



Angus says his new book is not a lament, it's a call to arms

Kate Malloy p. 23

The problem of political homelessness

Gerry Nicholls p. 9

Canada must recommit to Rohingya crisis

Taha Ghayyur & John Jonaid p. 12



Exclusive news inside



THE HILL TIMES

Exclusive opinion: inside

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NEWS

Conservative filibuster costing millions of dollars, say NDP and Green MPs

BY SOPHALL DUCH

Some New Democrat and Green MPs say the ongoing Conservative filibuster—which started in the House on Sept. 26 and has continued since—has already cost Canadians millions of dollars in House of Commons resources as legislative business remains paralyzed for another week, though the actual figure is harder to pin down.

“We have updated numbers on how much money has been spent by the Conservatives on debating this motion. We have now had 96 Conservative members speak to it, which is about 48 hours if we only account for the Conservative speeches. That adds up to over \$3.3-million spent continuing to speak to a motion we could vote on if the Conservatives would just stop speaking to it,” said Green MP Mike Morrice (Kitchener Centre, Ont.) in the Chamber on Oct. 28.

When *The Hill Times* asked Morrice’s office how they came to that figure, they cited a number that was mentioned the previous week in the House.

“The Conservatives are filibustering their own motion. The House of Commons costs about \$70,000 an hour to run. That is a lot of money being burned up right now, and we are doing absolutely nothing,” said NDP MP Alistair MacGregor (Cowichan-Malahat-Langford, B.C.) on Oct. 21.

Another NDP MP cited a different number: \$1-million per day

“Taxpayers are footing the bill for the Conservatives’ \$1-million-a-day filibuster,” posted NDP MP Leah Gazan (Winnipeg Centre, Man.) on X (formerly Twitter).

However, there is no official number to corroborate how much

Continued on page 27

NEWS

Amid growing questions over his leadership, Trudeau looks ahead as PMO vets some MPs for cabinet and PS positions



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, pictured Oct. 30 on the Hill, is expected to shuffle his cabinet soon after the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential election. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Meanwhile, Andrew Bevan, Marjorie Michel, Azam Ishmael, and Terry Duguid held an election readiness briefing for the national Liberal caucus last week.

BY ABBAS RANA

As some Liberal caucus members push for a secret ballot on Justin Trudeau’s leadership, the Prime Minister’s Office and the Privy Council Office are gearing up for an anticipated cabinet shuffle in the weeks following the U.S. presidential election, say Liberal MPs and political insiders.

Given the expected closeness of the Nov. 5 race, it may take several days or weeks to determine the election winner.

Liberal sources told *The Hill Times* that some MPs are currently undergoing a vetting process

for an upcoming cabinet and parliamentary secretary shuffle which will fill positions left by five cabinet ministers who recently announced they will not seek re-election. To replace them, Trudeau may promote parliamentary secretaries or select MPs from his backbench.

The Prime Minister’s Office declined to comment for this article.

The outgoing cabinet members include former transport minister Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Que.), who stepped down in mid-September to pursue

Continued on page 26

NEWS

‘Extreme apprehension’: Canada holds its breath as U.S. election enters final stage

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

As voters across the United States prepare to decide who will become their 47th president on Nov. 5, Canadians politicians and the public alike are waiting to see whether the violence and uncertainty that followed 2020’s polls will be repeated.

“My contacts, such as they are, lean to the Democratic side of the equation. And I would say [they have] extreme apprehension of yet another four years of unmitigated chaos,” said Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), a co-chair of the Canada-U.S. Interparliamentary Group. “I guess the other part is the importance of this election. I know that every politician everywhere, at all times, says this is the most important election ever. In this particular instance, it might actually be.”

Polls during the final weeks of the campaign have shown the race between U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris and former president Donald Trump as a toss-up. Though Harris and the Democratic Party have led in most national polls, the handful of swing states that will decide the final makeup of the electoral college show a much tighter race, in some cases favouring Trump and the Republican Party.

Beyond the policy differences between the two candidates, Canadians and Americans alike fear the potential for the election to turn violent, especially in such a tight race.

A Leger poll of 1,562 Canadians published late last month showed 65 per cent were worried about violence and uncertainty related to the election outcome. A majority of all age groups, political party supporters, and regions across Canada were worried—women, rural dwellers, NDP voters, and Atlantic Canadians

Continued on page 25



Christina Leadlay

Heard On The Hill

Fraser pokes fun at Conservatives' affinity for their three-word catch phrases in 'The Slogan Bunch'



Bring it on home: Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, top left; Conservative MPs Rosemarie Falk; Bernard Généreux; Shelby Kramp-Neumann; Melissa Lantsman; Scott Aitchison, centre left; Poilievre; Don Stewart; Jamil Jivani; Poilievre, bottom left; Brad Vis, Jacques Gourde; Raquel Dancho, and Andrew Scheer. Screen shots courtesy Sean Fraser's X account

Housing Minister **Sean Fraser** posted a cheeky video on social media on Oct. 28 about the Conservatives' love of three-word slogans in the House and out on the street.

Titled "The Slogan Bunch,"—a riff on the 1970s sit-com *The Brady Bunch*—the 45-second reel accompanied by jaunty music opens with a shot of Conservative Leader **Pierre Poilievre** in the House of Commons saying "Axe the Tax, Build the Homes, Fix the Budget, Stop the Crime."

The next few shots each show three different MPs, their images stacked one on top of the other, repeating their leader's words. The montage continues with nearly a dozen Conservative MPs in total chanting together the opposition's in-House favourites—in both official languages—as well as the B-side catch phrase: "Taxes are up, costs are up, crime's up, time's up."

Featured are MPs **Rosemarie Falk**, **Scott Aitchison**, **Brad Vis**, **Shelby Kramp-Neumann**, **Don Stewart**, **Raquel Dancho**, **Bernard Généreux**, **Jacques Gourde**, **Melissa Lantsman**, **Jamil Jivani** and **Andrew Scheer**.

The video's climax is a shot of 32 Conservative MPs all saying the same slogan simultaneously.

"It's good to have such authenticity in politics these days," wrote Fraser in a post about the montage, which his press secretary confirmed to **Heard on the Hill** is a social media-only video that debuted on Oct. 28 from his office alone, and is not an official Liberal Party ad.

The video is part of an exchange Fraser has been stringing along recently, ribbing the opposition on their penchant for catchy three-word rhymes.

"Slogans are up, rhymes are up and parroting talking points

so that a member can get a shiny gold star in caucus seems to be up," Fraser said in the House on Oct. 22. "I cannot imagine diminishing myself when I have the opportunity to represent my community in the House, or to cheapen the arguments that we can put forward on the floor of the House."

U.S. presidential election watch parties in Ottawa on Nov. 5



Looking to watch the U.S. election results tomorrow night? **HOH** knows of three watch parties happening in Ottawa that are open to the public.

Democrats Abroad (DA) will return to the Carleton Tavern in Hintonburg for its quadrennial watch party. The group has a long history of hosting such gatherings for elections and leaders' debates, according to **Rachel Eugster**, co-chair of the local DA chapter.

"This is one of the most popular kinds of events that our members gather for, to see the work we've done to register voters pay off in real time," she told **HOH** by email last week.

Eugster expects "a lot of people"—from DA members, friends and family, and curious Canadians—to drop by the tavern over the course of the night, whether it's for a quick visit, a drink and a snack, or to settle in until closing time. Eugster says she enjoys the camaraderie that the casual in-person event provides. "We may not know the results of the election on Nov. 5, so the purpose of the gathering is to celebrate the hard work and dedication of our volunteers, and to decompress together as a community."

Meanwhile, at the Rideau

Democrats Abroad's vice-presidential debate watch party in Ottawa this past September. Photograph by David Schellenberg

Sports Centre in Overbrook, the Canadian International Council's National Capital Branch is hosting "a lively watch party as we track the results of the 2024 U.S. presidential election in real time" according to the Eventbrite invitation. General admission is \$15 and the fun begins at 7p.m.

And at the Lieutenant's Pump in Centretown, the Centre for Inquiry Canada—a non-partisan group of atheists, agnostics, secular humanists, and critical thinkers—will host a watch party featuring trivia, analyses, predictions, an interactive map, lively discourse, some friendly debates, and a pool to guess the final vot-

ing percent and electoral college count. Register via Eventbrite.

Vandenbeld out, Damoff in at House Status of Women Committee



Liberal MP **Anita Vandenbeld**, above, and Conservative MP **Michelle Ferreri**. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia

Ottawa-area Liberal MP **Anita Vandenbeld** is no longer on the Status of Women committee. According to the minutes from the Oct. 24 procedure and House affairs committee, she's been replaced by another Ontario Liberal MP, **Pam Damoff**.

Conservative MP **Michelle Ferreri** took to social media on Oct. 28, saying Vandenbeld's exit was due to her "disgusting behaviour in July where she silenced survivors of IPV [intimate partner violence]" and that the incident "deserves serious consequences. Her removal is a victory for survivors who, to date, have never received an apology for her actions."

Vandenbeld responded 50 minutes later, saying "I requested to be removed from the committee because it has become toxic and [Ferreri] has chosen to make it about me rather than about the women. I issued a formal letter of apology to the chair on October 11th and asked that it be forwarded to the witnesses. The chair failed to do that. Conservatives should be ashamed of playing games with issues as important as GBV [gender-based violence]."

Two out, two in at Donner Prize Jury

The Donner Prize jury announced the addition of two new



André Beaulieu, left, and **Antonia Maioni**. Photographs courtesy Donner Canadian Foundation

members: **André Beaulieu** and **Antonia Maioni**, both of whom are based in Montreal.

Beaulieu, who is senior vice-president of Corporate Services for BCE, takes over the jury chair duties from **Louise Fréchette**.

Maioni is new to the team. In addition to teaching population and global health at McGill University, she is also the 2023-24 William Lyon Mackenzie King Visiting Professor in the Canada Program at Harvard University. Maioni fills a vacancy left by **Karen Restoule**.

Other jury members include Dr. **Jack M. Mintz** with the University of Calgary, **Maureen O'Neil**, board chair at WaterAid International, and Dr. **Frederick Wien**, professor emeritus at Dalhousie University, and former deputy director of research at the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples.

The Donner prize is awarded annually to the best public policy thinking, writing, and research by a Canadian. Deadline for submissions for this year's prize is Nov. 30, 2024, for books published between Jan. 1-Dec 31, 2024. The winner will be announced in May 2025.

The Hill Times

CORRECTIONS:

The Hill Times, Oct. 28 issue

Re: "Meanwhile, on a planet far, far away," (*The Hill Times*, Oct. 28, by Susan Riley). Riley's column incorrectly reported that the province of Alberta's enlarged pipeline has boosted its production to a record five billion barrels per day, but that should be five million, not five billion.

Re: "Don't expect Trudeau to follow in his father's footsteps and take a walk in the snow this week," (*The Hill Times*, Oct. 28, by Sheila Copps). Copps' column incorrectly reported that Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith underscored the lack of government advertising spending, but he was referring to the lack of Liberal Party of Canada advertising spending, not government spending in media scrums. *The Hill Times* apologizes for these mistakes.



Canada has
what it takes
to discover
a cure
for type 1
diabetes.
Investment in
research will
get us there.



A path to curing type 1 diabetes (T1D), a life-long autoimmune disease, is investing in Canadian cell therapy research.

Breakthrough T1D (formerly JDRF) wants to continue working alongside government to leverage world-leading talent and research infrastructure right here in Canada to accelerate cures for those living with T1D.

We must build on Canada's legacy in T1D research – from the discovery of insulin and stem cells to the development of the Edmonton Protocol for islet cell transplantation. Cures are within reach and Canada is well positioned to deliver them.

News



House Speaker Greg Fergus led a group of cross-party MPs to Ukraine in October. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

After long wait, House finally sends parliamentary delegation to Ukraine

Prior to House Speaker Greg Fergus leading a delegation to Ukraine in October, House-sanctioned travel to the war-torn nation had been quashed due to security concerns and partisan gamesmanship

BY NEIL MOSS

After two years of MPs pushing to send a parliamentary delegation to Ukraine, House Speaker Greg Fergus finally led an all-party visit to the war-torn country in October.

House committees wanting to travel to Ukraine had numerous requests denied, both for security reasons and lack of consensus on international parliamentary travel.

Fergus (Hull-Aylmer, Que.) led a delegation that included Liberal MP Helena Jaczek (Markham-Stouffville, Ont.), Conservative MP Shuvaloy Majumdar (Calgary Heritage, Alta.), Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron (Montarville, Que.), and NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen (London-Fanshawe, Ont.). The group met with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal, Foreign Affairs Minister Andrii Sybiha, and Verkhovna Rada Chair Ruslan Stefanchuk on Oct. 14.

Mathyssen said more parliamentarians should be travelling to Ukraine to have a better sense of the conditions.

"Other parliamentarians really do need to go to see things on the ground, to see things you can't possibly understand from a briefing, or from a committee meeting," she said. "Seeing things on the ground—there's nothing that can replace that."

The delegation travelled to Ukraine at the invitation of Stefanchuk, according to Fergus' office. While in Kyiv, the House Speaker delivered an address to the Ukrainian Parliament.

A press release from Zelenskyy's office noted that the dele-

gation's visit was "an important signal of support from Canada."

"Greg Fergus emphasized that the visit of representatives of all parties of the House of Commons demonstrates the unity and solidarity of the Canadian Parliament with Ukraine," according to the release.

Mathyssen said that the Speaker's status helped in terms of having security while in Ukraine, which was lacking on other parliamentary visits.

"I felt very secure, well taken care of, at all times," she said, but noted that it was apparent that they were in a country at war.

"There were the alarms [and] the sirens that were going [off] all the time that we were there," she said.

Security fears shouldn't stop MP travel to Ukraine: Mathyssen

Previous attempts for House-sanctioned travel to Ukraine were stalled due to concerns over security, as well as partisan gamesmanship that was blocking committee travel.



NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen says nothing can replace seeing the conditions on the ground in Ukraine. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"I think security has to be a concern for sure, but it shouldn't stop parliamentarians from going," Mathyssen said.

MPs on the House Foreign Affairs Committee first raised a desire to travel to Ukraine in 2022 during a trip that it was taking to Europe. That trip took place from Feb. 18 to March 2, 2023, just over a year after Russia invaded Ukraine. The committee stopped in Belgium, Finland, Sweden, and Poland, but the visit to Ukraine never materialized. The Subcommittee on Committee Budgets of the Liaison Committee didn't approve the Ukrainian visit after receiving a recommendation against the trip from the House Sergeant-at-Arms and Global Affairs Canada.

House Speaker spokesperson Mathieu Gravel said that "adequate risk-mitigation measures were taken to ensure the safety of all members of the delegation," but didn't provide what those were "for security reasons."

Mathyssen told *The Hill Times* that in Kyiv the delegation was flanked by members of the Canadian Armed Forces and the Ukrainian military.

Department of National Defence spokesperson Andrée-Anne Poulin confirmed the CAF was authorized to support the delegation by Defence Minister Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.), on the advice of Chief of the Defence Staff Jennie Carignan.

"Initiated by the office of the Sergeant-at-Arms, the minister of



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy met with the Canadian parliamentary delegation on Oct. 14. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

public safety, through the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, requested Canadian Armed Forces support in providing protective services to the Speaker of the House of Commons and their delegation for a recent trip to Ukraine," she said.

"For operational security reasons, we will not disclose information related to force composition and disposition," Poulin said.

To get to Ukraine, the delegation flew to Poland, and took a train to Kyiv.

During the visit, the delegation not only met with Ukrainian officials, but also parliamentarians and NGO groups that are operating on the ground. The group also visited the Holodomor Genocide Museum and met with officials from the Canadian Embassy in Ukraine.

The long road to the first trip

On March 22, 2023, the Committee Budgets subcommittee approved a Foreign Affairs Committee trip that included a stop in Kyiv, Ukraine, but that trip never received approval from the House of Commons, which required unanimous consent from all parties. It also received travel approval from the subcommittee on Feb. 29, 2024, for another trip that also included a stop to Kyiv, but that trip also didn't receive travel authority from the House.

The Hill Times reported in December 2023 that Liberal committee chairs were blaming Conservatives for blocking committee travel.

While no House-sanctioned travel to Ukraine was occurring, a number of cabinet ministers were travelling to Ukraine. Some MPs—including Liberal MP Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.), who chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Heather McPherson (Edmonton, Alta.)—took it on their own volition to independently travel Ukraine.

Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron frequently raised concerns that travel to Ukraine was being reserved for cabinet ministers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



MPs grew frustrated that the executive branch was allowed to travel, but the legislative branch was not, especially as there were a number of legislative trips to Ukraine from Canadian allies, such as from the United States and the European Union.

"I think it's inconceivable that Canada—which claims to be one of its closest allies, if not Ukraine's closest ally—be one of the only ones, if not the only one, who has not sent a parliamentary delegation until now," said Bergeron on Oct. 31, 2023. "For me, that was an anomaly we needed to correct as quickly as possible."

Bloc Québécois MP Stéphane Bergeron frequently raised concerns that travel to Ukraine was being reserved for cabinet ministers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"I find it unacceptable that travelling in Ukraine seems to be considered a privilege of the executive," he said at the time.

Bergeron reiterated that call during a committee meeting on Nov. 6, 2023, when he asked Canadian Ambassador to Ukraine Natalka Cmoc about parliamentarians travelling to Ukraine.

"Canada claims to be Ukraine's closest ally. Yet we have yet to set foot there. Despite security concerns, parliamentarians from just about every allied country have already visited," he said.

Cmoc told the committee that the Embassy would be "in a position to host delegations" as "early as winter."

The Fergus-led delegation was financed through the International and Interparliamentary Affairs' parliamentary exchanges budget, and was jointly approved by the House Speaker, and Senate Speaker Raymonde Gagné (Manitoba).

Gravel said the trip was "designed to strengthen parliamentary diplomacy" with Ukrainian counterparts while also showing Canada's support for Kyiv during Russia's invasion.

He said as the fifth in the Order of Precedence, the House Speaker has a diplomatic function in both Ottawa and abroad.

He added that the delegation wasn't influenced by the lack of House-sanctioned international travel being approved by the House.

Another parliamentary trip to Ukraine could be in the works as the Canada-Europe Parliamentary Association is exploring holding a trip, but nothing is yet confirmed.

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The Hill Times



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News

House paralysis due to privilege debate has put Senate focus on private members' bills, say Senators

CSG Senator Scott Tannas says the Red Chamber has 'enough business to keep us busy' as the privilege debate drags on in the House, stalling legislation such as Ways and Means Motion No. 26.

BY JESSE CNOCKAERT

A privilege debate that has paralyzed several government bills at second reading in the House, including a confidence vote on a government budget motion and a way and means motion on the capital gains tax, has also given the Senate breathing room to focus on private members' bills, but the delays can only go on for so long, according to the leader of the Canadian Senators Group.

"We haven't run out of things to do, in terms of the government legislative agenda, but we're almost there. We have a lot of private members' bills from the House of Commons, Senate private bills that we are debating and moving along," said Senator Scott Tannas (Alberta) in an interview with *The Hill Times*. "I would say for the time being, and probably for a number of weeks, we've got enough business over here to keep us busy, and in some respects, we welcome the break."

Work in the House has been stalled since House Speaker Greg Fergus (Hull-Aylmer, Que.) ruled on Sept. 26 that the Liberal government's failure to provide records related to the now-defunct Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC)—an arm's-length foundation created by the federal government to fund new clean technologies—constituted a violation of parliamentary privilege.

In June, Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Sask.) put forward a motion directing the federal gov-



Government House Leader Karina Gould said the Liberal government has provided thousands of pages of documents already, 'in a way that complies with its obligations under the Charter,' in an emailed statement to *The Hill Times* on Oct. 31. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ernment to release all documents related to SDTC and turn them over to the RCMP. The motion came a week after an investigation from Auditor General Karen Hogan was tabled in the House, which found "significant lapses" in SDTC's governance and stewardship of public funds. Among the report's findings was that eight projects funded by SDTC, totalling \$51-million, did not meet eligibility criteria, and that some projects did not support the development of a new green technology.

The Liberals provided the House with redacted documents in August, which led to Scheer raising a question of privilege in September, and arguing the government was in contempt for not fully complying with the House order.

Debate about the privilege motion has been ongoing throughout October with the Conservatives vowing to continue until the Liberals hand over unredacted documents.

Legislation that's been stuck at second reading in the House while this goes on includes Bill C-63, an act to enact the Online Harms Act; Bill C-66, an act to amend the National Defence Act; Bill C-71, an act to amend the Citizenship Act (2024); and Bill C-38, an act to amend the Indian Act.

Tannas told *The Hill Times* that the delay in moving legislation in

the House has allowed the Senate some time to catch up on private members' bills, and for Senate committees to engage in studies. As an example, he cited work related to Bill C-244, an act to amend the Copyright Act. If passed, the bill would grant the "right to repair" by amending the Copyright Act to allow people to circumvent technological protection measures when maintaining or repairing a product.

The Senate's Committee on Banking, Commerce and the Economy completed its consideration of the bill on Oct. 22.

Last month, the Senate's work included finishing consideration of

Bill C-232, an act respecting Arab Heritage Month, in the Committee on Social Affairs, Science and Technology on Oct. 24; completing consideration of Bill C-275, an act to amend the Health of Animals Act (biosecurity on farms), in the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry on Oct. 29; and third reading began for Bill C-294, an act to amend the Copyright Act (interoperability), with discussions on Oct. 24 and Oct. 29.

Tannas said that, in a minority Parliament, the Senate is often under time pressure from the House to see legislation reach its final steps, requiring other work to be put on the back burner. However, he added that "at some point we should see some supply bills, and some 'keep the lights on and the government running' bills coming through, and we don't want to get those too late."

"It's been nice, but there's some bits and pieces that do have to get attended to before Christmas. The sooner we get them over here is better," he said. "Some of these things that we would normally expect to have received at this point, we're waiting on."

Conservative Senate Leader Donald Plett (Landmark, Man.) told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on Oct. 29 that the Liberal government can fix the House gridlock by tabling the documents related to SDTC in Parliament "so the RCMP can investigate the corruption within the Green Slush Fund."

"The majority of MPs in the House of Commons voted to compel the Liberals to release the documents. But [Prime Minister Justin Trudeau] is clearly trying to hide the extent of his government's corruption from Canadians," he said in the email.

"The Senate has the ability to focus on important and valuable studies, but so far, Senators have been dedicating considerable time to private members' bills. Trudeau Senate appointees seem to prioritize their pet projects, thus leading to the production of fewer valuable committee reports," Plett added in the email. "In this Parliament, 90 bills have originated from Senators, eating up time and significantly reducing the committees' capacity to study issues of public interest and to work on useful reports."

Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* in an emailed statement on Oct. 31 that the Liberal government has provided thousands of pages of documents already, "in a way that complies with its obligations under the Charter."



Senator Scott Tannas, leader of the Canadian Senators Group, says that regarding legislation, 'There's some bits and pieces that do have to get attended to before Christmas,' and 'the sooner we get them over here is better.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

"When police request documents, they do so with judicial oversight. Of course, the government complies when the police request documents using the proper process. The Conservative MPs are trying to use a back door to avoid due process," said Gould in the emailed statement. "This should be a warning to any Canadian that the Conservative party is prepared to suspend their rights and interfere in police operations if they think it serves their political interests."

Gould said in the email that the House Speaker ruled that the matter should be examined by the Procedure and House Affairs Committee, and argued the Conservatives are currently filibustering their own motion to do that.

"The debate in the House is about that motion, and the Conservatives are delaying a vote on it because they are worried the truth about the dangers of their plan will emerge at committee," she wrote.

Among the work that has stalled in the House is a confidence vote on the Ways and Means Motion No. 26. That motion would pave the way for the government to formalize an adjustment in June to the capital gains inclusion rate.

"Important legislation is before the House, and we believe the Conservatives should stop playing obstructionist partisan games so that MPs can debate those bills. This includes the Ways and Means Motion for the increase to the capital gains inclusion rate," said Gould by email. "We are committed to delivering greater tax fairness for every generation and making our economy grow."

The Hill Times reached out to Conservative MPs including Andrew Scheer (Regina-Qu'Appelle, Saskatchewan), his party's House leader, and Kerry-Lynne Findlay (South Surrey-White Rock, B.C.), party whip, to ask about the gridlock in the House and delays to important legislation, but did not receive a response by deadline.

Discussions about the privilege motion continued in the House last week, with Conservative MP Arnold Viersen (Peace River-Westlock, Alta.) calling the green slush fund a "horrendous scandal" on Oct. 29.

"What we are debating today is the privilege of this place—the documents that we need to hand over to the RCMP to do the investigation on a fund of over \$400-million that has gone missing, or has been allocated to companies in a severe conflict of interest. This is Liberal corruption at its height," Viersen told the House.

Conservative MP Pierre Paul-Hus (Charlesbourg-Haute-Saint-Charles, Que.) also spoke in the House on Oct. 29, and said in French that there is a \$400-million scandal in front of parliament and that "the facts are there."

"We're being told by the Liberals 'Listen, why are the Conservatives not giving up on this? Why are they talking about this day after day?'" he said to the House. "What should we do? Should we stop and say 'Oh, well, your friends got \$400-million, whatever? It's just taxpayer money, who cares?' No. That's not how it works."

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The Hill Times

The security clearance process: an explainer from ex-CSIS director Ward Elcock

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre is currently the only party leader in the House to not have a security clearance, which has left him open to criticism from other parties. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



As politicians politick over Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre not having a security clearance, former CSIS director Ward Elcock breaks down the process.

BY SOPHALL DUCH

The issue of security clearance for party leaders returned to the headlines recently following the latest foreign interference commission

hearings, and an escalation in the allegations of Indian government interference in Canada.

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Carleton, Ont.) is currently the only party leader in the House to not have a security clearance, which has left him open to criticism from other parties.

"Canadians should rightfully be asking themselves why is it that he's still refusing to get a security clearance. And there's only one answer: it's because he has something to hide, and he's hiding that from Canadians," said Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) to reporters on Oct. 30.

But Poilievre has been stalwart for months now in his decision to not getting a security clearance.

"I will not allow any process that is designed to silence me, though. We're not going to allow the government to silence the

leaders of the opposition by swearing them to secrecy on this matter of grave public importance," said Poilievre to reporters in May 2023, following David Johnston's first report on foreign interference.

The Tories said their leader's chief of staff has received classified briefings, and that Poilievre has received a briefing from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's (Papineau, Que.) national security and intelligence adviser, the CSIS director, and the deputy minister of foreign affairs on the RCMP's announcement of their findings of crimes allegedly linked to agents of the Indian government.

While the politicking over Poilievre being the lone security-clearance holdout is not going anywhere, *The Hill Times* spoke with former CSIS director Ward Elcock to explain what getting a security clearance entails. This interview has been edited for clarity.

What is the security clearance process like? "There are different levels of security clearance. So it's different depending on the level of clearance for which you're applying. 'Confidential' doesn't require much in the way of a clearance. 'Secret' starts to get tougher. And 'top secret' gets tougher. And then after that, different sort of compartments are tougher again."

Continued on page 21

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Editorial

As the United States decides, Canada needs to make its own tough choices

The people of the United States have a decision to make this week. It should be one of the easiest decisions in the world, but the polls do not suggest that. There is evidence that a significant minority of the country's citizens are happy to hand the reins of the world's largest economy and military to a demagogue for whom democracy, truth, and good grace are mere irritants on the road to power.

Donald Trump has made no secret of his authoritarian desires. He's pondered—nay, promised—to turn the U.S. Department of Justice into his own personal toy to go after his political opponents, to send the military into cities populated by those with whom he shares a mutual hate, and to round up breathtaking numbers of immigrants for deportation.

The felon, who's also been found liable in civil court for sexual abuse, has lied and slandered his way in much the same way as during his first successful run for the White House in 2016. But one can imagine this time around to be worse, given the wholehearted transformation of the Republican Party into a Trump cult of personality.

He's been helped along by the proliferation of conspiracy theories that have created an alternate reality of untruths for millions, and a cowed and cowardly news media providing horse-race cov-

erage as if this were any other standard election. He'll also be assisted by a series of lawsuits attempting to deny citizens their right to be heard under a paper-thin guise of election integrity.

Democracy in the United States—flawed from the outset—could be on its last legs, even if Trump does not win. If each election from now on is a choice between one party promising to continue democracy and one that rejects it, can it really be called a healthy democracy?

With that in mind, just as Americans have a choice to make in the coming days, so do Canadians. Will our country continue to act as if all is normal as our largest trading partner succumbs to its own division and democratic decay? Do we even have a choice?

If Trump does win, over the next four years—possibly longer, as the ex-president has flirted with—Canadian prime ministers will have to engage, appear at conferences with, and shake the hand of an unrepentant convicted felon found liable of sexual abuse, and then try to make the case at home that they believe in the rule of law and the rights of women.

The old adage states that when the United States sneezes, the rest of the world catches a cold. The country currently appears to be battling a terminal disease, so Canada had best snap to inoculating itself before it's too late.

Letters to the Editor

Poilievre can't just 'cat-call from the periphery': Tom McElroy

Re: "Security clearance politicking reflects a minority Parliament on its 'last legs,' say observers," (*The Hill Times*, Monday, Oct. 28, by Stephen Jeffery). It is outrageous that Pierre Poilievre is putting politics ahead of the security of Canada. His refusal to get a security clearance leaves him unaware of possible foreign interference in Canadian politics that may be happening *within his own party*. And this is a man who thirsts to ascend to the highest office in the land where the handling of secret and sensitive information is mandatory. How can he possibly manage the integrity of his own party without the knowledge that is available from security agencies? This lack of information leaves him incapable of managing his own party, and unsuitable for the office of prime minister.

It is the unfortunate burden of our leaders to have to deal with secrets and to make difficult decisions, not just

cat-call from the periphery. Security clearance is a necessary requirement for many parts of government, but is nowhere more important than at the level of the PMO and the opposition leader's office. Is Poilievre afraid of being vetted?

He doesn't have access to secret knowledge now. After getting vetted, he would just have to use discretion in what he made public. Of course, this would mean not making outrageous statements to the press to gain an advantage in the polls.

Here is a man who refuses to learn the truth about his party members, leaving our government open to interference from foreign nations. Is he suitable to lead Canada?

Tom McElroy
Toronto, Ont.

Humans failing to mitigate causes, effects of changing climate: Robinson

Had we known sooner about the harmful effects of introducing greenhouse gases in to the atmosphere, putting the whole carbon cycle out of balance, perhaps we could have changed course. In 1772, Joseph Priestley and Benjamin Franklin did document the role played by vegetation in reducing the lethal effect of excess carbon dioxide.

In 2024, countries are still promoting LNG as a clean fuel, particularly when burned elsewhere. Policies and measurement parameters have been created to support that notion. In Canada, political parties are wanting to remove many of the policies that would reduce greenhouse gas emissions into the atmosphere.

In 1822, Joseph Fourier, in his *Analytical Theory of Heat*, noted the Earth was much warmer if the sun's radiation were the only factor. In 1856, Eunice Newton Foote experimented with sealed glass cylinders exposed to sunlight. One was filled with "normal air," the other with carbon

dioxide. The latter heated twice as much as the first.

We might ask, with this prior knowledge, why are we surprised that introducing more carbon dioxide into the atmosphere would result in warming? We have added other gases to the list, now collectively called greenhouse gases. It was 1907 when John Poynting coined the terms "greenhouse effect" and "blanketing effect".

We might ask why we continue to introduce more GHGs in to our atmosphere, and by extension, why so much of our economies depend on introducing more GHGs in to our atmosphere? Part of the answer may come from the 1989 formation of the Global Climate Coalition, a lobby group for the fossil fuel industry with a mandate to create misinformation about climate science.

So how are we doing in our efforts to mitigate the causes and effects of a rapidly changing climate? Not so good.

Ron Robinson
Nelson, B.C.



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Trump alienates women and Puerto Rican voters

Pennsylvania is a pivotal state because of the electoral college system, and the majority of the state's 580,000 eligible Latino voters are from Puerto Rico.

Sheila
Copp

Copps' Corner



OTTAWA—Bromance may cost Donald Trump the election.

In a plea to Trump supporters, former Trump opponent Nikki Haley told Fox News that the male-only pitch and the use of the C-word in PAC ads attacking Kamala Harris were hurting the former president's campaign.

She also underscored a huge mistake in the Trump campaign strategy.

While Haley was the last person standing in the nomination process against Trump, she quickly got on board and offered her help.

She revealed in the media last week that while she has been involved in fundraising mail and calls, she has not been asked to join in a single rally.

Instead, Trump's major final event at Madison Square Gardens featured the kind of supporters who would appeal to the angry young men who are already in the former president's camp.

The event was dominated by former wrestlers, comics, and other supporters, most of whom were unknown to the general public.

Instead of reaching out to women and minorities, the Trump-approved guest list at the New York event may actually cost him the election.

Former Trump supporter and well-known Latino broadcaster Geraldo Rivera called the insulting comments made by comedian Tony Hinchcliffe a "seminal" moment which will cost the

Trump team dearly in Puerto Rican support and amongst other Latinos.

Hinchcliffe is now a household name. He may go down in history as the man who took Trump down. During the six-hour long rally, Hinchcliffe got a roar from the audience when he referred to Puerto Rico as a "floating island of garbage" and said Latinos "love making babies."

Another presenter referred to Harris as a prostitute whose pimps are helping in her campaign.

The disastrous comments garnered immediate reaction in the Latino community with famous rapper Bad Bunny endorsing Harris immediately after the Hinchcliffe meltdown. The rapper's official name is Benito Antonio Martinez Ocasio, and he was born in Puerto Rico. He has 45 million followers on Instagram.

His endorsement could go a long way in reversing the hike in Trump support amongst Latinos compared to 2016.

That increase has played very well for Trump in some states where the margin between the two candidates is less than two per cent.

Ricky Martin, another Puerto Rican, immediately sent out

this message to his 18 million Instagram followers: "this is what they think of us. Vote for @kamalaharris."

And the tight race between the two presidential candidates on the eve of the election means that a one- or two-point shift could actually change the election's outcome.

Pennsylvania is a pivotal state because of the electoral college system, and the majority of the state's 580,000 eligible Latino voters are from Puerto Rico.

The gaffe opened the door for Harris to remind voters how Trump pitched paper towels and little else in the aftermath of the worst natural disaster to hit Puerto Rico in 2017 when Hurricane Maria claimed 2,975 lives.

It was widely reported that federal funding to states that voted for Trump was quicker and more fulsome than relief received by Puerto Rico.

To make matters worse, Trump staff did not issue an immediate repudiation of the comedian.

Instead of responding to multiple requests for a retraction, Trump doubled down, telling the media "there's never been an event so beautiful. ... The love in that room."

It was breathtaking. It was like a lovefest, an absolute lovefest."

It took him 48 hours before he appeared on Trump-friendly Fox News to say that Hinchcliffe probably shouldn't have been at the rally.

But the other question, unanswered by Trump, is why, in the major rally of his campaign, he refused to reach out to known Republicans like Haley in an effort to court the vote of women.

Haley told Fox News that the Trump team's approach is alienating women voters. "Fifty-three per cent of the electorate are women. Women will vote. They care about how they're being talked to, and they care about the issues."

Harris moved quickly to post Haley's comments on her social media outlets.

Trump's attempt to "bromance" those whose support he has already solidly secured is a strategy alienating the very women he needs to secure his return to government.

Strategically, even Republican spokespeople have sought to distance themselves from the racist, misogynistic mess left in the wake of the final Trump rally in New York.

If Geraldo is right, and this seminal moment determines the election, it underscores the reality that campaigns count.

And women power is here to stay—even in the White House.

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

The problem of political homelessness

According to Nik Nanos, 'more than four in 10 people likely consider themselves (politically) homeless in Canada.' So, what's causing this to happen and how can political parties woo them back?

Gerry
Nicholls

Post Partisan Pundit



OKAVILLE, ONT.—Political parties in this country are facing a serious challenge.

That's to say there's a growing number of disinterested voters out there who just don't feel the need to plant their flags of allegiance in the camps of any political party.



Bloc Leader Yves-François Blanchet, left, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, and NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh. The politically homeless won't necessarily be attracted to the main parties if they move to the centre, writes Gerry Nicholls. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade and Sam Garcia/illustration by Neena Singhal

In other words, they've become what some refer to as "politically homeless."

And yes, this is an issue in our country.

According to Nik Nanos, of Nanos Research, "more than four in 10 people likely consider themselves (politically) homeless in Canada."

So, what's causing this to happen and how can political parties woo them back?

Well, one popular theory is that the main cause of political homelessness is ideological polarization within major political parties.

The argument goes that people are dropping out of the Con-

servative Party because they're concerned it's moving too far to the right; others are dropping out of the Liberal Party because they're concerned it's moving too far to the left.

In short, according to this theory, moderate voters feel abandoned, like they no longer have a home.

Hence the obvious solution would be for the Conservatives and Liberals to move towards the ideological centre.

Or, another answer, would be to create a brand new "centrist" party that would be designed specifically to appeal to disillusioned moderates, giving them a place to go.

Indeed, this is exactly what the fledgling Canadian Future Party, which paints itself as a centrist alternative to Conservatives and Liberals, is trying to do.

As Dominic Cardy, leader of the Future Party, recently wrote, "We're socially liberal, and fiscally disciplined. ... In a time of toxic division, we bring democrats together."

At the same time, others argue political parties—whether new or old—must do a better job of selling "centrist" policies to the public.

Graeme Thompson, a senior analyst at Eurasia Group, put it this way: "being moderate isn't a political program. You have to stand for something. If there's going to be a liberal, centrist, moderate political revival, it has to speak to the concerns of people."

But what if the problem of political homelessness has nothing to do with ideology; what if there aren't legions of centrist Canadian voters impatiently waiting for a moderate option to win them over?

Indeed, I'd argue there's another explanation for political homelessness.

In my view, people are opting out of political parties not because they're worried about ideological extremism, but because

they simply don't care about politics.

They don't care about policy platforms; they don't listen to partisan rhetoric; they don't follow political news in the media.

They tune all that stuff out.

To help prove my point, consider a poll taken after the 2020 U.S. presidential election that was commissioned to ask non-voting Americans why they didn't bother to cast a ballot.

According to that poll, 29 per cent said they hadn't registered; 23 per cent said they weren't interested in politics and 10 per cent said they couldn't decide who to vote for.

To my mind, those answers equate to people saying, "I don't care enough to participate."

This is why I don't believe the politically homeless will be attracted to the main parties if they move to the centre, nor will they be attracted to a new moderate party seeking to win over centrists, nor will there be a "moderate political revival" if the parties try to do a better job of speaking "to the concerns of people".

After all, if voters are tuning out for non-ideological reasons, a push for a more moderate "centrist ideology" won't resonate.

Maybe the politically homeless are determined to stay homeless.

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

Comment



Donald Trump, left, and Kamala Harris. Things have moved well beyond bizarre in the lunatic villa of U.S. politics, writes Michael Harris.

Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Flickr

U.S. presidential election may reveal if the clock strikes 13

Ultimately, this election is not about either Harris or Trump. It's about Americans, and whether they still believe their country is a shining light on a hill, or something else.

Michael
Harris

Harris



HALIFAX—Tomorrow's American presidential election may reveal if the clock strikes 13, the way it does in the opening line of

George Orwell's dystopian masterpiece, 1984.

Things have moved well beyond bizarre in the lunatic villa of U.S. politics. Americans may well elect a convicted felon who wants to suspend the Constitution, round up millions of people for deportation, and unleash the military on what he calls "the enemy within." In other words, Americans who don't view the world through Trump-tinted glasses.

That, by the way, includes not just his perceived political opponents like Nancy Pelosi, Liz Cheney, and Adam Schiff. It also applies to journalists, newspapers, and TV networks who dared to tell the truth about this third-rate huckster who wants to be a dictator. There is only one commandment in the Trump political Bible: no opposition.

Faced with Trump's tyrannical bullying, serious people are sadly chickening out. Jeff Bezos just set a new low in media ownership malfeasance by pulling *The Washington Post's* endorsement

of Kamala Harris just days before the election.

If any newspaper has the right to endorse Trump's opponent, it is the *Post*. The paper's professional, fact-checked, talented, and courageous coverage helped to reveal who Trump actually is. And that has been very important at a time when Fox News is lying its brains out every night.

And who is Trump? A man convicted on 34 counts of falsifying business records to hide a payment to a porn-star playmate. A man found civilly responsible for sexual assault. A man charged with an attempted coup after losing a free and fair election in 2020. And a man repudiated by his own vice president, chief of staff, and secretary of defence. And not just repudiated, but called out as a fascist.

Bezos speciously claimed that the decision to pull the Harris endorsement was an act of independence. Hogwash. It was a cowardly betrayal of one of the world's best newsrooms. It turned the triumph of a free press into

a travesty of journalism directed by commerce. Perhaps that's why 200,000 subscribers checked out of "The Bezos Post."

The owner's decision had nothing to do with the *Post's* independence, and everything to do with Trump's threat to punish other businesses owned by Bezos if the Orange One regains the presidency.

As his own personally selected staff from his one-term presidency have claimed, Trump isn't fit to be president. Bezos has shown that he isn't fit to own *The Washington Post*. He is the man who turned Watergate into watered-down.

So what is on the table not just for America, but for the world? Harris offers authenticity, inclusion, and the rule of law. Trump offers tawdriness, racism, and lawless flim-flam.

A small, but telling example: Harris indeed worked at McDonald's as a student. Trump faked working there as a politician—in a store that was closed to get a photo op. His specialty was quarter-pounders with a side of lies.

But here is the most telling thing about this battle between Harris and Trump, this binary choice between the authentic and the dangerously undemocratic.

Americans are in a quandary. If the polls have it right—they didn't in 2016—half the country is interested in integrity and truthfulness, while character doesn't matter in the least to the other half. It is the very definition of Abraham Lincoln's house divided against itself. How can a guy who falsely claims to having more indictments against him than Al Capone be competitive?

The answer is profoundly disturbing. No matter what happens tomorrow, something fundamental has already changed in America. Who in the modern era has ever seen a racist spectacle posing as a political rally like last week's debacle at Madison Square Gardens?

Where did Trump get 20,000 people to fill the place, to hear that Puerto Rico is a floating island of garbage? The only way

that qualifies as comedy is if we define a joke as the epigram we make on the death of a feeling.

Who has ever seen the threat levels against election workers so high? High enough to post snipers on the roofs of the buildings where some of them work, to install bullet-proof glass in their offices, and employ metal detectors to check out people coming to vote?

Who has ever seen the spectacle of a billionaire putting a price on votes, as Elon Musk is doing in Pennsylvania? No wonder he wants to retire on Mars.

And no wonder Philadelphia's district attorney, Larry Krasner, is suing this tech toady and his pro-Trump group America PAC. Offering million-dollar prizes to people who make a political pledge is a fake lottery, exactly as Krasner has charged. It is a brazen attempt to buy support for Trump that he may not be able to earn in a critical swing state with critical electoral college votes. It is election interference at its worst.

And who ever saw someone like Tucker Carlson get a national platform to tell people that daddy is home, and bad girl is going to get spanked?

Never mind the misogynistic and racist bile he spouted about Harris herself. How telling that the same Carlson—who used to make rational arguments for his positions on the CNN show *Crossfire*—has morphed into a bloviating, cockalorum, out-Trumping Trump in his ludicrous excesses.

Tomorrow is ultimately not about either Harris or Trump. It is about Americans, and whether or not they still believe that their country is a shining light on a hill—or something else.

In his poem the *Second Coming*, William Butler Yeats gets the last word on the most consequential election in American history: "And what rough beast, its hour come round at last, slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?"

Michael Harris is an award-winning author and journalist.

The Hill Times

Between wars and fears of fascism in the U.S., there's plenty to be scared about

In a time of fear and legitimate risks from too many parts of the world, we need political leaders who ethically refuse to use the fear to their own advantage.

Rose LeMay

Stories, Myths, and Truths



OTTAWA—As I write this on Halloween, things are darn scary. Wars, the rise of bots pushing conspiracies, the American you-know-what, the rhetoric about a potential federal election here: things are scary all over.

Just count the number of times you put on a face of disbelief

while reading or watching the news. Is it more than five times a day? More than 10? This is a remarkably difficult time to believe in democracy. Notice that we've given up saying about political process that "we'll work it out together, we'll get through it" because it's really not clear that humans will.

The election to the south of us is tying up media around the world, as the results may well be world-changing if the orange man gets in. Fascism is a method to grabbing power, not a label, said former U.S. secretary of state Madeline Albright. All the signs are there for fascism come Nov. 5, regardless of the actual vote. If it weren't for all the social media and influencers pushing the conspiracy that the vote is already stolen from the orange man, perhaps we might be less worried. But the fear-based outrage online is ramping up.

It's also ramping up here. Canada needs to sit up and take notice that we have our own

problem with people getting taken in by the conspiracies. I had the pleasure of overhearing a Canadian talking loudly to his friends about the "WF" and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's secret plans for Liberal tyranny, which is admittedly funny, given the party can't even figure out if it supports its leader. Thankfully, this individual's friends engaged on the tirade and pushed him to back-check what he thought he knew when he used the acronym WF for the World Economic Forum. Friends don't let friends repeat lies.

There's evidence building that the Russian bot farms are spreading lies about votes stolen in the United States, which leads me to question why we're stuck in this cycle talking about interference from China.

Wake up, people! Just how much is Canada impacted by the Russian bots attempting to bring down the world order as we know it? More than we want, and more than we know. It's scary.

This will be a controversial position, but how about we don't call a federal election right now? Things are just too unstable everywhere, and I doubt Elections Canada is ready, anyhow. The wars in eastern Europe and the Middle East grind on with a ripple effect across the world economically, and the degradation of civil discourse. We must figure out how to stop the bots and lies—they are like a blowtorch on democracy.

Nobody wants a bot election. How about we enshrine a four-year election cycle as law so we don't get caught up into this rash game of snap-election-poker?

In a time of fear and legitimate risks from too many parts of the world, we need political leaders who ethically refuse to use the fear to their own advantage. Lookin' at you, Pierre Poilievre—please stop egging on conspiracy in a drive for power.

But I'm also lookin' at you, Trudeau. Using fear to maintain your power is a bad look, and

it might be time for the walk in the snow. Don't take down the country for your own ego. We need stability both in the country, and in political parties. Both of you, please instruct your inner circle to put the country first—not you—or find another inner circle who is first loyal to the country. That's the leadership worthy of the times.

We need stability. We need political leaders who are trustworthy and tell the truth even if it's complicated, who model civility and respectful debate, who are worth our trust. Don't make it worse—it's scary enough.

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

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Opinion



Bob Rae, then the prime minister's special envoy to Myanmar, holds a press conference on the Hill on April 3, 2018. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Canada must recommit to addressing the Rohingya crisis

Walking away from the Rohingya crisis would not only betray the values this country claims to uphold, but would also diminish our standing on the global stage.

Taha Ghayyur &
John Jonaid

Opinion



Six years ago, Canada emerged as a global leader against the Rohingya genocide, offering unwavering support under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Today, that leadership has faded, and Canada's focus has shifted, leaving the Rohingya abandoned as their crisis intensifies. The world—including Canada—is turning its back on those it once vowed to protect.

The situation in Rakhine State, Myanmar, is a grim testament to the ongoing Rohingya genocide. Under the Arakan Army's brutal control, the coastal town of Maungdaw has become a scene of relentless suffering. Haunting images show Rohingya men, women, and children huddled in makeshift shelters, their eyes pleading for mercy amidst the chaos of ongoing attacks. The bodies of those desperate enough to attempt escape are now washing up along the banks of the Naf River where the once-tranquil waters are now stained with blood. Bangladesh's tightened border control has forced thousands of people into a deadly limbo, stranded between two worlds with no refuge in sight. Overhead, drones relentlessly hunt the remaining Rohingya,

turning the skies into instruments of terror—a calculated effort to erase an entire population from existence.

Once several million strong in Rakhine State, the Rohingya have been reduced to just 200,000 in Myanmar, mostly confined to concentration camps in Sittwe, with major cities like Maungdaw and Buthidaung no longer home to the Rohingya. The 2017 massacre and forced displacement has driven an estimated 2.5 million now living in exile. Bangladesh alone hosts nearly 1.6 million registered Rohingya refugees, though unregistered populations suggest the actual number could be closer to two million. In countries like India, Malaysia, and Indonesia, which haven't signed the Refugee Convention, Rohingya are treated as illegal immigrants, enduring some of the most dehumanizing conditions imaginable, denied even the most basic human rights. The urgency for action has never been greater.

Canada's initial response to the Rohingya crisis was com-

mendable. The appointment of Ambassador Bob Rae as Canada's Special Envoy for Myanmar in 2017 marked a significant step in acknowledging the gravity of the situation. Rae's report outlined crucial recommendations for Canada's role in addressing the crisis, including the creation of a Rohingya working group within the federal government, and the establishment of a Rohingya consultative body. These measures were intended to ensure that the Rohingya's voices were heard, and that Canada could lead international efforts to find a lasting solution to the crisis.

Six years later, Canada has failed to fulfill its promises. Successive foreign ministers have allowed the Rohingya crisis to slip from the federal government's priorities. Resources have dwindled, and attention has shifted elsewhere. The Rohingya are conspicuously absent from the 2024-25 budget, a glaring sign of Ottawa's neglect. The lack of a clear, updated strategy to address the evolving crisis in Myanmar, especially after the 2021 military coup, underscores the urgent need for Canada to recommit to this cause.

Canada cannot walk away from its commitments. The best course of action now is to support the Rohingya in helping themselves. Establishing an emergency immigration pathway for Rohingya refugees—similar to those created for Ukrainians, Afghans, and Syrians—would provide immediate relief while empowering the Rohingya to build self-sufficient communities. Effective change must come from within the Rohingya community itself, reflecting the principle of full participation: "Nothing about us without us." Implementing Rae's recommendation to create a Rohingya consultative body would enable the community to lead its advocacy efforts, ensuring Rohingya voices are central in resolving this crisis. This approach not only addresses the immediate

humanitarian needs, but also strengthens the Rohingya's ability to shape their own future.

Canada needs to take stronger action in response to the military coup in Myanmar, starting with sanctioning Myanma Oil and Gas Enterprise (MOGE)—the main revenue source for the junta, the military government that currently controls Myanmar. Despite imposing sanctions on several Myanmar-related entities, Canada has yet to target MOGE, unlike the United States and European Union, which have already sanctioned the firm. As the junta's primary financial stream, MOGE plays a critical role in enabling the military to carry out its abuses against the Rohingya and other marginalized groups.

The issue is further complicated by the involvement of MTI Energy, a Canadian company planning to collaborate with MOGE on the Yadana gas project. It is concerning that current Canadian sanctions have not blocked this partnership with a military-controlled enterprise. A complaint was filed by a U.S.-based NGO with Canada's OECD National Contact Point about MTI's role last September, yet no resolution has been reached. This country must ensure its sanctions regime is comprehensive enough to prevent any complicity with Myanmar's junta.

Canada must rethink how it delivers humanitarian aid to Myanmar. Currently, much of its support flows through multilateral agencies, including the Myanmar Red Cross Society, which is influenced by the junta. This method not only lends legitimacy to the military regime, but also prevents aid from reaching the most vulnerable populations, particularly those in conflict zones like Rakhine State. To address this, Canada should redirect its focus towards cross-border humanitarian aid, working with local organizations along Myanmar's borders. These groups have decades of experience, and are more capable of delivering aid directly to those in need, bypassing the junta's control. Even in areas where international NGOs are restricted by the regime, local actors have successfully provided assistance. Supporting these locally-driven efforts is both a more ethical and practical approach to addressing Myanmar's growing humanitarian crisis.

Canada's international credibility as a leader on human rights and humanitarian issues is at stake. Walking away from the Rohingya crisis would not only betray the values Canada claims to uphold, but would also diminish its standing on the global stage. The government's inaction risks turning its legacy on the Rohingya issue into one of abandonment. To restore its credibility, Canada must act now and recommit to this cause with the urgency it once demonstrated.

Taha Ghayyur is the executive director of Justice for All Canada, a human rights and advocacy organization dedicated to preventing genocide. John Jonaid is a human rights journalist, and Rohingya refugee advocate.

The Hill Times



China's Door is Open to More Canadian Students

Celebrating the milestone of more than 1,000 CLIC students

In Beijing, a Canadian student made friends from all over the world—Norway, Germany, Italy, France, Japan, Brazil, and Brunei. He enjoyed with them the delicious, authentic yet affordable meal options offered at the universities' canteens.

In Shanghai, another Canadian student did an in-depth study of Canadian and Chinese labor laws and participated in Chinese language classes. She did a four-month internship at an international law firm, and after graduation, she landed a job as a labor relations consultant in Montreal.

They have one thing in common. Both of them participated in the Canada Learning Initiative in China (CLIC) program. Funded by the Chinese and Canadian governments and universities, they studied in China, earned academic credits, forged friendships, and gained firsthand experience of Chinese education and society. They took the opportunity to explore various parts of the country during weekends and holidays. They found their experience in China rewarding, and hoped to visit the country again.

CLIC is an educational program generously supported by both the Chinese and Canadian governments. It was established through a partnership between the Chinese Ministry of Education and the University of Alberta, Canada in 2016. With previous and current membership, the CLIC consortium includes a dozen university members from Canada's U15 group. The program was designed to create opportunities for students at top Canadian universities to pursue credit-transferable courses in China.

Leaders of both two countries have attached importance to the program. It was listed in the official Joint Statement during the Chinese Premier's visit to Canada in 2016. In 2017, in the presence of the Canadian Prime Minister and Chinese Premier, the two countries signed "the Memorandum of Understanding Concerning the Canada Learning Initiative in China" in Beijing, establishing a policy framework for the two governments to co-fund Canadian students' studies in China.

CLIC is the first program for fostering exchanges among undergraduate and graduate students launched by the two governments, and also stands as a testament to the deepening people-to-people and cultural exchange between our two countries. We are pleased to learn

from the CLIC Canadian office located at the University of Alberta that from the summer 2016 semester when the first CLIC student embarked on the journey to China to the summer 2024 semester, more than 1,000 Canadian students from 12 U15 member universities have participated in about 20 summer programs lasting from two weeks to two months, along with semester and full year exchange programs with 60 Chinese universities, despite the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The third plenary session of the 20th CPC Central Committee held in July adopted the Resolution of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China on Further Deepening Reform Comprehensively to Advance Chinese Modernization. The Resolution underscored that China will open its education to the world with higher standards. The Chinese government places great importance on student exchanges between China and Canada. This includes encouraging students from both countries to study in each other's institutions, fostering cooperation between educational institutions and scholars from both sides, to enhance mutual understanding, and lay the foundation for stronger bilateral relations. Canada has long been a preferred destination for Chinese students, with the number of Chinese students studying in Canada reaching 200,000 at its peak before the pandemic. The number of Canadian students studying in China was also as high as 3,800.

As the world's second-largest economy, China's education and science and technology research capability is also rising to the top of the world. According to the Global Innovation Index 2024 of the World Intellectual Property Organization, China leads the world in the number of science and technology (S&T) clusters, with 26 in total.

We hope more Canadian students will study in China through CLIC and other various programs. Through their stay in China, they will get to know the hospitable Chinese people, forge friendships with the hardworking Chinese students, explore China's vibrant society, and enjoy the healthy and diverse Chinese food.

I eagerly look forward to the next milestone of another 1,000 Canadian students of the CLIC program.

H.E. Chinese Ambassador to Canada Wang Di

For more information please visit <https://clicstudyinchina.com/>



Opinion

Will Susan Holt's new government continue New Brunswick's nuclear fantasies?

Keeping the Point Lepreau and SMR fantasies alive will require considerable effort from the new government. Susan Holt's handling of the nuclear file will be an early test—both of her leadership and her commitment to wishful thinking.

Susan O'Donnell

Opinion



Successive New Brunswick governments have been bewitched by two nuclear fantasies: first, that its beleaguered public utility NB Power can connect two experimental reactors to the electricity grid, and second, that the small province can successfully run a nuclear power reactor.

Both fantasies will confront Susan Holt early in her new Liberal government's tenure. Will she break the spell and end the province's nuclear delusions? Nuclear energy was not raised during the recent election campaign, but a 2023 CBC interview with Holt offers clues.

The biggest fantasy is connecting two experimental "small modular nuclear reactors" (SMRs) to New Brunswick's electricity grid. In 2018, Holt was a business adviser to then-premier Brian Gallant when his Liberal government invited two nuclear start-up companies from the United Kingdom and the United States to set up shop in the province and promote their SMR designs, although it's unknown if she was involved in that decision.

The Gallant government had chosen two "advanced" reactor designs—molten salt and so-



Susan Holt plans to re-convene the New Brunswick Legislature before the end of November. At that point, the Point Lepreau reactor will likely still be mothballed, and the two SMR start-ups will be on life support, writes Susan O'Donnell. Photograph courtesy of Commons Wikipedia

dium-cooled—that have never operated successfully in a commercial setting. The government gave each company a \$5-million incentive and support to apply for federal funding to develop their designs. A recent expert report from the U.S. Academies of Sciences predicted that such designs would have difficulty reaching commercial viability by 2050.

During the subsequent reign of PC Premier Blaine Higgs, the province gave \$25-million more to the start-ups and federal government added grants totalling \$57.5-million. Both governments also invested in building an SMR business supply chain in New Brunswick, and encouraged some First Nations to support the projects.

The Higgs government further supported its plan to have the experimental designs built and connected to the grid by 2035 by

passing legislation forcing NB Power to buy electricity, at any price, from SMRs if they are ever built and actually work.

However, despite the governments' support, after more than six years of trying, the companies have been unable to entice private investors. Each firm claims to need \$500-million to develop its reactor design to the point of applying for a licence to build one. Where this money will come from is an open question.

This summer, the CEO of one SMR company—ARC Clean Technology—left suddenly, and some staff at the Saint John office received layoff notices. The second firm, Moltex, was notably absent from an Atlantic energy symposium in Fredericton this September. Until Moltex secures matching funds for its three-year-old \$50.5-million federal grant, further federal funding is unlikely.

In her CBC interview last year, Holt said SMRs must be part of the energy transition, but: "I don't think it needs the province to subsidize the businesses ... buying power produced by an SMR is different than putting money into a company building SMR technology."

The second fantasy—the Point Lepreau nuclear reactor on the Bay of Fundy—has been offline for repairs since April. Cost overruns for its original build and refurbishment represent two-thirds of NB Power's \$5.4-billion debt and crippling (94 per cent) debt-to-equity ratio. The reactor's poor performance is the main reason the utility loses money almost every year.

Around the globe, it is hard to find an electrical grid as small as NB Power's with a nuclear reactor. The province's oversize nuclear ambitions were identified early. In 1972, a federal Department of

Finance official warned against subsidizing a power reactor for a utility with "barely enough cash flow to finance its present debt," calling New Brunswick's nuclear plans "the equivalent of a Volkswagen family acquiring a Cadillac as a second car."

New Brunswick lacks even the internal capacity to operate its reactor. When the plant re-opened in 2012 after refurbishment, NB Power first contracted a management team from Ontario Power Generation (OPG) and later hired a manager living in Maine who billed the utility for travel expenses in addition to his salary which reached \$1.3-million despite no improvement in the reactor's performance. In 2023, NB Power ditched the American, and contracted OPG management again.

In her 2023 CBC interview, Holt's statement that the province's energy strategy needs to include "wind energy, solar energy, SMR energy, hydro energy, nuclear energy" suggests that her government will continue to support the Point Lepreau plant. However, new developments may give her pause to reconsider.

A recent expert report linked the poor performance of NB Power's nuclear reactor to the utility's failure since refurbishment to spend enough on maintenance. If this trend continues, "It is likely that performance could drop even further in the late 2030s into the 2040s."

The plant's shutdown for maintenance and upgrades on April 6 this year was originally planned for three months, but the work uncovered serious problems with the main generator. In July, NB Power suggested the plant would re-open in early September and then in August, and has since pushed that date to mid-November.

Energy watchdogs expect the Lepreau plant to remain off-line longer than November due to the serious nature of the generator malfunction. NB Power will be looking to the new government to reassure the public that the utility has its nuclear operations under control. New Brunswickers are facing a 19.4 per cent increase in electricity rates, due in large part to the poor performance of its nuclear reactor, although Holt has already promised to eliminate the 10 per cent PST on NB Power bills to ease the pain.

Holt plans to re-convene the New Brunswick Legislature before the end of November. At that point the Point Lepreau reactor will likely still be mothballed, and the two SMR start-ups will be on life support.

Keeping the Point Lepreau and SMR fantasies alive will require considerable effort from the new government. Holt's handling of the nuclear file will be an early test—both of her leadership and her commitment to wishful thinking.

Dr. Susan O'Donnell is adjunct research professor and primary investigator of the CEDAR project in the Environment and Society program at St. Thomas University in Fredericton.

The Hill Times

To protect nature, Canada must ratify the High Seas Treaty

We border three large oceans that are filled with countless species that do not recognize the 200-mile limit between national and international waters. If we want to preserve these places and animals for future generations of Canadians, a high seas treaty is essential.

Susanna Fuller

Opinion



Last week, in Cali, Colombia, thousands of people from around the world gathered to celebrate nature and the efforts that countries are making to protect it at the 16th Conference of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity.

Only two years ago, Canada hosted a meeting that culminated in the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, an ambitious plan that included a collective commitment to protect 30 per cent of the planet by 2030.

However, the convention cannot achieve this goal on its own for the very simple reason that a big part of the planet doesn't fall under the legal authority of any one country. The international ocean, also known as the high seas, makes up 43 per cent of the earth's surface—a vast expanse of interconnected ecosystems that support a huge amount of marine life and are essential for planetary and human health.

To protect nature, fulfill the promise of the Global Biodiversity Framework, and meet our international goals, we need a treaty focused on the high seas. The good news is that we have one—the recently completed UN Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, which will have the ability to implement effective conservation measures in international waters. But while Canada has signed on, along with 105 other states, it has yet to ratify it—and until at least 60 of them do so, the treaty cannot come into force. The time has come to make the High Seas Treaty a reality, and Canada needs to step up.

While the goals of the Convention on Biological Diversity are laudable, they're not legally enforceable. The High Seas Treaty is different. Once it is ratified, there will be legal mechanisms to implement much-needed necessary protections for high seas ecosystems and the many species within them who are at risk. In many ways, it is the missing piece in global biodiversity protection. It will ensure there is a process for environmental impact assessments, place-based protections, and access and benefit-sharing for all countries from the discovery of marine genetic resources that could provide the next generation of life-saving treatments.

Fourteen countries have currently ratified the treaty. In Canada, a cabinet decision is required before we can become the next. It would be a logical next step for



Fisheries Minister Diane LeBouthillier signed the recent UN Treaty on Biodiversity Beyond National Jurisdiction, but the treaty has not yet been ratified, writes Susanna Fuller. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

a government that has consistently shown leadership at home and abroad when it comes to protecting nature and managing human impacts on the ocean. Domestically, Canada has made good progress in its marine and coastal laws and policy through modernizing the Fisheries Act, updating the Oceans Act, and including marine species and habitats in its 2030 Nature Strategy.

Internationally, Canada last year ratified the World Trade Organization Fisheries Subsidies Agreement that addresses the depletion of marine resources caused by overfishing. And in addition to its work on the Kunming-Montreal Agreement, Canada has joined a group of countries—including the United States, Chile, and Palau—that are committed to be the “first movers” on high seas marine protection areas, which also means being a first mover in ratifying the treaty that will allow them to be established.

Our country has much to gain from better managed and protected high seas. We border three large oceans that are filled with countless species such as tuna, sharks, and whales that do not recognize the 200-mile limit between national and international waters. If we want to preserve these places and animals for future generations of Canadians, a High Seas Treaty is essential.

When we think about nature, most people's minds turn to green—the trees, plants, and grasses that support the ecosystems that make up our day-to-day lives. But nature is also blue—and if we want to protect it, we need ways of reaching beyond our own backyards and into the waters that we share as a planet. Against the odds, the world has come together and made something that will allow us to do that. Ratifying the High Seas Treaty is a simple step that Canada can take to invest in this vision and turn the tide on global biodiversity loss.

Dr. Susanna Fuller is vice-president of conservation and projects at Oceans North, and a longtime advocate for high seas protection.

The Hill Times

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Opinion

Bill C-20 is a missed opportunity for real accountability



Public Safety Minister Dominic LeBlanc is responsible for Bill C-20, to establish the Public Complaints Review Commission. Unless the bill is amended to allow third-party and systemic complaints, enforce its decisions, and operate transparently, it will fall short of delivering change, writes Faisal Kutty. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

As Senate hearings on Bill C-20 wrap up, it's crucial that lawmakers take accountability concerns seriously. This bill is a critical chance to build trust between law enforcement, border services, and the communities they serve—but it must be done right.

Faisal Kutty

Opinion



Canada's Bill C-20, an Act establishing the Public Complaints and Review Commission,

is being hailed as a significant step toward holding the RCMP and the Canada Border Services Agency accountable for misconduct. On paper, the bill aims to introduce civilian oversight for these two powerful agencies, and its timing couldn't be more urgent. Racialized communities—especially Muslims, Black, and Indigenous groups—have long experienced the brunt of racial profiling, arbitrary detention, and discriminatory treatment by law enforcement and border officials. But as it stands, Bill C-20 does not go far enough to address the very issues it claims to solve.

It's important to note that most RCMP and Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) officers are decent, hardworking individuals who treat people fairly. However, a few bad apples, when combined with systemic and structural issues, can taint the entire system. Without proper oversight, these isolated incidents of misconduct can grow into larger patterns of abuse. Accountability mechanisms, such as the Public Complaints and Review Commission (PCRC), are critical to ensure the actions of a few do not reflect poorly on the entire force—or worse—erode public trust altogether.

The Senate National Security, Defence and Veterans Affairs Committee wrapped up its hearings on Oct. 21, 2024, and the legislation is set to move into a clause-by-clause review immediately after. This means that despite the bill's critical importance, it may be pushed through Parliament without the amendments that are urgently needed to ensure it delivers real accountability.

At first glance, Bill C-20 looks promising. It would create the PCRC to provide independent oversight of the CBSA, which has never been subject to civilian review. The RCMP—notorious for systemic racism and misconduct—would also come under the commission's scrutiny. But when the bill was examined by the House committee earlier this year, groups representing marginalized groups—those most affected by these agencies—were largely left out of the conversation, including organizations like Amnesty International, the British Columbia Civil Liberties Association, the Canadian Muslim Civil Liberties Association, Canadian Civil Liberties Association, and the Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. Now, with the Senate about to conclude its review, it

feels like these voices are being heard, but may have no real chance to influence change.

One of the bill's most glaring shortcomings is the restriction on who can file complaints. Bill C-20 only allows complaints from individuals directly affected, leaving out third-party complaints and limiting the ability to address systemic issues. For vulnerable people—refugees, asylum seekers, and those with precarious immigration status—filing a complaint can feel like risking everything. Many fear retaliation—including deportation—if they raise concerns about the CBSA's conduct. Advocacy groups and legal representatives should be able to file complaints on their behalf, especially when systemic discrimination is at play.

The bill also fails to address broader patterns of abuse. Racial profiling at the border isn't an isolated problem. It's systemic. A 2020 survey of Canada's border agency found that one-quarter of front-line employees had witnessed a colleague discriminate against a traveler in the past two years, with 71 per cent attributing the bias to race, and over 75 per cent citing national or ethnic origin. Instead of empowering the PCRC to investigate these wide-

spread issues, Bill C-20 focuses too much on individual cases. Real accountability means taking a step back and looking at how these agencies operate on an institutional level. Without a mechanism for addressing systemic complaints, the PCRC's potential for meaningful reform is severely limited.

Another critical flaw is the lack of independent enforcement. While the PCRC would be tasked with overseeing the RCMP and CBSA, its recommendations would be non-binding. This means that both agencies can effectively ignore the commission's findings without consequence. After years of documented abuse, this kind of weak oversight won't cut it. If the RCMP and CBSA are truly to be held accountable, the PCRC must have the power to enforce its decisions, and impose disciplinary measures.

And where's the transparency? Bill C-20 doesn't mandate that the PCRC make its findings public. If Canadians can't access information about how their complaints are handled—or how often agencies like the CBSA and RCMP are being held to account—the bill's promise of oversight rings hollow. Without public reporting, marginalized communities won't know whether their concerns are being taken seriously, or swept under the rug. Transparency is critical for building trust, and right now, it's missing from this legislation.

Lastly, there's a troubling rush to get this bill passed. The Senate is moving quickly, with the clause-by-clause review expected to start right after the hearings. While there's urgency in addressing misconduct, pushing the bill through without thoroughly considering amendments from those most affected undermines the process. This bill was steam-rolled through the House with little engagement from advocacy groups, and now it seems like the Senate may do the same. What's the point of having an oversight commission if the people most impacted by these agencies aren't included in the discussion?

There's no denying that Bill C-20 has the potential to be a transformative piece of legislation. The creation of the PCRC is a step in the right direction, especially for holding the CBSA accountable for the first time. But unless the bill is amended to allow third-party and systemic complaints, enforce its decisions, and operate transparently, it will fall short of delivering the meaningful change that racialized communities have been demanding for years.

As the Senate hearings come to a close, it's crucial that lawmakers pause and take these concerns seriously. We cannot afford to rush through a bill that offers only a veneer of accountability. Bill C-20 is a critical opportunity to build trust between law enforcement, border services, and the communities they serve—but only if it's done right.

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Saving the political furniture

In Queensland, Australia, a nine-year-old centre-left government facing electoral wipeout opted to go down fighting.

Stephen Jeffery

Opinion



The Liberal National Party under David Crisafulli, left, defeated the Labor Party under Steven Miles after nine years during the Queensland election on Oct. 26. Photographs courtesy of X/@DavidCrisafulli and Government of Queensland

OTTAWA—Wandering in the warm winter sun through Brisbane this past July, change was in the air.

The city that I left just shy of a decade ago is now home to new skyscrapers that dwarfed the once-prominent features of the skyline. Two new pedestrian bridges jutted from the peninsula on which the downtown sits across the snaking Brisbane River. Roadwork signs promised new bus and rail projects.

All pointed to signs of a place to be, a swelling city preparing for the international attention the 2032 Olympic Games would bring.

But that same change, that restlessness was also in the air beneath the glass towers in Queensland's sandstone Parliament House where the incumbent Labor government was bracing for what all polling indicated was a thumping defeat after nine years in office.

The pressures of inflation, population growth, and limited housing supply, coupled with fears of a—largely debunked—youth crime crisis have left Queenslanders feeling none too happy about the status quo.

A near 18-per-cent swing from the government in a March byelection indicated that the centre-right Liberal National Party (LNP) under former minister David Crisafulli could sleepwalk into office with a small-target strategy.

Polling released after that byelection showed Labor with a 23 per cent primary vote, and a 41.5 per cent two-party-preferred vote—like most other Australian jurisdictions, Queensland has a preferential voting system—against the LNP.

So it was no surprise as, clapping a coffee early on Oct. 26 Ottawa time, I watched blue-shirted figures celebrating and downing beers on television as a conservative party celebrated its second election victory in the state in 35 years.

What was surprising, however, was that the thrashing anticipated for months never really came for Labor. It was a decisive loss, yes, but that night/morning, it was unclear whether the LNP would

win the 47 seats necessary for majority government. At the time of writing, the party is on track to win 52 seats, compared to Labor's 35—roughly flipping the parties' pre-election positions.

So, yes, Labor lost power as expected, but it managed to save the furniture instead of succumbing to an electoral bludgeoning.

So how did this happen, and are there any lessons for another nine-year-old, centre-left government facing an expected wipeout as constituents struggle with the cost of living?

For Labor, the answer seemed to be in doubling down on a big government, big spending agenda, helped along by an effective scare campaign that their opponents would wind back abortion laws. Sound familiar?

Of course, to state the bleeding obvious, Queensland is not Canada. Indeed, the state is impossible to define or compare without making somebody angry—the population of British Columbia spread across an area slightly smaller than Nunavut, with the natural resource dependency of Alberta, and cultural exceptionalism of Quebec.

Queensland is also unfairly characterized elsewhere in Australia as a “Deep North” conservative bastion. Part of that is due to being the most decentralized state, and part is from long memories of “hillbilly dictator” premier Joh Bjelke Petersen, whose National Party ruled the state for decades with the help of a rural-favouring gerrymander.

But it's more complicated than that. As mentioned, Labor has been in power for all but five of the last

35 years—the 1989 election being the last under the “Bjelkemand-er”—but the party holds only five of the state's 30 federal seats.

The state is the birthplace of both Labor and the xenophobic, far-right One Nation party; the second-last state to decriminalize homosexuality, but the first to introduce same-sex civil unions; a place that declared a state of emergency to protect apartheid South Africa's touring rugby union team, but that also elected Australia's only communist member of parliament.

Governing such a decentralized state requires balancing these contradictions. For Labor, it means pushing outside its base of Brisbane and a smattering of union-heavy industrial cities along the coast. For the LNP, it's about cutting beyond its rural, regional, and Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast strongholds into Brisbane's suburbs.

Labor has proven capable of threading that needle more often. Their dominance was thought to be at an end in 2012, however, when the party went from 51 seats in the 89-seat Legislative Assembly to just seven.

The Honda Odyssey-sized caucus elected one of its most senior surviving members—former transport minister Annastacia Palaszczuk—as leader, and hun-

tered down for what was expected to be a long stint in opposition.

What Labor did not count on was on being returned to office just one election cycle later. Emboldened by its 78 seats and making up for lost time, the LNP under premier Campbell Newman embarked on a series of public sector cuts and fights with the judiciary that lost the party many friends.

When the time came for the 2015 state election, in which the LNP ran on a promise to sell state assets, Queenslanders decided to relieve the party of government, and Newman of his seat.

Palaszczuk and Labor found themselves with 44 seats, one shy of a majority, but enough to govern in minority. The party converted the minority into a majority in 2017, partly thanks to reviving the spectre of Newman against the LNP.

That majority increased at the 2020 election, due in part to the government's controversial—but locally popular—COVID-19 lockdown measures.

Back to 2024. Newman was long gone—so, too, were the border closures and movement restrictions. Palaszczuk was also no longer on the scene, having retired in December 2023. She was replaced by Steven Miles who was given just under a year to prove his bona fides and dis-

tance himself from an unpopular predecessor.

Prior to the campaign, the Miles government went on a spend-a-thon, introducing 50-cent fares across Queensland's public transport network, provided \$1,000 electricity rebates for households, and announced \$3.1-billion with a 22-year plan to build one million new homes.

Once the campaign started, Labor promised a free school lunches program, and to open 12 state-owned gas stations. But it was not their promises that necessarily narrowed the gap alone, but a good old scare campaign against their opponents, raising the dreaded “A” word with the help of a conservative minor party.

Abortion was only decriminalized in Queensland in 2018. But shortly after the election campaign began, Robbie Katter, state leader of the outback and north Queensland-based Katter's Australian Party, said he would introduce a private member's bill to repeal the law.

Katter later softened his language, proposing only a partial windback of the laws, but Labor could already smell blood. Miles, who was health minister when abortion was decriminalized, sought to highlight the difference between himself and Crisafulli, who voted against the law.

Crisafulli repeatedly said it had “no plans” to change the laws, but was more coy as to whether he would allow his caucus a conscience vote on Katter's private member's bill. That uncertainty was enough to keep the issue alive, dominating leaders' debates and journalists' questions.

By the end of the campaign, Miles was leading Crisafulli as preferred premier, and was seen as the winner of the leaders' debates. Based on the election results, the party appeared to stave off LNP challenges on most of its Brisbane seats, particularly the inner city, cosmopolitan areas that trend more socially progressive than the rest of the state, but have elected Liberal National members in the past.

But do not let that get in the way of the most important point—Labor still lost. They lost long-held seats in industrial centres, and they have been shut out of decision-making in Australia's third most populated state for the next four years.

Facing annihilation, the party was only left bloodied out on the street. But is such a “defeat with honour” enough for supporters who spent their weekends door-knocking, to donors providing what they could during a cost of living crisis?

Accepting one's fate or going down fighting—either way, it's still a defeat.

Stephen Jeffery is a deputy editor of The Hill Times and studied journalism and political science at the University of Queensland. The Hill Times



Brisbane, Queensland, Australia. The city and state has been struggling with cost of living issues since the COVID-19 pandemic. The Hill Times photograph by Stephen Jeffery

Opinion

Climate change barrier between the public and government MPs

As professionals in climate and medical science, we cannot successfully advocate for climate change mitigation until that party caucus wall is opened, which won't happen without either major changes in our political system, or public outcry.

Geoff Strong,
Richard van
der Jagt

Opinion



Many of us concerned about climate issues try to advocate for positive change by gov-

ernment, but we are constantly blocked by a seemingly impenetrable barrier: the "party caucus." Yet, large corporate interests have no trouble getting through that wall, and have huge influence in all government decisions.

Meanwhile, those of us involved in climate or medical research can only beat our heads against that barrier.

We have come to realize that the greatest difficulty we have in trying to help mitigate the climate crisis and various related health crises is not the difficulty of significantly reducing carbon emissions—including air pollutants as well as GHGs—but it is our inability to move government leaders towards appropriate actions, despite the WHO declaring climate change as the global population's greatest threat. This difficulty is reinforced by party caucuses, which are supported and certainly influenced by large corporations—especially fossil fuels, mining, and

forestry industries, whose primary concerns are for increased profits. Canada's Environmental Defence published a report in 2022 stating that "Toronto's largest financial institutions funnelled over C\$1.43-trillion into fossil fuel companies, resulting in 1.44 billion tonnes of CO2 emissions."

Few government MPs understand the severity of the rapidly evolving climate crisis, perhaps because it is not something we see happening on a day-to-day basis. As professionals in climate and medical science, we cannot successfully advocate for mitigation of climate change or its impacts until that wall is opened, which won't happen without either major changes in our political system, or through widespread public outcry. Without these changes, carbon emissions continue to increase, the climate continues to warm, climate disasters increase in frequency and intensity, and adverse health impacts increase, including growing death rates from cancer and lung problems from air pollutants. Meanwhile, nature moves us toward that uncertain climate tipping point where all human efforts become useless, somewhere around 2 °C of warming (we have already surpassed the infamous 1.5 °C level). Add to that the cost of rebuilding after destruction by hurricanes and wildfires, with huge increases in insurance costs.

Despite what fossil fuels and governments have been claiming, we do not have any technological fix that can work in the timeframe we have remaining. That's the only certainty.



Environment and Climate Change Minister Steven Guilbeault arrives for the Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on Oct. 23, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

We, therefore, need all politicians to understand the severity of what is happening, and to realize that the current status quo cannot continue. Our climate is very close to that tipping point where nature will restore climate equilibrium over a short timeframe, but at a much higher mean global temperature level of 3-5 °C. We appeal to the moral consciousness of individual MPs to demand change within their respective parties, to work closer with other parties, and agree to stop all subsidies to fossil fuels immediately. Note that the fossil fuel industry knowingly makes unethical decisions to continue putting profits ahead of any adverse effects to the public, and those profits provide massive lobbying power over politicians, pass Canada's Aligned Finance Act, provide subsidies to municipal governments and small businesses to help construct renewable energy 'mesogrids', work with provincial governments to upgrade existing electricity grids, encourage provinces and electric utilities to welcome these mesogrids linking to their major grids, and provide re-training assistance to individuals transferring from fossil fuel to renewable energy jobs.

Not acting immediately is not an option for a world with 3-5 °C warming after 2050 would create untenable global situations with mass movements of hundreds of millions of climate refugees, especially from the subtropics which are becoming unlivable—including places like Florida—creating massive immigration problems in every mid-latitude country, followed by the rapid breakdown of most social services, including health, education, policing, governments, and more.

Meanwhile, individuals can voice support for efforts to develop clean renewable energy systems "at local scales," ignoring fossil fuels for we cannot fight that juggernaut. But renewable energy alone cannot save humanity without major changes in the way that governments operate.

Geoff Strong is an atmospheric/climate scientist based in Cowichan Bay, B.C. Richard van der Jagt is an adjunct professor of medicine at the University of Ottawa. Both are members of the Canadian Association for the Club of Rome.

The Hill Times

Letting credit unions consolidate helps keep banking sector competitive

In the credit union sector, consolidation is one of the ways in which the sector will continue to provide competition to the banks, and choice for consumers in the future.

Michael
Hatch

Opinion



The cost of living remains the No. 1 economic issue on the minds of Canadians. Though the headline inflation number has come down over the last year, prices are still elevated compared to pre-COVID levels. Wages have not kept up, and consumers—and

voters—are feeling the pinch. From housing to groceries to restaurant meals, household budgets are stretched, and incumbent parties are feeling the dual pain of frustrated voters and a lack of concrete policies to do much about it in the short term.

Price controls are not a realistic option. Governments lack the levers and the competence to initiate any kind of controlled deflation, and this would not be desirable in any event. The most powerful tool for governments looking to address the cost-of-living challenge is to increase competition in the sectors that impact Canadian households. Other things being equal, more competition will almost always exert downward pressure on prices.

Governments in this country and across the world are slowly waking up to this notion. Competition authorities have been given greater powers here and in many other nations to investigate anti-competitive behaviour, scrutinize mergers, and generally push back against what many would describe as a decades-long trend of power accumulation in the mega tech giants that dominate

growing swathes of the economy. This represents a much-needed rebalancing, but those same competition authorities have to be aware of the unintended and sometimes perverse consequences of this shift.

No one would describe our domestic financial sector as suffering from a surplus of competition. A small number of huge institutions dominate the market. Everyone knows who they are. From a retail and business banking perspective, credit unions have provided some of the only competition—such as it exists—for Canadians' wallets for decades. Though it represents a relatively small share of this country's overall financial services market, the credit union sector still serves more than 10 million Canadians. We are also, collectively, the largest lender to small business in Canada.

The sector is also undergoing significant changes to respond to market pressures, and the ever-increasing costs of regulation from both levels of government. This has meant a large degree of consolidation. What used to be thousands of mostly very small

financial institutions now numbers below 200. We predict that number will continue to shrink to something close to or below 100 by the end of this decade, all the while growing assets and membership across Canada. Fewer institutions in the credit union sector is consistent with a stronger sector, and one that can compete more robustly with the industry giants.

Enter the Competition Bureau, and its enhanced powers. A trend that started beyond our shores, aimed at the Googles and the Facebooks of the world, has seen its role in our sector and elsewhere materially expanded. The bureau is looking more closely at mergers in many sectors. Mergers, intuitively, can be associated with a reduction in competition and consumer choice. In the credit union sector, the opposite is true.

Credit unions need to be able to continue to consolidate and partner in the years to come in order to continue to provide some of the only competition that exists to the large banks that dominate financial services in Canada. For that reason, in the credit union

sector, further consolidation is consistent with more—not less—competition and consumer choice. In one recent egregious, yet informative, example, a credit union merger in Alberta has taken longer to approve than the tie-up between RBC and HSBC. One of these mergers will have a materially negative impact on competition and consumer choice in financial services, and it is not the credit union merger in Alberta. The bureau's enhanced scrutiny of mergers is, therefore, having consequences that are not only unintended, but also utterly at odds with the agency's objective of fostering greater competition in the marketplace.

All mergers should be subject to review, and approval on consumer choice grounds. Mergers are often associated with a reduction in competition, and the associated increased consumer costs. However, in the credit union sector, the logic is the reverse: consolidation is one of the ways in which the sector will continue to provide competition to the banks and choice for Canadian consumers in the coming years. The bureau needs to understand this distinction, or risk outcomes at odds with its mandate of competition and consumer choice.

Michael Hatch is vice-president of government relations at the Canadian Credit Union Association.

The Hill Times

'Gross mismanagement': Conservatives grill former green tech fund board member

'Between Conservatives' aggressiveness and the Liberals' complacency, there was room to ask some questions to understand what happened,' says Bloc MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné after former SDTC board member denies responsibility for misappropriated green tech funds.

BY IREM KOCA

With the House still paralyzed by a privilege debate concerning a now-defunct green tech fund, one of its former board members faced accusations of "conflict, corruption, and mismanagement" at committee last week in a heated exchange with Conservative MPs.

Former Sustainable Development and Technology Canada (SDTC) board member Andrée-Lise Méthot's testimony at the House Public Accounts Committee on Oct. 28 was the latest chapter in the SDTC saga.

Méthot—who's also founder of the Montreal-based clean technology venture capital investment platform Cycle Capital—denied allegations that she exploited her position as a board member to fund her own firms, and told MPs that she recused herself from meetings where there was a real, perceived, or potential conflict of interest concerning her company.

"I followed the rules. I submitted a conflict of interest declaration for these companies in which Cycle Capital indeed had interest," she said. She clarified that she had to recuse herself four times relating to real conflicts of interest, and 32 times overall due to potential or perceived conflict of interests.

There have been several heated exchanges between Méthot and Conservative MP Rick Perkins (South Shore—St. Margarets, N.S.), with Perkins claiming that Méthot funnelled more than \$200-million in government funds to her own company. Méthot



Conservative MP Rick Perkins, left, had a heated exchange with former clean tech fund board member Andrée-Lise Méthot, right, on Oct. 28 at the House Public Accounts Committee. Screenshots courtesy of ParlVu

refuted those claims saying "This is false."

"I wonder where all these figures come from because they do not hold up," Méthot said in her opening statement, referring to the dollar amounts that have been circulating over social media. The former SDTC board member attended the meeting with her lawyer present, and only spoke in French.

Perkins' questions come as the House of Commons remains gridlocked in a privilege debate related to the defunct fund, with Conservatives demanding all SDTC documents be turned over to the RCMP for a criminal investigation, but the government says the matter should be reviewed by a parliamentary committee instead.

At committee, Perkins went through a list of companies that received SDTC funding, citing new documents the committee received from Auditor General Karen Hogan, which includes more details than were in her public report on the fund. Perkins pressed Méthot on whether her company held any interests or investments in the firms on his list. Méthot denied involvement in most cases, but acknowledged ties to a few.

Perkins argued that the number of instances in which Méthot acknowledged having ties to companies amounted to \$20-million in funds allocated to those firms. However, Méthot said "the number is incorrect," and explained that there were four businesses in her company's portfolio that received SDTC funding which totalled at \$10.4-million. The discrepancy over the funding amounts further fuelled the dispute between Perkins and Méthot.

"Ten million alone, alone from SDTC. While you were on the board ... \$10-million just in one company. Now I will ask again," said Perkins.

"Sorry!" Méthot retorted, shaking her finger at Perkins as she attempted to speak over his question.

"You don't get to interrupt me," Perkins shot back, reminding Méthot that it was MPs' time to question witnesses in committee.

"Whether it's \$10-million, \$30-million, or whether it's

\$50-million, it's contrary to the act. You broke the act," said Perkins.

In testimony on Nov. 28, 2023, Méthot confirmed four businesses in Cycle Capital's portfolio—where it had some equity or interest—had received support from the green-tech fund since her appointment to SDTC's board in 2016. Méthot told the House Industry and Technology Committee SDTC handed funds to MineSense, which received \$4-million; GreenMantra which received \$2-million; Inocucor, which received \$1.2-million; and Polystyvert, which received \$3.5-million. According to Méthot's breakdown, the overall government funding these companies received added up to \$10.7-million.

Méthot told MPs on Oct. 28 that the only votes she did not recuse herself from, and "may have cast unknowingly in favour of companies in which Cycle Capital had interests," are GreenMantra, a clean-technology firm, and MineSense, a digital mining company.

Méthot said the reason she did not recuse herself from the vote on COVID-19 relief grants was that she was "unaware" that these businesses would benefit from those measures, and that she received incorrect legal advice. She told MPs that no list of potential beneficiaries had been provided to the board, so a legal team informed the board members that they could not be in a conflict of interest.

Méthot told MPs that Cycle Capital "has never invested a penny" in 21 cases for which she declared a "potential conflict of interest" because the company was "considering the possibility of investing" in them, but eventually decided not to invest.

A whistleblower told MPs on Sept. 18 that Méthot benefited "the most" from the SDTC funding, and that she had multiple companies within the SDTC portfolio. According to the whistleblower, "there were multiple instances" concerning Méthot "where it wasn't just that she got preferential treatment for projects; she was getting funding two or three times."

Méthot also told MPs that Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault (Laurier—Sainte-Marie, Que.) "received nothing—zero dollars" from Cycle Capital, where he served as a strategic adviser for over 10 years. "He is not an investor. He has no shares," she stated, responding to MPs questions about her companies ties to the minister.

Méthot says 'no blame laid' in AG report

She also noted the auditor general "did not issue any criticism" of Méthot personally after a thorough investigation—but that did not satisfy the MPs.

"The report of the auditor general was a damning indictment of conflict, corruption, and mismanagement of SDTC while you sat on the board. Isn't that the case?" asked Conservative MP Michael Cooper (St. Albert—Edmonton, Alta.).

"There was no blame laid," Méthot responded.

"Putting aside issues of conflicts of interest," Cooper continued. "Gross mismanagement while you sat on the board—do you take responsibility for that?"

"No, I'm not going to take all responsibility for that," replied Méthot.

Cooper later pressed the witness on whether she would be willing to provide the RCMP with the information she possesses. Méthot replied that she would answer questions, adding "I've got nothing to hide."



Conservative MP Michael Cooper called the auditor general's report on SDTC 'a damning indictment.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Liberal MP Francis Drouin (Glengarry—Prescott—Russell, Ont.) intervened, asserting that Conservative MPs bringing up the RCMP was "just dirty politics."

Cooper said he interpreted Méthot's response as a "no," which ignited another heated exchange amongst MPs. Tension escalated when Drouin yelled, "ask her that outside," arguing that Conservative MPs were speaking freely due to their parliamentary privilege. This prompted interventions from

Méthot's counsel and the committee chair, resulting in a short suspension of the meeting. Liberal MP Jean Yip (Scarborough—Agin-court, Ont.) proposed a motion for Cooper to apologize to the witness for "attacking" her, but that motion was dropped after a counter-motion from the Conservatives to adjourn the debate was adopted.

Bloc MP says tension in committee complicates MPs' probe

After the meeting, committee vice-chair Bloc Québécois MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné (Terrebonne, Que.) said the ongoing tension complicates MPs' efforts to get to the heart of the SDTC file, an issue that has dominated their meetings, and has brought the House to a standstill for more than a month.

"I think between Conservatives' aggressiveness and the Liberals' complacency, there was room to ask some questions to understand what happened," Sinclair-Desgagné said.



Bloc Québécois MP Nathalie Sinclair-Desgagné says the high tension in committee stands in the way of MPs work. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Sinclair-Desgagné argued Drouin "went overboard" and was "too aggressive" when he implied that Conservative MPs could be sued for their comments in committee had they expressed them outside. She also noted that Conservatives, who take an aggressive approach in their committee interventions, "reap what they sow."

Sinclair-Desgagné also said she did not see Méthot taking responsibility for the issues at the SDTC, and instead described it in positive terms.

"It seemed like she was talking about a different organization, honestly," said Sinclair-Desgagné.

Liberal MP Jean Yip told *The Hill Times* that "the Conservatives do not give time for witnesses to answer the questions and frequently interrupt them." She said Conservative MPs "insist on yes or no responses to questions that require context and then refuse to let witnesses answer." Conservative MPs on the committee did not respond to *The Hill Times* request for a comment.

Despite the high tensions at committee, Yip argued that she feels progress is being made. "The government was proactive when it first heard of the allegations out of SDTC. The minister froze funding and mandated multiple independent investigations to get to the bottom of allegations," she said.

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Comment



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, left, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. The transition to a new energy world will not be cheap or easy. But it will deliver great economic opportunity and a more environmentally sustainable world. We need to be part of that world, but we are not there yet, writes David Crane. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

and more on the transition to the electric age, and the many technology and commercial opportunities that can be seized? The oil industry is demanding that Canadian taxpayers take on a greater share of the risk in carbon capture and storage while it spends billions of dollars on share buybacks to enrich shareholders.

A second IEA report—*Energy Technology Perspectives 2024*—shows how a new global energy economy is emerging, illustrating this by growth in six major clean technologies: solar photovoltaic (PV), wind, electric vehicles, batteries, hydrogen electrolyzers, and heat pumps. Their markets are expected to soar over the next decade, tripling by 2035 to more than US\$2-trillion, the same as the annual global oil market in recent years.

Clean energy systems are becoming more economically and environmentally attractive than fossil fuels. This growth, the IEA says, “can offer many benefits and opportunities, including new manufacturing industries, job creation, lower energy bills, improved energy security, cleaner air and emissions reductions.” But where will Canada be in this transition? Will we be spending too much on our role as a petrostate and too little on the new energy economy?

One way in which clean energy technologies are better, the IEA report points out, is that “while fossil fuel supplies need to be replenished as soon as they are consumed, importing clean technologies provides a durable stock of energy equipment.” For example, “a single journey by a large container ship filled with solar PV modules can provide the means to generate electricity equivalent to the amount generated from the natural gas onboard more than 50 large LNG tankers, or the coal onboard 100 large ships.” This helps explain why countries are investing heavily in solar manufacturing. In fact, under its subsidy programmes, the U.S. has mobilized US\$230-billion of investment in clean technology manufacturing through to 2030.

Overall, global manufacturing capacity for clean energy technologies is accelerating. Between 2021 and 2023, production capacity increased from just over 450 GW to 1.2 TW in solar PV modules, 125 GW to 180 GW for wind, 10.5 to 22.5 million units for electric vehicles, 1.1 TW hours to 2.5 TWh for batteries and triples to 25 GW for electrolyzers. Based on announced expansions, by 2030 we could see manufacturing capacity worldwide of 1.6 TW in solar PV, 260 GW for wind, 9.3 TWh for batteries and 165 GW for electrolyzers.

The transition to a new energy world will not be cheap or easy. But it will deliver great economic opportunity and a more environmentally sustainable world. We need to be part of that world, but we are not there yet. The Liberals have fumbled it. The Conservatives don’t even seem interested.

David Crane can be reached at crane@interlog.com.

The Hill Times

Liberals have fumbled green energy transition, while Conservatives have zero interest

We are far from the needed trajectory to reach net-zero emissions by 2050, but failure is not an option.

David Crane

Canada & the 21st Century



TORONTO—Let’s face it. The Trudeau government has done a clumsy job in leading Canada through the transition to a new energy economy. While the government’s aspirations have

been high-sounding, its implementation has been confused and contradictory, with over-investment in the oil and gas industry through tax incentives and direct subsidies, and under-investment in supporting the entrepreneurship that can take us into the clean energy world.

We are still far from the needed trajectory to achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. But failure is not an acceptable option.

The Russian invasion of Ukraine and the rising level of conflict in the Middle East have necessarily focused greater attention on energy security worldwide. But this should not mean any let-up in the transition to a clean energy future, with its much-reduced role for fossil fuels, and much greater focus on the switchover to renewable energy to address climate change as the

International Energy Agency (IEA) underlines in its new *World Energy Outlook 2024*. Quite the contrary: energy security and climate action “go hand-in-hand.”

As the IEA argues, “deploying cost-competitive clean-energy technologies represents a lasting solution not only for bringing down emissions, but also for reducing reliance on fuels that have been prone to volatility and disruption.”

To take one example, the European Union is not simply replacing natural gas it previously bought from Russia with natural gas from Qatar and the United States. It is sharply reducing its use of natural gas altogether, since it is a source of greenhouse gas emissions. It is replacing it with renewable sources of energy as well as accelerating the adoption of electric vehicles

and trains, and more energy-efficient buildings and industrial processes. As the IEA says, “clean electricity is the future.”

Based on its own best estimates drawn from extensive consultations with energy providers and users around the world, the IEA forecasts—even in its most conservative scenario—that clean energy meets “virtually all” growth in energy demand between 2023 and 2030, leading to “an overall peak in demand for all three fossil fuels before 2030.” There will still be a demand for some time for fossil fuels, but a there will be excess supply in a world of shrinking demand.

The world’s spare capacity in oil, for example, was 3 million barrels per day (mbd) in 2019, is 6 mbd today and slated to reach 8 mbd by 2030. Existing planned investments in LNG projects are expected to lead to a surplus of supply over demand until 2040, so that there is no need for additional projects. This implies lower fuel prices as supply exceeds demand, the IEA says, raising questions about taxpayer-subsidized future investments in relatively higher cost Canadian oil sands and LNG projects. By 2030, almost half of all new vehicles sold could be electric while demand for electricity will soar.

Yet despite growth, the existing transition underway is not enough. “The world is still a long way from a trajectory aligned with climate goals,” while “Decisions by governments, investors and consumers too often entrench the flaws in today’s energy system, rather than pushing it towards a cleaner and safer path,” the IEA warns. In Canada, despite its boast of green credentials, the Trudeau government is planning billions of dollars towards support for the oil sands industry. But how far should we go in subsidizing the fossil fuel industry?

Should we not be spending less on subsidies for oil and gas,



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre leaves after announcing his proposed policy on removing sales tax from home sales in a neighbourhood in Kanata, Ont., on Oct. 28, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

The security clearance process: an explainer from ex-CSIS director Ward Elcock

Continued from page 7

In relation to foreign interference and who's been alleged to have been named for colluding or being targets of foreign interference, would you say that's 'top secret', or above 'top secret'?

"Again, it depends on the nature of the information that you're getting about those individuals and, sometimes, how that information was secured. If somebody simply provided you with the information, that may be straightforward. But if you had to carry out an operation that touches very sensitive information to secure that information, like an entry or communications intercept, then that may make the information even more of a problem, more highly classified than other information."

How long does the process take? "Depending on the instance, depending on the individual, depending on the clearance level and so on, an investigation may be required and that can take time. And a top-secret clearance probably takes—I don't know what the precise amount of time it takes these days is—but a good six months for top-secret clearance."

So can any one MP get clearance? "Well, do you need a clearance? If you're not really doing a job that requires access to top secret information, they're not always going to do a clearance for you. There may still be information that you have no need to know, even if you've got a top secret clearance."

If you're justified in getting that clearance, but if there isn't a 'need for you to know,' then you can still be denied access to that info? "If you get a top-secret clearance and your job is, for example, examining immigration into Canada or

immigrants coming into Canada, nobody's going to give you information on nuclear weapons or weapons programs or whatever that are classified at the same level. You don't have a 'need to know it.'"

So, that 'need to know' is specific to each situation? "Yeah. The one in this case that has come up is the issue of the chief of staff of the opposition leader. He has a clearance. He has no need to know the identity of individuals who within the Conservative [party] who may have been involved in foreign interference because he has no ability to do anything about it."

But for the other party leaders, there was a justification for those who received clearances? "They have a 'need to know certain things', but just because you're the leader of the party doesn't mean you'll be briefed on everything that is classified within the Government of Canada."

Is the process different for party leaders? "Party leaders are not likely going through the lengthy process that one would get as a [Government of Canada] employee. It is likely more similar to that ministers would go through which likely means it is a little more cursory. It won't take them six months to get a clearance."

Poilievre said he received a security clearance when he was a minister in Stephen Harper's cabinet. Do security clearances expire? "Clearances don't last forever. You don't get one just because you were a minister. It doesn't carry forward. If you stop being a minister you'd have to—depending on how recent the clearance is—might not require much of a process to reinstate it. But if it's been a number of years, then it might require a further investigation before you actually get it cleared."

So, there is an expiry? "They don't last very long. I think the usual course is about five years."

Can you explain why the prime minister does not need to go through this process? "A full clearance process is rarely done on the prime minister because they're elected by the population."

But what about a situation like that of former U.S. president Donald Trump whom people had raised red flags about his connections to certain regimes? "I don't think with his background he'd get one."

But if a hypothetical Trump became a prime minister then he gets to bypass that? "He'd get one if he becomes president, but I don't think he'd get one otherwise."

Who's in charge of administering the security clearance process? "Different people are doing different checks. If you've

got criminal convictions, that's not something CSIS would necessarily have on file. That would be the police that would do that. If you're looking at intelligence, then it probably is CSIS. If information has been identified that somebody has links with a foreign government and that's been identified by signals intelligence, it would be [Communications Security Establishment Canada] that provided it. Some other organizations like [Canada Border Services Agency] also participate in the clearance process. But usually the core intelligence process is CSIS."

What information do you need to provide? "You have to provide information about your travel history, where you lived back to a certain period of time, education. It's the basic sort of 'tombstone data' that allows [investigators] to start inquiring. It allows security clearance process to inquire into your background."

But how far does that investigation reach? "It could lead to an investigation in which some co-workers or whatever were spoken to, or people that were associated with you in an earlier position were interviewed. In my early years, I moved every two years/18 months when my father was transferred. He was a naval officer, so that means a whole lot of addresses when [he] first applied for a security clearance. So in some cases, it's going to be more complicated than others. Some person who lived in the same house for 40 years and had the same job for 40 years, it makes the inquiries a little bit simpler."

What would be grounds for someone to be denied clearance? "You've got to find out whether there are grounds to believe that the individual is trustworthy, or grounds to believe the individual is not trustworthy. If somebody comes in and in their application says they went to [a] university associated with the Chinese intelligence agency, then that would raise a concern. In the old days, it would have been if you were gay, you probably wouldn't get a clearance because people would be worried about that."

"That's no longer the case, but people would have been worried about whether or not you could

be compromised. Similarly, if you're in the midst of an affair with somebody who is a known agent of a foreign power—even if the individual doesn't know they're a known agent of a foreign power—you're probably not going to get a clearance. If you're widely known as a drunk, you're probably not going to get a clearance. If you've got a nice little criminal record, you're probably not going to get a clearance. So there can be a bunch of reasons why you don't get a clearance. The whole point of it is to make sure that the people you're allowing to see classified information that is in the government holdings need to actually do their jobs and that you're trustworthy."

Who has access to the information gathered? "People who are dealing with the clearance process will have access to it. And, ultimately, the individual will be told if they have a clearance or not. And if they refuse the clearance, they can go to [Security Intelligence Review Committee] and appeal the process. But beyond that, it's certainly not information that gets fed into the political process."

So it's not in a database that someone could access whenever they want later on? "No, unless you're part of the clearance process. The minister can't call up the clearance folks and say 'I want to see the file on X' and all the information about it."

So if 'X' had their security clearance expire, then that person investigating the new application could look up the information that was previously gathered? "Probably that would be likely the only case. But if an issue arose about an individual and their activities, they might look at the clearance process. But that would be part of an investigation into the activities of an individual."

If someone that had clearance is under investigation, then that information could be looked at? "If you have an open investigation into somebody because you think they're engaged in espionage, or they have been recruited by another power, then when you're investigating them, I suspect you probably have access to their clearance information. Because the clearance is relevant to what it is that they're doing. I mean, if you're in essence violating the clearance which you're being given, that becomes, probably, part of the investigation."

What do you make of Conservative MP Michael Chong's comments to *The Globe and Mail* that the data obtained through the clearance check could be used for "politically motivated purpose?" "I think that is the most paranoid statement I have ever heard. And, frankly, I would say what it says about them, how the Conservatives would deal with information if they were to become the government, is kind of scary."

Because it's not a political process, right? "It is not a political process. It is not one that politicians participate in. It's not one that is taken to politicians for approval. The idea that that kind of information would be provided for political purposes is just kind of ludicrously paranoid."

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Former CSIS director Ward Elcock, pictured in this file photo in Centre Block. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Books & Big Ideas

What's so wrong with Canada that we best snap out of our complacency?

Through nine persuasive yet demoralizing chapters, Jonathan Manthorpe leads us through his rational report card on our nation's prospects. If we don't attend to matters now, he warns, Canada is Argentina waiting to happen.

BY CHRISTOPHER DORNAN

Here's a question: Given everything the two countries have in common, why isn't Canada like Argentina?

They're both geographically vast. Argentina extends from the Andes mountains across the Pampas grasslands to the Atlantic forest. They're both extraordinarily rich in natural resources, and their agri-businesses are essential to the world. They are the second-largest economies on their respective continents, and 100 years ago Argentina and Canada had the same per capita GDP. Argentina is a soccer powerhouse, Canada dominates international hockey, and both countries have their national pride.

But Argentina has long been an economic disaster and a political nightmare. It has defaulted on its sovereign debt nine times. It has lurched from the left-wing authoritarianism of the Juan Peron decades to the even more brutal right-wing fascism of the Junta and its Dirty War, and now to whatever Javier Milei is on about. (Social credit, possibly.)

Canada, by comparison, is an unexciting tableau of political and economic stability, a place where there are no runs on the bank, no *coups d'état*, and no riots in the streets unless a hockey championship is involved. The secret to this stability is that everyone in Canada is encouraged to speak up, all the time, about how they don't like how they're being governed.

Keep this in mind as Jonathan Manthorpe leads us through his unsentimental report card on Canada and its prospects. He examines the structure of Canadian democracy in nine chapters, every



Justin Trudeau, left, Pierre Poilievre, and Jagmeet Singh. Author Jonathan Manthorpe insists our representative democracy is crucially misrepresentative. *The Hill Times* photographs by Sam Garcia and Andrew Meade

one of which is knowledgeable, persuasive, and demoralizing. If we don't attend to matters right now, Manthorpe warns, leaning on the klaxon, Canada is Argentina waiting to happen.

Slim and readable, this book should be handed out to anyone applying to emigrate here. You really want to get in the midst of this?

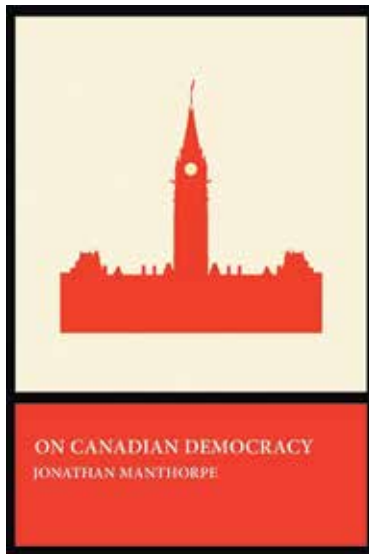
Manthorpe is an old hand as they used to say in the journalism trade. China correspondent, Africa correspondent, European bureau chief, national political reporter, all of which provided the salary and worldly experience to write well-received books—*Forbidden Nation*, *Claws of the Panda*—on top of his day job. That sort of career is all but impossible now, which is a shame.

Okay, what's so wrong with Canada that we best snap out of our complacency?

The crucial thing about our representative democracy, Manthorpe insists, is that it's misrepresentative. The first-past-the-post electoral system skews the outcome, so the governments we get at the municipal, provincial, and federal levels are a triple distortion of the country's political will. We have a democracy that is un-democratic.

On top of that, riding by riding, the people we elect through this system have next-to-no agency. They are camouflage for the concentration of authority in the office of the prime minister, the premier, or the party leader. Backbenchers or cabinet ministers take their orders from above, belittled by the very power structure they bought into.

The country, Manthorpe despairs, is poorly governed no matter who is in power because its structures of governance are askew. And because it is poorly governed, it is a country of lousy productivity and economic stagnation. Its economy



On Canadian Democracy,
by Jonathan Manthorpe,
Cormorant Books, \$19.95

is just a bunch of monopolies in a trench coat. Government has so discredited itself that distrust in government now extends to civic institutions. Social cohesion deteriorates. Prosperity and stability are being undermined right before our eyes.

This is the thinking person's version of "Canada is broken."

Sure, the Commons is a circus and the Senate is a "waste of time and money," and the division of powers between the provinces and the federal government is poorly drawn and counter-productive. But the bone in the throat of Canadian democracy, Manthorpe laments, is the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

He believes the Charter is a wrong idea because it strait-jackets Parliament, which is supposed to be the author of the nation's laws. The Charter presumes to tell our highest chambers of debate

that some things are not to be debated. And when the will of Parliament abrades the Charter, the matter gets referred to the Supreme Court, nine unelected people in robes who were never supposed to be empowered to overrule the political will of a country's government.

This crappy, dysfunctional political apparatus leads to crappy, dysfunctional political outcomes. Health care is in crisis. Education is in crisis. Housing, groceries, and cell-phone fees are too expensive. Immigrants flood our six biggest cities, adding more and more strain to beleaguered hospitals, schools, and housing markets when we really need newcomers to spread out, to settle in places like Lloydminster and Cornerbrook. The whole place is coming apart.

If we're going to stave off the catastrophes he sees coming, Manthorpe can see no way out except to do away with the first-past-the-post electoral system, reverse the centralization of authority in the PMO, reform the Senate, rewrite the constitution, rein in the Supreme Court, reconfigure not only provincial-federal relations but also municipal-provincial relations, and while we're at it break up the grocery, bank, and telco oligopolies.

Here's my bold prediction: That's not going to happen. Any of it. And Manthorpe knows that, too.

Housing. Immigration. Health care. These are pressing issues, but they are ultimately administrative problems that can be tackled in different ways by different governments with different policies. Not one of these problems is going to be helped by triggering a constitutional crisis over revoking the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. No government in its right mind is going to do that.

Manthorpe sees Canada's political structure as a machine

whose gears don't mesh, an engine grinding against itself, a problem that can't be fixed. He wishes it were otherwise, but with a shrug and a sigh he concedes there's not much we can do about it. So, we're doomed.

This is where he and I part company. This nation's political structure is a wonderful example of an unending problem that doesn't need to be fixed. For 157 years, it has shown a spongy resilience. Its mis-matched parts means that everything must be negotiated, which means deal-making, power moves, one-upmanship, and comeuppance. But always negotiation. The political structure of Canada is one big shock absorber, a machine for muddling through.

Manthorpe is not a fan of muddling through. He is an advocate of putting things right. I get it, believe me. Muddling through is nerve wracking. It's just one crisis postponed after another. Nothing gets resolved, everything gets deferred.

Lately, our muddling through has been put to the test. There are no runs on Canadian banks, but one of them just got fined \$3-billion by the American government because it was hospitable to drug cartel money. Meanwhile, the official opposition leader has made a point of trying to undermine trust in the central Bank. That's the sort of thing that happens in Argentina.

As to riots in the streets, we are still trying to process the convoy occupation of Ottawa and the border blockades. That was an organized exercise of civil disobedience intended to discomfit the government, maybe unseat it. Aggressive, but non-violent. Not a march, an encampment. A blight on the neighbourhood. A static riot.

If it had been people in poverty setting up a tent village on Parliament Hill to make a point, they would have been cleared out promptly without the need for any special police powers. The convoy was a vehicular encampment, a tractor-trailer park. The people in the truckers' blockade were not dispossessed. They were angry for other reasons. Their plan was to provoke a crisis, and they got what they wanted.

We had to muddle our way through that one by invoking the Emergencies Act. At the time, it was the right thing to do. But we can't keep invoking the Emergencies Act.

Maybe Manthorpe is right. Maybe we're running out of muddling room.

Nah. If there's anything this thing we call Canada is really good at, it's finding new ways to negotiate with itself, just when you thought that wasn't possible anymore.

On Canadian Democracy, by Jonathan Manthorpe, Cormorant Books, 204 pp.

Christopher Dornan retired from the faculty of the Carleton University School of Journalism and Communication in 2020. He is helping to organize the School's upcoming conference, "Reimagining Political Journalism: Perils, Possibilities, and What Comes Next," made possible by a SSHRC Connections grant and the support of organizations such as The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Angus says his new book is not a lament, it's a call to arms

Charlie Angus talks about his new book, *Dangerous Memory: Coming of Age in the Decade of Greed*, and about the state of federal politics today.

BY KATE MALLOY

When Charlie Angus was 18 years old, he quit school to play in a punk band with Andrew Cash and worked with the homeless. Today, the federal lawmaker, musician, and prolific author just wrote another book, *Dangerous Memory: Coming of Age in the Decade of Greed*, which Naomi Klein calls “an extraordinary read.”

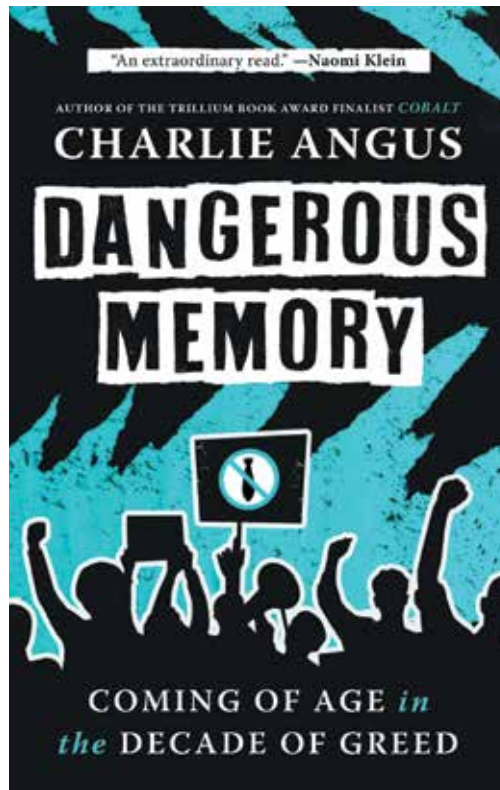
Published by House of Anansi Press, the book digs into the darker side of the 1980s and looks at its impact on the world today, along with stories of resistance and hope.

“Recently, media commentators have begun doing a major rethink of the 1980s. Whether it’s the economy and rising labour unrest, or nuclear brinkmanship and a new Cold War, the 2020s remind us that forces unleashed in the 1980s have finally caught up to us. But the 1980s was also time of idealism and resistance with incredible victories for social justice and the environment. *Dangerous Memory* is a journey through a troubled era with a focus on the incredible stories of resistance and activism that could chart a way forward in these dystopian times,” Angus said.

Angus is also the author of eight other books, including the award-winning and bestselling *Cobalt: Crane of the Demon Metals, Birth of a Mining Superpower*. Angus, 61, who was first elected in Timmins-James Bay, Ont., in 2004, and is not running again, talks to *The Hill Times* about his new book.

Why did you want to write this book, and how did you come up with the idea?

“*Dangerous Memory* tracks the long shadow of the 1980s, and how it continues to impact the world around us. There has long been a superficial fascination with the 1980s. It is often portrayed as an era of colourful clothes and catchy pop songs. A simpler time. It was anything but. Recently, media commentators have begun doing a major rethink of the 1980s. Whether it’s the economy and rising labour unrest, or nuclear brinkmanship and a new Cold War, the 2020s remind us that forces unleashed in the 1980s have finally caught up to us. But the 1980s was also time of



NDP MP Charlie Angus just released a new book, *Dangerous Memory: Coming of Age in the Decade of Greed*, his ninth book: ‘I don’t think I would have been able to keep doing the political work if I didn’t nurture space for musical creativity and research.’ Photograph courtesy of Paul Rincon and House of Anansi Press

idealism and resistance with incredible victories for social justice and the environment. *Dangerous Memory* is a journey through a troubled era with a focus on the incredible stories of resistance and activism that could chart a way forward in these dystopian times.”

What was the writing process like for you, and how long did it take you to write this one?

“*Dangerous Memory* is part memoir, part broader social history. The 1980s defined who I am in terms of the politics, the music, and the lifestyle choices I have embraced. The anchor for the book was a diary I kept in that era of my time on the road with a punk band, and working with the homeless at a Catholic Worker house in Toronto. I wasn’t interested in exploring my personal feelings in the diary, but was interested in the details the journal contained of events that were happening in the broader world at the time. Trying to merge a partial memoir within a broader history required many rewrites to get the right pacing and connect the dots. In the end, this project took me about two years to put together.”

You’re a prolific writer. Where do you write?

“Long before I begin to write, I build an extensive research file of anything that could be remotely related to the subject I am interested in. This means reading numerous books, articles, and studies. Anything of relevance is documented with source notes. This takes a lot of prep work as I end up going down all manner of rabbit holes looking for inter-

esting connections. Once that larger archive of notes, sources, etc., is in place I am ready to write. I write wherever I have a moment—airport waiting rooms, dead time in the House, when I am at home. My favourite part of the process is the editing.”

You’re also a federal lawmaker and an active Member of Parliament. How do you make time to write books?

“I take my work as a parliamentarian with the upmost seriousness, but I learned quickly that living in a political world can quickly close your mind to other ways of thinking. I have tried to nurture my natural curiosity by trying to learn as much as I can about history, culture, and ideas that exist outside the world of the political message box. I don’t think I would have been able to keep doing the political work if I didn’t nurture space for musical creativity and research.”

Why is it important for you to write books?

“This is my ninth book of history. I write these books because history matters. Knowing how the world became the way it allows us to consider ways in which the future could be different. We are living in an age that feels increasingly cut off from a sense of historical narrative. It’s not just the need to know what went before us, but understanding the obligation that we are handing the world onto those who come after us. *Dangerous Memory* is a history written from the street. It helps frame how things went down and how the decisions made by the great-counter revolutionaries of the era—Reagan, Thatcher,

Mulroney, Khomeini—continue to impact us today.”

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

“I wrote this book for a young generation who are living with the grief and anxiety of confronting a world that may have no future. It brings me back to my youth when fear of nuclear annihilation brought people into the streets—first in small groups, then in the hundreds, then in the thousands. The 1980s was a period of incredible non-violent resistance. The Berlin Wall fell. The brutal Apartheid regime was brought down. Not a shot was fired. Lessons of how ordinary people stepped up and saved the planet is a tale that needs to be told today. This book is not a lament. It is a call to arms.”

What’s next for you now that you won’t be running again?

“I am looking forward to giving more time to creative pursuits with my band Grievous Angels. I have already begun research for new writing projects. But I remain deeply committed to political action as a means of change. I started in politics with street level activism. In the face of the growing climate crisis and Canada’s refusal to take on the oil lobby more and more young people will take to activism. Perhaps there is a way I can be of help.”

What was the absolute best part about being an MP?

“I love people. Being part of their communities allowed me to be at the celebrations and tragedies. I never took this lightly. It allowed me to be a witness at

powerful moments of change and hope. By far the most impressive was being an ally as the Indigenous communities in my northern region began to move forward and take control of their future.”

What was the worst part?

“The hardest part of being an MP were the funerals of young people. I remember the overwhelming grief at the funeral of young Cree leader Shannen Koostachin. I have never seen such pain and despair as the people of Attawapiskat mourned the loss of such a powerful young lawyer. Worst parts? Watching the dismal dumbing down of discourse and debate at times when people expect our elected representatives to step up and show leadership and vision.”

What will you miss about your job as an MP?

“I have been honoured to be a voice for people who had no voice. That meant being able to step up for constituents who were unable to get a fair hearing from government, business, bureaucracies. The office of MP allowed me to find solutions to so many who would have fallen through the cracks.”

What’s your take on the state of federal politics today and the House of Commons?

“Democracy is in a very fragile state. As I point out in *Dangerous Memory*, a young generation is facing massive levels of economic precarity, communities that have become increasingly unliveable from real estate speculation, and, of course, a looming climate disaster. They are watching genocide unfold as western leaders ignore the crisis, or are complicit. At a time of major historic crisis, Canada’s political class have failed to step up. Canadian politics is increasingly becoming a rudderless ship obsessed with dumbed-down slogans and politicians chasing after the rage algorithms.”

What was the most important lesson you learned about being an MP?

“My message to new parliamentarians is simple: the party got you elected, but what you bring with you into the House is your integrity. At the end of the day, integrity is what matters most. Don’t be a sock puppet. Make your ‘yes’ mean yes, and your ‘no’ mean no. Do the right thing even if it’s hard.”

What’s your hope for the future?

“I am very frightened about where the world is headed in the 2020s. Today’s political class have absolutely failed this young generation. But I put my hope in the spirit and skill of this young generation. At this point in my life and my career, I would like to find ways to work with them to ensure that we build a future with hope and sustainability.”

Dangerous Memory: Coming of Age in the Decade of Greed, by Charlie Angus, House of Anansi Press, 320 pp., \$26.99.

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News

‘Each of our voices matter’: disaster survivors call for greater climate action in Ottawa advocacy push

If personal stories of loss ‘can’t resonate with political leaders, I really don’t know what is going to,’ said the Sierra Club’s Conor Curtis.

BY STEPHEN JEFFERY

Three years after a wildfire destroyed much of Lytton, B.C., Meghan Fandrich’s daughter still refuses to have candles on her birthday cake due to fear of fire.

“This is three years later, and she and I both are dealing with ongoing mental health effects,” she said. “The whole community has been unable to recover because the fire was so intense, but also because of the lack of progress. My coffee shop was still rubble almost two years later, and I wasn’t allowed on the property to clear it myself. So how can you have closure?”

Fandrich was part of a group of fire, flood, and hurricane survivors from across the country who visited Ottawa on Oct. 30 to demand a strengthened emissions cap in the hope that stemming greenhouse gas emissions would help prevent more frequent and worse disasters.

The Sierra Club Canada advocacy event was the latest in a series of climate-related gatherings seeking greater action on emissions, support for disaster responders, or a combination of the two.

As previously reported in *The Hill Times*, firefighters and wildfire survivors held meetings with MPs the previous week in order to seek greater support for those fighting wildland fires, as well as “stopping the problem at its source” through switching to clean energy and improving forest management.

The same week, members of Climate Proof Canada held a second national climate adaptation summit,

and pushed for improved emergency management planning, funding for the national flood insurance program, and greater education about extreme weather risk.

Those efforts followed a September emergency preparedness and climate adaptation convention in Ottawa, which itself coincided with a separate plea from the insurance industry after a 20-year high in July and August claims related to severe weather and natural disasters.

For Sierra Club, the idea of using personal stories and experiences to reach out to decision-makers was a way to show the impact of these disasters beyond numbers and statistics, according to communications head Conor Curtis.

“If that can’t resonate with political leaders, I really don’t know what is going to,” Curtis told *The Hill Times*. “We did this exhibit previously in New York for New York Climate Week. I can’t think of a single person who walked out unaffected by it, and in fact, people who had come in off the street then stood outside with us trying to get other people to go into the exhibit because they were so moved.”

In addition to the personal testimony of survivors, Sierra Club also displayed artifacts either damaged in or retrieved from a climate-related disaster. The exhibit ran in the Queen Street Fare food court, two blocks from Parliament Hill.

Fandrich’s contribution was the remnants of a doorknob from her coffee shop, Klowna Cafe, found in the ruins nine months after the fire.

“It’s such a normal, mundane object that you don’t even think about it,” she told *The Hill Times*. “And yet, when it is all that’s left, it becomes so precious.”

In summer 2021, fire destroyed 90 per cent of Lytton, and killed two people. On the third anniversary of the fire on June 30, CBC News reported that only a handful of buildings were in the process of being rebuilt.

Fandrich’s house was saved, but she said the town still has no pharmacy or grocery store. She



Meghan Fandrich, left, and her daughter Helen survived the 2021 Lytton, B.C. fire. They were in Ottawa with a doorknob salvaged from the remains of Fandrich’s destroyed cafe, part of an exhibit of items retrieved from climate-related disasters. Photograph courtesy of Sierra Club



A life preserver is all that remains of Mark Lomond’s fishing stage after Hurricane Fiona devastated his hometown of Port aux Basques, N.L. in 2022. Photograph courtesy of Sierra Club

wrote a personal account about the loss of the community in the book *Burning Sage*, and about the ongoing trauma. Her hope is that politicians would make a personal connection with what happened.

“My little daughter, who’s eight now, for the last three years—so more than a third of her life—she’s been living in a burned up town, and I don’t want that to happen to other kids in Canada,” she said. “So I want policy makers to enact the change they can, and I want the public to know that each of our voices matter, and it’s through the strength of our collective voices that we can demand change.”

Also at the exhibit was Mark Lomond from Port aux Basques, N.L. He said life was never the same after Hurricane Fiona struck the town in September 2022, destroying his fishing stage and five homes of family members.

Lomond’s mother’s next-door neighbour was killed when her home was swept into the ocean. He said “even the land is unrecognizable, everything is bare ground, bedrock. It’s unbelievable how clean the ocean swept everything out.”

But one of the hardest things post-hurricane for Lomond has been the loss of community, he

said. Families who had lived next to one another for years were spread out and separated after the storm, destroying the sense of community that had developed over generations.

“I’ve got an uncle, and he’s elderly and he’s blind, so he needs to go into assisted living. There’s no nursing homes or assisted living homes available in Port aux Basques, so he had to move hundreds of kilometers away from his family and all his support,” he said. “That was pretty common. People just couldn’t find homes after all the homes were lost.”

Lomond’s artifact in the exhibit is a life preserver, the one surviving part of his fishing stage. The throw line attached to the preserver snagged it and kept it fixed in the cove for 18 months until clean-up crews picked it up.

“It was kind of like my home away from home,” he said of the fishing stage. “I spent a lot of time there, we would stay there, have meetings there, all kinds of stuff, and there was nothing left of it but the life preserver,” he said.

Like Fandrich, Lomond said he hopes that putting a human face to the data on disasters would encourage politicians to act.

“There’s a basis to the numbers and the data and that they’ve got to get to work and try to find

some meaningful solutions,” he said.

In December 2023, the federal government announced a proposed regulatory framework for requiring 2030 emissions at 35 to 38 per cent below 2019 levels in the fossil fuel sector, as part of a longer-term goal of reducing emissions in the sector to net zero by 2050. Oil and gas firms would also be able to purchase offset credits or add to a decarbonization fund under the proposed framework, and would therefore be subject only to a 20 to 23 per cent cut compared to 2019 levels.

Final regulations on the cap are planned for 2025. But the plan faces opposition from the Alberta government, which launched a \$7-million advertising campaign both inside and outside the province calling for the federal government to abandon the idea.

Curtis said the exhibit in Ottawa is to encourage the swift implementation of the cap.

“We know that these storms are getting worse, we know that these fires are getting worse every year,” he said. “We know that the cause is linked directly to oil and gas emissions, and we know that in Canada’s case, the biggest portion of our emissions come from oil and gas corporations, and so there is a particular need to fix that.”

Prior to the exhibit, Curtis said some MPs had reached out to either show interest in attending, or to meet with the survivors to hear their stories. Asked whether such exhibits would form a regular feature of federal advocacy, Curtis said it would depend on logistics and participants’ willingness.

“We are asking people to come out here and share these stories, and that’s a lot of work for them,” he said. “I feel tired after each one of these. I can’t imagine how they feel... there’s hope for an immediate outcome, but definitely continuing to share these stories is going to be a priority for us.”

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‘Extreme apprehension’: Canada holds its breath as U.S. election enters final stage

While the race sits on a knife’s edge, residents on both sides of the border fear violence and uncertainty will plague the presidential election.

Continued from page 1

had the highest figures in their respective demographics.

In the U.S., an Associated Press-NORC Centre for Public Affairs Research survey of 1,072 Americans found 41 per cent were extremely or very concerned about violent attempts to overturn the Nov. 5 election results, and another 35 per cent were somewhat concerned.

The last U.S. presidential election in 2020 was marred both by violence and attempts to overturn the result from the Trump campaign. Trump has repeatedly denied that he lost the election to Joe Biden, and has continued to make baseless allegations about widespread fraud that robbed him of a second term.

Those lies about his defeat culminated in a violent mob of Trump supporters storming the U.S. Capitol building as legislators certified the election results on Jan. 6, 2021, forcing politicians to evacuate. A subsequent U.S. Senate report found seven people died.

“The events of Jan. 6 a little over three years ago aren’t far enough to be a distant memory, and so certainly, there’s some concern,” said Andrew Enns, executive vice-president of Leger’s Central Canada operations. He noted that the 65 per cent of respondents concerned about violence and uncertainty was close to the 70 per cent who said they were very or somewhat interested in the election.

“The comments by Mr. Trump, worrying about a free election, and repercussions that get reported up here and picked up in the media certainly have created some concern that the results may not be fully accepted,” he said.

This year’s campaign has already been marred by both violence and vote tampering. Trump survived an assassination attempt during a July 13 rally in Butler, Penn. In September, Secret Service agents fired at a man pointing a rifle barrel at the Trump International Golf Club in Florida as Trump was golfing.

Meanwhile, two drop boxes in Oregon and Washington were set alight on Oct. 28, destroying hundreds of ballots. Trump has



Polls during the final weeks of the campaign have shown the race between U.S. Vice-President Kamala Harris, left, and former president Donald Trump as a toss-up. Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons and Gage Skidmore/Flickr

already told supporters in Wisconsin that cheating was the “only way they’re [his opponents] going to win,” according to NBC News.

McKay said the sowing of doubt or violence after the election is a “virtual certainty.”

“Whether it will actually happen on election day, or subsequently, who actually knows?” he said. “[Trump is] already paving the ground for saying that the election was stolen, but of course, if he wins, that it wasn’t stolen... and he’s so coarse in the dialogue that it’s an expectation of violence rather than an apprehension of violence, and that’s not a good development.”

McKay said that such normalization of violence had spilled over to an extent into this country where he noted that MPs now have more security than in previous years.

“It’s not the world that we lived in even two or three years ago,” he said, adding that Canada and the United States are in “effectively one ecosystem, and I like to think that we are immune from that sort of thing, but we’re not.”

“Trump is not exclusively to blame, but he certainly brought gasoline to the fire,” McKay said. “When you move an apprehension or concern about violence to

The latest polls close in each swing state (Ottawa time)	
7 P.M.	Georgia
7:30 P.M.	North Carolina
8 P.M.	Pennsylvania
9 P.M.	Arizona
9 P.M.	Michigan
9 P.M.	Wisconsin
10 P.M.	Nevada

almost certainty of violence, you have degraded the ability of democracies to cope and, in effect, to invite dictatorial instincts into your democracy.”

Beyond a disputed election, if he does win, Trump has promised to use the apparatus of the state against his political enemies, including using the U.S. Department of Justice and military to target those he perceives as being disloyal.

Those positions may hold sway over a significant portion of the American voting public, but the Leger poll showed it is incredibly unpopular among Canadians. It showed, if it were up to Canadians, Harris would win in a

landslide with 64 per cent support to Trump’s 21 per cent.

The Democratic candidate was the most popular choice among all Canadian political party supporters except the Conservative Party and People’s Party—both the Bloc Québécois and NDP voters showed 90 per cent support, Liberals 88 per cent, and Greens 86 per cent.

Trump won the backing of a plurality of Conservative supporters—at 45 per cent—ahead of 42 per cent for Harris, though both candidates tied at 42 per cent among Tories on which candidate’s election would provide the best outcome for Canada.

Conservatives also saw Harris over Trump as the best candidate on climate change and trade relations with China, though they saw the Republican candidate as better placed on the economy, immigration, national security, and conflicts in Ukraine and the Middle East.

“A lot of the policies that the Democrats espouse tend to be more centrist and pragmatic than certainly some of the more prominent policies that often get picked up in the Canadian media that the Republicans put forward,” Enns said. “Take the fixation on abortion among some Republicans. In this

country, certainly the extreme side of the small-c conservatives will put that forward, but by and large, it’s not really a mainstream policy like it is in the U.S.”

Enns said the lessons Canadian political leaders could take from those figures would be to take a balanced approach, especially those aspiring to be prime minister.

“Like it or not, whatever the outcome in the United States, it’s going to be very important that Canada has, at a minimum, a good working relationship with that individual, regardless of how your party’s supporters feel about the person,” he said.

McKay agreed. He said that, regardless of the result, Canada needs a “continuous upping of its game” in relations with the U.S., whether being present at legislator conferences, improving business ties, or preparing for the coming Canada-United States-Mexico negotiations in July 2025.

“Not only should we have figured out the strategy going into that, but we also need to have dealt with whatever irritants that we can unilaterally deal with, so that we’re not providing points of irritation, but we should also have our own agenda,” he said.

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News

Amid growing questions over his leadership, Trudeau looks ahead as PMO vets some MPs for cabinet and PS positions

Continued from page 1

the Quebec provincial Liberal leadership. Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) subsequently assigned that portfolio to Treasury Board President Anita Anand (Oakville, Ont.). Other recent announcements include Northern Affairs Minister Dan Vandal (Saint Boniface-Saint Vital, Man.), Revenue Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau (Compton-Stanstead, Que.), Minister for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario Filomena Tassi (Hamilton West-Ancaster-Dundas, Ont.), and Sport Minister Carla Qualtrough (Delta, B.C.).

Some MPs speculate that an additional one or more cabinet ministers may also announce at some point in future that they won't re-offer next time around. In most cases, when a cabinet minister decides not to run, they co-ordinate the timing of the announcement with the PMO. While Rodriguez jumped into provincial politics in September, the other four ministers formally announced their plans not to run again in mid-October, though it had been known for weeks and in some cases months that they would not seek re-election.

If any of the current parliamentary secretaries are promoted to cabinet, their positions will be filled by backbenchers. Some parliamentary secretaries, such as Pam Damoff (Oakville North-Burlington, Ont.) and Francis Drouin (Glengarry-Prescott-Russell, Ont.), have already announced they will not seek re-election.

Most Hill insiders predict the next cabinet shuffle will occur after the Nov. 5 U.S. presidential election to make necessary adjustments depending on whether Donald Trump or Kamala Harris wins. During Trump's first term, Deputy Prime Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) served as foreign affairs minister, and was the lead Canadian official to renegotiate NAFTA, now known as Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement in this country. Regardless of who wins the presidency, that agreement is due for renewal on July 1, 2026, which will likely prompt changes in Canada's foreign policy team, potentially impacting other portfolios.

The newly shuffled cabinet is expected to be the one that will



Liberal national campaign director Andrew Bevan, left, and PMO director of operations Jeff Valois head into the Oct. 30 caucus meeting. Bevan briefed caucus on the state of party's election readiness, and showed them the ads the party plans on releasing in the coming days. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

lead the Liberal Party into the next election.

Meanwhile, Trudeau is still facing leadership challenges within his own caucus. At the Oct. 23 national Liberal caucus meeting on the Hill, 24 MPs presented a letter to Trudeau calling on him to step down by Oct. 28. Liberal MP Patrick Weiler (West Vancouver-Sunshine Coast-Sea to Sky Country, B.C.) read the letter to the caucus in Trudeau's presence, then handed it to the prime minister. Instead of waiting until the deadline, Trudeau said on Oct. 24 that he was staying on, and has no plans to leave.

According to Liberal caucus sources, about 50 MPs spoke during the Oct. 23 meeting, with roughly half supporting Trudeau, and the other half opposing his continued leadership. Sources said that the number of caucus members who believe Trudeau should step down before the next election may be even larger than those who expressed their opinions at the meeting.

The primary reasons for these MPs' dissatisfaction are their party's lagging position trailing the Conservatives by as much as 22 points in the polls, and the recent byelection losses in traditionally safe Liberal ridings—Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont., and LaSalle-Émard-Verdun, Que. If current seat projections hold until the next election, Pierre Poilievre's (Carleton, Ont.) Conservatives could secure a super majority. While the next election is scheduled for Oct. 20, 2025, an earlier election is possible, and public opinion may shift by then.

In September, former Liberal campaign director Jeremy Broadhurst left for "family reasons."

According to *The Toronto Star*, he informed the prime minister that, based on his assessment, Trudeau could not win the next election, and should bring in a new campaign director who believes Trudeau can lead the party to victory.

At the Oct. 30 national caucus meeting, according to Liberal sources, no MP explicitly raised the issue of leadership. However, that evening, Liberal MPs Ali Ehsassi (Willowdale, Ont.) and Alexandra Mendès (Brossard-St. Lambert, Que.) appeared on CBC's *Power & Politics*, advocating for a secret ballot vote within the Liberal caucus in the interests of party unity and transparency. They pointed out that senior cabinet ministers, including Freeland and Health Minister Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.), claim that Trudeau has the support of the "vast majority" of the caucus. At the Oct. 23 caucus meeting, both Ehsassi and Mendès urged Trudeau to resign, citing feedback from their constituents.

"If nothing else, it would put the question to rest," said Mendès told CBC *Power & Politics* host David

Cochrane. "It would give a definite answer on caucus support for the prime minister's leadership because it would be the most reasonable, and I would say clearer way of making that [determination]."

Ehsassi echoed the same view to Cochrane: "What I have heard outside caucus during the course of the past several days is ministers repeat, ad nauseam, that the prime minister has the support of the overwhelming number of caucus members," said Ehsassi. "So that's one thing I've been hearing. Another thing here is ministers are those who purport to speak on behalf of the government [say this issue] is settled. Listening to what those individuals are saying, seems to me that we can put this behind us. It's important that we be united, and that no one has any doubt that this party is united and looking forward to marching forward and making sure that Pierre Poilievre does not form the next government."

Mendès denied that the internal debate is weakening the Liberal Party, arguing that, in a democracy, MPs should be allowed to discuss such issues internally. However, other senior cabinet ministers and backbench supporters of the prime minister oppose the idea of a secret ballot vote or even discussion on this topic, viewing it as aiding the Conservatives.

Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.), who was first elected in 1999, said that her colleagues should focus on defeating Poilievre rather than discussing a secret ballot on Trudeau's leadership. She said that the number of MPs questioning Trudeau's leadership is shrinking, and expressed no concern over the leader's current unpopularity.

"I've been through five leaders, [Trudeau] is my fifth leader," said Sgro. "Most of the time they're unpopular, but we still managed to win."

Sgro won her seat in the last election with 60.7 per cent of the vote, and was first elected in a byelection under then-prime minister Jean Chrétien. The Paul Martin-led Liberals won the 2004 election, but were defeated in 2006. The Liberals lost two more elections in the 2008 and 2011 under then-leaders Stéphane Dion and Michael Ignatieff, respectively. However, the party returned to power in 2015 under Trudeau, and subsequently won the 2019 and 2021 elections.

Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne (Saint Maurice-Champlain, Que.) said that Trudeau has said numerous times that he is staying on as party leader and will lead the Liberals in the next election. He said that

now MPs should work together to win the next election, and not engage in leadership discussion.

"The vote that really matters, the vote of confidence of all is the one of Canadians [on election day]," said Champagne. "My view is to make sure we now work together, earn the trust of Canadians, win the next election and continue to deliver for Canadians."

Holland said that there's no process in the party to allow for a secret ballot vote on Trudeau's leadership. He also seemed to argue that the grassroots party members elect a party leader, and they should be the one to make a change if they want.

"We have a [party] constitution that determines the leadership process in our party, and he [Trudeau] absolutely has the support of caucus, but I think party members would not only be confused but angry if we circumvented the convention," Holland told reporters in a scrum. "I've been a party member since I was first allowed to be at 14 years old. I took my voting responsibilities before I was legally allowed to vote in elections—but I could do it in party processes—very seriously, and to override that because a member has an opinion and they want to force that process on the rest of us ... It doesn't make sense."

The Liberal caucus never adopted the Reform Act, which would have allowed it to hold a leadership review. Passed in 2015, the Reform Act grants parliamentary caucuses the option to adopt four specific powers. By law, all parliamentary caucuses with official party status must hold a vote at their first post-election meeting to decide whether to adopt these powers for that session.

The available measures include: the power to elect the caucus chair; the power to elect an interim leader if needed, the power to vote on the expulsion or re-admittance of a caucus member; and the power to remove the leader.

Meanwhile, at last week's weekly caucus meeting, Andrew Bevan—former chief of staff to Freeland and the newly appointed campaign director—and his team gave a presentation to the caucus, sharing in broad terms the strategy and the party's state of election readiness. They also showed caucus members the ads that the party is planning on releasing in the coming days. Along with Bevan, Marjorie Michel, deputy campaign director; Azam Ishmael, the Liberal Party's national director, and Terry Duguid (Winnipeg South, Man.), national campaign co-chair, conducted the approximately 40 minute briefing, which was followed by a session in which MPs asked questions, and the four senior Liberals provided answers.

"Bevan is hungry for success, he's very accessible to MPs," one Liberal MP told *The Hill Times*, who spoke on a not-for-attribution basis because they were commenting on a presentation that took place in the caucus which is always a confidential meeting.

This MP and others said that Bevan assumed his new position only two weeks ago, and he's still working on coming up with a detailed comprehensive plan.

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Katie Telford, the prime minister's chief of staff, arrives on the Hill on Oct. 30. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Government House Leader Karina Gould, left, Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer, Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet, Green MP Mike Morrice, and NDP MP Leah Gazan. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Conservative filibuster costing millions of dollars, say NDP and Green MPs

The impasse in Parliament is now in its fourth week as Conservatives continue to demand the feds release unreacted SDTC documents to RCMP.

Continued from page 1

it costs to run the House per hour or per day.

“We don’t have that figure for the daily cost of running the House of Commons. We cannot provide it because too many factors come into play: fixed versus variable costs, salary of employees working on any given day, number of sitting days in a year, etc.,” said Mathieu Gravel, director of media relations in the House Speaker’s Office, to *The Hill Times*.

When asked to clarify their numbers, the NDP pointed to a 13-year-old *iPolitics* article, while MacGregor said he heard his figure from a previous filibuster.

“It was a figure that I’d heard when we were doing our all-night voting marathon back in December. I’d heard other MPs mention it, so it was off the top of my head. It was kind of a ballpark figure, but the fact remains that it does cost many tens of thousands of dollars an hour to run this place in over a day. And right now we’ve had three weeks of a Con-

servative filibuster,” MacGregor told *The Hill Times*. “The taxpayers are footing that bill.”

Government House Leader Karina Gould (Burlington, Ont.) told *The Hill Times* that the Conservatives are “completely reckless with taxpayers’ dollars, and they are wasting people’s time obstructing their own obstruction motion.”

In response, the Conservatives lay the blame on the governing Liberals.

“The Liberals have no one else to blame but themselves. The Liberals have paralyzed Parliament with their \$400-million Green Slush Fund scandal,” said Conservative House Leader Andrew Scheer (Regina—Qu’Appelle, Sask.), in a statement to *The Hill Times*.

Scheer is referring to the Sustainable Development Technology Canada (SDTC)—a now-defunct green-tech fund that the auditor general found to have approved millions of dollars for ineligible projects and had conflict-of-interests concerns.

Commons’ costs

The House has been in the filibuster since Sept. 26—translating to roughly over 67 hours across 20 sitting days.

On that day, House Speaker Greg Fergus (Hull—Aylmer, Que.) ruled that the government’s failure to provide records related to the now-defunct SDTC constituted a violation of parliamentary privilege. The initial motion in June came from Scheer, asking for the release all documents related to SDTC to

be turned over to the RCMP. That bill was backed by all opposition parties, and approximately a dozen departments submitted records.

But some of those records were withheld or redacted, which prompted Scheer to raise a question of privilege in September and argued the government was in contempt for not fully complying with the House order. Fergus then ruled there was a *prima facie* case of privilege and recommended the matter be moved to the Procedure and House Affairs Committee (PROC).

The subsequent debate has centred on such a motion for the matter to go to PROC, but there has not yet been a closure motion to end debate, and Conservative MPs have continuously been chosen to speak on the matter, as well as to amendments.

As for the cost? The only official dollar number available is the yearly price tag it costs to run the House.

According to the House of Commons’ 2023-2024 *Annual Financial Report*, the total net operating expenses for the ‘House Administration program’ was \$271.6-million in the last fiscal year.

Not including the salaries of MPs, it cost nearly \$240-million to pay the salaries of House employees.

About \$29.8-million was spent on parliamentary precinct operations, which included transportation, printing, and mail processing.

Another \$32.6-million went towards procedural services like parliamentary publications, the page program, and the management of petitions.

The parliamentary cafeterias and restaurant helped the House recoup some of those costs, with \$3.6-million in food service sales made during the last fiscal year.

For the 2023-2024 fiscal year, MPs sat a total of 117 days in the House. However, some House services continue operating during non-sitting days and the summer, like Hill security.

Documents dispute

Other activities like Question Period, MPs’ statements, and committee work have continued during the filibuster, but debate on other bills have been stalled since the Conservatives’ privilege motion takes precedent on House business.

Despite legislative business in the House coming to a halt, MPs have been largely beset by other political issues in recent weeks.

Those include discord within the Liberal caucus over Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s (Papineau, Que.) leadership, the Bloc Québécois’ ultimatum on Old Age Security and supply management, and a diplomatic dispute with India.

Gould has ruled out prorogation to end the impasse in Parliament, while the Conservatives say they can end their point of privilege debate once the Liberals hand over all the unredacted SDTC documents.

“Their refusal to hand over evidence to the RCMP forced the Liberal Speaker to suspend all other government legislation. It can all end today if the Liberals end the coverup and release all of the documents as ordered by Parliament,” said Scheer in a statement.

But Gould said the Conservatives’ calls for SDTC documents to be given to the RCMP is “completely inappropriate.”

“Quite frankly, [Conservatives are] not fit to lead this country because they are trying to use their extraordinary powers in Parliament to get around due process, to compromise police independence, to get around the Charter rights of Canadians. And it’s time for them to stop abusing

their power and to allow parliamentarians to get back to work on behalf of Canadians,” Gould told *The Hill Times*.

Waiting for the punchline

Now that the deadline for the government to meet the Bloc’s OAS and supply management ultimatums have passed, the party has started talks with other parties to bring down the Liberal government at the first available opportunity.

But Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet (Be-loeil-Chambly, Que.) said that everybody has forgotten why the official Opposition has stopped the functioning of Parliament.

He added that Conservatives were “working against their own intention,” given the Tories need Parliament to resume working in order for opposition MPs to officially vote non-confidence and topple the Liberal government.

“If the Conservatives want the government to fall, they will have to stop being childish,” Blanchet told reporters on Oct. 29.

When reporters asked NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) if he would support a motion to end the filibuster, he wouldn’t say. But Singh did lay the blame for the standstill on both the Liberals and the Conservatives.

“The Conservatives are in here just playing games, locking up the House, locking up everything. But the Liberals are also to blame, too. At a time when people are hurting, the Liberals just need to provide transparency, and we can move forward,” Singh said to reporters on Oct. 30.

“So both the Liberals and the Conservatives are playing games in the House.”

Until a solution can be found, the House appears to be stuck in a time loop.

Bloc Québécois MP Denis Trudel (Longueuil-Saint-Hubert, Que.), a former actor, likened the impasse to his time setting the pace of a scene.

“We have been talking about the same thing, the same motion, just this one thing, for three weeks now,” asked Trudel in French in the Chamber on Oct. 28.

“When are we going to get to the punchline? When are we going to vote?”

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2023-2024 Annual Financial Report Financial Results

HOUSE ADMINISTRATION PROGRAM	
2023-2024 NET RESULTS	
Salaries and benefits	\$239.0-million
Transportation and telecommunications	\$3.8-million
Professional and special services	\$15.2-million
Rental and licences	\$6.0-million
Computer and office equipment, furniture and fixtures	\$12.6-million
Utilities, materials and supplies	\$5.8-million
Advertising and printing services	\$139,000
Amortization of tangible capital	\$10.3-million
Repairs and maintenance	\$5.4-million
Transfer payments to international associations	\$233,000
Net loss (gain) on disposal of tangible capital assets	\$26,000
Other costs	\$125,000
Cost recoveries	(\$23.7-million)
Food service sales	(\$3.6-million)
Other revenues	(\$68,000)
Total net operating expenses	\$271.6-million

Source: House of Commons

The Big Photo

NDP MP Matthew Green speaks with reporters in the House of Commons foyer before Question Period on Oct. 28, 2024. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade





Stuart Benson

Party Central

Kirbie's fledgling Blackbird flock celebrates first half-decade on the Hill

Blackbird Strategies founder and CEO Lisa Kirbie celebrated her strategic capital roost's fifth birthday on Oct. 30 at the Métropolitain Brasserie with friends and colleagues.

Politicos, First Nations elders, politicians, and staffers flocked to the Métropolitain Brasserie on Oct. 30 for Blackbird Strategies' fifth birthday, and, for once, **Party Central** was even able to make an appearance. After missing its third-anniversary reception in 2022 due to a scheduling miscommunication, this reporter was determined not to deliver another snub to **Lisa Kirbie**, Blackbird's founder and CEO.

Arriving just before 6 p.m., **Party Central** was one of the first guests to arrive at the party, including, ironically, Kirbie herself, who made a more fashionably late entrance once a larger crowd had gathered, as was her right. However, most of her staff were already snagging a couple of group photos with friend of the column **Cynthia Münster**, a former reporter and *The Hill Times* photographer.

Since establishing her strategic roost in Ottawa on Nov. 1, 2019, Kirbie's flock has grown to 11, plus two associates, most of whom were in attendance. This allowed **Party Central** to finally make the IRL acquaintance of several phone-interview-only sources, including **Dan Pujdak**, chief strategy officer, and **Olivier Cullen**, Blackbird's director of strategy. Additional fun fact: consultant **Maddy Eisenberg** and **Party Central** both attended Algonquin College together, though Eisenberg was in the broadcast and radio program, and you get one guess which program this reporter was in.

Once the rest of the night's crowd began to arrive—and were given some slight prodding to migrate away from their gaggle between the washrooms and rear bar, and into the main reception area—**Party Central** got to chatting with Blackbird's **Cameron Penner**, **Tom Potter**, and Global Public Affairs' **Curtis O'Nyon** about the month-long-plus limbo in which the House of Commons is still stuck, and the Liberal caucus' palace intrigue.

Scattered around the other candlelit tables draped with soft-pink tablecloths, **Party Central**

spotted Champagne and Aishihik First Nations Chief **Barb Joe**, Carcross-Tagish First Nation Deputy Chief **Darla-Jean Lindstrom**, Crestview Strategy's **Sam O'Grady** and **Alexander Byrne-Krzycki**, Greenshield's **Rob Rosenfeld**, CTV's **Vassy Kapelos**, the NDP's **Anne McGrath**, and KAN Strategies' **Greg MacEachern**. MacEachern is also owed an apology as **Party Central** cut him off mid-sentence to make a mad dash to the shrimp and oyster tray served moments before.

There was also an assortment of Liberal MPs, ministers, and staffers, including Mental Health Minister **Ya'ara Saks** and International Development Minister **Ahmed Hussen**, Liberal MPs **Marco Mendicino**, **Jennifer O'Connell**, and **Darren Fisher**, and newly Independent MP **Pablo Rodriguez**, who had popped back to Ottawa from Quebec following an event for his campaign to lead the Quebec Liberals.

Of note, all the photographs in this column are always taken with full consent rather than from a hidden position across the bar. That's the **Party Central** promise: any awkward photos taken by a weird dude hanging out alone at the bar are captured with complete journalistic integrity and transparency.

After the guests settled in and had either partaken of the Met buffet featuring mini beef sliders, aforementioned shrimp and oysters, make-your-own-poutine station, or traded in a few of their complimentary drink tickets, Blackbird's vice president **Travis Boissoneau** and Kirbie took to the mic for a few words.

Half a decade after taking flight over the skies of Ottawa on Nov. 1, 2019, Kirbie, who described herself as an "accidental CEO," said she's happy to have finally found her flock, and work that no longer keeps her up in the dead of night.

So, to five more years of restful nights and new daily heights. Happy Birthday, Blackbird!

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The Hill Times



Hussen and Kirbie.



Travis Boissoneau, vice-president of Blackbird Strategies, speaks at Blackbird's reception.



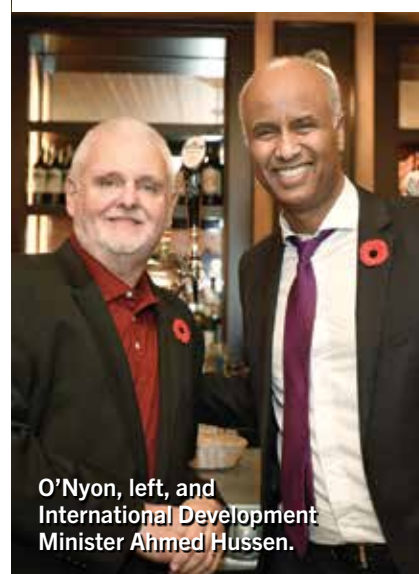
Global Public Affairs' Curtis O'Nyon, left, Liberal MP Marco Mendicino and Anne McGrath, principal secretary to NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh.



Lynne Hamilton, left, CEO of Local Consultants Inc., and Lisa Kirbie, founder and CEO of Blackbird Strategies.



The Blackbird Strategies flock: Riley Wong, left, Annalisa Harris, Dan Pujdak, Naomi Steele, Lisa Kirbie, Aaron O'Quinn, Tom Potter, Olivier Cullen, Cameron Penner, Maddy Eisenberg, and Travis Boissoneau.



O'Nyon, left, and International Development Minister Ahmed Hussen.



Liberal MPs Jen O'Connell, left, and Darren Fisher, and KAN Strategies' Greg MacEachern.



Mental Health Minister Ya'ara Saks, left, and Blackbird's Naomi Steele.



Greenshield's Rob Rosenfeld, left, and McGrath.



Kirbie, O'Connell, and Fisher.



Meron Cheway, left, staffer with Women and Gender Equality Minister Marcia Ieri, and CTV News' Vassy Kapelos.

The Hill Times photographs by Cynthia Münster



Laura Ryckewaert
Hill Climbers

Mental Health Minister Saks hires new press secretary

Plus, Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech has a new Quebec regional adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary on his team.

Mental Health and Addictions Minister **Ya'ara Saks** recently hired a new press secretary to her office, which is now run by acting chief of staff **Jeremy Proulx**.

Proulx stepped in as acting chief at the start of October, following **Sarah Welch**'s official exit from the role.

Welch's then-upcoming exit was first reported in September as one among a number of end-of-summer chief of staff departures, a list that also included **Peter Wilkinson**, now-former chief of staff to Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly**, whose office is now run by acting chief **Alexandre Boulé**; and **Jude Welch**, who left the helm of Canadian Heritage Minister **Pascale St-Onge**'s office, where **Michael Lartigau** is now acting chief.

Two other ministers saw their chiefs of staff depart in August: National Revenue Minister **Marie-Claude Bibeau**, who has announced she won't run for re-election and whose office is now run by acting chief **Marianne Dandurand**; and Environment and Climate Change Minister **Steven Guilbeault** who has promoted **Joanna Dafee** as his new chief.

Since then, following last month's mini-cabinet shuffle, **Anson Duran**, who had been chief of staff to then-transport minister **Pablo Rodriguez**, bade the Hill farewell. **Vasken Vosguian** is now acting chief of staff for transport to Treasury Board President and Transport Minister **Anita Anand**, whose Treasury Board office continues to be run by **Monique Lugli**.

Proulx has spent the last year as director of parliamentary affairs to Saks, and has been working for the federal mental health and addictions minister since the 2021 election, starting as an issues manager to then-minister **Carolyn Bennett**.

Prior to the post-election shuffle that saw Bennett moved into the mental health portfolio, Proulx had worked as an issues manager in her office as then-Crown-Indigenous relations minister since September 2020. He's also a former assistant to Quebec Liberal MP **Élisabeth Brière**, a former 2019 summer intern in then-international development minister **Maryam Monsef**'s office, and a former staffer at Quebec's national assembly, among other past jobs.

On Oct. 10, **Callum Haney** officially joined Saks' office as the minister's new press secretary and issues adviser.



Mental Health and Addictions Minister Ya'ara Saks, pictured, has tapped Callum Haney to field her media requests. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Haney was hired fresh from Diversity, Inclusion, and Persons with Disabilities Minister **Kamal Khara**'s shop; he marked his last day with Khara's team where he had most recently been an Atlantic regional affairs and outreach adviser, on Oct. 2.



Callum Haney is now press secretary and issues adviser to Minister Saks. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Haney was first hired as an issues manager and assistant to the parliamentary secretary to Khara in October 2023, and previously spent roughly two years as a staffer with the Liberal research bureau, beginning as a special assistant for outreach and ending as a communications adviser. According to his LinkedIn profile, he also has some relevant experience as a former communications projects officer with York University.

Yuval Daniel is director of communications to Saks whose team currently also includes: **Fara Shah**, director of policy; **Julia Duncan**, senior policy adviser; **Hillary Morgan**, director of operations; **Courtney White**, senior operations and outreach

Rachel Bendayan, a legislative adviser in the office of then-Senate Speaker **George Furey**, and an assistant to former Notre-Dame-de-Grâce-Westmount, Que., Liberal MP **Marc Garneau**.

Almost a month after Desjardins' exit, on Oct. 23, **Osman Omer** started with Beech's team as the minister's new Quebec adviser and assistant to the parliamentary secretary—a role currently filled by Liberal MP **Stéphane Lauson**. Though previously referred to as Osman Abdalazez, **Hill Climbers** understands his preferred name is Osman Omer.



Osman Omer is now working for Minister Beech. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Omer was most recently an operation and outreach adviser to Anand as Treasury Board president, having first been hired to that office last January. Omer studied public administration and governance at McGill University between 2021 and 2023 as part of its school of continuing studies, during which time he was active with the school, including serving a term as president of the McGill Association of Continuing Education Students, and as a member of the McGill Board of Governance, among other things.

Along with a few certificates, Omer's LinkedIn profile notes he also holds a bachelor's degree in electronic and communications engineering from the University of Nottingham.

Ryan Cotter is chief of staff to Beech. Currently covering the minister's other regional desks are: **Tenzin Chogkyi**, regional adviser for Ontario; **Daniel Schnurr**, special assistant for Atlantic regional and parliamentary affairs; and **Justine Vincent**, parliamentary affairs, issues management, and regional affairs adviser for the West and North.

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The Hill Times



Citizens' Services Minister Terry Beech has hired a new Quebec adviser and parliamentary secretary's assistant following a recent staff exit. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

U.S. presidential election happens Tuesday, Nov. 5



The U.S. presidential election will happen on Tuesday, Nov. 5. Former U.S. president and current Republican candidate Donald Trump, left, will face off against the Democrats' presidential candidate, current Vice-President Kamala Harris. Photographs courtesy of Wikimedia Commons/Flickr

MONDAY, NOV. 4

House Sitting—The House sits Nov. 4-Nov. 9, and breaks on Nov. 11 for Remembrance Day week until Nov. 15. It resumes again on Nov. 18, and is scheduled to sit from Nov. 18 to Dec. 17.

Canada's Envoy to OECD to Deliver Remarks—Madeleine Chenette, Canada's ambassador to the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, will deliver remarks at a webinar hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Monday, Nov. 4, at 12:30 p.m. ET. Details online: cdhowe.org.

Book Launch: *The Adaptable Country*—McGill University hosts the launch of Alasdair Roberts' new book, *The Adaptable Country: How Canada Can Survive the 21st Century*. In a turbulent world, authoritarian rule is a tempting path to security. Canada's challenge is to show how political systems built to respect diversity and human rights can also respond nimbly to existential threats. Monday, Nov. 4, at 4 p.m. ET at the Faculty Club, 3450 rue McTavish, Montreal. Details: mcgill.ca.

Estonia's Digital Affairs Minister to Deliver Remarks—Invest Ottawa and the Embassy of Estonia host a high-level digital transformation and innovation event between Canada and Estonia featuring a panel discussion with Liisa-Ly Pakosta, Estonia's minister of justice and digital affairs, alongside her Canadian counterparts and tech reps from both nations. There is also an exhibition, "Why Estonia? From the USSR to e-Estonia." Monday, Nov. 4, at 6 p.m. ET at Bayview Yards, 7 Bayview Station Rd. Details via Eventbrite.

TUESDAY, NOV. 5

Senator Omidvar's Retirement—Today is Ontario ISG Senator Ratna Omidvar's 75th birthday, which means her mandatory retirement from the Senate.

U.S. Presidential Election—The U.S. presidential election will happen on Tuesday, Nov. 5. Former U.S. president and current Republican candidate Donald Trump will face off against the Democrats' presidential candidate, current Vice-President Kamala Harris.

Enbridge Gas CEO to Deliver Remarks—The Empire Club of Canada

hosts Enbridge President CEO Michele Harradence who will discuss with Hannah Thibedeau about "How Canada's Largest Gas Utility Is Becoming North America's Largest." Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 11:30 a.m. ET. Details: empireclubof-canada.com.

Premier Doug Ford in Ottawa—Ontario Premier Doug Ford will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Economic Club of Canada. Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 11:55 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Register: economicclub.ca.

CPRA Reception—The Canadian Parks and Recreation Association invites MPs and their staff to join them for an exclusive reception with leaders in the recreation and parks sector from across Canada. Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 12 p.m. ET in Room 310, Wellington Building, 180 Wellington St. Contact colleen@cpa.ca.

IRPP Fall Lecture—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a lecture. American author and political scientist Hahrie Han, an expert in political organizing and social movements, will offer an analysis of the U.S. presidential election. Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 5 p.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details online: irpp.org.

Canola Parliamentary Reception—The Canadian Canola Growers Association and the Canola Council of Canada host an invitation-only reception. Tuesday, Nov. 5, from 6-9 p.m. at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St. Details: julial@ccga.ca.

Democrats Abroad Election Watch Party—Canada's Capital Region of Democrats Abroad hosts an event on USA Election Day to watch the results. This event is open to the public. Media welcome. Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 5p.m. ET at the Carleton Tavern, 223 Armstrong St. Contact: davidschellenberg@gmail.com.

U.S. Election Watch Party—The Canadian International Council's National Capital Branch hosts a lively watch party to track the results of the 2024 U.S. presidential election in real time. Tuesday, Nov. 5, from 7-9 p.m. ET, at The Bridge Public House, 1 Donald St. Details via Eventbrite.

Ottawa Watch Party: 2024 U.S. Election—The Centre for Inquiry Canada—a non-partisan group of atheists,

agnostics, secular humanists, and critical thinkers—host a U.S. presidential election viewing party featuring trivia, analyses, predictions, an interactive map, lively discourse, some friendly debates, and a pool to guess the final voting percent and electoral college count. Tuesday, Nov. 5, at 8p.m. at the Lieutenant's Pump, 361 Elgin St. Details via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, NOV. 6

Bank of Canada Senior Deputy Governor to Deliver Remarks—Carolyn Rogers, the Bank of Canada's senior deputy governor, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Economic Club Of Canada. Wednesday, Nov. 6, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Sheraton Centre Toronto Hotel. Details: economicclub.ca.

CSIS Senior Official to Deliver Remarks—Nicole Giles, senior assistant deputy minister at CSIS, will discuss "Our Eyes Only: A Whole of Canada Approach to National Security Resiliency," an off-the-record event hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Wednesday, Nov. 6, at 12p.m. ET at 67 Yonge St., Suite 300, Toronto. Details: cdhowe.org.

World Sikh Organization Canada Reception—The World Sikh Organization of Canada hosts its annual Parliamentary Reception to commemorate its achievements over the past 40 years. Featuring a keynote address by Emmy Award-winning journalist and documentary filmmaker Angad Singh. Wednesday, Nov. 6, from 5-8p.m. ET at 228 Valour Building, 151 Sparks St. RSVP: mukhbirsingh@worldsikh.org.

Vimy Gala—The Conference of Defence Associations Institute hosts the 32nd annual Vimy Gala, the most exclusive defence and security recognition gala of its kind. Former chief of defence staff Walter Natynczyk will receive this year's Vimy Award. Wednesday, Nov. 6 at 6 p.m. ET at the Canadian War Museum. Details: cdainstitute.ca.

THURSDAY, NOV. 7

'Salute to Service and Security'—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a special lunch event in honour of Remembrance Day. Lt.-Gen. Michael Wright, commander of the Canadian Army, will deliver remarks on "Salute

to Service and Security: Honouring Our Veterans." Thursday, Nov. 7 at 11:30 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St. Details: canadianclubottawa.ca.

Kimberly Murray to Deliver Remarks—Kimberly Murray, independent special interlocutor for missing children and unmarked graves and burial sites, will deliver remarks at a lunch event hosted by the Canadian Club of Toronto. Thursday, Nov. 7, at 11:45 a.m. ET at the Fairmont Royal York, 100 Front St. W. Details: canadianclub.org.

Webinar: 'Blue Skies Ahead'—Bluesky Strategies hosts a post-U.S. election webinar, "Blue Skies Ahead." With the U.S. election on the horizon, it is time to look ahead to the future state of the Canada-U.S. relationship. Featuring Laura Dawson of Future Borders Coalition, Robert J. Johnston of GEOCAP Advisors, and Evan Solomon of GZERO Media. Thursday, Nov. 7 at 12p.m. ET happening online. RSVP: rsvp@blueskystrategygroup.com.

Book Launch: 'The Trudeau Record'—The Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives host the launch of its new book, *The Trudeau Record: Promise and Performance* edited by Katherine Scott, Laura Macdonald, and Stuart Trew. Thursday, Nov. 7, at 5 p.m. at Metropolitan Brasserie, 700 Sussex Dr. Details via Eventbrite.

Lecture: 'Home Truths to Homeward Bound'—The Institute for Research on Public Policy hosts a talk on "Home Truths to Homeward Bound: Deeply Affordable Housing to Address Canada's Housing Crisis." Housing expert Carolyn Whitzman will review the federal policies that have led to the current housing crisis, and examine how new government efforts can prioritize deeply affordable housing for Canadians who need it most. Thursday, Nov. 7 at 5 p.m. at IRPP, 1470 rue Peel, #200, Montreal. Details: irpp.org.

Book Launch: *A Communist for the RCMP*—Library and Archives Canada hosts the launch of Dennis Gruending's new book, *A Communist for the RCMP: The Uncovered Story of a Social Movement Informant*, the hidden story of a RCMP informant embedded within Canada's communist movements during the Cold War. Thursday, Nov. 7, at 7 p.m. at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St. Details via Eventbrite.

FRIDAY, NOV. 8

Jody Wilson-Raybould to Discuss Her New Book—Former Liberal justice minister Jody Wilson-Raybould and Roshan Danesh will discuss their new book, *Reconciling History: A Story of Canada*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Friday, Nov. 8, at 7 p.m. ET at Southminster Church, 15 Aylmer Ave. Details online: writersfestival.org.

An Evening with Minister Anand—Treasury Board President and Transport Minister Anita Anand will attend a dinner with Liberal MP Taleeb Noormohamed hosted by the Vancouver Granville Federal Liberal Association. Friday, Nov. 8 at 5:30 p.m. PT at a venue to be determined. Details: liberal.ca.

SATURDAY NOV. 9

Senator Clement Hosts Democracy Dialogue—ISG Senator Bernadette Clement hosts a discussion on how we can engage in constructive dialogue to promote a healthy democracy. Saturday, Nov. 9, at the Cornwall Public Library, 45 Second St. E., Cornwall, Ont. Details via Eventbrite.

Kings-Hants Liberal Fall Harvest Dinner—Liberal MP Kody Blois hosts a fundraising for his upcoming campaign featuring dinner with all the fixings made by the Port Williams Lions Club. Saturday, Nov. 9 at 6 p.m. AT at the Port Williams Community Centre, 1045 Main St., Port Williams, N.S. Details online: liberal.ca.

MONDAY, NOV. 11

Remembrance Day—Parliamentarians are in their ridings for Remembrance Day this week. A ceremony will take place at the National War Memorial in Ottawa.

Minister Champagne to Attend Event—Industry Minister François-Philippe Champagne will take part in a 5-à-7 event. Monday, Nov. 11 at 5:30p.m. ET at a location to be announced in Montreal. Details online: liberal.ca.

TUESDAY, NOV. 12

Stephen Harper to Receive Defender of Israel Award—Former prime minister Stephen Harper will receive the Defender of Israel Award at an event hosted by the Abraham Global Peace Initiative. Tuesday, Nov. 12, at the Meridian Arts Centre, 5040 Yonge St., North York, Ont. Details: agpiworld.com.

Ambassadors' Speaker Series—Indonesia's Ambassador to Canada, Daniel Tumpal S. Simanjuntak, will deliver remarks on "Indonesia and Canada: Forging Stronger Bilateral Ties for a Shared Future," part of the Ambassadors' Speaker Series hosted by Carleton University. Tuesday, Nov. 12, at 5:30 p.m. ET at The Westin Ottawa Hotel, 11 Colonel By Dr. Details: carleton.ca.

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