

Tributes pour in for Eddie Goldenber

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NEWS

Corporate CEOs in Alberta seek briefings from political consultants, pollsters, and auditors on what fall referendum means for business

BY ABBAS RANA

Corporate CEOs in Alberta are seeking briefings from political consultants, government relations advisers, auditors, and

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NEWS

Nutrition North subsidy needs a revamp, says ITK president Obed

BY TESSIE SANCI

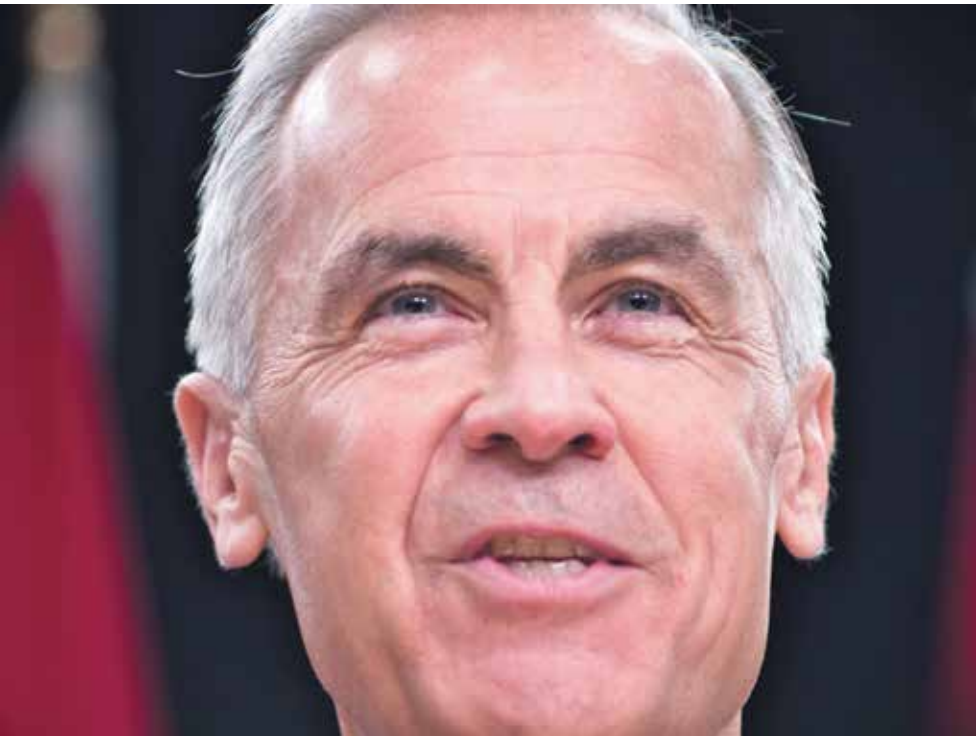
As the federal government considers ways to improve a funding program to make food more accessible in remote northern communities, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami president Natan Obed says his organization is looking for a new model for Nutrition North's much-criticized subsidy component, which received \$160-million last fiscal year and is targeted to grocery stores with the goal of lowering retail prices for specific food and non-food items.

"The rebate retail model is not producing the [intended] results. ... We would welcome the development of an alternative to the rebate retail model that is more

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NEWS

Senior PMO staff shakeup further fuels ongoing cabinet shuffle speculation



BY ABBAS RANA

Seventeen months into Prime Minister Mark Carney's mandate, as the Liberals continue to enjoy strong public support across the country, a series of senior staffing changes are underway in the Prime Minister's Office and in the offices of several senior cabinet ministers.

At the same time, MPs, ministerial staffers, and political insiders are increasingly speculating that a cabinet shuffle could take place before the House returns in September.

In interviews with *The Hill Times*, MPs and senior Liberals say that after Carney's (Nepean, Ont.) successful party leadership win in March 2025, spending

nearly a year-and-a-half as prime minister, and obtaining a majority government, he is now in a position to shape his long-term team in both the PMO and his front bench.

They said the prime minister has had sufficient time to assess his ministers' performances in

A senior staff shake-up in Prime Minister Mark Carney's inner circle triggers speculation about a potential cabinet shuffle before the House returns for the fall sitting in September. Some say if one is planned, it would likely happen before the cabinet retreat, which is expected in mid-August. *The Hill Times* photograph by Aidan Raynor

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NEWS

Crypto ban for political fundraising allows clean paper trail, but may not stop foreign donations, say experts

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A ban on cryptocurrency for political donations and a softening of fundraising disclosure rules are among the significant

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NEWS

Experts say new election law reforms targeting deepfakes will be difficult to prove harmful intent: 'I'm not seeing how it can be done'

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

Recent legislation aimed at cracking down on digital "deepfakes" is a positive step in protecting the integrity of Canadian elections, say some experts, although they question how

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Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

‘I have lost a dear friend’: Jean Chrétien leads tributes to former top adviser Eddie Goldenberg, who died on July 9



Eddie Goldenberg, left, with then-Liberal staffer Richard Wackid at the Liberal Christmas party in 2006. Goldenberg, 77, died on July 9 in Ottawa after a battle with cancer. Wackid, who worked on the Hill for many years as well, died in 2009 of ALS. *The Hill Times* file photograph

“I have lost a dear friend. Our country has lost a great public servant,” said former Liberal prime minister **Jean Chrétien** in a July 9 statement following the news of the death of **Eddie Goldenberg**, his former chief of staff. Goldenberg, 77, died in Ottawa on July 9 from cancer.

A Montreal-born lawyer, Goldenberg began working for then-Liberal MP Chrétien in 1972, and is credited as an author of the 1982 Charter of Rights and Freedoms thanks to his role as adviser to Chrétien who was justice minister at the time. Goldenberg followed Chrétien to the Prime Minister’s Office in 1993, serving as his chief policy adviser until 2003 when he became chief of staff until Chrétien left the PMO that December. Post-politics, Goldenberg practised law in Ottawa, and wrote the 2007 book, *The Way It Works*, based on his time working for Chrétien.

“The debt I owe to him as a successful political and government leader is incalculable,” said Chrétien in the statement.

“Eddie’s strategic insights, deep understanding of the Canadian political landscape, and his earnestness to get the job done earned him his reputation as one of the most influential figures in Canadian public life,” wrote **Randy Pettipas**, CEO of Global Public Affairs (where Goldenberg had worked since 2024), in a July 9 statement announcing Goldenberg’s death.

On social media, Prime Minister **Mark Carney** praised Goldenberg’s “extraordinary intellect,



Goldenberg, left, with then-Liberal MP Bonnie Crombie at Ottawa’s National Arts Centre in 2008. *The Hill Times* photograph by Cynthia Münster

judgement, and devotion,” and for having “helped define the Canada we know today.”

Liberal MP **Greg Fergus** recalled being a “young political nerd” when he first met Goldenberg on a train to Montreal: “He is one of those great Canadians who freely engages in politics and public policy because it was the thing that citizens should do. He never stopped being of service to Canada,” Fergus wrote.

Ian Brodie, former chief of staff to then-Conservative prime minister **Stephen Harper**, recalled “Goldenberg was very kind to me on many occasions. I found his advice and support invaluable, and his book about government is a legacy piece for everyone involved in Canadian politics.”

Two former Conservative cabinet ministers—**John Baird** and **Jason Kenney**—each called

Goldenberg a friend and former legal colleague, with Baird noting, “He played an outsized role in Ottawa and served Canada with distinction,” and Kenney eulogizing Goldenberg as “a Canadian patriot.”

Former United States ambassador to Canada **Bruce Heyman** called him “a good friend,” while former senior public servant **Margaret McCuaig-Johnston** recalled Goldenberg’s warmth, humour and “super political acumen. He was the key lynchpin for years between then-finance minister **Paul Martin** and PM Jean Chrétien when they weren’t talking directly,” she wrote on X.

“Hard to think of another top adviser who served a politician so long and loyally as Eddie Goldenberg, who counseled Chrétien so well for three decades,” *Globe and Mail* columnist **Lawrence Martin** posted on X July 9.

Sen. Pamela Wallin talks democracy in new podcast on women leaders

CSG Senator **Pamela Wallin** took part in the inaugural episode of a new video podcast series launched last week.

Produced by the Toronto-based Ontario College of Art and Design University, *Women Talking Democracy* is available on YouTube. Host Dr. **Charlotte Yates** interviews

women leaders in Canada from across the sectors of politics, law, media, academia, and civil society.

Both the first and second episodes—the latter featuring constitutional lawyer **Ewa Krajewska**—were released on July 7.



CSG Senator Pamela Wallin was the first guest on the inaugural episode of *Women Talking Democracy*, a new video podcast series launched last week on YouTube by OCAD University. *Screenshot courtesy of YouTube*

“This series places women’s voices at the centre of discussions about democracy. It asks women leaders from across the political spectrum why they think democracy is under threat, what they believe are the answers to its revitalization, and if there is hope for a democratic future,” Yates said in a press release.

Future episodes will feature former Ontario Liberal premier **Kathleen Wynne**, and former Ontario Progressive Conservative finance minister **Janet Ecker**.

New Canadian envoys headed to Benin, Senegal, and Romania



Sharon Armstrong, left, Evelyne Dabiré, and Kevin Rex are Canada’s newest ambassadors. *Photographs courtesy of LinkedIn and The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia*

Canada’s missions to Senegal, Benin, and Romania will have new ambassadors this summer, Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand** announced on July 9.

Sharon Armstrong is the new ambassador to Senegal, replacing **Marcel Lebleu** who was appointed recently to Turkey, as reported in *Heard on the Hill*. Armstrong joined the public service in 1996, and has experience in international development. She has been posted to Indonesia, Bolivia, and in Geneva, seconded to the WHO.

Evelyne Dabiré will succeed **Tina Guthrie** as ambassador to Benin. Dabiré has been with Global Affairs Canada since 2008.

In Ottawa, she’s worked on files focused on West and Central Africa. Abroad, she has served in Ethiopia, and most recently as “head of co-operation and head of the embassy office in Benin,” according to her official biography.

And **Kevin Rex** will become ambassador to Romania, replacing **Gavin Buchan**. A public servant since 2000, Rex was a foreign policy adviser in the Privy Council Office, and was involved in the Afghanistan Task Force while also being a army reservist. His prior postings include to the UN in New York City, to Serbia, and as ambassador to Latvia, Estonia, and Lithuania from 2018 to 2022.

Ex-Conservative staffer co-launches a free ‘journal of Canadiana’

A new journal called *Canada 2067* officially launched on Canada Day.

The brainchild of **Michael Cuenco** and **Ben Woodfinden**, who serve as editors, *Canada 2067* is named for the for the bicentenary of Confederation, and bills itself as “a journal of Canadiana,” covering themes and issues including “politics, philosophy, art, history, public policy, music, education, folklore, urbanism, nature writing, culture, sport, myth, and imagination,” according to its website.

Cuenco is senior editor at *American Affairs* and a regular contributor to *UnHerd* who writes

on current affairs across Canada and the U.S.

Now with Meredith Boesenkool & Phillips policy advisers, Woodfinden previously served as director of communications to Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre**. He’s also a PhD candidate at McGill University.

“This isn’t a conservative or liberal journal, and it’s not simply focused on politics,” wrote Woodfinden in a July 1 post on X.

“Our goal is to bring together writers from all sorts of different political and philosophical backgrounds,” he added, noting the weekly publication will be freely available.

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HEARD ON THE HILL

Continued rom **page 2**

Global News' Amanda Connolly launches debut novel

Global News' managing editor **Amanda Connolly** has a new book out.

The first in a trilogy, *The Lure of Wolves and Whispers* is a crossover dark fantasy/romance novel, which Connolly launched on July 7 at Ottawa's Dominion City Brewing. The next day, she was at Octopus Books signing copies of her debut novel.

"Connolly has worked tirelessly on this novel and it shows," the bookshop posted on Instagram on July 8.

*“The Lure of Wolves and Whispers is an Irish-inspired, high-stakes, slow-burn, roman-tasy that follows **Maeve**, who risks her life to acquire illegal magic that could save her sister’s life. Now she finds herself in a bar-gain with a ruthless and dangerously alluring rebel leader,”* according to Octopus Books.



Global News' Amanda Connolly signed copies of her debut novel at Octopus Books in Ottawa on July 8. *Photograph courtesy of Instagram*

Housing expert Leilani Farha to give Massey Lecture

Former UN Special Rapporteur on the Right to Housing **Leilani Farha** will deliver this year's CBC Massey Lecture, titled "Housing Inc.: A Global Takeover and Our Fight for Home."

The global director of The Shift—an international human rights group focused on housing, finance, and climate—will deliver the lecture in Toronto, Halifax, Yellowknife, and Vancouver before returning home to Ottawa on Oct. 29 to deliver her talk at the National Arts Centre. House of Anansi Press will publish the book of her lecture on Sept. 8.



Leilani Farha,
former UN
special
rapporteur on
adequate
housing,
pictured in
West Block on
Nov. 23, 2023.
The Hill Times
photograph by
Andrew Meade

The Trillium looks to take root in Ottawa

Toronto-based news service *The Trillium* is opening a bureau in Ottawa, and is looking for a bureau chief and reporters to staff it.

Published by Sault Ste. Marie, Ont.-based Village Media, *The Trillium* has been covering Ontario politics at Queen's Park in Toronto since 2023.

“We’re expanding to Parliament Hill to bring hard-hitting, enterprising federal

political news to our readers across Ontario," reads the job posting.

The successful candidate should have seven to 10 years of experience covering federal politics, newsroom leadership experience, and live in the National Capital Region for this primarily in-office—and on the Hill—role. The salary window is \$100,000-\$150,000 per year.

Trudeau and Perry on the cover of *Hello, Canada*

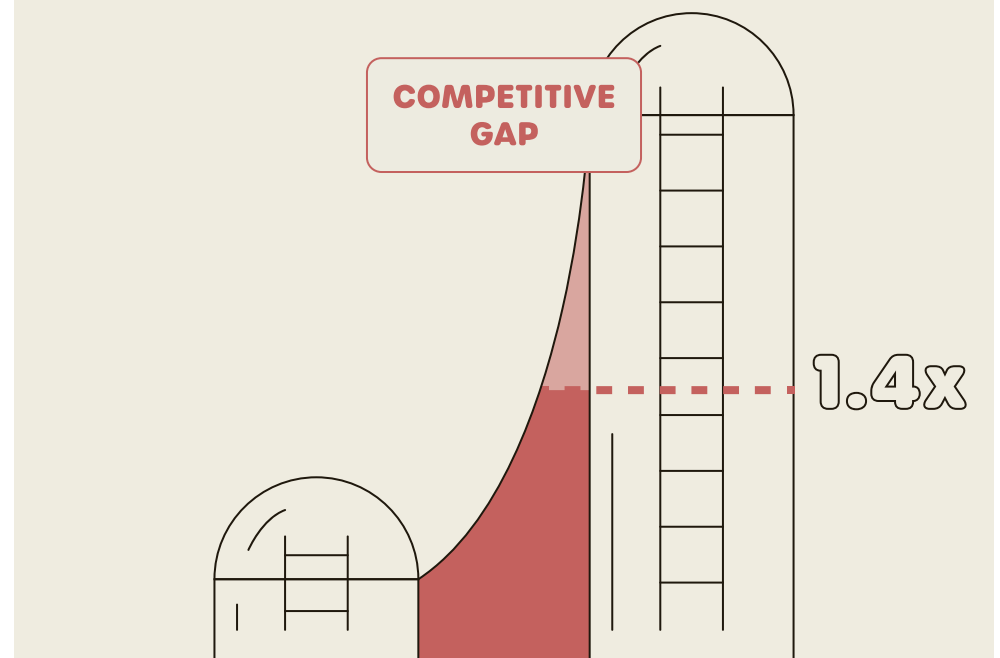


On the cover of *Hello Canada*: Former prime minister Justin Trudeau and American singer-songwriter Katy Perry, pictured on the cover of *HELLO! Canada* magazine, second row, second left, as seen in the Walmart grocery store check-out rack of magazines recently. Their romance is still creating a buzz. *The Hill Times* photograph by Kate Malloy

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The Hill Times

BALANCE THE SCORE

MAKE IT 1.4



Canadian Ethanol
(Current Clean Fuel Policy)

Subsidized Ethanol Imports (U.S. 45Z + Canadian Clean Fuel Credits)

Canadian ethanol producers
and corn farmers should be able
to compete in their own market.
Today, they can't.

This summer, the Government can help level the playing field by setting a minimum **1.4x Canadian ethanol credit multiplier.**

Our farmers and producers
deserve nothing less.

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NEWS

Bains, Aboultaif, and Loffreda line up to show support for Kidney Foundation's framework policy

Liberal MP Parm Bains is an advocate after finding out 25 years ago that he has a single kidney. The news compelled him to make lifestyle changes, which is why awareness and early detection of kidney problems—as well as other conditions—is important, he says.

BY TESSIE SANCI

It was an employer-ordered physical exam 25 years ago that instigated a series of additional tests, eventually telling Parm Bains that he only had one kidney. An original examination showed that the-now Liberal MP, then in his mid-20s and working for Air Canada, had high blood pressure and protein in his urine—the latter of which signals a kidney problem. Still, that didn't prove Bains only had one kidney, but it led his doctor to order additional tests which resulted in the finding.

"I just had a really good doctor," Bains (Richmond East—Steveston, B.C.) told *The Hill Times*.

"He was just a really good doctor who's thorough and [spent] a lot of the time on leading-edge things, and a very good researcher."

More than two decades and one kidney transplant later—which only became necessary in 2021—Bains advocates for awareness and early detection of chronic kidney disease.

Early detection is key for any disease because it allows people to make lifestyle changes, Bains said.

"I probably could have done a lot of different things in my 20s to delay maybe some of ... the measures that I would have had to take, whether it was the transplant or other things," Bains said with a laugh, adding that he stays active, is healthy, and undergoes regular medical screenings.

Once he was aware of his sole-kidney status, Bains began medication to target the protein problem, and implemented dietary and other lifestyle changes to maintain the health of his kidney. It wasn't until 2021, when Bains was a new MP, that he found himself with dwin-



Liberal MP Parm Bains, left, and Elizabeth Myles, national executive director of the Kidney Foundation of Canada, at a roundtable in the Wellington Building on March 12, 2026. The roundtable to discuss the foundation's framework was sponsored by Bains. Photograph courtesy of the Kidney Foundation of Canada

dling energy levels. Knowing a transplant was his best option, he began dialysis in his home province while he waited for an available match.

Working from his riding during the COVID-19 pandemic, when hybrid parliamentary proceedings were very much the norm, Bains fulfilled his House duties during the day and self-administered dialysis treatments in the evening.

In addition to being an advocate for kidney disease awareness, Bains said he's also been vocal about his support for hybrid proceedings as they allowed him to work from home when he could not travel due to health concerns.

Bains received a transplant on Aug. 9, 2022, and returned to working in person in Ottawa in March 2023, after receiving the go-ahead from his medical team.

Kidney Foundation's work gives 'roadmap' for prevention, awareness

Bains is currently sponsoring petition e-7303 in the House of Commons, calling on his government to adopt the Kidney Foundation of Canada's strategic framework for chronic kidney disease, which was released this past March. The deadline for signatures was July 12. As of July 9, the petition had 1,368 signatures.

The framework has three distinct priorities: prevention, early detection, and timely intervention; ensuring equitable access to kidney care; and improving research and data for the disease.

With chronic kidney disease afflicting one in 10 Canadians

and having the status as the 11th-leading cause of death in this country, a "roadmap" is needed, said Carrie Thibodeau, national director of programs and policy at the Kidney Foundation of Canada.

Knowing the organization had access to all of the voices—medical professionals, patients, and caregivers—that would need a say in this work, Thibodeau said she and her colleagues decided in 2022 to begin consultations to develop the framework, as opposed to asking the federal government to build one.

A challenge connected to chronic kidney disease is the lack of "noticeable symptoms" until kidney function has been severely reduced, the framework states. This leads to many people being unaware they have the condition until it is in an advanced stage.

This is why awareness and pushing for early detection is so important, according to Thibodeau.

When asked what could be accomplished from the framework to see positive changes sooner rather than later, she pointed to improving awareness among primary care physicians of the use of certain blood and urine tests to look for specific markers indicating chronic kidney disease.

Something specific the federal government could do that would help with awareness and data collection is to categorize chronic kidney disease as a "distinct chronic condition," she said.

Having that label "helps us to first of all establish surveillance, [and produce] integrated data that would help us to recognize the gaps in care and the gaps in

policy and address those," Thibodeau explained.

The Public Health Agency of Canada maintains a list of illnesses in its "chronic disease surveillance system." There are more than 20 diseases on the list including asthma, mental illness, stroke, multiple sclerosis, and dementia.

Kidneys were most-needed organ for transplants in 2025

Also supporting the federal adoption of the Kidney Foundation of Canada's strategic framework is Conservative MP Ziad Aboultaif (Edmonton Manning, Alta.), a known advocate of organ donation who has used private member's bills—most recently Bill C-234, calling for the creation of a living organ donor recognition medal—to strengthen awareness of the importance of organ donation. The bill is currently being studied by the Senate Human Rights Committee.

Aboultaif, himself a living organ donor, told *The Hill Times* that Canada is facing a challenge due to the high need for kidney donations, and that awareness of the disease and its symptoms is important so Canadians can look after themselves.

"What the framework is asking for is basically ... to bring awareness to Canadians about how they look after themselves, look after their kidneys, and ... the health-care process. I mean, at the end of the day, dealing with the problem at the forefront is better than dealing with it at the far end when it's almost too late," Aboultaif said.

Last month, the Canadian Institute for Health Information released statistics that showed that kidney transplants—1,921 out of 3,174 transplants overall—outnumbered rates for liver, lung, heart, and pancreas in 2025. There were also 3,131 patients on the wait list, as compared to 646 liver transplant patients, which was the second-highest number. As for the number of deaths for those waiting for a kidney transplant, that was 77 in 2025, just behind the 86 liver patients who died last year.

If Canada can go to the moon, we can work to improve people's quality of life: Sen. Loffreda

Also pushing for the federal adoption of the framework is Independent Senator Tony Loffreda (Shawinigan, Que.), who questioned Health Minister Marjorie Michel (Papineau, Que.) about whether the government would go ahead during her appearance in the Senate chamber on March 25.

"This endorsement and official adoption of the framework by the Government of Canada is a necessary catalyst for transforming this blueprint of meaningful action that will improve the lives of people living with kidney disease," he told Michel.

Noting that she and her staff had met with foundation representatives the previous week, Michel responded, "I can assure you that we are working very closely with them, and we will let you know as soon as we are ready to announce something."

Loffreda has been involved with the Kidney Foundation of Canada since the late 1980s when he started his career in the banking sector, marking the beginning of decades of philanthropy efforts.

Nearly 40 years later, his long-time support has led to him receiving the foundation's highest honour, the 2025 Ashenmil Legacy Award, which recognizes leadership, commitment, and contributions to the cause.

Although Loffreda told *The Hill Times* that action on the framework shouldn't depend on whether it makes economic sense—"it's about caring, it's about leadership, it's about making the country stronger"—the Senator said he still uses statistics when he's speaking with cabinet ministers to discuss the need.

"There's memorable statistics that you weave into every statement, every time you have a chance to speak to a minister ... Four million people are living with chronic kidney disease ... It costs [the Canadian economy], I think, billions of dollars every year, over \$10-billion in cost. ... Close to one-third of kidney diseases could be prevented if you detect them, do innovation [and] research," said the former banker, rattling off numbers he has memorized throughout his years of advocacy.

With his first-hand experience, Bains said early detection and prevention efforts are good for people and the health-care system. He also said that while he shares his own kidney disease story, the MP believes there needs to be a similar focus on prevention and early detection for all diseases.

"I look at the amount of medication—let's just leave the surgery piece out of it—and if you look at just the general equipment, the materials that it requires to have people on dialysis, and all of these other things—it's unbelievable," he said, adding that these costs put "immense pressure" on taxpayers.

And if statistics don't convince policy-makers, Loffreda had one final argument before he ended his call with *The Hill Times*.

"It's important for Canada to move forward. I think we can do it—set up a framework ... [and] find a cure. If we can go to the moon, [there are] a lot of things we can do to improve the quality of lives of many Canadians," he said, referring to Canadian astronaut Jeremy Hansen's trip around the moon this past spring.

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Subs decision will ‘create a bond for decades’ with Europe and NATO, say observers

Canada’s pick of the German-Norwegian bid for its preferred submarine manufacturer firmly entrenches the prime minister’s broader political pivot to European allies, says one public policy expert.

BY IREM KOCA

The federal government’s decision to pick the German-Norwegian bid to build Canada’s new submarine fleet will create a bond between allies for decades, according to the German ambassador.

At the same time, observers say the decision came down to “geopolitical” considerations and the prime minister’s desire to diversify away from the United States.

Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) announced on July 7—ahead of his visit to Turkey for the NATO leaders’ summit—that the government has chosen Germany’s ThyssenKrupp Marine Systems (TKMS), which works in partnership with Norway, over South Korea’s Hanwha Ocean after a two-year-long competition for Canada’s submarine contract.

While Carney did not release the total cost for a full fleet of submarines, media reports have estimated the price to be between \$60-billion and \$100-billion. The new fleet of 12 vessels will replace the Canadian Navy’s Victoria-class submarines, which will remain operational into the mid- to late-2030s. The German firm has said if a contract were to be awarded this year, with the first boat delivered by 2033.

According to TKMS, the deal will create more than 650,000 Canadian jobs, contribute more than \$86-billion to this country’s GDP, and generate \$167-billion in economic activity.

Germany’s Ambassador to Canada Tjorven Bellmann told *The Hill Times* in a July 7 interview that her government is “deeply appreciative and proud” of the decision.

“We truly value the trust that the Canadian government is putting in us, and we also understand the responsibility that goes along

with this. For us, this is a strategic step into a partnership between our nations that will create a bond between us for decades,” she said.

The submarine decision shows that Canada and Germany are entering into a “much more comprehensive defence partnership” era, Bellmann said.

On July 7, Carney and German Chancellor Friedrich Merz announced the two countries are launching negotiations towards a bilateral strategic partnership structure, with the intention of finalizing a partnership agreement before the end of this year.

A joint statement said the partnership deal would serve as a “flexible strategic framework” between the two countries which are looking to co-operate in areas like security and defence, technology, artificial intelligence, and space, as well as supply chains, energy, and critical minerals.

Bellmann argued that the German-Norwegian submarine option was picked for a combination of things including—but not limited to—the vessels’ technical strengths, and the substantial economic benefits embedded in the offer.

“The partnership we offer is for a fleet double the size that the Canadian fleet would otherwise have. We buy this to create not only interoperability between our navies, but really to have interchangeable crews, so that crews can switch [vessels], and we would maintain them together, produce together, operate together,” she said, adding that such a partnership would create economic benefits.

“And militarily, of course, it’s a different animal when you have this kind of fleet amongst three NATO allies,” she said.

“Canada is one of the major NATO allies in terms of Arctic defence. Submarines are a crucial part of that defence. So I think the sovereign capability that Canada will get through this will be the backbone of Arctic defence, and of course that is something that is good not only for Canada, it’s good for the whole NATO alliance,” Bellman said.

Norway’s Ambassador to Canada Hanne Ulrichsen echoed that message.

“For Norway, it’s really about building a strategic long-term security partnership built on shared values and interests for Norwegian Maritime Security Awareness, and it’s essential to assert sovereignty in the North Atlantic and the Arctic,” she told *The Hill Times* in a July 7 interview.

“It underlines, really, that Canada has a will to anchor stronger [relationship] with European allies, and to contribute to the collective security of NATO. That’s the key message I’m reading from this,” Ulrichsen said. “I think it provides big opportunities for Norwegian industry, for Canadian industry, for German industry, when this partnership will develop further.”

TKMS’s 212CD is a medium-size, diesel-electric, quiet submarine that is roughly 73 metres and 2,800 tonnes. It is built with hydrogen fuel-cell air-independent propulsion technology that allows it to stay submerged for long periods without surfacing. It is pitched as being suited for under-ice, high-latitude operations. The German-Norwegian design is in production, but it is building on the 212A subs used by the German and Italian navies.

Norway’s Kongsberg Group supplies the combat systems of the 212CD submarines.

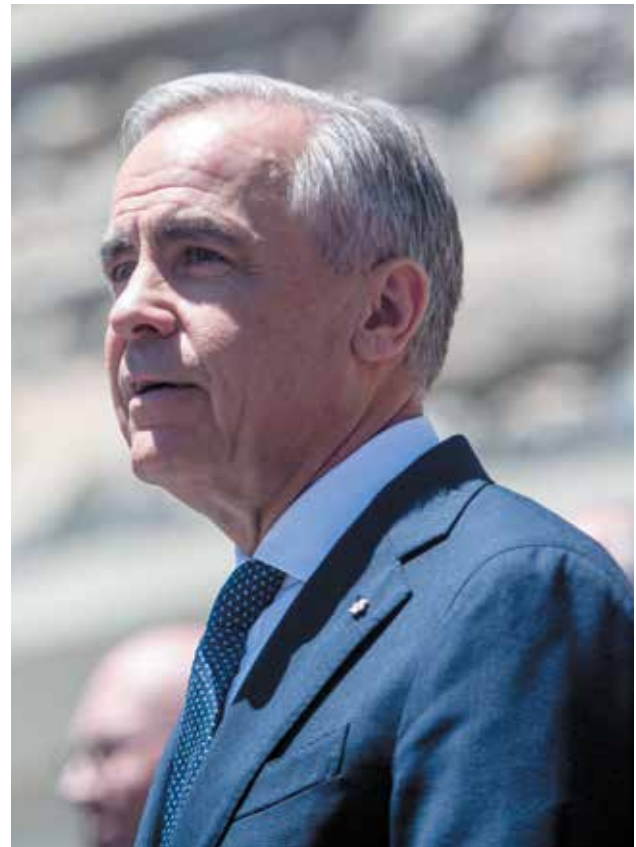
NATO interoperability is key

The federal government has said repeatedly the competition would come down to which supplier offers Canada the best economic and industrial benefits, and generates the most jobs and investments in the country, while the Navy has stated that both options are technically viable. In the end, that multibillion-dollar decision seems to be driven by a geopolitical positioning where NATO-interoperability, building stronger ties with European allies, and Arctic deterrence were part of the calculus, observers say.

As he announced Canada’s submarine pick in Halifax on July 6, Carney told reporters the TKMS vessels are optimized for Arctic waters and are interoperable with the NATO military alliance, which he said allows them to “communicate seamlessly, share intelligence, and carry out joint missions.”

“It is used widely by our allies; TKMS provides submarines to over a third of the NATO alliance, and is the leading submarine provider to navies around the world,” Carney said.

Vina Nadjibulla, vice-president of research and strategy at the Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada, told *The Hill Times* in a July 7 interview that Canada’s strategic considerations and partnerships were why the German-Norwegian bid ended up being successful.



Prime Minister Mark Carney said TKMS’s vessels are optimized for Arctic waters and interoperable with the NATO military alliance, which he said allows them to ‘communicate seamlessly, share intelligence, and carry out joint missions.’ *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Acknowledging that this is disappointing news to South Korea and Hanwha, Nadjibulla argued that this procurement process actually ended up deepening Canada-Korea relations for the very first time.

“Canadians saw Korea not just as an economic and diplomatic partner, but also as a significant strategic partner and a defence industrial partner,” she said, adding that this could lead to other opportunities in the future in areas like drone technology, cybersecurity, and maritime domain awareness.

“Even two, three years ago, it would have been a really easy choice. Canada would have naturally aligned with its NATO partners. The fact that this was such a difficult decision and a close race showed that the strategic landscape is changing in Canada, and the Indo-Pacific is becoming more important while obviously NATO remains our primary security alliance,” she said.

Nadjibulla wrote in a June 6 *Policy* magazine article titled “Canada Chose NATO on Submarines. Now, it Must Keep South Korea Close” that the German-Norwegian partnership made a strong case around interoperability, lower delivery and integration risk, Arctic and North Atlantic experience, and the advantages of working with two NATO allies at a moment when Canada is under pressure to translate higher defence spending into real capability.

“For decades, Canadian defence procurement has been shaped primarily through a North Atlantic frame: the United States, the United Kingdom, NATO and, more recently, select European partners. Those relationships remain essential. But they are no longer sufficient,” she wrote.

“The defence-industrial base Canada needs will not be built through transatlantic relationships alone. It will also require deeper partnerships with trusted Indo-Pacific partners, especially South Korea, Japan and Australia.”

Julian Karaguesian, McGill University professor and policy expert who previously served as finance counsellor at Canada’s Embassy in Washington, D.C., told *The Hill Times* in a July 7 interview what while NATO interoperability must be a very important factor for the government, it’s the “net benefits” to Canada that affected the final decision. He argued that, on a political level, diversification of suppliers away from the U.S. and a pivot to working closer with European allies was top of mind.

“I’d say the one deciding factor—the number one—is diversification in our trade and our investment in our procurement. Diversification is coming from a big political push in reaction to what the Trump administration is doing,” he said.

“I think that’s the biggest factor: a geopolitical decision to pivot towards Europe. You see that with [the government negotiating with Sweden for] Global Eye, with the [negotiations for] Italian Leonardo training jets, so this is definitely a pivot towards traditional allies in Europe,” he added.

Karaguesian gave the example that if U.S.-based General Dynamics had been in the running for the sub bid, he doubts “the net benefits to Canada could have been in the \$70-billion to \$86-billion range.”

“I just doubt that the any American competitor could have put those kind of numbers on the table,” he said.

The decision is also a credible signal of two things, according to Karaguesian: that Canada is taking its own national defence more seriously, and that the country is moving towards a more independent defence policy as the purchase of the new submarines would mean Canada having its own fleet in the Arctic and having its own intel.

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The Hill Times

NEWS

Public servants adjust to new in-office mandate with parking struggles and ‘a bit of a call-centre vibe’

National Defence says its Carling Campus has approximately 10,000 employees but just about 5,000 parking spaces, while ESDC says some office locations will need additional workspaces.

Environment and Climate Change Canada is expecting a phased approach at several offices.

BY MZWANDILE PONCANA & MARLO GLASS

As thousands of bureaucrats across the federal public service adjust to the new reality of working in-office four days a week, some are grappling with buildings that are short on desks and parking spaces.

Rebecca Anne Clark has been a policy analyst with Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) since 2024, and is the president of Canadian Association of Professional Employees (CAPE) Local 520—the union representing employees at NRCan. The department reported having 6,044 staff in 2025. She described her first day in office under the four-day return-to-work order as crowded and noisy, with employees packed in and sitting close together while participating in separate virtual meetings.

“It does give a bit of a call-centre vibe,” she said in an interview with *The Hill Times*, describing workers wearing noise-cancelling headphones and attempting to listen to their meetings over conversations taking place around them.

The Treasury Board Secretariat announced back in February that executives in the public service would return to office full-time on May 4, and all other workers would be in-office four times per week as of July 6. Most public servants began working remotely at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020, though since September 2024, public servants have slowly



Treasury Board President Shafqat Ali, left, and Public Works Minister Joël Lightbound. Public servants are grappling with a return-to-office mandate, with some departments short on desks and parking space. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

been ordered to spend more days in-office.

The move has sparked a flurry of protests from public-sector unions, and many have filed grievances, arguing for flexibility, and saying there is a lack of office space to accommodate all workers.

Clark says her NRCan office on 580 Booth St. in Ottawa seems to have enough desks for the number of people they expect to come in, but it has come with a cost. She said some focus and sensitivity rooms are being removed to make space for additional desks—those enclosed rooms had provided staff with spaces for concentrated work in a silent environment.

Clark, who has experienced migraines since childhood, said the quiet rooms previously allowed her to take medication, reduce light and noise, and continue working while waiting for her symptoms to subside. She said removing those spaces could leave her having to choose between working in an environment that worsens her symptoms, or using sick leave, even when she may otherwise be capable of continuing her work remotely.

“And I know a lot of my neurodivergent, disabled co-workers experience something similar—where sometimes in a noisy office space, they simply cannot concentrate,” she said. “And they are removing these rooms that support an in-office presence.”

Clark said she is also concerned about parking—which had already been a persistent problem with her NRCan office—will worsen under the new return-to-office mandate, known as RTO-4. Her Booth Street office has one parking lot she describes as small, and that she often hears

stories of employees staying awake until midnight, when spaces become available for reservation, to secure a spot for the following workday.

However, even after securing a spot, she said staff will often arrive to find it occupied, she said—forcing them to use street parking or lots located approximately a 15-minute walk from the office. Clark said employees have reported paying \$15 a day for parking.

NRCan did not respond by deadline to questions from *The Hill Times* about whether the department has the needed workspaces for employees to return to the office four days per week.

CAPE president Nathan Prier said that, under the new RTO-4 mandate, the union—which represents more than 27,000 federal employees—is hearing different concerns across departments, including crowded workplaces, parking difficulties, and staff commuting to offices only to spend much of the day in virtual meetings.

Some departments, he said, struggled to implement the three-day in-office mandate, and it’s not clear which departments are ready to accommodate their workers four days per week.

CAPE’s largest membership groups include economists, policy advisers, and statisticians working across federal departments and agencies, as well as translators, interpreters, and terminologists, many of whom work through the Translation Bureau.

10,000 staff fighting for 5,000 parking spaces at DND

Department of National Defence spokesperson Andrée-

Anne Poulin says the department’s Carling Campus, located at 60 Moodie Drive in Ottawa’s west end, has approximately 10,000 employees, but just about 5,000 parking spaces.

“DND encourages Defence Team members to make use of carpooling and other alternative transportation, but acknowledges that the parking lot is often at or near capacity,” she said via email. “This is compounded by a lack of reliable public transit options, which we hope will improve when the Moodie light-rail station is opened.”

She said DND officials met with the City of Ottawa and OC Transpo officials to discuss “parking and traffic pressures” at the Carling campus.

“We are working closely with the city to assess a variety of options to address key challenges, including safety issues and transit convenience,” Poulin said.

“Officials agreed on the need for co-ordinated, short- and long-term solutions to support workforce mobility and Ottawa’s role as a growing defence hub. DND and the city will continue working together to support transit and service planning.”

DND also has an overflow parking lot at the Connaught Range Primary Training Centre, several kilometres away, “on a first-come, first-served basis in the morning with shuttle service to the Carling Campus,” Poulin said, which accounts for 50 additional parking spots.

Canada Revenue Agency spokesperson Etienne Biram said “the vast majority” of the tax agency’s 48,000 employees will be able to work on-site four days per week at offices across Canada, though the department is

“working closely with Public Services and Procurement Canada to ensure that workspaces meet operational needs.”

Employment and Social Development Canada—one of the largest federal departments employing 35,540 people as of March 31—acknowledged that some of its locations require additional workplace capacity to implement the four-day onsite requirement.

“The department is working closely with Public Services and Procurement Canada to ensure employees’ operational needs are met and to increase workplace capacity as quickly as possible,” said ESDC spokesperson Maja Stefanovska. The department did not clarify which office locations are affected, or whether four-day attendance will be phased-in at some locations.

Back in May, spokesperson Samuel Carbonneau told the *Ottawa Citizen* that full compliance with RTO-4 would be staggered due to space complaints.

Environment and Climate Change Canada—which currently employs 8,185 workers—said most of its approximately 90 locations are prepared to accommodate non-executive employees four days per week, but acknowledged that a phased approach will be required at several offices, though the department didn’t specify which ones. The department said staff at the affected locations have been notified.

At a July 8 workplace health-and-safety action in downtown Ottawa, the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada (PIPSC) used foam-core mice, cockroaches, and a hermit crab to illustrate the conditions its members say they are encountering under the return-to-office mandate. CBC News reported last fall that between April and November 2025, there were 549 confirmed reports of pests in 93 Crown-owned buildings in Ottawa-Gatineau, though Public Services and Procurement Canada is no longer making public which offices have infestations.

PIPSC full-time vice-president Katie Francis, who previously worked as a scientific evaluator at Health Canada, said the hermit crab represented workers carrying equipment from home to unassigned workstations each day, while the other figures represented reports of pests—including mice, cockroaches and bedbugs—in federal offices.

Francis said members’ concerns extend beyond whether departments have enough desks.

“It’s not only lack of space, but also inadequate space,” she said, describing employees working shoulder to shoulder in some buildings. “We represent professional workers, and they expect professional workspaces where they can do their jobs.”

She said parking had already become difficult under the three-day requirement and predicted that four-day attendance would worsen the problem. Francis said staff commonly warn one another that anyone arriving after 7 a.m. may be unable to find a space.

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Feds pushing 'irresponsible' approach to AI data centres that need regulation, say NDP leader, critics

AI data centres have taken Canada's city councils by storm, but where is Ottawa?

BY DAVIS LEGREE

Proposed data centres are sparking cross-country community debate with some cities moving to halt these projects, prompting critics to press the federal government to step in with better regulations for municipalities wrestling with the growing industry.

In recent months, various town halls and city council meetings have hosted citizens worried these data centres could strain the local power grid, deplete freshwater aquifers, or create threatening noise levels.

"We know from the uprisings across the United States and increasingly in Canada, as well, from Olds, Alta.; to Hamilton, [Ont.]; to Sherwood, Sask.; to Nanaimo, B.C., ... there is a rising tide of the Canadian public expressing deep resistance to these hyperscale data centres," said NDP Leader Avi Lewis in an interview with *The Wire Report*.

In Hamilton; Saint John, N.B.; and Vancouver, hundreds of residents are protesting proposed facilities in their communities. Online initiatives looking to stop construction on AI data centres have garnered thousands of endorsements, while multiple petitions have been brought before the House of Commons.

While data centres are not a novel concept in the digital economy, the rise of AI has necessitated the design and construction of new facilities to house the infrastructure needed to power large language models.

Analysis from *The Logic* found Canada has 309 built and proposed data centres located in nearly every province and territory.

These types of facilities occupy 1.5 per cent of the globe's energy demand, a figure that has grown exponentially in recent years, according to the International Energy Agency, and some data centres annually require millions of litres of water to cool their system structures.

Additionally, data centres facilitate the adoption of a disruptive technology believed by some Canadians to be imminently harmful to the labour market and, in some extremes, human existence.

However, the Liberal government's highly-anticipated AI strategy, unveiled last month, provides little regulatory clarity or moral guidance on the construction of new data centres, according to municipal and federal leaders.

"Canada is uniquely positioned to lead in building this

infrastructure responsibly and sustainably," reads the policy.

"Canada needs domestic data centre capacity and cloud services—not only to power research and commerce, but to accelerate homegrown innovation, incentivize collaboration, and create a magnet for talent, intellectual property, and investment using leading-edge technology."

Ottawa also recently conducted a federal consultation specifically aimed at "enabl[ing] largescale commercial AI data centres."

Lewis said the government has made its views clear on data centres.

"Their silence on the question of the impacts on local water, air, noise, and jobs is a statement in and of itself," he said.

"We're not luddites. We believe this technology can be used in exciting ways if it's used responsibly, but we don't have a regulatory framework for AI, let alone for the data centres."

Lewis called for a national pause on data centre approvals and amendments to the Impact Assessment Act, which he said would ensure that new developments meet rigorous environmental and social standards.

"We really need the federal government to step up and regulate," said the NDP leader.

"I have not heard from [Prime Minister Mark Carney or AI Minister Evan Solomon] a concern for the local communities that are going to bear the impacts. It really does seem they are enthralled by the power and wealth of this industry, and I think it's irresponsible."

"I mean, how is this not a national issue on a regulatory level alone?"

Federal silence creating more work for local officials, says Hamilton councillor

Instead, the debate is unfolding predominantly at the municipal level, with concerned residents bringing their frustrations to local representatives.

"What is the provincial and federal regulatory framework for AI data centres, especially in the context of the 'AI for All' strategy?" asked Hamilton city councillor Nrinder Nann. "A lot of residents have said, 'why isn't the federal government taking time to stipulate what they expect from AI data centre development going forward?'"

"Their expectation of the federal government was that it would have rolled out a comprehensive framework that would have given Canadians the assurances that ... this policy isn't about mapping the least resistant way forward for AI data centres and mega-tech companies."



Prime Minister Mark Carney's highly-anticipated AI strategy, unveiled last month, provided little regulatory clarity or moral guidance on the construction of new data centres, according to municipal and federal leaders. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

In June, Hamilton became the first Canadian municipality to implement a moratorium on data centre development, after a motion moved by Nann passed through council.

"This is not a uniquely Hamilton phenomenon and these questions are not unique to Hamilton," said Nick Tsergas, a Hamilton-based journalist who has advocated against data centre development. "They apply to every municipality in the country."

"This is a national issue that is manifesting locally."

In an interview with *The Wire Report*, Nann said 21 municipal leaders from other communities have asked for a copy of her motion, leading her to believe more moratoriums could be brought forward in other parts of Canada.

"Many, many municipalities feel blindsided right now that these projects are landing in their communities with pre-approvals," she said.

Mississauga, Ont., where a proposed hyperscale data centre has also encountered resistance, will hold a city council vote on a moratorium later this month.

Other stakeholders are pointing fingers at Ottawa, like Chris Watson from Save Lorneville, an advocacy group pushing back against a proposed AI data centre and corresponding gas power plant near Saint John.

Watson said his organization has met with local officials, as well as provincial representatives, including New Brunswick Premier Susan Holt, though they left with an impression that there was "pressure from the federal level to get these things built."

"It's frustrating for us," said Watson. "You can raise all these concerns but, in the end, if that pressure is coming from the

federal levels, it just seems like it's going to get done at all costs."

"So, the federal government is turning a blind eye to the actual local impacts."

In a statement, AI Minister Evan Solomon's (Toronto Centre, Ont.) office said most data centres are "built and operated by private companies, working with provinces, municipalities, utilities, and local communities."

"The federal government supports this development through targeted programs that help mobilize private investment, expand Canadian-controlled compute capacity and advance strategic infrastructure," reads the statement. "The government is also investing directly in public and secure computing infrastructure to support researchers, businesses and government."

"The minister is engaging regularly with provincial and municipal leaders, Indigenous partners, industry and other stakeholders to understand local priorities, infrastructure needs and community concerns."

Solomon's office turned down repeated requests for an interview with *The Wire Report*. According to a spokesperson, the minister is currently on tour. On July 7, he stopped in Manitoba to speak to the Winnipeg Chamber of Commerce about the government's AI strategy.

Solomon had previously been asked by youth leaders whether he would consider implementing a national ban on data centre development during an event on Parliament Hill earlier this year, to which he said the government would not consider a moratorium.

Data centre resistance represents broader opposition to AI: Lowan

The Liberal government's position has also drawn criticism from provincial leaders, including BC Green Leader Emily Lowan, who has openly called for increased restrictions on AI data centres.

"Over the past two months, as the Carney government has pushed forward..., we've seen an outpour of resistance across the country," said Lowan in an interview. "It's very clear to me that the federal government is going to be moving at an aggressive pace, emulating the United States for this unbridled strategy."

"I think we see so many young people out at these protests because they are deeply concerned about what AI means for their future and our planet. I think it represents this broader fight and this new horizon of resistance."

Still in British Columbia, Nanaimo city councillor Paul Manly has led his community's response to a proposed data storage facility, which he said has been the subject of strong community opposition.

"What we really need is regulation," said Manly, who was the Green MP for Nanaimo—Ladysmith from 2019 to 2021.

"Should we be building data centres for the oligarchs that control all our social media and are data mining and stealing intellectual property? Or, should we be building data centres for our own sovereign needs?"

Public opinion data suggests Canadians have decidedly mixed views on data centres, with equal numbers of respondents providing positive and negative viewpoints. A poll conducted by Abacus Data revealed a plurality of Canadians opposed federal backing for data centres, and stated they were unlikely to support a proposed facility in their community.

According to Anne Pasek, a cultural studies professor at Trent University in Peterborough, Ont., Ottawa has abdicated from its role in guiding the debate around data centres throughout Canadian municipalities.

"If I were made king of Canada, I would probably have taken a special interest in data centres when I was developing an AI strategy for the nation," Pasek, also the Canada Research Chair in Media, Culture and the Environment, told *The Wire Report*. "The Carney government hasn't taken that approach."

"A lot of people talk about there being a democratic gap between the way that industry and city councils will interface with citizens, and I think having an actor at the federal level who isn't bound by those pressure points in the context of a city council, that could be quite helpful."

Pasek said, if the government wants to enhance data centre development, it should look to standardize procurement processes or establish best practices to guide the industry "away from their worst impulse."

"That way," she said, "it could ensure that we don't have gas generators standing up the energy requirements of these facilities."

Davis Legree is the editor of The Wire Report where this piece was first published. The Wire Report, owned by Hill Times Publishing, covers the intersection of business, technology, and government, with a special focus on the regulatory sphere.

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Editorial

Editorial

New Canada Strong and Free Elections Act won't stop the spread of disinformation to explicitly undermine the electoral system

In May, Canada's Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault told MPs on the Procedure and House Affairs Committee that he thought the proposed Bill C-25, the Canada Strong and Free Elections Act, didn't go far enough to stop the spread of disinformation, and, more specifically, to stop bad actors from deliberately spreading disinformation about Canada's electoral system.

The bill is now federal law, and Perrault says it still doesn't far enough. The bill does create a new offence relating to false statements pertaining to certain aspects of the electoral process to counter election disinformation, but it does not explicitly prevent the spreading of misinformation aimed at undermining faith in the electoral process.

"What is not addressed by this bill is a situation where inaccurate information about the electoral process is published with the goal of undermining trust in the election or its results—for example, altered videos purporting to show stolen or destroyed ballots," Perrault told the House Affairs Committee in May.

Perrault said at the time that he didn't think the bill went far enough, that there needs to be a mechanism in the act to address the intentional spread of disinformation, and that he thought it could be added to the legislation.

"Such behaviour supporting false claims that an election may have been stolen has nothing to do with criticism of the process or criticism of its

administration. The standard for such an offence should be high, as I have proposed. I believe that a line must be drawn to protect our democracy against deliberate acts of destabilization," said Perrault.

Last week, The Hill Times' Jesse Cnockaert asked Perrault's office for an update on what he thinks about the new law, which received royal assent on June 18. Although Perrault was not available for an interview, an Elections Canada spokesperson said the issue remains. The spokesperson said Canada's chief electoral officer "believes that maintaining trust in the electoral process is essential, and attempts to undermine that trust through the deliberate sharing of inaccurate information about the electoral process need to be addressed—this was not addressed specifically in C-25."

Perrault also said, through the spokesperson, that for bad actors, the problem still exists, and Elections Canada pointed to two reports that could improve the Canada Elections Act: the *Protecting Against Threats to the Electoral Process* report, released in November 2024, and the *Meeting New Challenges* report, tabled in June 2022.

The new Canada Elections Act will have to be updated again and hopefully before the next federal election. The Elections Act has to evolve in order to meet the emerging challenges, and Parliament has to do a better job of preserving the integrity of Canada's electoral process and system. It's their job.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor



Image courtesy pexels.com

NWMO needs to properly explain why it picked Ignace for Canada's \$26-billion deep geological repository for used nuclear fuel: Alexander

The government should be congratulated for recognizing Canada's deep geologic repository for used nuclear fuel as a potential nation-building project. It should have been recognized in this way from the start. The Impact Assessment Agency should also be congratulated for ensuring non-nuclear transport issues are included in the assessment.

However, one of the most important decisions—the location—has never been properly explained and, in the current review, it appears it never will be. It is really important that everyone supports the decision on the location, otherwise it will open opportunities for the decision to be questioned in the law courts or later in the court of public opinion.

The organization responsible for site selection, the Nuclear Waste Management Organization (NWMO), unilaterally set a condition that the repository should be hosted by a willing community. At the time of selection, Ignace, Ont., had expressed willingness, while South Bruce was still considering the project. Both sites were described as technically acceptable, yet NWMO chose Ignace before the South Bruce process had concluded.

Ignace is a long way from Canada's nuclear stations, so transport routes are long and while shipping used nuclear fuel is very safe because it is almost entirely a contained solid (tens of thousands of shipments have taken place without a radiological incident), extended transportation routes are costly, and worth avoiding wherever possible.

The choice of Ignace also enables accusations that the nuclear industry wants to dispose of the used fuel a long way from where it operates, implying incorrectly that the industry perceives some risk.

These concerns, along with others such as what constitutes a community and how willingness is defined, have already spawned court challenges that pose a significant risk to the project.

A clear, transparent, public review of the timing of the decision and the reasons for it would enable these issues to be accepted by the Canadian public, and would remove, or at least reduce a major future risk to the project.

Any environmentally responsible person should want this project completed as it will ensure that Canada's production of used nuclear fuel will never adversely impact the lived environment. A full explanation at this time of the choice of location will help ensure that happens.

Dr. R. Neil Alexander
Wainfleet, Ont.
(The letter writer is president of Bucephalus Consulting, and former head of communications for the Canadian Nuclear Society).

Letters to the Editor



Nuclear is slow to build and expensive to run: Toronto reader

Re: “Carney’s nuclear strategy ‘ambitious,’ but leaves questions about tighter regulatory regime, financing, say experts,” (*The Hill Times*, June 29, by Jesse Cnockaert). The fact that the federal government plans to build out up to 10 new large reactors and expand Canada’s international nuclear technology footprint is problematic for several reasons.

It is well-known that nuclear power is the most expensive way to provide power to the electricity grid. Solar and wind are now the most affordable sources of power, and the latest advances in energy storage mean that renewable energy is now reliable.

In the midst of the current record-breaking heat dome in Europe, France has had to pause some of its nuclear power transmission due to the fact that the

local river water used for essential cooling of the reactor has become too warm because the heat wave has already significantly heated up the river water so that the water returned from cooling the reactor is at a temperature higher than regulations allow. The question then becomes: in the face of a warming planet ... how reliable is nuclear really when the critical water sources for cooling are compromised by unprecedented heat waves?

The projected build-out time for the new reactors is a decade or more, yet the history of nuclear builds is littered with delays and cost overruns. While renewable solar and wind power build out in a matter of months—not years. The cost of renewables, both for the construction and for final power consumption is much more affordable for consumers and

businesses, while providing good, skilled trades job opportunities and apprenticeships for Canadians now.

Much of the planet is going renewable. Denmark now gets 88 per cent of its power from renewable energy. China is installing upwards of 3000 megawatts of solar per day. Pakistan is buying Chinese solar panels to save money and not have to rely as much on the big grid. California meets more than 50 per cent of their electricity needs with renewables. And the list goes on.

Nuclear is slow to build and expensive to run. We don’t have time to wait for it. We don’t want to pay for it. Let’s invest our time and money in renewable energy and slow the advance of climate change while we’re at it.

Carol Essex
Toronto, Ont.

Feds shouldn’t sacrifice rigour to expedite procurements: Alan Williams

The government’s announcement regarding our submarines was noteworthy in three respects. First, when announcing the submarine decision, the prime minister highlighted the benefits to Canada’s industrial base rather than Canada’s Royal Canadian Navy receiving the best submarine to meet Canada’s needs. Second, there was no technical briefing providing the detailed costs and technical description of the chosen submarine and third that a contract with TKMS won’t be signed until 2027 at the earliest.

In evaluating competing bids, the evaluation criteria for the submarines only allocated 20 per cent of the points to the technical component. A typical evalua-

tion grid would allocate at least 60 per cent of the points to the technical solution, as was done, for example, in the evaluation for our fighter aircraft. Clearly, as the prime minister emphasized, his objective is to leverage defence expenditures for industrial purposes rather than to get the best platform for the military.

No technical briefing was provided because there was no technical information to provide. While the Royal Canadian Navy may say that it is getting what it needs, the fact is it has no idea what it is getting. None of the systems in the submarine have been identified. That is why a contract signing is a long way into the future. Under a true open, fair,

and competitive process, all the terms and conditions would have been prescribed and bidders would have had to comply with all of them in order to submit a compliant bid. Consequently, a contract signing typically takes place two to three months after announcing the winning bidder, not a year or, more likely, years into the future as with this procurement.

You do not have to sacrifice rigour to expedite procurements. Sadly, this government has yet to figure it out.

Alan Williams
Ottawa, Ont.

(*The letter writer is a former assistant deputy minister of materiel at DND.*)

Senate has failed in its duty to consult: Kenora letter writer

Re: “Senate leaders rebuff timing concerns after Upper Chamber rises two days early, limits committee study,” (*The Hill Times*, July 1, 2026, by Eleanor Wand). Senate hearings on government bills are part of a consultative process in which the people of Canada are invited to express their views.

Despite what the Senators interviewed by *The Hill Times* say—with the exception of CSG Senator Paul Prosper—Bill C-16, a multi-faceted criminal justice bill, and Bill C-25, a law proposing reforms to the Canada Elections Act, the Senate failed in its duty to consult and in its duty to carefully consider proposed legislation.

The record belies Senator Pierre Moreau’s suggestions that Senators could have held further sittings if they so desired and that witnesses who could have come to testify chose not to.

In its report on C-25, the Senate’s Legal and Constitutional Affairs Committee sets out that on June 9, 2026, the Commons requested that it conduct a pre-study, and on June 15, the Commons gave it until June 18, to report, failing which the committee would be taken to have reported the bill without amendment. This was a command, not a request.

The report further tells us that during pre-study, the committee did not have sufficient time to hear from key stakeholders or to examine concerns relating to foreign interference or AI. In addition, highlighting the government’s rush to push through its agenda, some additional written submissions following the pre-study could not “be translated in time for the committee’s review.”

Bill C-25 was referred to committee on June 16, and four witnesses were invited to attend its only hearing on June 17. Not surprisingly, in view of the short notice, none were able to do so.

It is, then, disingenuous for Moreau, the government representative in the Senate, to suggest that the witnesses declined to present evidence. Witnesses cannot be expected to adjust their schedules on one day’s notice.

The committee’s report speaks for itself. The committee tells Canadians that the government “forced” it to “speed through its study,” that it was unable to “provide the thoughtful, measured advice on which the committee prides itself,” that the rush to judgment eroded the “role of the Senate as a chamber of sober second thought,” and to drive the point home, accused the Liberal government of “reducing the

institution to a rubber stamp for the government’s legislative agenda.”

In addition, at the same time as it was studying Bill C-25, the committee was engaged in the study of Bill C-16, an omnibus criminal justice bill, also the subject of a government enforced deadline. The committee report accepts that there may have been some urgency for the adoption of Bill C-16, but none with respect to the electoral reforms proposed in Bill C-25.

With respect to C-16, the committee had only a week, from June 9 to June 17, to hear witnesses and examine briefs. Fifty-eight witnesses did attend, but “many”—so said the committee report—were not able to do so and of 11 briefs submitted, six could not be translated in time for the committee to review them. With respect to C-25, the committee heard from seventeen witnesses and received twelve briefs.

Moreau told *The Hill Times* that he felt comfortable with the process. Other Senators told *The Hill Times* that they did what they were able to do and that the government was entitled to push its agenda through. All need to be reminded that Canadians depend on them to be a democratic guardrail to ensure that legislation is the best and the fairest it can be. These Senators provided no persuasive answers to Senator Prosper’s questions: “Why must we rush it? Why must we forgo proper, in-depth study?”

In its rush to judgment, the Senate has done a disservice to the people of Canada, particularly those who presented briefs which could not be translated in time for review and those who might have come to the committee hearings as witnesses, but were unable to do so. When government has no time to listen, the trust of the citizenry is eroded.

The number of witnesses heard and willing to present their case to the Senate on Bill C-25 and Bill C-16 tells us that Canadians are far from indifferent to the creation of laws under which they are governed. They want to be heard and they should be heard.

As the Carney government elevates speed over prudence, the Senate will be tested again. Let us hope that over the summer, Senators learn to better understand their duty to consult and their duty to fully and carefully consider legislation in light of what Canadians tell them and in light of their own experience and concerns.

Peter Kirby
Kenora, Ont.

COMMENT



U.S. President Donald Trump seems unable to get even the little things right, such as renovations to the White House or the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool, Michael Harris writes. *Photograph courtesy of Molly Riley/The White House*

A reality check on Donald Trump's ruinous presidency

The U.S. president is not the business whiz saviour of America. He is, in fact, the guy who went bankrupt six times. He is not a paragon of virtue, entitled to judge others. He is a felon convicted of 34 counts of fraud. He is the man who was found guilty in a civil case of sexually abusing E. Jean Carroll.

Michael Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—The 32-member NATO military alliance that recently gathered in Ankara deserves to be congratulated.

The member nations did not allow United States President Donald Trump to turn the alliance into the North Atlantic Trump Organization.

Although Trump came in swinging, he exited singing the praises of NATO. His inauspicious opening remarks were dreadful. He criticized the alliance for its failure to support his war of choice with Iran.

What nonsense. For starters, Trump's attacks display his woeful misunderstanding of what NATO actually is. From its beginnings with the Treaty of Denmark and the Truman Doctrine, to its formal creation in 1949, NATO has been a defensive military alliance. It is not a war machine. The purpose was to build a formidable barrier against a potential Soviet attack. It rested on the notion that an attack on one member was an attack on all.

Trump tried to change that foundation to something profoundly different by suggesting that an attack by a NATO member on another country should be supported by all other members.

The president went so far as to single out Spain as a "wasted cause" over NATO spending and the Iran war.

In a petulant and delusional outburst, he declared the U.S. will "cut off" all trade with Spain. It

has been reported that he doesn't have the power to do that.

In an equally outrageous display of thoughtless divisiveness, Trump repeated his thuggish declaration that the U.S. should snatch Greenland.

No one should laugh off his belligerent proposition. After all, Trump is the president who abducted the leader of Venezuela, and is now threatening to invade Cuba. And, oh yes, he wouldn't mind grabbing Canada.

Is it any wonder that European Union countries and Canada are trying to "de-Americanize" their economic and military dependence on the U.S.? Prime Minister Mark Carney has made it a priority.

Trump's tariffs and tantrums have left his country strangely isolated even amongst its traditional closest friends and allies.

And there is another major reason Trump's NATO allies didn't want to support his war in Iran. Trump never even bothered to tell them about his bellicose plans before the bombs started dropping. Without so much as a briefing, why would any country assist in the hostilities?

And there was an obvious reason to stay away from the conflict. Since Trump unleashed the U.S. military without even

consulting Congress, let alone getting its blessing, his war was illegal. The power to go to war expressly belongs to Congress—if the U.S. Constitution is being respected. Under Trump, it clearly isn't.

If Trump were following the Constitution, in particular the Emoluments Clause, he wouldn't have raked in an astonishing \$2.2-billion while occupying the Oval Office. And that includes huge cash payments to Trump from countries in the Middle East.

If the Constitution were being observed, his sons would not be pulling in hundreds of millions of more dollars for contracts they've won because of their connection to the president.

And there are a host of other reasons that much of the Western World has concluded that it is no longer dealing with the America of presidents John F. Kennedy, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, or even Richard Nixon.

Trump is proving to be the first truly incompetent—if not corrupt—president, a leader with closer ties to Russian dictator Vladimir Putin than with longstanding friends and allies. Remember, when Putin invaded Ukraine, Trump called it "brilliant."

The surest sign that Trump doesn't care about the rule of law is how he has used the Justice Department to go after his political rivals. Those perceived enemies include New York State Attorney General Letitia James and former FBI director James Comey.

And who can dismiss Trump's handling of the file on convicted child sex offender Jeffrey Epstein? Although the president's name is mentioned hundreds of times in the documents, Trump had the files carefully curated by his operatives, refusing to release some of those that mentioned him.

And now the president has guaranteed his corrupt grip on the Justice Department by nominating his former criminal lawyer, Todd Blanche, as the next attorney general.

Weighty issues of justice and war to one side, Trump seems unable to even get the little things right. He tries to renovate the Lincoln Memorial Reflecting Pool and turns it into algae heaven. He inherits the White House, one of the world's most iconic landmarks, and destroys it. Between the new ballroom and the gold-plated bathrooms, and grounds with more holes in it than Trump's logic, it is now an architectural monstrosity.

And now Trump wants to have a new power of controlling what his administration calls "election integrity."

That is a little rich. Trump is infamous for continuing to claim that he—not Joe Biden—won the 2020 election. After multiple investigations of that claim, there is no proof for Trump's assertion, and a mountain of evidence to the contrary.

What it all means in the end, is that some obvious facts in Trump's ruinous presidency have to be faced. This guy is not the business whiz saviour of America. He is, in fact, the guy who went bankrupt six times. He is not a paragon of virtue, entitled to judge others. He is a felon convicted of 34 counts of fraud. He is the man who was found guilty in a civil case of sexually abusing E. Jean Carroll. He is the guy who wants to put his face on every building in Washington, D.C. He is the guy who wants his mug on the money.

Nothing could devalue the U.S. dollar more than that.

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Carney's put politics back in the Senate, it's about time

With two provinces now publicly debating secession, it makes sense to nominate Senators who know something about politics.

Sheila Copps

Copps' Corner



When Justin Trudeau kicked Liberal Senators out of the caucus, it also meant that the public process forfeited the talent of political operatives who could be very helpful in the workings of government, writes former federal Liberal cabinet minister Sheila Copps. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

OTTAWA—Prime Minister Mark Carney has put the politics back in the Senate. And it couldn't come a moment too soon.

With two provinces now publicly debating secession, it makes sense to nominate Senators who know something about politics.

Many experienced political people across party lines simply shook their heads when then-prime minister Justin Trudeau decided to name only "non-partisan" Senators in 2015.

That decision led him to kick Liberal Senators out of the caucus, some of whom had been heavily involved in the party for decades.

It also meant that the public process forfeited the talent of political operatives who could be

very helpful in the workings of government.

Then-Liberal Senator Keith Davey—dubbed "the rainmaker" for his direction of multiple winning campaigns—headed a mass media inquiry by the Senate which stood the test of time.

Former Conservative Senator Donald Oliver served as legal counsel to his party for years, and then went on to become the first Black man named to the Senate. It was his drive that introduced the first code of conduct for Senators.

Trudeau's non-partisan directive was designed to end criticism of the Senate, which had been plagued by spending allegations and attacks on the Senate composition by the previous government.

Then-Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper headed a party created by the merger of the Reform Party and the Progressive Conservative Party. In order to accommodate Reformers, the party dropped its progressive label and continued to support some key Reform policies, which included the creation of a triple-e, elected Senate where each province would have equal numbers of Senators.

Five Albertan Senators who had been symbolically elected have been subsequently appointed to the Senate.

But spending issues continued to create challenges for which Trudeau believed the best solution would be to appoint Senators who were well-informed in their fields and political non-partisans.

Trudeau did appoint a couple of former New Democratic politicians to the Senate, but it was a standing joke in the Liberal Party that if you were recommending anyone for the Senate, make sure they weren't Liberals.

If you look at the composition of the Senate today, there are multiple Senators who are absolute experts in their fields of endeavour, including medicine, science, and demography. But those same Senators have very little knowledge of Canada, or how to deal with political issues that could tear the country apart.

The last referendum in Quebec led to the Clarity Act, which was a pivotal piece of legislation designed to ensure that future separation questions had to be clear and concise.

The role of the Senate historically has been to serve as the Chamber of sober second thought. The reference to sober was not a reflection on the dipsomaniacal nature of Members of Parliament. Rather, Senators were supposed to provide sober-minded reflection on legislation proposed by the House of Commons.

It could not introduce legislation of its own, a nod to the elected nature of the House of Commons. But it could return or delay legislation that it deemed bad for the country. Senators needed some political where-withal and understanding.

That doesn't mean that all Senators were partisans. Some of the most effective were former political assistants who ended up working as non-partisan civil servants. Names like Peter Harder spring to mind.

The point being that most Senators had some knowledge of the country and the system of governance, so they could legitimately add something to a debate on national issues like secession.

Trudeau wiped out the possibility for political participants to be involved in the Senate. In doing so, he used a hammer—instead of a flyswatter—to reform the Senate.

By naming a prominent Liberal and well-known Conservative to top the Senate as well as two nominees without political experience, Carney has beefed up the Senate in a way that will be invaluable in the face of any national crisis.

He will face some criticism from those who don't believe in the existence of the Senate. But with the Conservative appointment, that criticism will be blunted.

It will also prompt a Quebec byelection which could open up another seat in the House for the Liberals.

At the end of the day, the Senate should include a group of elder statespersons who can offer political advice based on real-life experience.

If I were going in for major surgery, I would trust my fate to the hands of a medical doctor. The same is true in politics.

When the country's future is at stake, go with the pros.

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

The certainty of Canadian disunity

Despite the divisions within our country, Canada has remained intact and has flourished for 159 years. I think that's because, amongst all the tribes in this country, there also exists a strong 'Canadian tribe.'

Gerry Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Founding father of the United States Benjamin Franklin once wrote,

"In this world nothing can be said to be certain, except death and taxes."

Of course, were he living in modern-day Canada, Franklin might have amended that idiom to read: "Nothing can be certain except death, taxes, and national unity problems."

Indeed, national unity has been a problem in our country even before Confederation.

Back in 1839, for instance, Lord Durham, who was sent from Britain to investigate the cause of the 1837-38 rebellions, wrote in a report that religious and cultural divisions within the colonies, which pitted French against English, Catholics against Protestants, were causing tensions.

As he put it, Lower Canada was "two warring nations within a single state."

These tensions remained after Confederation, manifesting in issues such as the "Manitoba School Question" in the 1890s, and in the conscription crises of the First and Second World Wars.

Later in the 20th century, cultural divisions led to the rise of Quebec's nationalist movement, triggering a drive in that province for independence or, at the very least, for some form of sovereignty-association.

Over the years, that drive has put Canada through an emotional wringer as the country has had to endure gut-wrenching referendums and agonizingly divisive constitutional negotiations.

As one-time Quebec premier Jacques Parizeau put it, the crusade for sovereignty is like a "never-ending visit to the dentist."

Now, with the separatist Parti Québécois doing well in the polls, many fear we'll be back in the dentist's office.

Meanwhile, thanks to a growing sense of Western Alienation, a separatist movement is now flexing its muscles in Alberta.

Plus, in addition to the usual regional and cultural divisions in Canada, we're now seeing the emergence of sharp ideological splits, with right battling left.

All of this is causing concern amongst Canadians.

In fact, according to a recent Nanos poll, 53 per cent believe that Canada is less or somewhat less united than it was five years ago.

But before anybody gets too panicky about the divisions in this country, we should put things into proper perspective.

For one thing, virtually every nation in the world which contains ethnic or religious or cultural diversity is going to experience some degree of internal tension and disunity.

It's inevitable. That's because all humankind possesses subconscious tribal impulses, an inherent "us-versus-them" attitude, which causes us to be wary of those not like us, even if they live in our country.

It has been this way throughout history, and it's this way all over the world.

Think of the Scots versus the English in the United Kingdom, or of the Walloons versus the Flemish in Belgium.

There are also strong separatist movements in places like India and Spain.

And when it comes to political polarization, Canada doesn't hold a candle to the United States of America where the split between left and right has reached toxic levels of hate and anger.

It should also be noted that even some of the most repressive regimes in history, such as the Soviet Union, were unable to squelch nationalistic sentiments.

So, yes, Canada has tribal tensions, but when you're a diverse nation with many religions, languages, and cultures coexisting within the same borders, that just comes with the territory.

It's also inevitable that some will seek to exploit our differences for political gain.

Yet, despite the divisions within our country, Canada has remained intact, and has flourished for 159 years.

I think that's because, amongst all the tribes in this country, there also exists a strong "Canadian tribe," one that shares common values, such as a belief in democracy, a support for freedom and a love of hockey.

Gerry Nicholls is a communications consultant. *The Hill Times*

COMMENT

Can we take Mark Carney at his word, or is he Prime Minister Pants-on-Fire?

Pipeline politics, and economics, are complicated. The oil industry spends lavishly to bamboozle the half-informed—which is most of us. But, if anyone should be able to see through the false claims and phoney threats, it would be a prime minister whose adult life has been spent in corporate corridors.

Susan Riley

Impolitic



CHELSEA, QUE.—Prime Minister Mark Carney's charm—and that, he has in abundance—may be wearing thin with some Canadians.

His recent enthusiastic endorsement of another oil pipeline, intended eventually to carry another 100 million barrels a day of Alberta oil to foreign buyers, will surprise only those who have not been paying close attention. Carney has shredded most of Justin Trudeau's green policies, as we know, and warmly endorsed more oil and gas production, despite the increased greenhouse gas emissions this will inevitably unleash.

But Carney's latest embrace of fossil fuels seems especially—insanely—inappropriate at a time when climate change is driving a record hot summer in Europe, earlier wildfires in Quebec and throughout Northern Canada, flooding in southern Ontario, and elsewhere—even forcing the cancellation of Canada Day celebrations on Parliament Hill.

Carney appears not to notice the inferno just down the road as he touts the incredible promise of oil; he clearly doesn't want to kill the “energy superpower” vibe.

Disillusioning as this is for the core of voters still vitally concerned about climate, Carney's abandonment of an earlier promise—made in his usual emphatic, no-nonsense style back



Prime Minister Mark Carney's latest embrace of fossil fuels seems especially, insanely, inappropriate at a time when climate change is driving a record hot summer in Europe, earlier wildfires in Quebec and throughout Northern Canada, flooding in southern Ontario, and elsewhere, writes Susan Riley. *The Hill Times* photograph by Aidan Raynor

in November—was even more off-brand. He said at the time, when he signed the famous MOU with Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, that “if there is not a private-sector proponent, there won't be a pipeline.” That promise was included in the MOU.

All that changed on July 1, when he, and a beaming Smith, announced a proposed new pipeline that is to follow the existing TMX route, from the oilsands to Roberts Bank, south of Vancouver—and to be 90 per cent financed by the federal and Alberta governments. (That could change by October, when the Major Projects Office is expected to endorse the plan, but it seems unlikely.)

Carney's great appeal to many voters has been his disavowal of the usual distortions, accusations, exaggerations and fatuous self-congratulation that characterizes political discourse. You might not like what he was saying, but you could take him at his word. He sounded so emphatic, so clear, for example, when he laid out conditions for any pipeline approval.

Besides his repeated reassurance (and Smith's), that taxpayers would not be left on the hook for this \$35-billion to \$44-billion piece of new infrastructure, Carney also said any pipeline deal was contingent upon major oil producers, formerly known as the Pathways Alliance, following through with a \$16-billion carbon-capture-and-storage facility to modestly offset new carbon emissions. In his words, “no Pathways, no pipeline.”

As of last week, however, it was looking increasingly like “no federal money, no Pathways.” The industry—despite record-breaking profits of recent years—has

gone from lukewarm to cold about the prospect of paying for their expensive, long-touted fig leaf—and the ludicrous promise of “decarbonized oil.” They want Ottawa to cover it all.

Will Carney increase already generous federal backstops for this dubious project with even more taxpayer dollars? It seems likely—although with new caveats, perhaps, that could, as we have seen, change on a dime.

Yet, Carney brushes aside his seemingly ironclad conditions with scarcely a blush, only unconvincing excuses. The government line now is that the world has changed so much since November that governments must step forward to assist the massively-profitable—but perpetually risk-averse—oil sector.

But what, exactly, has changed? United States President Donald Trump is still being Trump, a menace to all human life forms. Yes, the Iran war has scrambled world oil markets and, say some, made Canada's reliable supply and stable democracy more attractive than ever. If that is so, why are the big oilsands players so reluctant to put their money on the table?

Carney has an answer for that, too: such massive investments must be “de-risked” for industry if they are to happen, with the risk transferred to us, the taxpayer. This is only reasonable, say industry proxies, like federal Energy Minister Tim Hodgson and Smith, given how long it takes to build a pipeline—or a new oilsands plant, for that matter—and how much it costs. Not to mention past “obstacles” to pipeline development caused by pesky Indigenous groups and irascible environmentalists who have made investors skittish.

But those little problems have been largely taken care of—the proposed pipeline will follow an established, southern route, thereby minimizing the prospect of protests, the oil tanker ban on the northern British Columbia coast remains, and B.C. Premier David Eby has been mollified by massive federal funding for a variety of projects, including LNG expansions.

This bolsters the argument from insightful energy watchers that the real explanation for the oil industry's reluctance to pay for new pipelines or new oilsands plants is commercial. Unlike Smith, they simply don't believe there is a vast and expanding market for their product. Complaints about environmental regulations—and Ottawa's alleged hostility to Alberta's main industry—are secondary and simply habitual at this point.

It has always been true that the future market for our oil in Asia, and elsewhere, is not infinite or even knowable given how quickly China is electrifying. And, after the summer they are having, you can bet European countries will be transitioning off fossil fuels as quickly as they can under enormous public pressure.

Some argue that a new pipeline isn't even necessary given flat-lining demand, an expected oil glut in the aftermath of the Iran-U.S. war, and OPEC-adjacent countries increasing their output and flooding the market. As well, planned expansions of the TMX and Enbridge mainline will soon accommodate the extra 100 million barrels per day in exports intended for that brand new pipeline, say observers.

They also say filling another new pipeline will require construction of new, multi-billion-

dollar “greenfield” projects—essentially new mines—also Smith's fondest wish as she fantasizes about quadrupling oilsands production within 10 or more years. But there hasn't been a new oil plant built in several years, because the price tag is too steep and the rewards too uncertain.

National Observer columnist Max Fawcett, a perceptive and knowledgeable student of the politics and finances of oil, believes that Carney has known all along this pipeline will never be built because the economics don't work.

Fawcett suggests Carney has been playing Smith in a bid to dampen separatist fever and draw Alberta back into the national (i.e. Liberal) fold. He has been agreeing to most of her demands (in the interests of national unity), knowing that by 2033-34, when construction is supposed to end, oil prices will be too low to make a new pipeline remotely profitable.

That's one possibility, but there is another: that Carney, a son of Alberta and long-time corporate insider, wants to do everything he can to help the oil industry expand production and exports. He wants those revenues and those jobs, and is willing to sacrifice climate measures to achieve that—as he openly admits.

To appease his more progressive, climate-conscious MPs—and the Canadians they represent—he sprinkles money for electrification, EVs, and nature preservation into the mix, all worthy projects, but many of those federal contributions measure in the high millions of dollars, as opposed to billions for oil and gas. They read as afterthoughts.

In a revealing “forward guidance” video, one of the prime minister's regular meditations on the “world as it is, not as we wish it to be,” Carney said that, as a boy in Edmonton, he watched the devastating impact of Pierre Elliott Trudeau's national energy policy on his neighbours. He thereby revived a cherished—and only half-true—myth about Alberta's repeated mistreatment at the hands of eastern bastards. Unhelpful.

Pipeline politics, and economics, are complicated. The oil industry spends lavishly to bamboozle the half-informed—which is most of us. But, if anyone should be able to see through the false claims and phoney threats, it would be a prime minister whose adult life has been spent in corporate corridors.

Instead, we have a leader whose primary concern seems to be defending the oil industry, rather than defending Canadians—those living in smaller, northern communities, and, increasingly in southern cities, too—whose lives, livelihoods, health, and habits are increasingly upended by climate change.

How about “derisking” them, instead of throwing fuel on a fire that threatens us all?

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The worst health care in Canada is federal

Indigenous Peoples deserve to be healthy. Do remember we're in this era of reconciliation, when Canada says it will make the reparations. NIHB is currently not a reparation. Instead, the program requires atonement for its current inequity.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—Our nurses, doctors, and hospitals are facing a lack of funding support from provincial ministries of health. Ontario

appears to be leading the pack for underfunding, but it's a very close race across the country. Health-care systems are a bit like a house: if you don't do the regular maintenance, fix the water leaks when they impact the foundation, replace the roof—that sort of thing—then you end up with a wildly expensive crisis. And here we are.

But there's one system that is even worse: the federally funded and managed Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB) for status First Nations and Inuit. This is the health-insurance-like card that First Nations rely on. It covers expenses a bit like provincial health-care insurance, but it pays less than any of them. The icing on this cake is the reams of paperwork and faxes for the required advance approvals.

Inuit and northern First Nations rely on NIHB travel support because the federal government has neglected to build 24/7 health care in their communities. Even when there are nursing stations in some northern Ontario communities, nursing services may only be provided during the weekdays, and a doctor who flies in monthly at best.

So, travel turns out to be an essential piece of the health care system for First Nations and Inuit, but it's stingy and mean travel support. Sometimes the patient gets notice of the flight out from the far north to a southern city's specialist with barely an hour's notice. Sometimes patients never get the notice of travel, and so they miss the appointment. Or the child gets covered to fly out for surgery, but not a parent. Or the patient who waited for medivac for weeks.

A list of the lack of parity across the board is both ludicrous and heartbreaking. If you were limited to NIHB for your health care, you would probably be furious. But who will be held accountable? Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) outsourced NIHB's claims processing to Express Scripts. Is it an Express Scripts decision or an ISC decision? Who knows? It all lacks transparency and accountability.

I have received stern emails from ISC on prior NIHB columns, as apparently it's the white god of health that shall not be critiqued. May I suggest that y'all be publicly accountable like the rest of the health-care sector?



Indigenous Services Canada, led by Minister Mandy Gull-Masty, should abolish Non-Insured Health Benefits, and instead replace the health program for Inuit and First Nations Peoples with the federal government's plan for bureaucrats, writes Rose LeMay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

I am not alone in critiquing this mess. Grand Chief Alvin Fiddler from Nishnawbe Aski Nation was at a rally at Sioux Lookout, Ont., where people came out to protest the poor and inequitable service from NIHB. Through a Facebook post, Fiddler, on June 8, referred to it as "the biggest barrier to better health care ... causing great harm to our communities."

The lack of health care called NIHB may just be the driving factor for the lower life expectancy of Indigenous Peoples, the higher rates of chronic disease, and virtually every disparity in our health outcomes today.

Indigenous Peoples deserve to be healthy. Do remember we're in this era of reconciliation, when Canada says it will make reparations for all the harms done through residential schools, Indian hospitals, and worse. NIHB is currently not a reparation. Instead,

the program requires atonement for its current inequity. Wait long enough and somebody might just sue for equity in health care. And that's a case that no Justice Canada lawyer in their right mind should fight.

Abolish NIHB. It's so beyond broken that it has no place in modern health care. Replace it with the federal government's employee health-care insurance and include travel support that is publicly managed and accountable.

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

Good choice on subs, but our South Korean friends are not happy, and we need to take this seriously

Let's tell the South Koreans that we want to place a large order for their mobile guns and that we want to partner with their industries, too. Let's show up with a specific plan and a gigantic duffel bag of cash. And maybe a nice card.

Matt Gurney

Opinion



TORONTO—Canada chose Europe for its new fleet of

submarines. It's a solid, defensible, and logical choice. I'm already on record as having preferred the South Korean submarines, but agree entirely that the German-Norwegian boats, built by TKMS, are fine vessels and a great fit for Canada. We found ourselves in the pleasant situation of having two great options to choose between, and we'd have gotten a great result either way.

But our South Korean friends are not happy. And this is something we should take seriously.

South Korea worked hard to win this contract. It would have been a major boon to its military industry to land a major defence export deal with a major NATO ally, especially a deal as large as this one. The Koreans offered major industrial benefits, spent heavily on advertising, and sent high-level political delegations to Canada. One of their submarines even visited us to show Canadians what was on offer.

We went with Europe anyway. That's defensible, given our strong NATO ties and our desire to show our allies there that

our decades-long neglect of our responsibilities is over. But it's still a choice, and it's a choice the South Koreans clearly aren't pleased with. Just last week, it was reported that South Korea was pulling some support for defence projects in Canada that it had previously said it would participate in. The dollar value of those contracts was small, but the message is clear: Seoul is not happy.

And that's a genuine problem. Canada needs a deeper, closer relationship with South Korea. They are a perfect and natural ally for us in a destabilizing world. They're a powerful and growing economy. They manufacture a wide array of military technology—far beyond submarines—and much of it would be of real use to Canada. South Korea also has a powerful manufacturing sector, and is willing to partner with allies that enter into defence agreements with it. They're also a major player in a part of the world with which Canada wishes to become closer.

You can tell that Prime Minister Mark Carney grasps

this. He went out of his way last week to heap praise on South Korea, and met with its president at the NATO summit in Ankara. Defence Minister David McGuinty did, as well, telling reporters that South Korea and Canada still had a lot they could and should do together. That's correct, wise, and prudent.

But it has to go beyond ego management. Carney made a point of noting last week that the submarine decision had been accelerated by years in response to changing global circumstances. That's true, though with the big asterisk that the decision was accelerated after it had been pushed back. The net effect is that we ended up making the decision a lot sooner than we planned, though we had planned to make it far too late. (I know that sounds like wordplay. It's just the reality of Canadian military procurement.) Since we can clearly make decisions quickly, and since the world isn't getting any calmer, let's figure out what we can do with South Korea as fast as possible, and announce it.

There's an easy place to start. The South Koreans make excellent mobile artillery systems, and the Canadian Army is very interested in exactly that. (It's shocking, or should be shocking, that we don't have any now.) Canada recently agreed to buy American-made HIMARS rocket artillery systems, but we still need a large number of conventional artillery tubes, preferably mounted on speedy armoured vehicles. South Korea is a world leader in making exactly those.

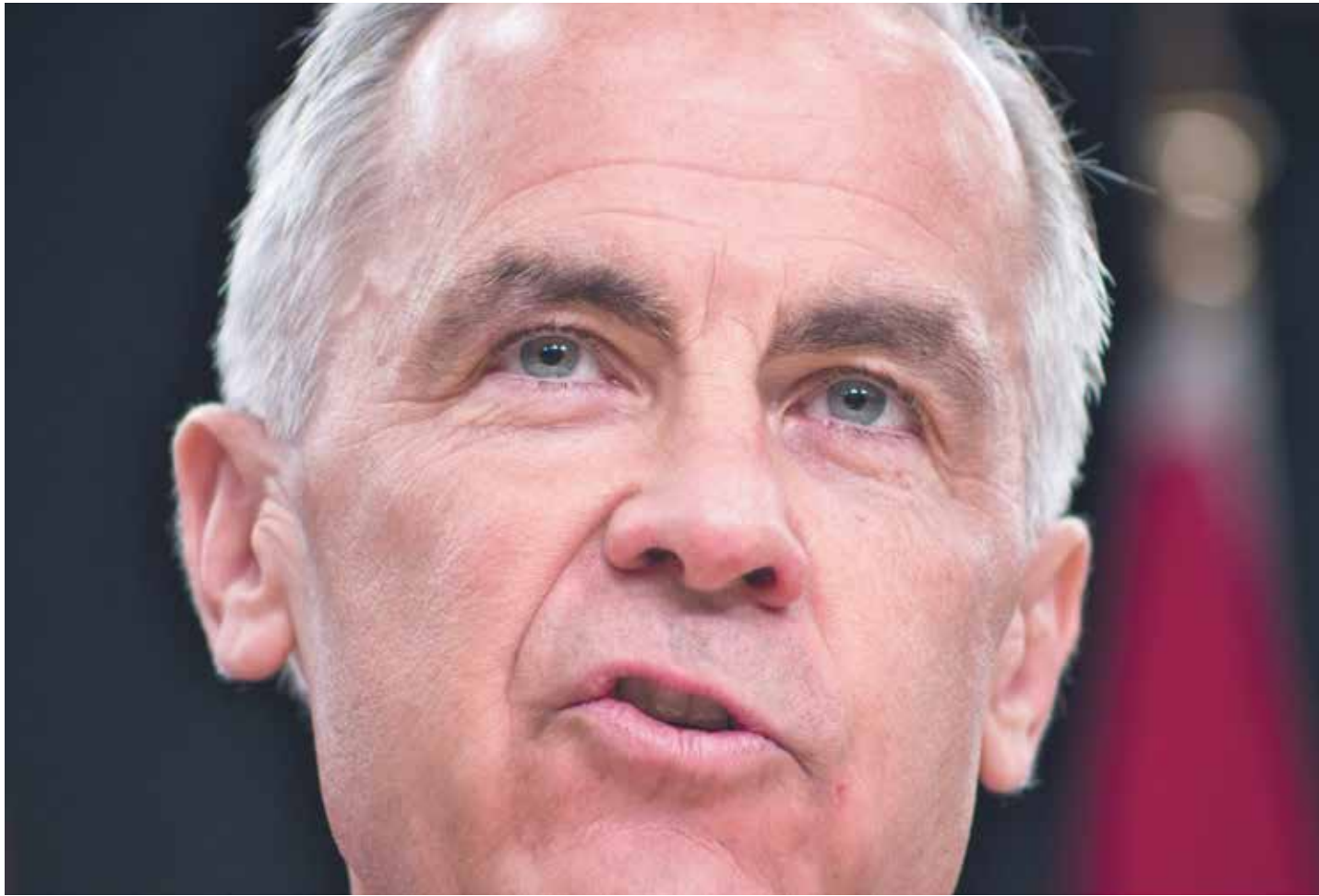
Let's buy some. Seriously. Let's tell the South Koreans that we want to place a large order for their mobile guns and that we want to partner with their industries, too. Let's show up with a specific plan and a gigantic duffel bag of cash. And maybe a nice card.

This is a win-win. The South Korean artillery systems are excellent, and we need them. And they could use a signal of our friendship and trust. This is a logical choice that would leave our Army better equipped, would presumably be a boon to Canadian industry, and would meaningfully enhance our relationship with South Korea, a country we must draw closer to for our mutual benefit. Let's make this the next project we make a deliberate choice to move quickly on. We won't regret it.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT



There is no doubt that this type of experience would be useful in the legislative process and is consistent with Prime Minister Mark Carney's overall focus on economic growth, private investment, and infrastructure. But it could set the Senate up for a significantly higher risk of real, potential, and apparent conflicts of interests, writes Lori Turnbull. *The Hill Times* photograph by Aidan Raynor

Senate 'modernization' in the Carney era: why partisanship isn't what we need to worry about

While proponents of democracy and political equality are likely not thrilled with the prospect of a throwback to cronyism, the more concerning part of the prime minister's plan is his intent to recruit Senators from 'key Canadian strategic industries.'

Prime Minister Mark Carney has a plan to "modernize" the Senate. If this sounds familiar, it's likely because his predecessor, Justin Trudeau, said the same thing 11 years ago. Trudeau's reform measures sought to eliminate partisanship from Senate appointments—or at least to create this appearance—Carney is bringing back partisan appointments. While proponents of democracy and political equality are likely not thrilled with the prospect of a throwback to cronyism, the more concerning part of the prime minister's plan is his intent to recruit Senators from "key Canadian strategic industries."

Let's be clear: there is no doubt that this type of experience would be useful in the legislative process and is consistent with Carney's overall focus on economic growth, private investment, and infrastructure. But such a recruitment strategy could set the Senate up for a significantly higher risk of real, potential, and apparent con-

licts of interest, which could create a new crisis of legitimacy for an institution that already struggles to convince Canadians of its value. If Carney is going to proceed with this, Senators need clearer, stricter, and more enforceable rules on the range of "outside activities" that they are permitted to engage in while holding public office. Otherwise, there could be negative consequences for the public and for the institution itself.

The reviews of Trudeau's independent Senate project are, at best, mixed. The narrative around it, though, was certainly compelling: instead of filling the Senate with partisan hacks to thank them for their loyalty and financial support over the years, the prime minister would appoint community leaders on a merit basis. Partisans need not apply. However, right from the get-go, Trudeau was accused of putting Liberals in the Senate despite his musings to the contrary.

A CBC report in 2024 showed that most of Trudeau's appoint-

ments had ties to the Liberal Party, including through financial donations. And while the objective of the Trudeau government's new approach to Senate appointments was to make the place more "independent," an earlier CBC report from 2017 showed that Trudeau's appointees voted with the government 94.5 per cent of the time. So much for independence. From this vantage point, the Trudeau government's Senate reform initiative looks more like a comms strategy than it does meaningful change.

However, despite what these numbers suggest, there is no question that there have been significant changes in the culture and work of the Senate in the last 10 years that need to be weighed heavily when considering the potential implications of Carney's plan to appoint more Senators from key strategic industries and regulatory frameworks.

While the Senate still ultimately defers to the will of the House of Commons as the people's elected chamber and

does not make a practice of overturning government legislation, the "new" Senate is much more inclined to move legislative amendments, a practice that can both delay a bill from becoming a law for a period of time and alter its substance. Both outcomes affect the ability of the government to implement its agenda.

This is likely why the prime minister wants to increase the presence of industry-minded people in the Senate: so that it is easier to get his proposals through in a timely fashion, as he has promised private investors he would.

But Senators' growing tendency to move amendments to bills has attracted the attention of lobbyists to the point where Senators are lobbied much more than they ever were before Trudeau's shift away from partisanship toward "independence." And now that they are free from party discipline, which puts their colleagues in the House of Commons in a political straight-jacket, Senators can make up their own minds on whether they want to bring the concerns of lobbyists forward in the legislative arena.

The spike in Senate-focused lobbying is made more complex by the fact that Senators are permitted to engage in a much wider range of "outside activities" than are cabinet ministers. For example, Senators can sit on boards and advisory boards, both for-profit and not-for-profit. They can hold outside employment and continue to practise their professions, which gives them alternative sources of revenue.

They are public office holders with potentially very active private lives. Of course, they are subject to conflict-of-interest rules, and are supposed to put their Senate responsibilities first. However, while they are designated public office holders (DPOH) under the Lobbying Act, they are not subject to the Conflict of Interest Act as other DPOHs are.

Given the significant increase in Senate-focused lobbying activity, the greater inclination towards legislative independence on the part of Senators, the "outside activities" that Senators can engage in in the private sector, and Carney's plans to recruit future Senators from key industries, it is appropriate to consider whether it's time for a more robust ethics regime for the Senate, either in the form of Senate-specific legislation or under the current Conflict of Interest Act. The combined effect of Trudeau's and Carney's reforms could be that industry leaders and others become public officials with the capacity to make important decisions regarding major projects and investments while maintaining a presence on the private sector side. A more robust ethics regime would allow the public to trust that any conflicts—whether real, potential, or apparent—would be resolved in accordance with the public interest.

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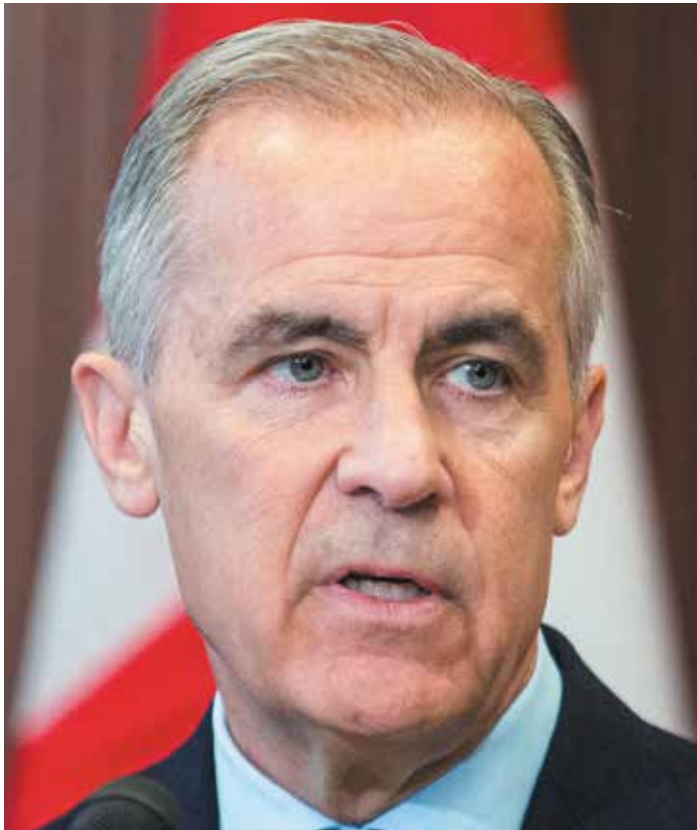
The Hill Times

Lori
Turnbull

Opinion



COMMENT



Prime Minister Mark Carney, left, and Alberta Premier Danielle Smith. Imperial Oil's CEO, John Whelan, says the proposed one-million-barrels-a-day West Coast oil pipeline is a \$100-billion-plus project, far more than the direct cost of \$35.2-billion to \$43.7-billion set out in Alberta's submission to the Major Projects Office, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Alberta's pipeline submission to Major Projects Office is not persuasive

Wood Mackenzie identified 35 possible projects, leading the Alberta submission to state that there was 'planned and potential' production, concluding that, 'deliverable crude supply will be ample to justify the capacity of the project.' But potential isn't the same as commitment.

day West Coast oil pipeline is a \$100-billion-plus project, far more than the direct cost of \$35.2-billion to \$43.7-billion set out in Alberta's submission to the Major Projects Office. Prime Minister Mark Carney goes even further, predicting that the project will unlock \$200-billion of investment, calling the project a "once in a lifetime opportunity."

In fact, we don't really know what the actual cost will be or where the money will come from, and indeed whether the project is feasible, or if it makes economic sense. It seems more a political project than an economic project, with the taxpayer picking up much of the tab, despite past promises to the contrary, and bearing much of the risk.

The federal and Alberta governments are launching the project through Trans Mountain, a federal Crown corporation, and the Alberta Petroleum Marketing Commission, a provincial agency, with a non-binding promise of a 10 per cent role by Pembina Pipeline, the only private-sector participant.

The project entails much more than the pipeline's costs. To meet environmental requirements, some \$20-billion will need to be invested in a carbon

at Roberts Bank in Vancouver. Some 550 megawatts of electric power capacity will be needed. Then there's the need to build significant new oilsands oil production since there is not enough oil currently to meet the proposed pipeline's volume needed if it's to go ahead, implying the need for significant new investment in oilsands production. All these related projects could depend on federal and Alberta taxpayer subsidies.

Is this the best use of this capital—with taxpayers taking on much of the cost and the risk? The proponents are to make a final decision on whether to go ahead sometime between December 2027 and April 2028, with the final green light in September 2028.

The Oil Sands Alliance (formerly the Pathways project) plans a major carbon capture and storage facility to reduce emissions from oilsands production. Both the federal and Alberta governments are committed to support the project. Building it is an essential requirement if the pipeline is to go ahead without a massive increase in greenhouse gas emissions.

The massive Roberts Bank project at the Port of Vancouver will need a major expansion, with significant federal support. The pipeline project will require 264 hectares of land—equivalent to 484 football fields—to hold 15 major storage tanks with a capacity to hold 6.5 million barrels of oil, and capacity to handle very large supertankers.

But the overriding question is whether there will be sufficient oil to provide the proposed pipeline with sufficient oil, combined with long-term contracts on use of the pipeline and related payment of tolls to sustain the pipeline, pay down debt, and deliver a return to investors. Without the oil, there will be no pipeline.

The Alberta government retained the oil industry con-

sultancy, Wood Mackenzie, to examine this question. It identified 35 possible projects, leading the Alberta submission to state that there was "planned and potential" production, concluding that, "deliverable crude supply will be ample to justify the capacity of the project." But potential isn't the same as commitment.

The supply issue is far from settled. In a detailed study, Peter Nicholson, chair of the Canadian Climate Institute, indicates that there is a real shortage of needed supply and a lack of enthusiasm by the oilsands industry for major new projects to bring on new supply. He argues that this lack of supply is "the major obstacle" to the pipeline going ahead.

"A pipeline is not a 'Field of Dreams'," he contends. "It cannot be built simply on the hope that production will eventually materialize. Before committing tens of billions of dollars, investors need confidence that sufficient oil will be available over several decades to generate an adequate return. If there is no convincing answer to that question, the pipeline should not be built."

Yet, the latest outlook from the Canadian Energy Regulator shows that industry plans to increase production by just 480,000 barrels a day over the next 25 years, and this production is already spoken for. Moreover, this increase will come from improving existing facilities rather than building new ones. Without committed new production there is no commercial basis for the project.

And this raises another question. Are oil companies skeptical that there will be a growth market for a lot more Canadian oil over the next 30-plus years, starting early in the next decade? And what pricing profile do they see? Is it high enough to justify investment in new oilsands plants? Since 2015, capital spending by oilsands producers has fallen sharply. "The industry," Nicholson contends, "increasingly resembles a mature cash-generating business rather than one preparing another generation of mega-projects."

The last proposed new oilsands project was the Frontier oilsands mine, promoted by Teck Resources. But the \$20-billion project, to produce 260,000 barrels a day, depended on oil at least \$95 a barrel to be profitable. Since Teck could not find equity partners to help finance the project it was cancelled in February 2020. If similar new plants were to be built today—four such plants would provide one million barrels a day—they would cost at least \$80-billion and probably much more.

The political pressures behind government support for a new oil pipeline—especially federal support—is understandable. But it would be wrong to make the investment from taxpayer funds for political symbolism if it is not economic or environmentally sustainable. The Alberta submission to the Major Projects Office is not persuasive.

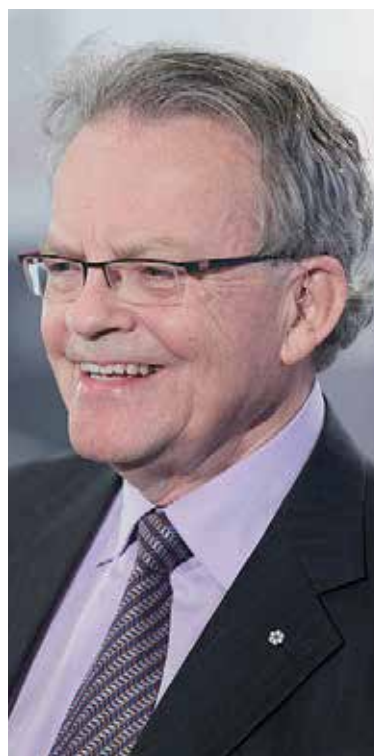
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The Hill Times

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Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—Imperial Oil's CEO, John Whelan, says the proposed one-million-barrels-a-



Peter Nicholson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Jake Wright

capture and storage project with the Oil Sands Alliance. Another \$20-billion will be needed to build the West Coast port facility

NEWS

Nutrition North subsidy needs a revamp, says ITK president Obed

While a third-party report focuses on improving the subsidy's administration, ITK leader Natan Obed says a new transparent model 'more explicitly focused' on people—not retailers—who experience food insecurity is required.

Continued from page 1

explicitly focused on those in greatest need of the food, and that is accountable and transparent," Obed told *The Hill Times*.

The need is great, Obed emphasized, adding that upwards of 70 per cent of individuals in Arctic communities are food insecure, and the median income for Inuit living in Nunangat communities is \$32,000 in comparison to \$100,000 for non-Inuit people.

The retail subsidy is one component of the broader Nutrition North program, which uses federal money to help with food prices and access to food for those in communities where their remote locations, insufficient transportation infrastructure, and harsh climates add to the cost of bringing food to local stores. The subsidy, also referred to as a rebate, is typically the program's most criticized component. The government provides funding to grocers to help with high transport and storage costs connected to bringing products into these communities. The grocers are expected to pass on these savings through lower retail prices.

Other more recently implemented aspects of the program include a grant to support food gathering through traditional hunting and harvesting, and funding for community food programs, both of which emphasize the traditions and production of local country food.

This is unlike the retail subsidy which focuses on making it easier to bring food from outside these communities and also allows the federal government to designate which food and non-food items are eligible.

Concerns have been raised for many years—recently reflected in a 2021 study by the House Indigenous and Northern Affairs Committee—that there's a lack of transparency in whether subsidy funding is actually applied to retail grocery prices.

A delayed third-party report, produced by Aluki Kotierk, who



Northern and Arctic Affairs Minister Rebecca Chartrand has been working on a multi-pronged review of ways to fix Nutrition North, which is meant to help food become more affordable and accessible to those living in remote and northern communities. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

was appointed by the previous Liberal government in February 2025, touches on the retail subsidy. Kotierk suggests that reducing the administrative burden connected to the subsidy could encourage more and smaller vendors to apply to be a part of the program, thereby increasing retail choices for consumers.

Kotierk's 26-page report was submitted to Northern and Arctic Affairs Minister Rebecca Chartrand's (Churchill—Keewatinook Aski, Man.) office on May 25, according to the minister's office. The report was originally due on March 31.

In response to questions about the report and Kotierk's fees from *The Hill Times*, Chartrand's office said travel expenses—slightly less than \$15,000—were paid out, but that Kotierk will not receive any other payments.

The Hill Times originally asked Chartrand's office for an interview about Kotierk's report, but the minister was unable to speak before deadline as she has been busy responding to flooding in her riding. The office agreed to respond to questions in writing.

Kotierk's report includes a heavy focus on personal stories, with Kotierk—who was once a bureaucrat for the Nunavut government—communicating the importance of food and community in Indigenous cultures.

"As we sat around the big communal pot of cooked caribou meat, there would be a sense of joy and excitement. This was not only about nutrition and filling our bellies. It was about the camaraderie, the connection, the togetherness as chunks of meat were being placed into toddler mouths and ulus and knives glistened in the sun," Kotierk wrote, recounting a childhood memory.

There are recommendations and suggestions weaved throughout the document, but unlike many typical government-commissioned reports, it does not include a formal list of recommendations.

Obed said he appreciates that Kotierk "created a first-person account and one that was people-



ITK president Natan Obed, centre, says his organization is on board with the Harvester's Support Grant and the Community Food Programs Fund, but the subsidy component of Nutrition North needs an 'alternative' model. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

focused and on Indigenous Peoples of the Arctic and the North, and really brought out a lot of the fundamental concepts around the appreciation and joy in food as the counter to food policy per se."

ITK calls for new food security program to replace Nutrition North

ITK recently issued its own report about the need to revamp Nutrition North. On June 9, it released a framework of recommendations as an accompanying document to a broader poverty reduction strategy, also announced that day. The framework states that solutions for Nutrition North problems must prioritize Inuit self-determination and local decision-making and control.

ITK's framework cites seven recommendations, including that the current Nutrition North program be "replaced by a new, evidence-based food security program" that veers away from the program's original intent of economic development and towards a policy more focused on social outcomes.

The retail subsidy's original intent was that competition between grocers would reduce prices and consumers would go to the store with the lowest prices. But that hasn't come to fruition, according to Obed.

"The reality is, in most of the Nutrition North-eligible communities, there are no more than two major grocery stores, and usually there's just one. There isn't enough competition to ensure that the program works as a lever for competition, and therefore it becomes a lever for private business," he said.

ITK wants to see funding targeted to the individuals who are the most food-insecure, and not the companies that sell food, according to Obed. He noted that all customers at a Nutrition North-affiliated grocery store have access to any reduced pricing resulting from the subsidy.

"If you're a company that's doing a big military contract in Iqaluit in the coming years, that subcontractor could go to the store and buy all the food that they need for the people who are working on their sites, and that's Nutrition North as well," he said.

Other components of Nutrition North include the Harvester's Support Grant, which helps fund food gathering through traditional hunting and harvesting, and the Community Food Programs Fund for food-sharing activities, such as for school meals or elders' gatherings.

Obed said his organization supports both. ITK's framework recommends that the federal government "expand support" for the two initiatives.

Picking up on an observation from Kotierk's report, Obed said infrastructure deficits—connected to roads and runways, but also in food storage—in Northern communities also need to be addressed.

"If there aren't secure refrigerator and freezer spaces for those foods almost within 10 to 15 minutes, there can be huge challenges for the integrity of those foods and getting to the stores," said Obed, referring to the challenges of moving and storing food in Arctic temperatures.

Chartrand's office 'looking at' expanding hunting and harvesting grant

In an interview with *The Hill Times* this past May, Chartrand described the Harvester's Support Grant and the Community Food Programs Fund as "successful," but she has heard "loud and clear" through her own consultations about the problems with the retail subsidy.

Obed said "it's good to hear" from the minister that she sees the value in community-based solutions, and he has observed "an openness from the Government of Canada to think differently about this program."

Kotierk's report is one aspect of a multi-pronged review to understand how to fix the program. The subsidy alone received more than \$160-million in the 2025-26 year, according to a Government of Canada explainer.

Obed said the program overall receives upwards of \$200-million annually.

Chartrand told *The Hill Times* back in May that she has hosted virtual meetings with representatives from industry, academia, and communities eligible for Nutrition North. She also hosted a food sovereignty summit in Ottawa this past March.

Her office's statement to *The Hill Times* on July 8 did not respond to questions about whether the government planned to take any recommendations from Kotierk's report, or would replace the current Nutrition North program, as recommended by ITK and promised in the federal Liberals' own 2025 election platform. It also did not provide examples of any actions taken on Nutrition North since Chartrand's May interview with *The Hill Times*.

"Several options for reforms are being considered, but one of the biggest wins in the program that we heard was the positive impact of the Harvester's Support Grant on communities, so one thing we're looking at is expanding that program. We have heard clearly that some things are working and others need to evolve," said the statement, adding that work on the program continues and it will be guided by those who use Nutrition North.

Obed said he has heard that decisions about changes could be made by this fall.

"The stakes are very high at this moment in time to get this review right," he said.

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Corporate CEOs in Alberta seek briefings from political consultants, pollsters, and auditors on what fall referendum means for business

Uncertainty over the separation referendum is adding a risk premium to business and investment decisions across Alberta, says Deborah Yedlin, CEO of Calgary Chamber of Commerce. And Alberta political consultant Stephen Carter says the remain side has to get 'off of our asses and actually do the work' to keep Alberta.

Continued from page 1

pollsters to better understand what the Oct. 19 separation referendum question could mean for their businesses.

"CEOs, business communities, the non-profit sector—all of them are very, very worried, and this is the time when I talk to all of them because the Stampede is the collection of business leaders, politicians, and political people like me, and we're all chatting, and we're all meeting at the same events, and it's always the same question," said Stephen Carter, a political consultant in Alberta who has managed several election campaigns.

"It won't happen, will it? It won't happen, will it? It won't happen?" And the answer is, "It will if we don't get off of our asses and actually do the work," he said.

Carter and others interviewed for this article said corporate CEOs are also seeking advice on whether they should speak publicly through media interviews or make financial contributions to either side of the campaign. They are also considering the lessons of Quebec's 1995 separation referendum, and its long-term economic and business impacts on that province as they assess the potential implications for Alberta.

Back in May, Alberta Premier Danielle Smith announced that the Oct. 19 referendum—which will have questions about issues like immigration and constitutional reforms—will also include a question about whether Alber-



Prime Minister Mark Carney at the 2025 Calgary Stampede. Senior Executives of corporations based in Alberta are receiving briefings from pollsters, political consultants, auditors and government relations consultants to understand what the Oct. 19 referendum means for their businesses. Photograph courtesy of X

tans want a binding referendum on the province leaving Canada. The question will read: "Should Alberta remain a province of Canada or should the Government of Alberta commence the legal process required under the Canadian Constitution to hold a binding provincial referendum on whether or not Alberta should separate from Canada?"

Smith has said publicly that she's on the "remain" side, and wants her province to continue to be a part of Canada. As of last week, it was unclear who would lead the "remain" side campaign. Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) and other cabinet ministers have been travelling to Alberta to discuss energy and other issues with the provincial government, but there is still no official organization or individuals representing the "remain" side in the referendum debate.

Alberta is the heartland of the federal Conservative Party base, and holds 33 of the province's 37 seats. Former prime minister Stephen Harper has said publicly that he will campaign for the "remain" side. Conservative Party leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River-Crowfoot, Alta.), who represents an Alberta riding, has also delivered speeches in the province making a case for staying in the federation.

Carter is currently running a third-party advertising group called Alberta's Voice in support of the "remain" side. He said that his group had raised \$40,000 as of last week, and their target is \$300,000. The spending limit for third-party advertisers in this referendum is \$607,000, according to Elections Alberta. The maximum donation limit for individuals and corporations is \$5,000. Carter said his group has 1,000 volunteers so far.

Carter said that he has delivered presentations to several

CEOs on what the fall referendum could mean for their companies and the broader business environment. He argued that separation referendums like the one planned for this fall undermine business confidence.

Carter said some people view the referendum as a way to send a message to the federal government about Albertans' frustration with the lack of resource development, but he argued that it is putting the province's economic future at risk. He said it is essential to counter misinformation suggesting Albertans would be better off as citizens of an independent country, adding that the Brexit campaign in the United Kingdom illustrated how influential misinformation can become if left unchallenged.

He credits Carney with taking positive first steps, pointing to the memorandum of understanding on pipelines and the prime minister's ongoing discussions with Smith. However, Carter said much more needs to be done at the ministerial level, and that every federal department needs to demonstrate through concrete actions that Alberta is important to the country.

Carter cited the example of Canadian Identity and Culture Minister Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) who recently made a funding announcement with the Canada Council for the Arts that will see the creation of the \$25-million Alberta Focus Fund for Alberta's arts community.

But he said this is just one step towards equalizing arts grants that have always been focused on the East more than the West. Carter said that sustained engagement across all federal departments is needed.

Carter also pointed out that more than 40 Liberal MPs

attended this year's Calgary Stampede, calling it a record and a positive sign of engagement. He said Carney's newly appointed senior adviser for Alberta, Morgan Breitzkreuz, has been reaching out to stakeholders, and that he himself has been in touch with Breitzkreuz. Carter said he told the senior adviser that Ottawa should focus on responding to all 10 issues raised by Albertans, and make a sustained effort to keep Alberta in Canada.

'Whatever the differences, it does not merit breaking up the country': Calgary Chamber CEO Yedlin

Deborah Yedlin, president and CEO of Calgary Chamber of Commerce, said that uncertainty surrounding the separation referendum is adding a risk premium to business and investment decisions across Alberta. She said that this is an additional layer of friction on top of existing challenges related to the Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement, supply chains, market access, labour shortages and inflation. Yedlin said the referendum has been one of the dominant topics of conversation at the Calgary Stampede.

She argued that Albertans should reject separation by a decisive margin, warning that even a 60-40 defeat for the separatist side would leave the issue unresolved, and continue to undermine Alberta's reputation as a stable destination for investment. Yedlin said businesses have been requesting presentations from political experts, auditors, and pollsters to better understand what the referendum could mean for their operations. Yedlin said there is widespread concern

within the business community and that those concerns need to be addressed.

"It's about what it means to be Canadian, and that's really what we have to continue to focus on, and why it's important to stay as a country united, even as we have differences," said Yedlin. "And recognizing those are real, whatever the differences are, and whatever the frustration has been, it does not merit breaking up the country."

Yedlin added that many business leaders are looking to Quebec's 1995 referendum for lessons. Montreal, she said, was once one of Canada's leading financial centres, but many firms relocated following the referendum.

She said the Quebec government struggled to raise money in the bond market for about two years after its referendum, while the province also experienced an outflow of capital and skilled workers. Yedlin said that many of the companies that left never returned. She warned that Alberta cannot afford a similar outcome. If uncertainty surrounding separation persists, she said, businesses and workers could leave the province, while experts have warned that the economy and gross domestic product could contract because of Alberta's reliance on interprovincial and international trade. Yedlin added that some small businesses are already delaying or reconsidering capital investment projects as they wait to see the referendum outcome.

Jason Hatcher, CEO of Calgary-based government relations firm Signal Hill, said that businesses are taking a cautious approach to the referendum and that it's going to have a negative impact on the businesses. He referred to a recent poll commissioned by the Calgary Chamber of Commerce that states that eight in 10 members say that separation talk is negatively affecting the provincial economy, and 48 per cent are likely to leave Alberta if the fall vote were to trigger a process that could lead to secession.

The poll also found that one in five businesses are slowing expansion plans, 74 per cent see no tangible benefits to separating from Canada, and one in three jobs are tied to trade with other provinces or the rest of the world. Hatcher said the political and business landscape is evolving in the right direction as the federal and Alberta governments continue to hold discussions, including meetings between Carney and Smith, but it is too early to predict the outcome of the referendum.

"Foreign capital or capital in general does not like uncertainty, so that's a very key factor," said Hatcher, who is the former CEO of Calgary Chamber of Commerce.

"At the same time, they're [businesses] watching the situation carefully. Obviously, there's a completely new day and dynamic between the provincial government here and Premier Danielle Smith and Prime Minister Carney and his government, and they've worked very, very hard to reset that relationship."

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NEWS

Experts say new election law reforms targeting deepfakes will be difficult to prove harmful intent: ‘I’m not seeing how it can be done’

Bill C-25 modernized the Canada Elections Act with measures intended to guard against digital threats to elections, including artificial intelligence deepfakes and the potential for foreign interference through cryptocurrency donations.

Continued from page 1

effective the new rules will be because of the difficulty of proving harmful intent—which has to be present in order to be breaking the law—and because the internet has no borders.

“[Bill C-25 is] great theoretically, but practically, I’m not seeing how it could be done,” said Ahmed Al-Rawi, an associate professor of news, social media, and public communication at Simon Fraser University. “It’s a good step in the right direction, but I have some big questions about implementation and the practical measures that should be put in in order to apply the law.”

Bill C-25, the Strong and Free Elections Act, was introduced back in March by Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.) and received royal assent on June 18. The legislation modernizes the Canada Elections Act with measures intended to guard against digital threats to elections, including artificial intelligence (AI) deepfakes and the potential for foreign interference through cryptocurrency donations.

The amendments to the Canada Elections Act make it an offence to—with the intent to mislead—create or disseminate false or manipulated images, audio, or video (including deepfakes) that is likely to be mistaken for a political figure, such as candidates, party leaders, or the chief electoral officer. However, the legislation does allow a defence for imitations if they are created for the purpose of parody or satire.

The new protections apply year-round, and not just during elections.

Al-Rawi described the legislation as having great objectives with good intentions, but also questioned the practicality of



Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon introduced Bill C-25, the Strong and Free Elections Act, in March and the bill received royal assent on June 18. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

how it would be implemented. He pointed out that the offence for creating and distributing deepfakes requires an intent to mislead the public, which can sometimes be difficult to prove.

“The problem here is, how can you prove in a court of law the intention to mislead, or someone knowing that something is false? How can you prove it?” he said.

Al-Rawi added that, when confronted, bad actors can lie about their intentions.

“For example, someone distributed false information, [and] when confronted, they would say, ‘Oh, that was a joke. I didn’t mean it,’ or ‘I did it for entertainment and not with the intention to mislead,’” he said.

“I wonder, how could someone prove the intention to mislead?”

Al-Rawi also questioned how the law can be implemented when social media and the internet have no borders.

“Have a look at Facebook ads during times of election. You’ll see that many ads are actually made and distributed outside Canada with regard to our elections. ... I saw many ads on Facebook that were created in places outside Canada for different reasons. How can you control that?” he said.

The Hill Times reached out to the office of Commissioner of Canada Elections (CCE) Caroline Simard to ask about what would happen if someone posted a deepfake video of an election candidate to social media. In an emailed response on July 9, a spokesperson for the office said they couldn’t speculate on how the CCE would address a hypothetical situation.

“That said, each complaint is reviewed and evaluated on its own facts and the available evidence. This allows our office

to determine whether the allegations fall within the scope of the CCE’s mandate and whether there are grounds to proceed with an investigation. Our office has an experienced team of investigators, and when it is appropriate to do so, the CCE may also rely on established memoranda of understanding with partner organizations to support investigations under our act,” said the spokesperson in the email.

Under the Canada Elections Act, if the CCE determines that an impersonation offence has been committed, the matter may result in the laying of criminal charges. The CCE spokesperson added that anyone who encounters this type of content and believes it may contravene the Canada Elections Act should report it to the commissioner of Canada Elections.

The legislation also increased the maximum administrative monetary penalties that can be imposed by Elections Canada for violations of the Elections Canada Act; from \$1,500 to up to \$25,000 in the case of an individual, and from \$5,000 to up to \$100,000, in the case of a corporation or an entity.

‘We should make penalties strong enough so people think twice,’ says Liberal MP Bittle

The Hill Times asked Liberal MP Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Ont.), who chairs the Procedure and House Affairs Committee, if he thinks the heightened monetary penalties will go far enough, to which he replied “We’re going to find out.”

“If it doesn’t go far enough, it’s something we need to address. This is something that all parties

could support, and we will see. A lot of times, increasing sentences doesn’t lead to the result we want when we look at criminal justice legislation—but it’s part of it. And if Canadians are concerned about it, and political parties are concerned about it, we should make the penalties strong enough that people think twice about engaging in that,” he said.

“If you make it substantial, it’s hopefully a deterrent, and we will see. We’ll see what the next election looks like in the coming years.”

Bloc Québécois House Leader Christine Normandin (Saint-Jean, Que.) told *The Hill Times* that when it comes to knowing if the legislation goes far enough, “it’s hard to tell.”

“It’s the first time that a bill tackled these issues, so we’re kind of walking in the dark a little bit,” she said.

“We’re all hoping that it improves the situation, but we all know at the same time that the problem will remain. It never will completely be solved ... but we’ll see with time, and I guess we’ll all be ready to make changes in the legislation in the future.”

Aengus Bridgman, director of the Media Ecosystem Observatory and an assistant professor (Research) with McGill University, told *The Hill Times* he is very happy to see the bill, but he also has questions about enforcement. While the legislation takes important steps, there are gaps, particularly in terms of platform distribution, according to Bridgman.

“Is it the producer or the distributor of that information that actually is the one producing the democratic harm or the civic harm?” he said.

“If somebody is profiteering off of this from the Netherlands, but it is being distributed at scale in Canada by YouTube, what is the party that we’re going to hold to account, and who is responsible for that digital deception?”

Bridgman pointed out that creating AI deepfakes is now easier and less costly than ever before.

“As with many other things in the AI gold rush, the creation of digital disinformation and particularly these deepfakes, the cost per unit, has just plummeted. You can imagine 10 years ago someone painstakingly photoshopping an image that was fake, [and] now it being a single prompt and pennies, if that, to produce a convincing deep fake,” he said.

Bridgman said that disinformation is now predominantly shared by individuals and groups that are “truth agnostic,” or those who don’t care about the truth, as opposed to those specifically interested in misleading others.

“It’s not the way it used to be, which is you’re producing disinformation to convince people of things that are false or trying to mislead people—it’s just that you don’t care about the truth. It’s incidental. You’re trying to get views and engagement and profit off of this, and so in that sense, there’s a much higher volume of disinformation now,” he said.

Elections Canada chief worries bill doesn’t address bad actors who sow doubt about the electoral process

This past May, Chief Electoral Officer Stéphane Perrault told MPs on the Procedure and House Affairs Committee that he generally supported Bill C-25, but said the legislation could go further in addressing the spread of disinformation, specifically when bad actors attempt to sow doubt about the electoral system itself.

“What is not addressed by this bill is a situation where inaccurate information about the electoral process is published with the goal of undermining trust in the election or its results—for example, altered videos purporting to show stolen or destroyed ballots,” Perrault told the committee in May.

“Such behaviour supporting false claims that an election may have been stolen has nothing to do with criticism of the process or criticism of its administration. The standard for such an offence should be high, as I have proposed. I believe that a line must be drawn to protect our democracy against deliberate acts of destabilization,” said Perrault.

The Hill Times reached out to Perrault to ask about this concern, and an Elections Canada spokesperson responded in an email statement on July 7 that the issue remains.

Perrault “believes that maintaining trust in the electoral process is essential, and attempts to undermine that trust through the deliberate sharing of inaccurate information about the electoral process need to be addressed—this was not addressed specifically in C-25,” said the spokesperson in the email.

“At the same time, it’s important to note that [Perrault] understands that some people may unknowingly share information that is not accurate and those instances should not be punished.”

Previously, Perrault has provided recommendations for ways to improve the Canada Elections Act in the *Protecting Against Threats to the Electoral Process* report, released in November 2024, and the *Meeting New Challenges* report, tabled in June 2022.

The chief electoral officer “is always willing to discuss changes that could be made to the Canada Elections Act with parliamentarians to ensure that the legislation continues to evolve [and] reflect Elections Canada’s experience in administering the law and to meet emerging challenges,” said the Elections Canada spokesperson by email.

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Crypto ban for political fundraising allows clean paper trail, but may not stop foreign donations, say experts

Bill C-25, the Strong and Free Elections Act amends the Canada Elections Act with measures intended to combat election interference through foreign funding, as well as a ban on the use of deepfakes of candidates and election officials.

Continued from page 1

changes in recently passed legislation intended to protect democratic processes, although some critics argue many of the changes may not be entirely effective, or could leave key loopholes.

"For me, the bill actually doesn't really change anything, materially," said Jeremy Clark, an associate professor at the Concordia Institute for Information Systems Engineering, who has a background in studying cryptography for voting systems.

"A lot of [cryptocurrency's] traceability comes down to how people use it."

Bill C-25, the Strong and Free Elections Act, received royal assent on June 18. It amended the Canada Elections Act with measures intended to combat election interference through foreign funding, as well as a ban on the use of deepfakes to impersonate candidates and election officials.

The legislation prohibits political parties, candidates, riding associations, leadership contestants, and third-party advertisers from accepting or using cryptocurrency—or digital currency that runs on blockchain networks without being controlled by a bank or government—for any election-related activities.

The Liberals have described the cryptocurrency ban as a means of closing potential channels for foreign funding in electoral processes. In a social media post back in March, Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.), the minister responsible for the bill, said that "we are taking concrete steps to better protect our democracy," through Bill C-25.

"With the introduction of the Strong and Free Elections Act,



Government House Leader Steven MacKinnon said that "we are taking concrete steps to better protect our democracy," through Bill C-25, in a social media post back in March. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

new investments to counter foreign threats, and stronger government coordination we are acting to ensure our elections remain free, fair, and secure at all times," said MacKinnon in the post.

Clark questioned how effective a ban on cryptocurrency donations would be in stopping foreign funding, arguing that foreign actors could still send cryptocurrency to Canadian citizens who could then convert the digital assets to cash and donate it to a campaign, creating the appearance of a legitimate domestic donation.

"Imagine ... 'Alice' has some bitcoin and she wants to donate it to a party. She's going to go to the party, and they're going to check whether she's eligible to donate," he said.

"Alice is still the front face of that payment or that donation, right? The party's due diligence ... is just to trace it back to Alice and make sure she's a Canadian citizen, etcetera, but you know they're not going to backtrace it any further than that."

Canada previously allowed cryptocurrency political donations starting in 2019 under a framework that classified such donations as "non-monetary contributions," similar to property. The guidelines also stated that contributions up to \$200 in crypto could be made to a political entity without being reported, but there should still be a record of the contributor's name. By 2024, Elections Canada suggested a prohibition on crypto, citing concerns about transparency and verifying the identity of contributors.

Liberal MP Chris Bittle (St. Catharines, Ont.), who chairs the Procedure and House Affairs Committee, told *The Hill Times* that when it comes to political donations, "it's best to keep the paper trail clean and easy."

"I think Canadians are fine with donating by the regular methods, which are cheque or credit card," he said. "Allowing for crypto just opens the path for abuse, and closing that door, I think, should be fine for everyone, as it makes it clear who's behind the donation."

Anwar Sheluchin, a PhD candidate in political science at McMaster University, told *The Hill Times* by email on July 7 there hasn't been a known case where a major federal party has publicly accepted crypto.

Now former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was asked in 2014—while he was serving as an Ontario MPP—if he would be willing to accept a Bitcoin donation. In a post on X at the time, Singh said he would have to "check with elxns Ontario," referring to Elections Ontario. In 2019, Liberal MP Michael Coteau (Scarborough—Woburn, Ont.), then running as a Ontario Liberal Party leadership candidate, claimed in a social media post to be possibly the first candidate in North America to accept crypto donations.

"Overall, it doesn't look like there was ever a consistent trend among major federal parties to accept crypto donations. I don't believe any of the political parties have registered crypto wallets to accept such donations," Sheluchin said via email.

Sheluchin also serves as the project manager and lead researcher for CryptoCommons.ca, a database that tracks where Canadian politicians stand on digital currencies, and is a doctoral fellow at McMaster's Digital Society Lab.

When asked about the potential for foreign interference through cryptocurrency donations, Sheluchin said that a normal donation through a bank

transfer or personal credit card would be traceable, but a crypto wallet doesn't necessarily document details such as the donor's name or address, unless the specific exchange enforces "know your customer" checks, or a set of processes that allow banks and other financial institutions to confirm identity.

"This is where potential foreign interference becomes a concern. Crypto is decentralized and operates in a peer-to-peer network, so someone outside of Canada could send crypto to a Canadian wallet just as easily as someone within Canada. A foreign actor could pass funds through multiple wallets or mixers before they reach a political entity, obscuring the trail back to the original source. If we were still operating under the rule that donations up to \$200 could go unreported, a foreign actor could then make multiple, small contributions, and fly under the radar," she said in the email.

"I don't think the primary concern was about crypto itself showing up in campaign financing, rather it's the potential opportunity crypto creates for foreign actors to influence our elections, using a payment method that could be obscured. That said, none of this has been documented as happening in Canadian party financing."

Sheluchin argued that the cryptocurrency ban could be in response to issues raised during the 2022 "Freedom Convoy" where truck drivers gridlocked downtown Ottawa for three weeks in protest to COVID-19-related mandates and restrictions. Protesters raised more than \$1-million in digital currencies, which mostly evaded seizure by authorities after the federal government invoked the Emergencies Act to freeze convoy assets.

"I think the ban is a reaction to the issues raised during the Freedom Convoy financing more than a response to any actual party finance problem in Canada. In other words, it's pre-emptively addressing a risk rather than an issue that has materialized. To date, there is no evidence that any actors were trying to exploit this option in party financing," said Sheluchin.

Weaker fundraising location disclosure provisions a 'recipe for corruption,' says Conacher

In terms of fundraising rules, Bill C-25 also made tweaks to the Canada Elections Act, repealing then-

prime minister Justin Trudeau's rules requiring parties to disclose the location of their fundraising events. Under the new rules, political parties are no longer required to provide a five-day advance notice before hosting a regulated fundraising event. Post-event public reports are still required, but specific venue locations are no longer published, with details now limited only to the municipality and province or territory.

Bittle argued that softening the disclosure requirements helps protect event attendees from possible harassment. He described a fundraising event from his own experience where he said a rumour that a former prime minister would be in attendance resulted in drawing in "large number of people who I felt were a threat to security of myself."

"From a security standpoint, you have a group of actors—and it's not a lot—who are taking action to limit people's ability to engage in the democratic process," Bittle said. "We've seen a lot of stories. I've talked to a lot of colleagues who have experienced this. You don't need a lot of people to show up to disrupt things, but it's happening. There's more of a willingness to do it, and it's fundamentally problematic."

MacKinnon told *The Hill Times* on May 5, shortly after he testified on the bill before the Procedure and House Affairs Committee, that there were past threats that prompted the government to amend this provision, but said he was not willing to provide specifics.

"We perceived some very real threats to people's security in the case of that participation, or in the case of election officials," MacKinnon said in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"I don't get into specifics. I can't point you to any sort of an example that would be widely or publicly known. But yeah, there were known threats."

Duff Conacher, the co-founder of Democracy Watch, criticized that change removing the requirement to disclose the precise locations of political fundraisers. He argued this change could hide whether lobbyists are organizing events, and essentially creates a "recipe for corruption" by enabling secretive access to government officials. Removing the requirement to disclose the location in advance also potentially prevents the media from monitoring a fundraiser to "watch who walks in the door."

"The changes will make it essentially impossible to determine if the lobbyist or someone who wants something from politicians is helping organize or hold a fundraising event for a party riding association or candidate, and that secrecy is a recipe for corruption, waste of the public's money, and other abuses," said Conacher.

"Bill C-25 contains some ineffective half measures that won't stop undemocratic influence of wealthy interests, disinformation, or foreign interference in Canada's elections, and the Liberals voted against all the changes proposed by opposition MPs to strengthen many measures and make other key changes."

—With files from Aidan Raynor
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NEWS

Senior PMO staff shakeup further fuels ongoing cabinet shuffle speculation

Following PMO principal secretary Tom Pitfield's Senate appointment and expectations that deputy chief of staff Braeden Caley will step aside for a byelection run, Prime Minister Mark Carney is expected to change his team in the PMO and the front bench.

Continued from page 1

cabinet, the Commons, and House and cabinet committees, as well as the progress made on key government priorities within their departments.

Several Liberal sources said that if Carney decides to shuffle his cabinet, it would likely take place before next month's cabinet retreat. As of last week, the retreat's exact date had not been publicly announced, although senior staff expect it to be held around Aug. 10.

In interviews with *The Hill Times*, senior Liberals neither confirmed nor denied that a cabinet shuffle is planned for this summer.

"At this time, we don't have any plans, but it could change," said one top Liberal.

But it's not unusual for senior Liberals to confirm plans for a cabinet shuffle until shortly before it takes place, as public speculation can quickly dominate the political agenda, and overshadow government announcements and other public policy priorities.

Liberal MPs and other political insiders who expect a shuffle this summer argue the circumstances have changed significantly since Carney unveiled his first post-election cabinet in May 2025. At the time, the Liberals had just secured a minority government, Carney was new to elected politics and had only recently won his first election as both an MP and prime minister.

They say after nearly 18 months in office, Carney now has a much deeper understanding of the country's political and economic challenges. He has represented Canada on the world stage, worked closely with his ministers and senior officials, and



Tom Pitfield, left, with CBC News' Aaron Wherry, at the Liberal policy convention back in April in Montreal. Pitfield's appointment to the Senate means that he would not have the same direct access to Prime Minister Mark Carney that he had as principal secretary. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

now leads a majority government which has a significantly different dynamic. They also say the government is preparing for major political challenges in the months ahead, including free trade negotiations with the United States and Mexico, Alberta's separation referendum this fall, and the possibility of a sovereignty referendum in Quebec should the Parti Québécois win October's provincial election.

Insiders also point to the two roles held by Steven MacKinnon (Gatineau, Que.), who is both government House leader and transport minister. They argue that both portfolios require a full-time minister, particularly as the government advances major initiatives such as high-speed rail while responding to concerns from rural Canadians.

Deputy chief of staff Braeden Caley expected to leave PMO to run in B.C. byelection

With speculation mounting, potential cabinet contenders are quietly positioning themselves for promotion, while incumbent ministers await word on whether they will remain in their portfolios, be shuffled, or be dropped from cabinet altogether. Some Liberal MPs who believe they are under consideration are even planning their summer vacations around the possibility of a shuffle, particularly if they are travelling outside the country.

"I cannot imagine our government going into the fall sitting without a shuffle," said one Liberal MP in an interview with *The Hill Times* who did not want to be identified in order to be candid. "I don't see how we can continue without any changes."

Some even joked about the prospect, and how MPs and insiders are preoccupied about a potential shuffle.

"I haven't been contacted so it's most likely going to happen," said a second Liberal MP with a chuckle. "No one has contacted [me] so that means it's moving forward. People keep on whispering back and forth if this is going to happen."

Since announcing his cabinet after the April 28, 2025, election, Carney has tweaked his front bench with some adjustments, including following the resignations of some ministers, such as that of Steven Guilbeault (Laurier-Sainte-Marie, Que.), who was minister of Canadian identity and official languages from May 2025 until November 2025 when he resigned after publicly disagreeing with Carney's decision to sign a memorandum of understanding with Alberta over a new pipeline. Guilbeault has announced that he will step down from his House seat this summer.

Guilbeault's resignation from cabinet last November triggered three changes: Marc Miller (Ville-Marie-Le Sud-Ouest-Île-des-Soeurs, Que.) was appointed as minister of Canadian identity, culture, and official languages. Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) was named Quebec lieutenant, while Environment Minister Julie Dabrusin (Toronto-Danforth, Ont.) was given the additional responsibility for Nature.

Carney also gave MacKinnon the transport file after Chrystia Freeland stepped down last September to serve as a special adviser to Ukrainian president.

Meanwhile, Carney announced the appointment of his principal secretary, Tom Pitfield, to the Senate last week. The appointment

had been the subject of speculation in Ottawa for several days beforehand.

In response to a *Hill Times* question about Pitfield's potential appointment to the Senate on June 30—one week before his appointment was actually announced—a PMO spokeswoman wrote: "There has been no change to Mr. Pitfield's role, having served as principal secretary to the prime minister since March 2025."

On July 7, Carney announced the appointment of his principal secretary as an Independent Senator along with three others.

PMO deputy chief of staff Braeden Caley is widely expected to be the next senior staffer to leave the PMO to run as a candidate in the riding of North Vancouver—Capilano, B.C. The seat became vacant recently after Jonathan Wilkinson resigned to become Canada's ambassador to Germany. It remains unclear whether Caley will be appointed the Liberal candidate, as the party did not hold open nomination elections for the previous three byelections, or whether he will have to compete in a nomination contest.

A former Liberal Party spokesperson, Caley previously worked at Canada 2020 before joining Carney's leadership campaign and later joining his PMO.

Carney's director of global affairs, Lisa Jorgenson, is scheduled to start her parental leave at the end of this month. More PMO and cabinet ministerial staffing changes are also expected later this month.

As of last week, it is unclear whether Carney has planned to replace Pitfield and Caley in the PMO. In interviews with *The Hill Times*, ministerial staffers said that some chiefs of staff could be promoted to the PMO, while others suggested Carney might look outside Ottawa's political circles to recruit new senior advisers.

Will new PMO staff be politics-oriented or policy wonks, asks pollster Lyle

Pitfield's departure surprised some pundits, who viewed him as the prime minister's most influential political adviser because of his direct daily access to Carney. While Pitfield's appointment to the Senate will allow him to remain involved in politics, they said he will no longer have the same day-to-day access to the prime minister that he enjoyed as principal secretary.

"As principal secretary, he's got an office down the hall from

the prime minister, he's in the immediate orbit," said Greg Lyle, president of Innovative Research, in an interview with *The Hill Times*.

"If he's going into the Senate, that sort of suggests they're trying to make room for someone else in the PMO."

Lyle said that as someone who's entered politics only recently, Carney has now spent about a year-and-a-half as prime minister and has developed a much better understanding of the demands of the job. Given that experience, he said, it is only natural that Carney would want to adjust his team.

"He didn't really know what his needs would be. He imagined what his needs would be, but now he knows," said Lyle.

"The two people [Pitfield and Caley] who are moving on to other active roles outside the PMO are very political people. The question is, will he get new political people, or will he go in a more policy/execution approach? That will be interesting."

John English, a biographer and former Liberal MP, agreed with Lyle that Pitfield is unlikely to wield the same level of influence as a Senator that he has had as a principal secretary to the prime minister, but said his political experience will be a valuable asset in the Senate.

English said that, under former prime minister Justin Trudeau, most newly appointed Independent senators had little first-hand experience with the political realities of the electoral process. That perspective, he argued, is important when Senators are reviewing and debating government legislation and policies.

As a pollster and political strategist, Pitfield played a key role in helping Trudeau win three consecutive federal elections and later assisted Carney in securing his own electoral victory in last year's election.

English said that Pitfield's late father, Michael Pitfield, was appointed to the Senate as an Independent by then-prime minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau in 1982, and went on to become a highly respected Senator. English said he hopes Pitfield will make a similarly significant contribution in the Upper Chamber.

Pitfield's wife, Anna Gainey (Notre-Dame-de-Grace-Westmount, Que.), is Carney's secretary of state for children and youth. They are currently the only couple who are simultaneously serving in Parliament.

"He's been in the political maelstrom for quite a while, and he probably wants some peace and quiet," said English.

"Secondly, his wife is a member of the House of Commons and secretary of state. That probably makes it more complicated being in the PMO. ... And the third reason is the Senate does give you, especially now, the capacity to do things in areas where you're interested, and they have a budget, they have a staff, and they have a voice."

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FEATURE

Blazers off, boots on: politicians strut their stuff at the Stampede

A look book of politicians' Western dressing at the 2026 Stampede, complete with big belt buckles, bolo ties and well-worn boots.

The Calgary Stampede isn't just a politician's dream venue for glad-handing and elbow-rubbing. It's also a chance to shed the House-mandated jacket and tie, and to show a bit of sartorial flair on the Cowtown catwalk. Naturally, those from Alberta or with some rural credentials come by their outfits more honestly than others.

Here's a look book of politicians' Western dressing at the 2026 Stampede, with fashion advice taken from Calgary's Kayla Bell, a Western fashion and lifestyle influencer on Instagram. —Christina Leadlay

Find a hat that best suits your face. There are many crowns, brims, and fabrics to choose from



Liberal MP from Ontario Peter Fragiskatos, left, and Conservative MP from Alberta Michelle Rempel Garner. Photograph courtesy of X

Fringe and a vest is go-to Stampede style



Conservative MP from Alberta Michelle Rempel Garner. Photograph courtesy of X

Layer denim and florals for a romantic, western-inspired look



Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister Rebecca Alty, left, Federation of Canadian Municipalities president and Ottawa city councillor Tim Tierney, and FCM CEO Carole Saab. Photograph courtesy of Instagram

Western wardrobe staples include a cowboy boots, a kerchief, and plenty of denim



Former Liberal MP from Ontario Hec Clouthier and his horse, Thunder, in the Calgary Stampede Parade. Handout photograph

Your hat shouldn't have more personality than you do/only wear a brand patch if you're being paid



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, Smith, and Conservative MP Mike Lake. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Most Western belts have a larger buckle. It isn't just an accessory, it's part of the uniform



Smith, left, and U.S. Ambassador to Canada Pete Hoekstra. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

It's all about the accent elements, like scarves, bolo ties, and belts



Culture Minister Marc Miller. Photograph courtesy of Instagram

Remove your hat during the national anthem. Men remove their hats when greeting people



Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, left, and former prime minister Stephen Harper. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Your boots say something about you, from 'not your first rodeo' to 'you have aura'



NDP MP from Alberta Heather McPherson, left, British Columbia Liberal MP Randee Sarai, former Liberal cabinet minister and ex-Edmonton mayor Amarjeet Sohi, Ontario Liberal MP Ruby Sahota, and Calgary-based consultant Haleigh Reay-Randell with New West Public Affairs. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Don't do up the top button on your shirt (unless you're wearing a tie)



Liberal MP from Ontario James Maloney, left, with Sohi and his wife Sarbjeet Sohi. Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

Hill Climbers



By Laura Ryckewaert

Housing Minister Robertson builds on team with new press sec, director change

Plus, Secretary of State for Rural Development Buckley Belanger has a new staffer in his office.

Housing and Infrastructure Minister **Gregor Robertson**, who's also the minister responsible for the regional Pacific Economic Development Canada agency, has handed out some new titles within his office, and welcomed some new faces to his team—one of whom isn't a summer intern.

Starting with the senior-most reassignment, **Enkhjin "Enzo" Zorigtbaatar**, who had been director of operations and regional affairs to Robertson, is now director of intergovernmental affairs.

Zorigtbaatar joined Robertson's team post election one year ago, and before then spent almost two years as a policy adviser to then-foreign affairs minister **Mélanie Joly**.

A former intern to then-Liberal MP **Catherine McKenna** over the summer of 2017, Zorigtbaatar went on to spend roughly four-and-a-half years working in the public service, largely as a labour market analyst with Employment and Social Development Canada, but ending as a defence and marine strategic program analyst with Public Services and Procurement Canada. He went on to work for Quebec Liberal MP **Sophie Chatel**, and, prior to joining Joly's team in October 2023, he spent almost a year and a half as a Quebec regional adviser to then-tourism and associate finance minister **Randy Boissonnault**.

Diane Chieng remains deputy director of operations to Robertson, helping Zorigtbaatar oversee a team that otherwise includes: **Cordell Johnson**, senior Atlantic



Along with a handful of summer interns, Housing and Infrastructure Minister Gregor Robertson has hired a new communications aide, and given two staffers new titles. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Enkhjin 'Enzo' Zorigtbaatar is now director of intergovernmental affairs to Minister Robertson. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

regional adviser; **Chris K. Simba**, senior Quebec regional adviser; **Ryan Spero**, Ontario regional adviser; **Annina Plummer**, Prairies and North regional adviser; **Lucia Liang**, British Columbia regional adviser; and current summer intern **Abigail Kewas**.

Also wearing a fresh title in the housing office is **Arianna Durgerian**, who had been an issues adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary, and is now press secretary to the minister.

Durgerian was first hired to Robertson's team in August 2025, and recently graduated from Concordia University with a bachelor's degree in political science and government. She has previously done communications for the city of Vaudreuil-Dorion, Que.

Previously, **Renée LeBlanc Proctor** was press

secretary and senior communications adviser to Robertson, but, as

previously reported by *Hill Climbers*, left in May to become a press secretary to Prime Minister **Mark Carney**.

In another change to the office's communications team, **Owen Lloyd-Ellis** has been hired as a new digital media manager.



Arianna Durgerian is now press secretary to Minister Robertson. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Owen Lloyd-Ellis is a new digital media manager to the housing minister. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Secretary of State for Rural Development Buckley Belanger during an interview with *The Hill Times* in Ottawa on June 17, 2025. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Lloyd-Ellis describes himself as a filmmaker and photographer on LinkedIn, and has done both on a freelance basis. Prior to joining Robertson's team, Lloyd-Ellis was also a marketing co-ordinator for SilverStar Mountain Resort in Vernon, B.C. He has previously been an environmental consultant with WSP in Ottawa, and has worked part-time as a video editor with Mountain Road Productions, amongst other past experience.

Durgerian and Lloyd-Ellis are working closely with Robertson's director of communications, **Mohammad Hussain**, as well as senior communications adviser **Piper McWilliams**, and current commu-



Kiana Pilon has joined Minister Anand's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

nications summer intern **Skylar Duggan**.

Along with these changes, Robertson has also recently bade farewell to **Kiana Pilon**, who had been a communications adviser and digital media manager in his office since June 2025.

Pilon exited last month to become a senior communications adviser and digital media manager to Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand**.

Pilon has twice previously worked for Anand. Pilon was a 2023 summer intern in the office of then-Treasury Board president **Mona Fortier** when Anand was shuffled into the central portfolio that July. Pilon was subsequently hired as a communications assistant to Anand, and, after the minister was shuffled into the

Transport portfolio at the start of 2025, Pilon followed as a communications adviser.

In Anand's office, which is run by chief of staff **Taras Zalusky**, Pilon works closely with director of communications **James Fitz-Morris**, press secretary **Myah Tomasi**, and strategic communications adviser **Jessica Daigneault**.

Turning back to Robertson's team, along with those already mentioned, the minister has two other interns in his office this summer: **Gabriella Ellis**, who's with the parliamentary affairs team, and **Jannat Puri**, who's focused on the Pacific Economic Development Canada (PacifiCan) file.

Marie-Pascale Des Rosiers is chief of staff to Robertson, supported by deputy chief of staff **Thomas Simpson**. Also currently working for the minister are: director of policy **Mary-Liz Power**, senior policy advisers **Eamonn Schwartz** and **Chris Knipe**, policy advisers **Sanjana Shah** and **Bayan Kadri**, senior adviser for net-zero infrastructure **Fiona Simons**, director of PacifiCan and executive operations **Reeha Korpall**, director of parliamentary affairs **Brendon Legault**, deputy director of parliamentary affairs and issues management **Muna Tojiboeva**, and executive assistant to the minister and chief of staff **Annyse Hawkins**.

SecState Belanger adds to team

Secretary of State for Rural Development **Buckley Belanger** boosted his team by one last month with the addition of regional adviser **Russell Van Raalte**.

Van Raalte had been working part-time for Guelph, Ont., Liberal MP **Dominique O'Rourke** since last October, and last year graduated from Queen's University with a master's degree in economics, adding to his bachelor's degree in the subject from the same school.



Russell Van Raalte is now working for SecState Belanger. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Hill Climbers understands that Van Raalte does not have a specific regional focus, and is instead a general regional adviser.

His hiring brings Belanger's team to six staff. Led by chief of staff **Maria Morley**, the team otherwise includes: **Chantal Tshimanga**, director of policy and parliamentary affairs; **Connor Burton**, press secretary and senior communications and issues adviser; **Suzanne O'Malley**, senior adviser, executive assistant, and office manager; and **Solomon Biniam**, driver.

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The Hill Times



Parliamentary Calendar

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



Assembly of First Nations National Chief Cindy Woodhouse Nepinak will host the AFN's annual general meeting from July 14-16 at the Rogers Centre in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Assembly of First Nations hosts its annual general meeting July 14-16 at Rogers Centre in Ottawa

MONDAY, JULY 13

Assembly of First Nations Water Walk—The Assembly of First Nations hosts a Water Walk, an event preceding its AFN Annual General Assembly which starts July 14. The Water Walk is open to First Nations chiefs, knowledge keepers, AFN council members, First Nations individuals, government officials, and partners. It will begin with a ceremony behind the Canadian Museum of History. From there, participants will walk across the Alexandra Bridge to Rogers Centre via Major's Hill Park. Monday, July 13, at behind the Canadian Museum of History, 100 rue Laurier, Gatineau. Register: afn.ca.

TUESDAY, JULY 14

Carrying the Fire—Blackbird Strategies hosts "Carrying the Fire" in celebration of First Nations' women in leadership. Tuesday, July 14, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Métropolitain Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr., Ottawa. Register via eventbrite.com.

Minister LeBlanc to Attend Fundraiser—Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc and Liberal MP Giovanna Mingarelli will attend a party fundraiser hosted by the Prescott-Russell-Cumberland Federal Liberal Association. Tuesday, July 14, at 6 p.m. ET at North and Navy, 226 Nepean St., Ottawa. Details: liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, JULY 14—THURSDAY, JULY 16

AFN's Annual General Meeting—The Assembly of First Nations hosts its annual general meeting. Details to follow. Tuesday, July 14, to Thursday, July 16, at the Rogers Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Details: afn.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 15

Webinar: 'Building Net Zero Defence Capability at Scale'—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute's Climate Security Program continues its two-part series with a second webinar: "Building Net Zero

Defence Capability at Scale: Procurement and Industrial Pathways." A panel of experts will examine how Canada can translate its strategic and sustainability objectives into practice through defence investments, procurement reform, and defence industrial policy. Wednesday, July 15, at 10 a.m. ET happening online: cdainstitute.ca.

THURSDAY, JULY 16

SecState Zerucelli to Attend Fundraiser—Secretary of State for Labour John Zerucelli and Liberal MP Amandeep Sodhi will attend a party fundraiser hosted by the Brampton Centre Federal Liberal Association. Thursday, July 16, at 6:30 p.m. ET at Terrace on the Green, 8672 Mississauga Rd., Brampton, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, JULY 21—THURSDAY, JULY 23

Summer Meeting of Canada's Premiers—Prince Edward Island Premier Rob Lantz, as chair of the Council of the Federation, will host the 2026 Summer Meeting of Canada's Premiers. Tuesday, July 21, to Thursday, July 23, at the Delta Hotels Prince Edward, Charlottetown, P.E.I. Details: canadaspremiers.ca.

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Lawn Summer Night—Cystic Fibrosis hosts its annual Lawn Summer Night fundraiser, featuring an evening of lawn bowling, refreshments, and fun. Help *The Hill Times'* Lawn Tall Salty Sailors team raise funds to help cure Cystic Fibrosis. Wednesday, July 22, at 6 p.m. ET at Elmdale Bowling Club, 1 MacFarlane Ave., Ottawa. Details: lawnsunnights.com.

THURSDAY, 23 JULY

Webinar: 'Mental health funding at risk'—The Canadian Mental Health Association examines the upcoming expiry of the \$5-billion mental health and addictions bilateral agreements

and makes the case—at a time of growing demand for services, shortage of family physicians, and affordability challenges to pay for private care—for federal renewal. Thursday, July 23, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register at cmha.ca or by email smsansouci@cmha.ca.

MONDAY, JULY 27

Women in Politics with MP Hepfner, Catherine McKenna—Liberal MP Lisa Hepfner and former Liberal cabinet minister Catherine McKenna will take part in a "Women in Politics" event hosted by the Hamilton Mountain Federal Liberal Association. Monday, July 27, at 7 p.m. ET at The Zoetic, 526 Concession St, Hamilton, Ont. Details: liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Should You Date a Lawyer or a Politician?—Topsy Scholars hosts "Should You Date a Lawyer or a Politician?" Law student Jasmine Jin, a former parliamentary intern to Liberal MP Kristina Tesser Derksen, will guide this healthy debate examining the strengths, weaknesses, red flags, and redeeming qualities of each profession. Who is more likely to send a carefully drafted text? Who can never give a straight answer? Who has the bigger ego, the bigger heart, and the bigger collection of excuses? Tuesday, July 28, at 7 p.m. ET at the Beyond the Pale Byward Taproom, 21 George St. Register via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

Women Talking Policy—Liberal MP Karina Gould and Ontario Progressive Conservative MPP Michelle Cooper will take part in Equal Voice's "Budget Season: How does a provincial or federal budget come to be?" part of its Women Talking Policy series. Thursday, July 30, at 12 p.m. ET happening online.

MONDAY, SEPT. 14—TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

Prime Minister Carney's Canada Investment Summit—Prime Minister

Mark Carney hosts the first-ever Canada Investment Summit convening the world's largest investors, including top CEOs, entrepreneurs, and prominent global business leaders. Monday, Sept. 14 to Tuesday, Sept. 15, in Toronto. Details: pm.gc.ca.

MONDAY, SEPT. 21

House Returns from Summer Break—MPs return to the House of Commons today following their summer break. Between now and year's end, the House is scheduled to sit Sept. 21-25; Oct. 5-9; Oct. 19-Nov. 6; and Nov. 16-Dec. 11. The full sitting calendar is available online.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22

PSPC Deputy Minister to Deliver Remarks—AFCEA Ottawa hosts a breakfast event featuring Public Services and Procurement Canada's deputy minister Arianne Reza who will speak to the evolving defence procurement environment and the Defence Industrial Strategy, including opportunities linked to emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence, quantum, and cyber capabilities. Tuesday, Sept. 22, at 7:30 a.m. ET at the Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29

Summit: 'From Ambition to Action'—Canada 2020 hosts a one-day summit, "From Ambition to Action: Getting Big Things Done, 3.0" focused on the realities of delivering big, transformational projects in Canada. Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 8:30 a.m. ET the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa. Register: canada2020.ca.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30

Women, Truth and Reconciliation—Author and *Hill Times* columnist Rose LeMay and author Tanya Talaga will take part in a special panel conversation in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Rec-

onciliation focused on what reconciliation looks like in practice, not just in principle, hosted by The Honest Talk. Wednesday, Sept. 30, at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: nac-cna.ca.

MONDAY, OCT. 5

Quebec Provincial Election—The next Quebec provincial general election is scheduled for Monday, Oct. 5. Details: electionsquebec.qc.ca.

MONDAY, OCT. 19

Alberta Referendum—A provincial referendum, asking key immigration and constitutional questions that stand for a sovereign Alberta within a united Canada will take place on Monday, Oct. 19. Details: albertareferendum2026.ca.

THURSDAY, OCT 29

CBC Massey Lecture 2026—Ottawa-based world expert on human rights and housing Leilani Farha will deliver her fifth and final lecture in this year's CBC Massey Lecture series, titled "Housing Inc.: A Global Takeover and Our Fight for Home," exploring a crisis engineered by governments and perfected by financial firms. Thursday, Oct. 29, at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: masseycollege.ca.

THURSDAY, NOV. 4

2026 Vimy Gala—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute hosts its annual Vimy Gala, one of Canada's premier gatherings in the defence and security community. Senior leaders from government, the Canadian Armed Forces, diplomacy, and industry will gather to honour Canada's fallen, and recognize those shaping its defence and security landscape. Thursday, Nov. 4, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the Canadian War Museum, 1 Vimy Pl., Ottawa. Register: cdainstitute.ca.

TUESDAY, NOV. 17

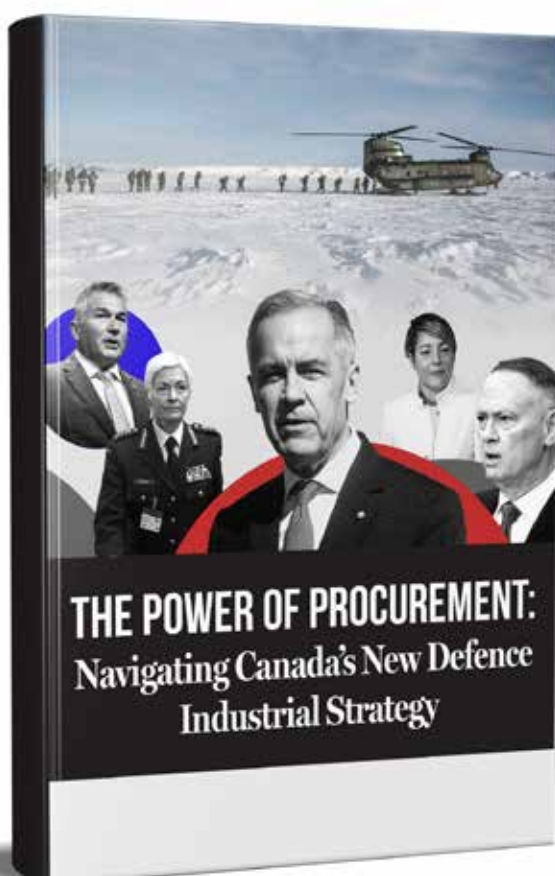
Lecture with Vince Beiser—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a lecture with Vince Beiser, author of *Power Metal: The Race for the Resources That Will Shape the Future*. His book explores the critical minerals needed for digital technology and renewable energy, and the environmental and political challenges facing the global race to secure them. Tuesday, Nov. 17, at 5 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, NOV. 20

Ontario Liberal Leadership Vote—Members of the Ontario Liberal Party will vote on a ranked ballot to choose the party's next leader to succeed Bonnie Crombie. Details: leadership.ontarioliberal.ca.



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