the medical community, including from Canadian Medical Association president Dr. Margot Burnell who said during the Indigenous Committee's March 24 meeting that her organization is strongly in favour.

Dr. Don Wilson, an obstetrician-gynecologist who appeared on behalf of the Survivors Circle for Reproductive Justice, said during the March 24 meeting that he acknowledged the concerns of medical colleagues about a "chilling effect on reproductive care, the politicization of reproductive care and the potential for unintended consequences," but that he supports the bill in its current unamended form.

Wilson, who said he is a member of SOGC, added that it's his "hope the bill will be a strong catalyst" for the medical profession to strengthen processes around informed consent for sterilization procedures for Indigenous peoples.

## Amendments aren't necessary, says Senator Boyer

Boyer told *The Hill Times* that she doesn't believe that amendments to the bill are necessary.

"It doesn't change the existing scope at all of the Criminal Code or any medical liability for procedures, and that includes sterilization procedures. ... It's simple and it's clear," she said.

Boyer said she continues to hear stories from Indigenous women of their being subject to coerced sterilization as recently as last year.

"In 2017, you know what I heard?" Boyer said. "We've got the government saying, 'We have to do something about this.' The medical associations are saying, 'We have to do something about it. We can't have this. We can't have it.' So, how many more women were sterilized ... in the last nine years?"

Murphy-Kaulbeck reiterated that her group understands the bill's intent, but that concerns will have to be addressed as it moves through the parliamentary process.

She also said that her organization is currently looking at the issue of informed consent—which is regulated at the provincial level—and discussing the possibility of a toolkit that could help clarify this process for members. Murphy-Kaulbeck said they're hoping to collaborate with other organizations on this work.

Boyer told *The Hill Times* that she is also working on the improving processes related to obtaining valid and informed consent through a collaboration with Dr. Unjali Malhotra, a British Columbia-based physician specializing in women's health. The work is currently focused on consent forms at B.C. hospitals.

tsanci@hilltimes.com  
*The Hill Times*

## NEWS

# Feds' \$27-billion F-35 fighter jet contract remains top choice for defence experts, despite NDP push for Gripen

Canada made a deal in 2023 for American defence contractor Lockheed Martin to supply 88 F-35 aircraft to replace its aging CF-18 fleet at a projected cost of \$19-billion. That cost later increased to more than \$27-billion. However, in March 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney ordered a review of that deal amid deteriorating bilateral relations with the U.S.

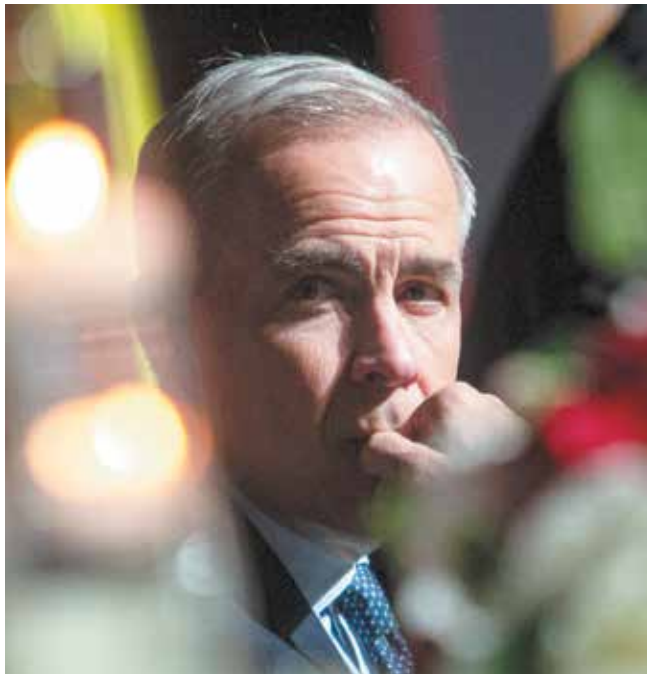
Continued from page 1

of the Centre for Defence and Security Studies at the University of Manitoba.

"We are up against Chinese and Russian fifth-generation fighters. Canada has already joined a consortium with the U.K. and Australia to start thinking about the sixth generation of fighters. Why would we handicap ourselves like that [by choosing the Gripen] just to prove a small political point at a moment in time that comes at the cost of lives of our Canadian Armed Forces members?"

Canada made a deal in 2023 for American defence contractor Lockheed Martin to supply 88 F-35 aircraft to replace its aging CF-18 fleet at a projected cost of \$19-billion. That cost later increased to more than \$27-billion. However, in March 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) ordered a review of that deal amid deteriorating bilateral relations as U.S. President Donald Trump voiced threats of annexation and imposed punishing tariffs on Canada.

The leading possible alternative to the F-35s is the Saab Gripen, an aircraft that Ottawa has deemed to meet mandatory minimum requirements, but which was still far exceeded by the F-35 in terms of technical



In March 2025, Prime Minister Mark Carney ordered a review of a 2023 deal for U.S. defence contractor Lockheed Martin to supply 88 F-35 aircraft to replace Canada's aging CF-18 fleet. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and military capabilities during a competition held by the Department of National Defence (DND) in 2021. During the Future Fighter Capability Project competition that year, both the F-35 and the Gripen met fundamental requirements set out by DND for Canada's future fighter planes, but the F-35 finished with a score of 95 per cent on military capabilities and a total of 57.1 points out of 60, while the Gripen finished with a score of 33 per cent and a total of 19.8 points.

The Liberal government's review is still underway, despite previously being expected to finish last summer.

*The Hill Times* reached out to DND to ask if there is any timeline for a completion of the review. In an emailed response on April 1, a DND spokesperson said the review is "ongoing as work continues to ensure maximum economic benefits for Canadian businesses and workers."

On Feb. 4, NDP MP Don Davies (Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.), then serving as his party's interim leader, called on Ottawa to "move swiftly" to negotiate an agreement with Saab to purchase 88 Gripen aircraft instead of the F-35s, citing concerns about dealing with the U.S.

"At a time when the Trump administration is threatening our sovereignty, attacking Canadian workers, increasing tariffs on our industries, and interfering in our domestic and foreign policies, going through with any F-35 orders is simply unacceptable," Davies told reporters in February.

Charron told *The Hill Times* that, for her, the decision comes down to the best platform to defend Canada, as well as fulfill the country's commitments to international alliances such as the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, and the North American Aerospace Defense Command. The Gripen is generally considered to be a fourth- or 4.5-generation fighter, while the F-35 is considered a fifth-generation fighter.

"We tend to hang on to our platforms for decades, so why would we pick a platform that's already from a past generation? We have fourth-generation fighters right now which we are upgrading, which essentially makes it on par with the Gripen," she said.

When asked if she was concerned about how long Ottawa is taking to announce the conclusion of the review, Charron said she didn't think there was a problem with the length of time, adding "this is just the weird and wonderfulness that is political decision-making."

"There are probably a myriad reasons that aren't nefarious at all, but the rest of us are like, 'For heaven's sakes, let's get on with it.' The only thing I can think of that is coming up is the [Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement] negotiations because this is a U.S. platform, and they seem very keen to sell it to us," she said.

"There are all these optics and leverage issues that I think are coming to bear."

## Canada already chose to buy F-35s more than once: David Perry

Canada is already required by contract to buy 16 of Lockheed Martin's F-35s. Although Ottawa's review is not yet completed, departmental plans show that DND has moved forward with infrastructure improvements and other projects needed for an F-35 fleet, as previously reported in *The Hill Times*.

The plans show that in the 2026-27 fiscal year, DND will launch a "sovereign Intelligence Mission Data Production Trial" to "provide essential reprogramming data for the F-35 and other fifth-generation platforms."

Richard Shimooka, a senior research fellow at the Macdonald-Laurier Institute, told *The Hill Times* that he favours the F-35 jets "100 per cent," calling the aircraft "far superior" to the Gripens. In response to the NDP's concerns, Shimooka argued that Canada's defence relationship has weathered negative times with the U.S. before.

"Decisions that we are making now will basically affect Canada's defence capabilities for the next 50 years," he said. "The Trump administration doesn't necessarily reflect the United States for the future."

U.S. Air Force General Gregory Guillot, who heads the joint U.S.-Canada NORAD, told the U.S. Senate Armed Services Committee hearing on March 19 that fifth-generation fighters, such as the F-35, are not needed to defend North America's borders. He argued that fifth-generation jets had a role to play in attacking overseas targets, rather than defence.

In response to Guillot's comments, Shimooka said that Canada's situation is not the same as that of the U.S., pointing out the U.S. already has fifth-generation jet fighters in operation. That country's military currently operates F-35s as well as F-22s.

"Their F-35 sustainability is probably different than ours. They also have a lot of older F-35s [because] they bought the very first tranches of them, right? So, they want to have aircraft in the next five years just to add to their force," he said.

"I see a lot of Gripen people trying to say, 'Yeah, he's saying you don't need fifth-gen.' Yeah, that's because they already have fifth-gen, right? If they can get a little bit extra capability through

an incremental increasing in funding, they can do that. We can't because we haven't even started the first step."

Pratt & Whitney Canada Corp., an aircraft engine manufacturer headquartered in Quebec, has a file on the federal lobbyists' registry that lists the F-35 as a subject the organization is interested in discussing with the federal government. According to the file, Pratt & Whitney is interested in discussing the F-35 procurement, and in having one of its engine types selected for the F-35 program. The firm is represented in-house by its president, Maria Della Posta.

De Havilland Aircraft of Canada Limited has a registry file listing the Gripen as a subject for discussion in federal lobbying. The organization is interested in follow-up discussions with federal officials on potential collaboration with Saab on the Gripen program, according to the registry file. De Havilland Aircraft of Canada is represented in-house by CEO Brian Chafe.

David Perry, president of the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, told *The Hill Times* that he thinks the purchase of F-35s still makes sense, despite the NDP's urging for the Gripen. He said that Canada has already chosen to buy the F-35 more than once. He pointed out that then-Liberal prime minister Justin Trudeau pledged in 2015 to cancel a planned purchase of 65 F-35s by the previous Conservative government. However the Trudeau government reversed their stance in March 2022, following a competitive process, launched in 2017, where the F-35 was selected as the top-ranked bidder.

"[The Trudeau administration] still identified [the F-35] as the preferred option as a result of a competitive process, which says to me that when they had the bid submitted and reviewed, it was very clear that the F-35 was a superior choice on all of the criteria for which it had been evaluated," said Perry.

"The fact that they campaigned on not buying it would suggest to me that if there was any wiggle room or any ambiguity, then they would have had an option to not make the selection."

When asked about concerns raised by the NDP about dealing with the U.S., Perry said part of his answer is that Canada has "a whole web of relationships with the United States on a defence and security framework."

"We rely on the Americans for intelligence information, for command and control, for logistics support, for the munitions that go in any one of the airplanes that we would fly," he said.

"Yes, we're under [a] difficult state of relationships with the United States, absolutely, but I don't know that that's a [reason] to purchase an airplane that a Canadian competition, run by a skeptical government, said was not the best choice, which would be, effectively, what selecting the Saab Gripen right now would be."

*jcnockaert@hilltimes.com*  
*The Hill Times*

# Feds' \$20-billion submarine choice must go beyond economic concerns, say experts: 'possibly one of the biggest defence procurement decisions Canada will make in decades'

A decision is expected by the end of June on which of two bidders—Hanwha Ocean of South Korea or TKMS of Germany—will supply submarines to replace the Royal Canadian Navy's existing Victoria-class submarines.

Continued from page 1

factors should not overshadow defensive and strategic considerations.

"In terms of war fighting, is it better to have the sort of smaller, but quieter and well-proven German design, or do you want a more ocean-capable, longer range South Korean [design]?" said Rob Huebert, a professor in the Centre for Military Security and Strategic Studies at the University of Calgary.

"Economics is always important, but which one is the better at war fighting? Which one provides for the better defence of Canada in the event of conflict? Because that's what you're ultimately getting it for."

A decision is expected this summer on which of two bidders—Hanwha Ocean of South Korea or ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS) of Germany—will supply 12 new submarines for the Royal Canadian Navy to replace Canada's existing Victoria-class submarines, which are scheduled for decommissioning in the mid-2030s.

Citing confidential sources, CBC News reported on March 2 that the federal government had reserved the right to ask

both bidders clarifying questions about their submissions until April 6, and that, afterwards, the plans would be analyzed, mostly through the lens of economic benefits to Canada, both direct and indirect. CBC News also reported last month that Prime Minister Mark Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) government is expected to make decision by late June.

On March 6, Secretary of State for Defence Procurement Stephen Fuhr (Kelowna, B.C.) announced that the Defence Investment Agency launched a request for information to engage Canadian industry on the sustainment of the future fleet.

Huebert told *The Hill Times* that Ottawa needs to be thinking beyond "economic payback," and should focus more on strategic considerations.

"I haven't seen Carney get up and say, 'Okay, well, which one is actually going to defend us better? Which one has the better reload? Which one has the ability to, basically, detect and sink enemy submarines?'" said Huebert.

Hanwha Ocean is offering KSS-III class submarines that use lithium-ion batteries which offer enhanced submerged endurance. TKMS is offering Type 212CD, which are known for using advanced sonar and non-magnetic materials to minimize detectability.

The decision of which submarines to use in Canada's fleet is of critical importance because any possible, future armed conflict with either China or Russia would include "a very powerful maritime component," according to Huebert.

"As we see the increased Russian and Chinese cooperation in the western Arctic ... having submarines is the way that you are able to perform any form of deterrence or defence at the Bering Strait," said Huebert.

Julie Kim, a post-doctoral fellow leading the Korea program at the Canadian Global Affairs Institute, told *The Hill Times*

that the procurement initiative to replace this country's aging submarines—known as the Canadian Patrol Submarine Project (CPSP)—is possibly the biggest defence procurement decision for Canada in decades.

"Whoever Canada chooses will naturally become its long-term partner for 40 or 50 years," said Kim.

"Canada must consider a lot of geopolitical, economic, and industrial benefits when choosing its partner."

Kim said that when it comes to Germany and South Korea, Canada can choose between two paths with distinct geopolitical and strategic implications. A European supplier like Germany could be a more traditional choice, which would reinforce Canada's alignment with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, according to Kim.

"If Canada goes with the Germans, they will follow the more familiar path, and given the uncertainty in U.S. policy right now and ongoing trade tensions, Canada is already trying to strengthen ties with other NATO allies beyond the U.S.," said Kim.

"For example, Canada signed the EU-Canada security and defence partnership in June 2025, so choosing this German submarine would fit into that broader trend."

In contrast, she said South Korea would allow Canada to look more seriously to the Indo-Pacific to diversify its defence partnerships.

Canada's relationship with South Korea has "really blossomed" in recent months, according to Kim. As an example, she cited the nations signing a landmark Security and Defence Cooperation Partnership in October 2025. She also referred to Feb. 25, 2026, when Canada and South Korea announced a reaffirmation of shared commitment "to strengthening co-operation at a time of heightened strategic competition, rapidly evolving technologies and increasing pressure on open, democratic societies."



National Defence Minister David McGuinty said leveraging domestic industry to sustain Canada's future submarine fleet is 'an investment in the readiness of our maritime forces, the strength of our workforce, and the growth of our economy,' in a Defence Investment Agency press release on March 6. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"I'll say that the relationship, especially the defence relations between the two countries, are really advancing, and South Koreans are serious in demonstrating their willingness and capabilities to partner in their submarine capabilities and their willingness to partner with the Canadians," she said.

Hanwha Ocean is represented on the federal lobbyists' registry by consultant Dave Hatherall, Norman Jolin and Peter Studer of CFN Consultants, a consultancy in aerospace, space, defence, maritime and public safety related government procurement.

TKMS is represented on the registry by seven consultants from PAA Advisory, including Eric Lamoureux and Andrew Bernardo.

## Submarine patrol project first major test for new defence industrial strategy

Besides Hanwha Ocean and TKMS, four organizations are registered on the federal lobbyists' registry that list the CPSP as a subject for discussion, those being Marmen Inc., IDS North America Ltd., Cenmax Group Inc., and Naval Group.

Marmen, a major manufacturing firm headquartered in Trois-Rivières, Que., has filed four communication reports for lobbying activity with designated public office holders at the federal level since the start of this year, which include communication with Caroline Desrochers (Trois-Rivières, Que.), parliamentary secretary to the minister of Housing and Infrastructure, on Feb. 24.

In December 2025, Marmen signed an agreement with TKMS

to support production of 212CD submarine segments in Canada.

"The goal is really to localize to Canada an important share of the production of the submarine. I believe that's critical," said Guillaume Angers, vice-president of strategic growth and acquisition for Marmen.

"By doing this, it will also help to maintain and sustain the fleet for the 50 years that it will be operated afterwards."

Angers described the CPSP as the first major test for Canada's defence industrial strategy, which was launched on Feb. 17. The strategy is a 10-year plan to overhaul this country's military supply chain and prioritize domestic production.

"It's critical for the government to see that this defence industrial strategy brings significant investment in the Canadian supply chain to both build and sustain, in the long-term, this program, and [also] create the manufacturing assets in Canada to support future programs," said Angers.

"It's one of the most significant decisions that will be taken in the coming years."

Marmen is represented on the registry by consultant David Pratt of David Pratt & Associates. Pratt previously served as a Liberal MP for Nepean-Carleton, Ont., from 1997 until 2004, and is a former minister of national defence.

IDS North America is registered with consultants Ian Skipworth, Raphael Brass and Stuart McCarthy of Bluesky Strategy.

Cenmax Group is registered with consultant Kent Hehr of Northern Arc Public Affairs. Naval Group is registered with consultants Jonathan Ballingall, David Angus and Erin Iverson of The Capital Hill Group.

[jcnockaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:jcnockaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*

# OPINION



Lobbying Commissioner Nancy Bélanger appears before the House of Commons Standing Committee on Access to Information, Privacy and Ethics on March 9, 2026. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## House committees aren't won by force, they're built by convention

If a government were to use its numbers to force through standing orders changes for a reallocation of committee seats, it would be acting within its formal powers—but outside long-standing convention and the guardrails against tyranny-of-the-majority would begin to look optional.

Yaroslav Baran



Opinion

OTTAWA—As speculation grows that the Liberals could cross the threshold from minority to majority in the House of Commons, a speculative and important discussion has resurfaced in the halls of Ottawa: would that translate into control of parliamentary committees?

The short answer is 'maybe, theoretically'. The more accurate answer is 'not necessarily, and not without consequences'.

Recent commentary has floated a range of mechanisms to realign committee control with a potential Liberal majority—from proroguing Parliament as the catalytic mechanism, to forcing through changes via Commons vote on a government motion. These proposals misunderstand how parliamentary committees are actually constructed, and how their composition is determined—and, more importantly, the conventions that sustain the system.

Committee architecture is not improvised midstream. It is negotiated.

At the beginning of each Parliament—not each session—party whips negotiate both the size of committees and the proportional allocation of seats among

parties. This is a structured, numbers-driven exercise. Each party's whip calculates the respective percentage share of all the parties' seats in the House, models different committee configurations (nine members, 12 members, 13, 15...), and works toward a distribution that reasonably reflects the composition of the House without producing unwieldy committees.

The different scenario proposals are compared, negotiated between parties, and finalized by the whips. Once set, this architecture is understood to last for the duration of the Parliament. Depending on the formula, the negotiated agreement might include an amendment to the parliamentary by-laws—the standing orders—to change committee size for the next four years.

This is not merely habit—it is embedded in both the standing orders and longstanding convention. Standing Order 104(2) governs the proportional composition of committees, while the role of the whips is derived from the parliamentary equivalent of common law—binding precedent based on decades of practice.

The Standing Committee on Procedure and House Affairs later reports committee memberships—the actual names assigned to each committee—and it repeats this exercise at the start of each session. It does not, however, redefine the underlying structure. That means that a hypothetical prorogation does not reopen the question: a new session (that's what happens after a prorogation) merely requires parties to re-submit names for committee assignments; it does not reset the proportional framework itself.

Could a government change this mid-Parliament? Yes, it can, theoretically. We have already established that prorogation is not the tool. But the standing orders can be amended by a majority vote in the House.

Yet, that is where procedure collides with principle.

In Westminster parliamentary systems, the standing orders function as a kind of internal constitution. While they do evolve over time, they are not supposed to be rewritten unilaterally by a temporary majority. In fact, the rules are designed, in part, to restrain precisely that kind of impulse. Many provisions exist specifically to protect minority rights and ensure that parliamentary procedure is not reduced to simple majoritarianism.

If a government were to use its numbers to force through SO (standing orders) changes for a reallocation of committee seats, it would be acting within its formal powers—but outside long-standing convention. And it would invite an obvious question: if simple majority vote can rewrite the rules on committees, why not make other changes to the government's favour? Why preserve opposition days? Why require ministers to show up for votes instead of letting their whip vote on their behalf while they travel the globe? Why not build in short-time limits on debates to legislation?

The guardrails against tyranny-of-the-majority would begin to look optional.

This is why, in practice, changes to committee composition are negotiated, not imposed. And in a negotiation, both sides would have credible arguments.

A government newly north of 173 seats could reasonably claim that committees should reflect that reality—that a voting majority in the House ought to translate into a voting majority in committee rooms.

The opposition, however, would be equally justified in countering that the difference between 171 seats and 173 is politically significant, but mathematically marginal. In either scenario the government holds roughly half the seats in the House, so is entitled to half the committee seats—something they already have.

That tension does not yield an obvious or automatic outcome. It yields negotiation.

This brings us back to the core point: committee control is not a switch that can simply be flipped by reaching a seat threshold, by prorogation, or by a motion in the House. It is the product of negotiated proportionality, sustained by convention, and bounded by a shared understanding that the rules of the game should not be rewritten by force by who happens to have 50 per cent plus one.

The government could force the issue. But in doing so, it would be trading a short-term procedural gain for a longer-term erosion of the norms that make Parliament function.

And those norms, once broken, are rarely rebuilt on command.

Yaroslav Baran is co-founder of Pendulum Group, specializing in parliamentary procedure and strategic communication in the governmental and political arenas.

*The Hill Times*

“THE STANDING ORDERS FUNCTION AS AN INTERNAL CONSTITUTION. THEY ARE NOT SUPPOSED TO BE REWRITTEN UNILATERALLY BY A TEMPORARY MAJORITY. IN FACT, THEY ARE DESIGNED PARTLY TO RESTRAIN PRECISELY THAT KIND OF IMPULSE.”

# Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

## Secretary of State Fuhr recruits familiar face as new chief of staff, James Cudmore

Plus, an update on Women and Gender Equality Minister and Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism Rechie Valdez's team.

Secretary of State for Defence Procurement **Stephen Fuhr** has lured back a familiar face to take on the job of chief of staff in his office.

Fuhr recently lost a chief of staff when **Mary-Rose Brown**, who had filled the role since last year's election, exited to become a senior adviser in Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** office, where she's reporting directly to PMO chief of staff **Marc-André Blanchard**, as recently covered by **Hill Climbers**.

**James Cudmore** has now returned to the Hill to take charge of Fuhr's office.

Cudmore was most recently busy as vice-president of strategic communications with the Bluesky Strategy Group in Ottawa, having started there late last year after bidding Parliament farewell upon the April 2025 election.

Up until the election, Cudmore had been chief of staff to then-emergency preparedness minister and Privy Council president **Harjit Sajjan** since 2023.

A former longtime senior reporter with the CBC News, Cudmore began working for the former **Justin Trudeau** Liberal government in 2016 as a senior policy adviser to Sajjan as then-defence minister.

Later promoted to director of policy by Sajjan, Cudmore went on to be policy director to then-democratic institutions minister **Karina Gould**. After a brief sojourn from the Hill in 2020, Cudmore returned as communications director to then-public safety and emergency preparedness minister **Bill Blair**, and was later a senior adviser

and communications director to Gould as then-families, children, and social development minister, before being hired as Sajjan's chief of staff.

Cudmore noted his return in a recent LinkedIn post, writing that while his time at Bluesky "was brief ... it was genuinely rewarding."

"The opportunity to return to government sounded to me like the call of a bugle. Given the circumstances of the moment, I could not ignore it," wrote Cudmore. "Political work has a way of getting into the blood, and after some time away from it, the pull to return has manifested."

"I'm very much looking forward to working again with Minister Fuhr and doing what I can to assist him stand up the Defence Investment Agency and advance the government's Defence Investment Strategy," he continued.

"I'm excited to be back in the arena—to help advance the government's agenda at an important moment, to contribute to serious work on defence procurement, and to be part of a Liberal team focused on delivering results for Canadians."

Fuhr's office otherwise currently includes **Pavan Saprà**, director of policy and operations; **James Rourke**, policy and operations adviser; **Laurent Blanchard**, policy adviser; **Mujtaba Hussain**, press secretary and issues manager; and **Dianne Watkins**, private secretary and office manager.

### New press sec for Minister Valdez

Women and Gender Equality Minister and Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism **Rechie Valdez** recently added a press secretary to her team: **Erin Quevillon**.

Quevillon started with Valdez's office on March 19, arriving straight from the office of International Trade Minister **Maninder Sidhu** where she'd been press secretary since the end of 2025.

Valdez has been without a permanent press secretary—with director of communications **Chris Zhou** flying solo in tackling media requests—since last year's election.

Quevillon previously spent roughly a year working as a policy adviser to then-women and gender equality minister **Marci Ien**, ending in March 2025 when Ien—who had then-recently announced she would not seek re-election—was dropped from cabinet as part of Prime Minister **Mark Carney's** first front-bench lineup (which did not include any minister for the portfolio).

Prior to working for Sidhu, Quevillon had most recently been manager of digital strategy and analytics for the Liberal research bureau (LRB). She's also a former communications adviser, and later manager, for the LRB, and is a past special assistant for communications to then-trade minister **Mary Ng**, amongst other past experience.

Also new to Valdez's communications team is **Allysa Pierre-Louis**, who was recently hired as a strategic communications adviser.

Pierre-Louis was previously a communications adviser to Jobs and Families Minister **Patty Hajdu**, whose office Pierre-Louis joined post-election last year. Before then, she'd been a special assistant for communications in the PMO, starting at the end of 2023 under Trudeau.

**Kendra Wilcox** is chief of staff to Valdez, whose office also includes: **Carina Gabrielle**, director of policy; **Alice Zheng**, deputy director of policy; policy advisers

**Francine Pauvif** and **Athusha Puvanendra**; **Kaitlyn Staines**, Atlantic regional and policy adviser; **Lauriane Songuissa-Moulanguou**,



Secretary of State for Defence Procurement **Stephen Fuhr** has found an experienced hand to take over as his chief of staff. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**



Women and Gender Equality Minister and Secretary of State for Small Business and Tourism **Rechie Valdez** speaks at an announcement at the National Arts Centre on Dec. 9, 2025, outlining the government's proposed updates to the Criminal Code in Bill C-16. *The Hill Times* photograph by **Andrew Meade**

director of operations; **Nathanielle Morin**, senior Quebec regional adviser; **Karla Atanacio**, West and North regional adviser, and outreach adviser; **Sabah Khan**, senior special assistant and operations adviser; **Aiman Akmal**, director of parlia-

mentary affairs and issues management; **Ruth Mekonnen**, parliamentary affairs and issues adviser; **Sana Rauf**, special assistant; and **Chris Troughton**, driver.

[lryckewaert@hilltimes.com](mailto:lryckewaert@hilltimes.com)  
*The Hill Times*



**James Cudmore** is back on the Hill as a chief of staff. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



**Allysa Pierre-Louis** is a strategic communications adviser to Minister Valdez. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



**Erin Quevillon** is now press secretary to Minister Valdez. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



# Parliamentary Calendar

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

# Anand to deliver speech at Greater Vancouver Board of Trade on April 7



Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand will deliver remarks at an event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade on Tuesday, April 7, at 7:30 a.m., at the Fairmont Waterfront. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## MONDAY, APRIL 6

**House Schedule**—The House of Commons is scheduled to sit for 117 days this year. Here's the schedule for 2026: it will sit Monday to Friday, Jan. 26-Feb. 13; Feb. 23-27; March 9-13; March 23-Thursday, March 26; April 13-May 8; May 25-June 19; Sept. 21-Oct. 9; Oct. 19-Nov. 6; and Nov. 16-Dec. 11.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 7

**Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks**—Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand will deliver remarks at an event hosted by the Greater Vancouver Board of Trade. Tuesday, April 7, at 7:30 a.m. PT at the Fairmont Waterfront, 900 Canada Pl., Vancouver. Register: [boardoftrade.com](http://boardoftrade.com).

**Lecture: 'Rupture, Risk, and Creative Insecurity'**—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts the 2026 Sylvia Ostry Lecture: on the topic "Rupture, Risk, and Creative Insecurity: Is Canada Ready for a Strategic Shift?" Robert D. Atkinson, president of the Information Technology and Innovation Foundation, will discuss how Canada can leverage creative insecurity to strengthen its productivity, competitiveness, and global standing. Tuesday, April 7, at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**Launch of John Fraser's New Book**—Sutherland House's Kenneth Whyte and Hal Jackman host the official launch of author John Fraser's new book, *The Governors General: An Intimate History of Canada's Highest Office*. Tuesday, April 7, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Massey College, 4 Devonshire Pl., Toronto.

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 8

**Minister Anand to Deliver Remarks**—Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand will deliver remarks at an event hosted by the Calgary Chamber of Commerce. Wednesday, April 8, at 11:30 a.m. MT at the Calgary TELUS Convention Centre, 136 8 Ave. SE, Calgary. Register: [calgarychamber.com](http://calgarychamber.com).

## THURSDAY, APRIL 9—SATURDAY, APRIL 11

**Liberal National Convention**—The 2026 Liberal National Convention will

take place from Thursday, April 9, to Saturday, April 11, in Montreal, featuring policy discussions, guest speakers, training sessions, and the election of the next national board of directors. Details: [2026.liberal.ca](http://2026.liberal.ca).

## FRIDAY, APRIL 10

**CIC Couchiching West**—The Canadian International Council presents Couchiching West, inspired by the legacy of the original Couchiching Conferences on public affairs. This year's conference is on "Mobilizing Canada: Power, Partnerships, and Purpose in the New Global Order." Participants include a keynote by Jody Thomas, former national security and intelligence adviser to then-prime minister Justin Trudeau; and Oxford University's Dr. Michael R.J. Bonner. Friday, April 10, at 8:30 a.m. PT at the University of Victoria, 3800 Finnerty Rd., Victoria. Details: [thecic.org](http://thecic.org).

**Seminar: 'AI and Misinformation'**—The Canadian Study of Parliament Group hosts a seminar on "AI and Misinformation," examining how misinformation—often driven by AI—affects parliamentarians, and will explore how these tools may be used by foreign or malicious actors. Friday, April 10, at 8:30 a.m. ET at 180 Wellington St., Room 425, Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

## MONDAY, APRIL 13

**Three Byelections in Ontario and Quebec**—Three federal byelections will take place today in the Quebec riding of Terrebonne, and in the Ontario ridings of Scarborough—Southwest and University—Rosedale. Details: [elections.ca](http://elections.ca).

**Panel: 'The Advocacy Ecosystem'**—The Government Relations Institute of Canada hosts the first in a series of panel discussions on "The Advocacy Ecosystem: Three Perspectives on Achieving Success." Monday, April 13, at 8 a.m. ET at Constitution Square, 340 Albert St., Ottawa. Details: [gri-irc.ca](http://gri-irc.ca).

**'Enemies of the State'**—Carleton University hosts a conversation with Brett Forester of CBC Indigenous in Ottawa, and Mohawk activist and artist Ellen Gabriel titled "Enemies of the state: Exposing CSIS's 'Native extremism' program and Canada's imaginary Indigenous terrorist." Monday, April 13

at 4:30 p.m. ET at 4400, Richcraft Hall, Carleton University, 1125 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: [events.carleton.ca](http://events.carleton.ca).

**Launch of Michael Pearson and John Delacourt's New Books**—The Pearson Centre will host the launch of two books: Michael Pearson's *Private Letters, Public Matters*, and John Delacourt's new novel, *The Innocent Canadian* featuring a brief Q&A for both novels. Monday, April 13 at 6 p.m. ET the Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 14

**2026 Economic Reconciliation Summit**—Canada 2020 hosts its "2026 Economic Reconciliation Summit: The Indigenous-Led Economy." Indigenous leaders, industry innovators, investors, and policymakers will examine leading practices in trade, economic security, and development; highlight projects at the forefront of Indigenous ownership and control; and advance thoughtful, solutions-oriented policy conversations that move economic reconciliation from commitment to execution. Tuesday, April 14, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the Westin Hotel Ottawa, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: [canada2020.ca](http://canada2020.ca).

**CTF Panel and Networking Reception**—The Canadian Teachers' Federation (CTF/FCE) presents "Violence in Schools: Beyond Quick Fixes," a national virtual panel on the rise of school violence, its systemic causes, and solutions to improve safety for students and educators. Speakers from across the education ecosystem will participate. Livestream with English and French interpretation. A networking reception for parliamentarians and staff follows. Tuesday, April 14, at 5 p.m. ET. Details: [ctf-fce.ca](http://ctf-fce.ca). Register: [gdeslouches@ctf-fce.ca](http://gdeslouches@ctf-fce.ca).

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

**Digital Access Day 2026**—The Canadian Internet Society hosts "Digital Access Day 2026: Access, Autonomy, and the Open Internet" asking a simple question: how do we build stronger Canadian capacity for AI, cloud, and networks without breaking the open, global internet that people rely on every day? This full-day event features panels, stories, and conversations on AI adoption, cybersecurity, sovereign infrastructure, affordability, and skills. Wednesday, April 15 at 9

a.m. ET at Impact Hub, 123 Slater St., 6<sup>th</sup> Floor, Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

## THURSDAY, APRIL 16

**Day for Diplomats**—The Parliamentary Centre hosts its 15<sup>th</sup> annual Day for Diplomats, an invitation-only, half-day orientation to equip foreign diplomats with a better understanding of Canada's institutional framework and the broader political and public context in which decisions are made to support their diplomatic mandates. Participants include House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia, MPs, former party leaders, experienced diplomats, public servants, journalists, academics, and policy practitioners. Thursday, April 16, in the Parliamentary Precinct, Ottawa. Contact: [info@parlcent.org](mailto:info@parlcent.org). Details: [parlcent.org](http://parlcent.org).

**Conservative Leader Poilievre to Deliver Remarks**—Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre will deliver a keynote address on "The State of Canada's Economy" at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Thursday, April 16, at 11:45 a.m. ET at an undisclosed location in Toronto. Register: [canadianclub.org](http://canadianclub.org).

**U.S. Ambassador to Deliver Remarks**—United States Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoesktra will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Thursday, April 16, at 12 p.m. ET, at 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**Build Canada Reception**—Build Canada hosts a reception bringing together builders, entrepreneurs, and policy leaders to mark the organization's growth, and to chart what comes next for Canadian competitiveness. Thursday, April 16, 6 p.m. ET, at the Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Details and registration: [luma.com/rgrlylqh](http://luma.com/rgrlylqh).

## MONDAY, APRIL 20

**Panel: 'The State of the Economy Post-Byelections'**—*Means and Ways* hosts a lunchtime briefing on the state of the economy following three federal byelections. Participants include former Conservative cabinet minister Lisa Raitt, now with CIBC Capital Markets; Nik Nanos, chief data scientist at Nanos Research; and former senior Liberal ministerial staffer Marci Surkes, now with Compass Rose. Monday, April 20, at 12 p.m. ET happening online.

## MONDAY, APRIL 20—TUESDAY, APRIL 21

**Future of Business Summit**—The Canadian Chamber of Commerce hosts its two-day Future of Business Summit. Participants include former Canadian ambassador Bob Rae; Alison Nankivell, president and CEO, Export Development Canada; Marie-Philippe Bouchard, president and CEO, CBC/Radio-Canada; Michael Kovrig, founder, StrategicEffects; Zita Cobb, founder, Shorefast; and Michelle Chawla, president and CEO, Canada Council for the Arts. Monday, April 20, to Tuesday, April 21, at the Rogers Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

## TUESDAY, APRIL 21

**Ambassador May to Deliver Remarks**—Canada's Ambassador to China Jennifer May will deliver remarks at a roundtable luncheon hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, April 21 at 12 p.m. ET at C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: [cdhowe.org](http://cdhowe.org).

**Webinar: 'CUSMA at a Crossroads'**—Canada's former chief trade

negotiator Steven Verheul will take part in this webinar, "CUSMA at a Crossroads: Strategic, Economic, and Political Dynamics in the Upcoming Renegotiations," hosted by the Canadian Association for Business Economics. Tuesday, April 21, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: [cabe.ca](http://cabe.ca).

**Webinar: 'Safeguarding Canada's Parliamentary Tradition'**—The Macdonald-Laurier Institute hosts a webinar, "Safeguarding Canada's Parliamentary Tradition," an explainer on how Parliamentary democracy fits within Canada's constitutional order, and what can be done to safeguard it from judicial overreach. Tuesday, April 21, at 1 p.m. happening online. Register via Eventbrite.

**'Does Canada Need a Foreign Intelligence Agency?'**—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts an event: 'Does Canada Need a Foreign Intelligence Agency?' Former intelligence analyst Alan Barnes will review past debates within the Canadian government on this topic, while ex-foreign service officer Daniel Livermore will provide a critical assessment of arguments for such a Canadian capability. Tuesday, April 21, at 4 p.m. ET at the Munk School of Global Affairs and Public Policy, 315 Bloor St. W., Toronto. Details: [billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca](http://billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca).

**'Confessions of a Leader: What I Wish I Knew'**—Former Liberal cabinet minister Marci Ien will take part in a panel of women leaders from Toronto Metropolitan University alumnae, "Confessions of a Leader: What I Wish I Knew," hosted by TMU. Tuesday, April 21, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the George Vari Engineering and Computing Centre, Toronto. Details: [torontomu.ca](http://torontomu.ca).

**CACP Parliamentary Reception**—The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police invite Parliamentarians and their staff to a Parliamentary Reception to discuss Bill C-22 and its importance to modernizing Canada's lawful access framework and strengthening public safety in the digital era. Speakers include Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree, OPP Commissioner Thomas Carrique, and Montreal Police Chief Fady Dagher. Tuesday, April 21, at 5:30 p.m. in Room 315, 180 Wellington St., Ottawa. RSVP: [veronica@cacp.ca](mailto:veronica@cacp.ca).

## WEDNESDAY, APRIL 22

**National Tourism Week Reception**—The Tourism Association of Canada hosts its National Tourism Week 2026 Reception, sponsored by Liberal MPs Patrick Weiler and Angelo Iacono, Senator Karen Sorensen, Conservative MP Tony Baldinelli, and Bloc MP Marie-Hélène Gaudreau. Wednesday, April 22, at 5 p.m. ET at the Sir John A. Macdonald Building, Ottawa. Contact: [tdegroot@tiac-aitc.ca](mailto:tdegroot@tiac-aitc.ca).

**2026 Ellen Meiksins Wood Lecture**—The Broadbent Institute hosts the 2026 Ellen Meiksins Wood Lecture, featuring Bhaskar Sunkara, founding editor of *Jacobin*, president of *The Nation*, and publisher of *Catalyst: A Journal of Theory and Strategy* who's helped to lay the intellectual foundations for this generation's socialist movements, including that behind Zohran Mamdani's successful bid for mayor of New York City. Wednesday, April 22, at 6 p.m. ET at Toronto Metropolitan University. Register: [broadbentinstitute.ca](http://broadbentinstitute.ca).

**Whit Fraser to Launch His Memoir**—Viceregal consort and former journalist Whit Fraser will launch his new memoir, *From Ragged Ass Road to Rideau Hall*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers Festival. Fraser's memoir is a collection of tales drawn from 50 years of reporting on nation-changing events. Wednesday, April 22, at 7 p.m. ET at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., Ottawa. Register: [writersfestival.org](http://writersfestival.org).

## THURSDAY, APRIL 23

**Build Canada Homes CEO to Deliver Remarks**—Ana Bailão, CEO of Build Canada Homes, will deliver remarks titled "Building Canada's Future: A New Era for Housing Delivery" hosted by the Halifax Chamber of Commerce. Thursday, April 23, at 11:30 a.m. AT at the Atlantica Hotel, Halifax. Details: [business.halifaxchamber.com](http://business.halifaxchamber.com).