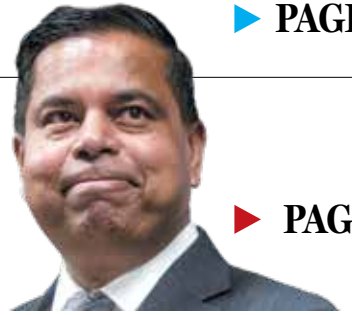


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Library and Archives Canada cuts a ‘disaster’
for information access: expert

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THIRTY-SEVENTH YEAR, NO. 2340

CANADA'S POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT NEWSPAPER

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NEWS

Carney shielded from political fallout from lagging U.S. trade talks as Canadians place blame on Trump, say pollsters



Prime Minister Mark Carney campaigned during the last election as being best positioned to strike a trade deal with the Americans. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

BY NEIL MOSS

Pollsters say Canadians won't blame Prime Minister Mark Carney for any potential shortcomings in his approach with the Trump administration.

Conservatives have criticized Carney (Nepean, Ont.) for offering “contradictions” on the agreement reached with United States President Donald Trump to open the Gordie Howe Bridge later this month.

In the 2025 federal election, Carney campaigned on being best positioned to negotiate with Trump. He pledged to work on an economic and security partnership with the U.S., which never developed. More recently, the American government has not indicated that it will renew the Canada-U.S.-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) for another 16-year term. Without a renewal, the deal will fold in 2036.

“On the trade front, there's a bit of political Teflon that he's

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NEWS

Feds urged to simplify procurement as contractors flag persistent issues with system

BY IREM KOCA

Federal contractors representing almost one-third of Canada's total spending on professional services since 2021 are urging the government to simplify its problem-plagued procurement process in a new report, highlighting issues the federal ombud says have persisted for many years as observers highlight reports of backsliding.

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), led by Minister Joël Lightbound (Louis-Hébert, Que.) launched a request for information (RFI) on July 16, 2025, on the Transformation of Professional Services Procurement to gather feedback on how contracting for professional services can be improved. The department received 73 written responses from contractors—most of which were small or medium-sized businesses—as of Jan. 16.

According to a subsequent report released by PSPC this past June, those 73 suppliers—who have secured a total of \$29.5-billion through federal contracts between the 2021-22 and 2025-26 fiscal years—have urged the government to simplify its complex contracting process.

The report revealed that suppliers highlighted persistent issues, such as stringent technical criteria that eliminates companies in earlier stages of the process, duplicated information in RFIs, unclear deliverables, and inconsistency in evaluation criteria that decides which supplier is selected to do the work. Suppliers also underlined the need for transparency, clear outcome definitions, measurable performance indicators, and balanced risk allocation.

“Many suppliers expressed interest in outcomes-based procurement, which focuses on

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NEWS

Construction of new welcome centre advances as scaffolding takes over Centre Block

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Construction of the new Parliament Welcome Centre has reached its final, topmost floor,

while excavations continue in Centre Block's two interior courtyards and masonry work moves ahead, with only months left before scaffolding along the his-

toric building's iconic south façade will shroud the Peace Tower.

This time last year, only the base—including footings, columns, elevator shafts, and

exterior walls—of the third and lowest level of the new underground Parliament Welcome

Heard on the Hill



By Christina Leadlay

Parties starting to mobilize candidates in seven yet-to-be-called byelections



Parties are mobilizing their candidates for future byelections in ridings recently vacated by ex-Liberal MP Jonathan Wilkinson, left, former Bloc MP Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, former Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, and erstwhile Conservative MP Richard Martel, as well as in three other ridings expected to be vacated by end of August. *The Hill Times* photographs by Andrew Meade

Three federal parties confirmed their candidates for a smattering of yet-to-be-called byelections across the country last week.

While a total of seven byelections are on the horizon, as of July 8, only four seats are officially vacant: one in British Columbia, one in Ontario, and two in Quebec.

So far, three candidates are running to replace former longtime Liberal MP **Jonathan Wilkinson** who resigned his North Vancouver–Capilano, B.C., seat on June 22. The Liberals confirmed on July 18 that **Braeden Caley**, the now-former principal secretary to Prime Minister **Mark Carney**, will run to keep the seat red. The Green Party of Canada announced July 15 that environmental scientist **Shelley Luce** has been acclaimed as its candidate. And Conservative Party communications director **Sarah Hill** confirmed to *Heard on the Hill* by email July 20 that lawyer **Stephen Curran** is running again in that riding. Curran placed second to Wilkinson in the April 2025 national election, garnering 33.68 per cent of the vote against Wilkinson's 59.83 per cent. As of publishing time, no NDP candidate has been announced. Elections Canada says a byelection must be called on or before Dec. 19.

The Quebec riding of Saint-Hyacinthe–Bagot–Acton is on the same schedule as its North Vancouver cousin, with

erstwhile Bloc MP **Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay** having left his seat the same day as Wilkinson. Last week, Bloc Québécois Leader **Yves-François Blanchet** announced **Caroline Émond**, a former Quebec delegate general to the European institutions in Brussels, will run to succeed Savard-Tremblay. As of July 20, no Liberal, Conservative or NDP candidates have been announced.

Vacant as of July 8 is the southern Ontario seat of Beaches–East York, which **Nathaniel Erskine-Smith** had kept Liberal since 2015. His former constituency office manager **Tanveer Shahnawaz** was confirmed on July 18 to run for the Liberals. Neither the Conservatives, NDP, nor Greens had chosen their respective candidates as of July 20.

The fourth vacant seat is Chicoutimi–Le Fjord, Que., which had belonged to four-term Conservative MP **Richard Martel** until July 7 when Carney appointed him to the Senate. None of the federal parties has chosen their candidates for the byelection that needs to be called by Jan. 5, 2027.

Meanwhile, there are three ridings which are technically still held, but whose incumbents will be resigning by the end of August.

While Liberal MP **Steven Guilbeault**'s date to quit his Laurier–Sainte-Marie, Que., seat isn't until Aug. 28, **HOH** has learned, the NDP confirmed last week it's lined up **Nima Machouf** to run there again. Machouf—an epidemiolo-

gist and Palestinian rights advocate—placed second to Guilbeault in April 2025, earning 18.81 per cent of the vote to his 52.07.

The left-wing party has also locked in **Pierre Céré** to succeed its erstwhile longtime MP **Alexandre Boulrice** in the riding of Rosemont–La Petite-Patrie, Que. Céré is a former spokesperson for the National Council of Unemployed Workers. Boulrice left the NDP on April 27, and now sits as an Independent with plans to resign once Quebec's provincial election is called, which should happen on Aug. 29, according to Elections Quebec. The only other party with a candidate for this forthcoming campaign is the Bloc, who confirmed on July 18 that executive director of the Union des artistes **Alexandre Curzi** will run.

Finally, in Yorkton–Melville, Sask., Conservative MP **Cathay Wagantall** declared on June 17 she would be stepping down on Aug. 31. Fischer confirmed that **Nelson Pohl** is the CPC candidate.

Fischer also told **HOH** that Conservative "candidates for the remaining byelection ridings will be announced in due course pursuant to the party's rules and procedures for candidate nominations," while the NDP's media team said in a July 20 email that "local riding associations are actively organizing in preparation for the upcoming byelections, and we expect to nominate candidates in the near future."

Anand taps new heads of mission to Ukraine, Greenland



Tamara Mawhinney, left, is Canada's new ambassador to Ukraine, while Corinne Petrisor is our new consul to Greenland. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade and photograph courtesy of LinkedIn

The season of diplomatic appointments continues, with Foreign Affairs Minister **Anita Anand** announcing two more on July 17.

Tamara Mawhinney will take over from **Natalia Cmoc** as Canada's ambassador to Ukraine. An attorney by training, Mawhinney has been with the department now known as Global Affairs since 1993, and has served abroad at Canada's permanent mission to the United Nations in New York City, twice at the embassy in France, the mission to the European Union, Canada's mission to the UN in Geneva, and most

recently as ambassador to Korea. She's also a former adviser to **Michaëlle Jean** as then-secretary general of La Francophonie.

And at our recently opened consulate in Nuuk, Greenland, acting consul **Julie Crêteau** hands over the keys to **Corinne Petrisor** who will be full consul. Following a career in the private sector, Petrisor joined GAC in 2009, working on commerce and trade policy including a stint as departmental adviser to the international trade minister. Her past postings include Canada's missions to Russia, Bangladesh, and most recently to Sweden.

Liberal MP Terry Duguid's dad has died

Liberal MP **Terry Duguid**'s father, **Don Duguid**, is being remembered for his sporting legacy.

Duguid senior died on July 15, aged 90, his son confirmed on social media last week. "While today is a difficult day for our family, we are also reflecting on his ... enduring legacy in the sport of curling as a two-time world curling champion and longtime broadcaster," posted the ex-cabinet minister who's been MP for Winnipeg South, Man., since 2015.

According to Curling Canada, Don Duguid's other curling accolades include having won three Briers in the 1960s. After hanging

up his broom, Duguid picked up the microphone and enjoyed a long career colour commenting curling games for the CBC and NBC. He was inducted in the Canadian Curling Hall of Fame, Canada's Sports Hall of Fame, and the World Curling Hall of Fame, and was also a member of the Order of Canada.

"Don Duguid helped define Canadian curling, first as a champion on the ice, and later as one of the game's most respected voices," posted Prime Minister **Mark Carney**.

"Your father's legacy is truly remarkable," added Secretary of State for Sport **Adam van Koeverden**.

Ex-Trudeau PMO staffer Cameron Ahmad has a new job

Cameron Ahmad, formerly with the Prime Minister's Office, has a new Toronto-based job.

"I'm thrilled to be joining the brilliant & talented Burson team," he posted on LinkedIn on July 16.

"A few months ago, I returned home to Canada following an incredible experience in New York with Malala Fund. Now, I'm looking forward to bringing my experience in politics, government, communications, and advocacy to Burson's impressive roster of clients."



Cameron Ahmad worked in communications for Justin Trudeau's Prime Minister's Office for almost a decade. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Ahmad first began working for then-Liberal leader **Justin Trudeau** in May 2014. When Trudeau led the party to a majority government in 2015, Ahmad "was among the first wave of staff hired to work in the Prime Minister's Office," according to an exit interview he gave **Hill Climbers** in 2023. Over nine years in the PMO, Ahmed led many roles including lead press secretary,

manager of media relations, and communications director. cleadlay@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times

‘A disaster’ for access, expert says as cuts push Library and Archives to end proactive declassification work

‘It’s just another tragedy in the access story,’ says historian Timothy Sayle of the decision to axe the three-year-old program, and part of a ‘broader pattern of underfunding access to information and preventing Canadians from studying Canada’s history.’

BY MZWANDILE PONCANA

Library and Archives Canada has ended proactive declassification activities that helped lower the security classification of historical government records, a move access and archival experts say removes one part of an already limited federal system for making older records easier to process and release.

It shuts down a function that, over three years, analyzed more than 1.2 million pages of historical records and saw departments approve recommendations to declassify 226,363 pages.

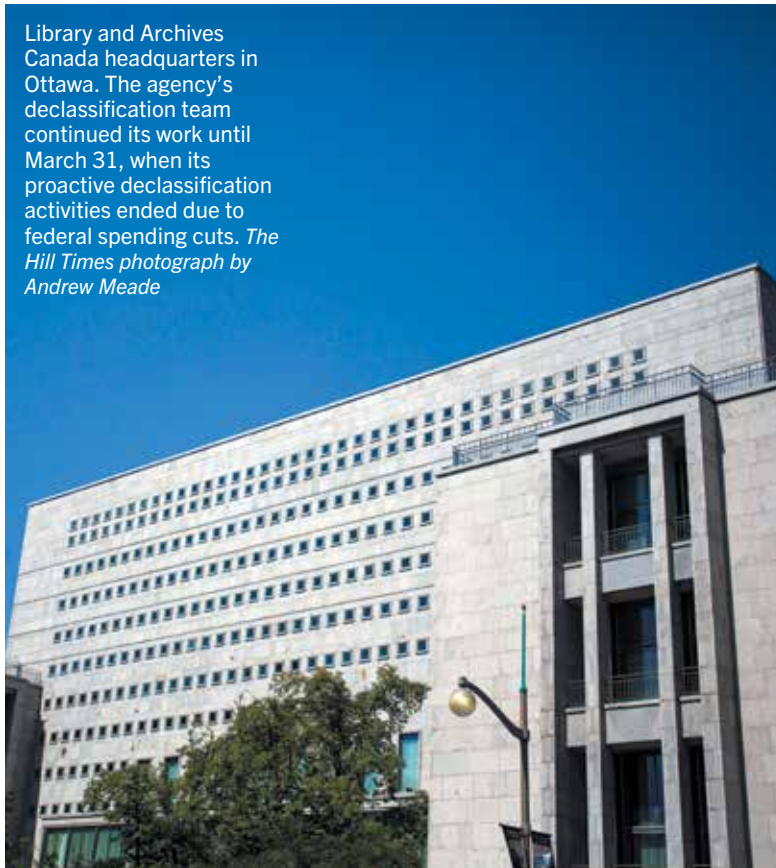
Proactive declassification refers to Library and Archives Canada’s (LAC) practice, started in 2023, of reviewing historical records on its own initiative and recommending that departments lower their security classification, rather than waiting for a member of the public to file a request.

Declassified records are not automatically made public. LAC’s own June 2026 progress report notes that the process lowers a record’s security classification, which can make it easier for the agency to handle, digitize, and process the record later if someone were to request it through the Access to Information Act, a distinct function from opening records outright.

LAC’s declassification team continued its work until March 31, when that work ended; LAC attributes that decision to reductions under the Carney government’s Comprehensive Expenditure Review, which asked organizations to identify savings proposals of up to 7.5 per cent in 2026-27, 10 per cent in 2027-28, and 15 per cent in 2028-29.

Patrick Boissonneault, a senior communications adviser with LAC, said in an email that the initiative had originally been scheduled to run until March 2027, but ended about a year

Library and Archives Canada headquarters in Ottawa. The agency’s declassification team continued its work until March 31, when its proactive declassification activities ended due to federal spending cuts. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



early as part of its expenditure review reductions.

Wesley Wark, a senior fellow at the Centre for International Governance Innovation and expert on national security and intelligence issues, reviewed LAC’s report and said the decision will make an already difficult access system worse for people seeking historical government records.

“Whatever reasons lie behind it, including financial pressures, it’s a disaster for the overall effectiveness of our information regime and the control that Library and Archives Canada has over that,” Wark said.

He added the loss extends beyond a single LAC program. Canada, he said, has never built a systematic method for declassifying historical records, leaving proactive efforts like LAC’s as one of the few mechanisms working against that gap before it was cut.

Treasury Board’s own review of the Access to Information Act, published in 2025, reaches a similar conclusion. The review states that the absence of a systematic approach for proactively reviewing, declassifying, downgrading, and disclosing historical records is creating challenges and delays for Canadians seeking access to those records, and is harming institutions’ compliance with the Act.

It also notes that Canada’s current legislative and policy framework contains no mandatory requirements for the proactive review, downgrading, or declassification of records, or their trans-

fer to LAC within specific time frames, leaving access requests as the primary mechanism for triggering disclosure of classified historical records.

Despite the cuts, Treasury Board spokesperson Daphney Degand-Emmanuel said in an email that declassification and disclosure of historical records are still important issues, and are among the areas of focus in the Access to Information Act review currently underway.

Boissonneault said LAC continues to work with Treasury Board and other departments to explore options for a systemic approach to declassifying and disclosing historical government records.

Of the 1,218,243 pages its proactive declassification team analyzed between 2023 and 2026, 553,557 classified pages were submitted to departments for declassification decisions, Boissonneault said. As of July, departments had approved 247,382 pages, while 306,175 were yet to be addressed. No recommendations were rejected, and four were partially approved.

The difference between the pages analyzed and the pages submitted reflects ones that were not classified within the files reviewed, Boissonneault said. He also said there was no formal deadline for departments to respond to these recommendations, though LAC introduced a 60-day response target for originating departments in 2025.

Wark said these figures suggest the project met with success,

despite slow responses from departments and agencies. But, he said, the numbers still leave important questions unanswered.

“What we don’t know, of course, is the nature of the declassification outcomes and how many of the files reviewed by LAC represented records with high classification levels, secret and beyond, which typically represent the greatest challenge,” Wark told *The Hill Times*.

‘It sets us back’: ACA president Alyssa Hyduk

Alyssa Hyduk, president of the Association of Canadian Archivists, said the end of LAC’s proactive declassification work came as a surprise to the archival community, which had viewed the work as a meaningful step toward improving access to classified historical records, even though declassification did not automatically make records public.

“Something that was really starting to move things forward as far as opening classified documents up and opening access up to the Canadian public for these records has suddenly ended,” Hyduk said.

Boissonneault said LAC informed several external stakeholders, including the ACA, this past February after deciding to discontinue the initiative. Hyduk said LAC had told the ACA at the time about gradual reductions over three years to its Access to Information and Privacy and Proactive Access functions, but that the declassification initiative itself was not named directly.

“So, yes, in technical terms, they did inform us, they just didn’t name the program directly,” Hyduk said.

Hyduk said the decision is especially significant because Canada has no formally mandated national declassification program, leaving LAC’s proactive work as the closest thing the country had to one.

“It sets us back,” Hyduk said. “If the government ever decides to start a national program, they’re starting from scratch all over again, and the cost of doing that will be so much more than if they were to just continue the program.”

Timothy Sayle, a historian at the University of Toronto who chairs the department of history and works with declassified federal records, shared similar concerns. He said this decision fits into a broader pattern of shrinking access to Canada’s historical record.

“It’s disappointing and frustrating, especially because it’s part of this broader pattern of underfunding access to information and preventing Canadians from studying Canada’s history,”

Sayle said. “It’s just another tragedy in the access story, that another part of the access team is disappearing and we’re losing another piece of the puzzle.”

LAC’s June progress report notes that its other proactive access work, known as Block Review, will continue, supported by \$22.4-million in permanent annual funding intended to stabilize the agency’s access to information and privacy functions.

Block Review the ‘soft option’, says Wesley Wark

According to LAC’s 2024-25 annual report on the Privacy Act, Block Review performs “a proactive risk-based review of archival records in LAC’s holdings,” following a set procedure, to determine whether blocks of records can be proactively opened to the public and researchers.

LAC also drew its own distinction between the two functions. Unlike declassification, which assessed page by page whether a record’s security classification could be removed or reduced, LAC said Block Review uses a sampling-based methodology to assess and open entire groups of archival records for public access.

Wark has followed the design of LAC’s review programs since Block Review began around 2010. He called Block Review the “soft option,” and said it involves reviewing records in large samples and releasing entire blocks only when they were unlikely to contain material protected by exemptions under the Access to Information Act, such as national security, cabinet confidences, or personal information.

“Block review has resulted in a large volume of records having been released,” Wark said. “What it hasn’t resulted in is any volume of significant historical records being released.”

That distinction matters because the continuation of Block Review does not necessarily replace the work LAC’s declassification team had been doing on classified historical records.

LAC job losses tied to spending cuts, PIPSC says

Boissonneault said LAC’s declassification team was made up of nine full-time-equivalent positions, affected through the reduction of indeterminate or permanent staff, and the non-renewal or termination of term employees. He said ending the activity will save \$1.08-million annually, including employee benefit plan premiums.

Brittany Smith—a spokesperson for the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, which represents some LAC employees—said approximately 100 of their members were affected by workforce reductions under Budget 2023 efforts to cut spending, as well as the Carney government’s new targets.

Members who had been working in declassification under the expenditure review were surplus or moved to LAC’s Proactive Access team—the unit carrying out Block Review—she said.

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NEWS

Construction of new welcome centre advances as scaffolding takes over Centre Block

Hill visitors should be able to notice steel framing climbing the Peace Tower by as early as October.

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Centre (PWC) had been poured inside the 23-metre-deep pit excavated in front of the Centre Block building.

Now, the concrete skeleton of that third floor is fully complete, with construction of the second level nearing completion—currently estimated to be 78 per cent complete—and work underway on the first and topmost level, starting on the west end of the pit.

The new three-storey complex will offer roughly 32,000 square metres of new space, and will connect to the Centre Block underground, as well as to the West Block, East Block, and the new office towers being constructed as part of the Block 2 project on the south side of Wellington Street.

Once complete, the PWC will be the new public entrance to Centre Block where visitors will enter and be screened in the underground space before making their way into the main building via its internal courtyards. Along with security screening, the space will include a public café, a multimedia theatre, exhibition space, classrooms, Parliament's boutique, two new committee rooms, and more.

Workers will finish construction of the concrete structure before beginning to install mechanical and electrical systems, explained Jean-François Robert, director general of the Centre Block Rehabilitation Program, in an interview with *The Hill Times* last week.

As it stands, the structure is largely "all concrete with steel rebar inside," with some "mechanical, electrical power distributions that are embedded in concrete" in certain areas of the structure, said Robert. He estimated the next phase of work in the PWC—installing building systems—would be underway by 2027-28.

The Centre Block Rehabilitation Program involves both construction of the PWC and renovation of the 100-year-old Centre Block building. In June 2021, Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) estimated the project would take until 2030-31 (for construction, and 2031-32 for re-occupation), and cost \$4.5-billion to \$5-billion to complete. Earlier this year, PSPC indicated the department was "in the process of



Tourists gather at the Centennial Flame in front of Centre Block on July 13. The building's south façade is already roughly 75 per cent covered in scaffolding needed for masonry repairs and other work. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The Parliament Welcome Centre, looking west, on April 30. The green area seen left is the floor of the third and lowest level of the new underground structure. *Photograph courtesy of PSPC*

updating" cost estimates following the completion of detailed design plans, given the changes made to project requirements over the last five years, as well as the changed economic climate.

Asked about this on July 14, Robert said PSPC is "not planning" to announce "any changes to the budget or the schedule."

"It doesn't mean that we don't have budget pressures or schedule pressures, but we manage those and we really hope to hit the target of \$4.5- to \$5-billion ... and the 2031 substantial completion with a reopening in 2031," he said. "Those dates and those budgets are still what we're striving for."

As noted in the most recent quarterly progress report, covering April 1 to June 30, spending on the project to date had reached \$1.79-billion as of June 15—up from \$1.658-billion as of the previous quarter.

Robert said one of the "main contributors" to spending between these quarters is the

excavation happening under Centre Block, which, along with digging, involves plenty of prep work, including the step-by-step transferring of the building's load onto the steel and concrete support network that's been constructed to hold up the historic structure while much of the ground beneath it is carved away. The excavations are needed not only to connect to the new welcome centre, but also for the installation of base isolation seismic upgrades under Centre Block.

Another "big" factor in terms of spending, said Robert, is work progressing on the building's roof, which is being raised to house new mechanical and electrical systems.

Both require "work from the construction people, but also from the design people" employed by the project's architectural and engineering services firm, CENTRUS, who create "shop drawings" for each element of work, said Robert.

"Even though design development is done and complete ... they continue to focus on development of the remaining construction packages," he said.

Procurement related to the project also continues, with part of that focus currently on procuring new windows for Centre Block, said Robert.

The dig continues

Centre Block's previously unused internal courtyards are getting new life as part of the project, and, as noted, will ultimately serve as the new public entrance points to the building.

As with the PWC, work is moving from west to east. Digging in Centre Block's western courtyard first got underway in April 2025, and by July had reached the eastern courtyard.

This time last year, PSPC estimated that some 190 truckloads of bedrock had been hauled out of these sites. And, as of the last media tour on Nov. 26, 2025, excavation in both court-

yards had reached roughly five metres down.

Now, as per the latest progress report, the department estimates roughly 3,300 truckloads of rock has been removed. Robert said excavation now covers the full footprint of both courtyards, and has reached roughly seven to eight metres in depth. Ultimately, digging is set to extend down roughly 23-metres, in line with the depth of the PWC.

Robert said, as of the spring (May/June), digging has also begun moving south towards the PWC. The west and east courtyard digs will meet and merge, and continue south to reach the PWC pit in the coming year, said Robert.

Elsewhere inside the building, slab replacement continues. Every floor of Centre Block is getting a new concrete base—or slab—as part of the project. Those efforts started on Centre Block's ground floor, and continued on its upper floors before beginning on its highest-heritage spaces: namely, the second floor, which is home to both the House and Senate Chambers.

Robert said slab replacement work is now underway in the House of Commons Chamber—having started "in the last couple of months"—with concrete being removed from the floor of the Chamber as well as its galleries. He estimated concrete will begin being poured as part of the subsequent rebuild "somewhere around end of fall and winter of 2027."

Speaking of fresh concrete, as noted in the latest progress report, the Peace Tower officially has a new foundation slab. The tower itself ultimately reaches right down to rest upon bedrock, but, beginning in 2022, PSPC has been working to "strengthen" its foundation, starting with excavating around the four columns, or piers, of the tower where the stairs leading to Centre Block's main entrance began (they've been pulled up as part of work).

"We've added a robust foundational concrete reinforced slab around the piers, which did not exist before," said Robert, noting that the new slab will not be visible in the future. "You won't be able to tell the difference."

Raising the roof

As first reported years ago, Centre Block's roof is being raised by roughly five metres—a change planners have previously said will be "almost imperceptible" from street level—to make space for brand new electrical and mechanical systems, including air conditioning, which are being added to the building's roof.

To do this, the existing roof—already in need of replacement—is being removed and a temporary one (that sits slightly higher than the new one will) is being installed to protect the building during the work.

The new building systems will need to be accessible for maintenance and repair, and will therefore exist on a new, seventh floor of Centre Block.

"We are starting to pour concrete for the new Level 7 floor," said Robert.

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NEWS

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The latest progress report estimates that roof removal was roughly 35 per cent complete as of the end of June, and targets 85-per-cent completion for construction of the temporary roof enclosure by this summer. A contract for construction of the new roof still needs to be awarded, noted Robert.

Every piece of copper being removed from Centre Block's roof—"whether it's small, medium, large"—is being put into storage, he said, and deliberations continue to decide whether and how to repurpose the material inside Centre Block, and beyond.

As an example, as part of the Wellington Building's \$425-million renovation—which finished in 2016—repurposed copper was used as a design feature on the upper walls of the building's library branch.

Robert noted that Block 2 planners are already looking to repurpose some of the copper from Centre Block as part of that build.

"The architects are talking, and are still determining in terms of finishing where exactly can and will we use the Centre Block copper," he said.

Materials sit on top of the temporary roof covering Centre Block on June 17. Photograph courtesy of PSPC



Visitors to the Parliamentary Boutique—or boutique shops around town—may have noticed keepsakes (pins, necklaces) made from Hill copper for sale. That copper comes from previous projects; along with the West Block, the East Block, for

example, has also already seen roof replacement ahead of its full rehabilitation. Robert said whether any of Centre Block's copper will be sold to external entities remains to be determined once any potential Hill reuses are settled.

Aufwiedersehen, Peace Tower

Large construction cranes and giant PWC pit aside, the most public-facing aspect of the Centre Block project is the scaffolding that's been erected along

the building's exterior walls to facilitate masonry restoration and other related work.

The iconic south façade is the last to be shrouded by scaffolding, and is now roughly 75 per cent covered as scaffolding moves towards the Peace Tower from the west and east. The tower itself can't support the weight of regular scaffolding, and instead, a steel structure will be built around its entirety.

Construction of that steel frame got underway this past spring, said Robert, with the installation of rock anchors and footings. He estimated that, from the street view, construction of the steel frame will become visible by October or November.

Robert confirmed that this steel frame—like the rest of the scaffolding surrounding the Centre Block—will ultimately be covered by *trompe l'oeil* tarping.

Meanwhile, PSPC is shoring up its final project approvals.

On June 23, the National Capital Commission's board of directors approved its final, full landscape design. PSPC is expected to present its final interior end-state design plans for both Centre Block and the PWC to the NCC board this fall.

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OPINION

Agriculture needs more than a voice—it needs a long-term vision

Rather than asking how many programs were delivered or how much funding was allocated, governments should ask whether Canada's agricultural system is becoming stronger.

John Simpson

Opinion



Canada's next agricultural policy framework arrives at a defining moment. Agriculture is no longer simply about producing food. It is increasingly central to Canada's economic security, food security, and geopolitical resilience. In a world of shifting trade relationships, climate uncertainty, and growing demand for trusted suppliers, the question is no longer whether agriculture matters. It is whether Canada is preparing the sector for the next

20 years rather than the next funding cycle.

That starts with recognizing agriculture as strategic infrastructure.

When Canadians think about critical infrastructure, they typically think of highways, ports, or electricity grids. Agriculture deserves to be viewed through the same lens. Food production depends on an interconnected system of transportation networks, processing facilities, water management, animal health, research, digital infrastructure, and international trade. Weakness in any one of these areas affects every producer, processor, and exporter.

Water offers perhaps the clearest example of why this broader perspective matters.

Around the world, reliable water supplies are becoming one of the defining constraints on agricultural production. While Canada is fortunate to possess significant freshwater resources, abundance alone is not a competitive advantage. Strategic management is.

That means investing in irrigation where appropriate, improving watershed management, strengthening drought preparedness, and planning for increasingly variable weather patterns. The countries that

succeed over the coming decades will not necessarily be those with the most water, but those that manage it most effectively. Canada has an opportunity to lead if it treats water infrastructure with the same long-term discipline applied to transportation or energy systems.

The same principle applies to traceability.

For many consumers, traceability is associated with food safety. In reality, it has become much more than that. Increasingly, international customers expect proof of where food comes from, how it was produced, and how quickly risks can be identified and managed. Trust has become a competitive advantage.

Investments in modern, interoperable traceability systems should therefore be viewed as investments in market access. They strengthen disease response, protect export relationships, reinforce Canada's reputation for high production standards, and provide confidence in an increasingly competitive global marketplace.

Perhaps no issue deserves greater attention than generational succession.

Canada is entering one of the largest transfers of agricultural assets in its history. Over the next decade, thousands of farms

will change hands. The decisions made during those transitions will determine not only who owns the land, but also how one of Canada's most valuable productive assets contributes to the country's long-term agricultural capacity.

Too often, succession is viewed primarily through the lens of taxation or estate planning. Those issues matter, but they overlook a broader policy question: how can succession policy encourage land uses that strengthen Canada's agricultural system?

Today's tax rules tend to draw a sharp distinction between agricultural and non-agricultural uses. In reality, a resilient food system depends on much more than fields and livestock. Processing facilities, transportation corridors, storage, irrigation infrastructure, distribution hubs, and other agricultural support assets are all essential to moving Canadian products from farm to market. As the next policy framework is developed, governments should consider whether succession and tax policy can better recognize investments and land uses that strengthen the agricultural value chain, even when they extend beyond primary production.

Succession policy should therefore be viewed not only as a tool for transferring ownership, but also as a way of shaping the

agricultural landscape Canada wants to build. Tax incentives and transition policies should reward decisions that preserve productive capacity, whether through continued farming or through investments that strengthen the broader agricultural ecosystem on which Canadian producers depend.

Finally, the next policy framework should rethink how success is measured.

Rather than asking how many programs were delivered or how much funding was allocated, governments should ask whether Canada's agricultural system is becoming stronger. Has domestic processing capacity expanded? Are producers better protected against drought and animal disease? Are farm transitions succeeding? Has traceability improved this country's access to premium export markets? Is our food system more resilient than it was five years ago?

Those are the outcomes that matter.

Canada already possesses many of the ingredients needed to become one of the world's most trusted and competitive agricultural nations. We have abundant natural resources, innovative producers, world-class researchers, and an international reputation for quality. The challenge is ensuring public policy is organized around preserving and strengthening those advantages.

John Simpson is the founder of The Simpson Centre for Food and Agricultural Policy at the University of Calgary School of Veterinary Medicine.

The Hill Times

COMMENT

The CAF's recruitment illusion

The Liberals have fixed a recruitment problem that didn't exist, and as a result are enrolling less-capable recruits into an already over-stretched training system.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Recent headlines in the Canadian media have heralded a significant spike in military recruiting.

According to news reports, the Canadian Armed Forces (CAF) just hit a 30-year high in recruitment with the enrolment of 7,310 new regular force members in the last fiscal year. This total represents 105 per cent of the CAF's annual target goal, which marks the second year in a row that CAF recruitment has exceeded its planned total.

That should be welcome news for the woefully under-strength CAF, which, in February 2024,



Defence Minister David McGuinty. For those cognizant of the actual state of the Canadian military, the problem was never about getting numbers of people in the front door. The bottleneck always lay in the training system, writes Scott Taylor. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

testing and pre-enrolment security reviews for PRs, and weakening medical standards to allow candidates to enrol with mental health issues and certain other conditions. In other words, the Liberal government's proposed solution to the personnel crisis—which was meekly accepted by senior military leadership—was to remove the speed limits and take away the guardrails in order to get recruits enrolled more expeditiously.

For those cognizant of the actual state of the Canadian military, the problem was never about getting numbers of people in the front door. The bottleneck always lay in the training system. The chronic shortage of trained personnel in uniform and the operational requirements upon which they were embarked meant a shortage of instructors available for basic military training and for follow-on specific trades training courses.

According to the Department of National Defence website, the CAF regular force currently has 67,827 living souls collecting a paycheque out of an authorized strength of 71,500. That means that officially there are only 3,673 job vacancies at present.

However, it needs to be noted that, by their own admission, that total includes approximately 12,000 personnel who are considered "under-trained or undeployable." That number includes CAF members who are on extended sick or parental leave, retirement leave,

Continued on page 7

then-defence minister Bill Blair admitted to Canadians was gripped in a personnel "death spiral."

Between 2021 and 2024, the gap between attrition and enrolment left the CAF with roughly 16,500 personnel vacancies from an authorized regular and reserve combined strength of 101,500.

Under Blair's updated defence policy, *Our North Strong and Free*, changes were implemented to existing recruiting policies. These changes included probationary enrolment, modernized security screening software, and information sharing agreements between security agencies to hasten clearances.

Previously, in December 2022, the Liberal government made it possible for permanent residents (PR) to enlist in the CAF. Up until that date, a recruit needed to be a citizen of Canada to serve. Additional changes aimed at speeding up the recruiting process included removing the aptitude test, ending language

Trump plays the blame fiddle while forests in both countries burn

First responders are putting themselves at risk while the American president senselessly flaps his gums to distract from whatever mess of the day he wants to avoid discussing.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—If you were asked to rank the most absurd or outlandish thing United States President Donald Trump has said since coming into office that would be a time-consuming exercise. It would almost be difficult to complete because there is just so much material. The truly



As U.S. President Donald Trump fulminates about fires, we can take some comfort that he and his brainiac buddies aren't charged with their day-to-day management or other cross-continental calamities, writes Tim Powers. *White House photograph by Joyce Boghosian*

unfortunate part is because he is the American president, and not some random social media aggregator, we have to pay some attention to them all.

So, when Trump jumped into the "Canadian wildfire smoke is ruining our summer and polluting our American air" conversation on July 17, he certainly broke into his own top 10 list of wackiness. Some of Trump's fellow Republicans have been on this kick for a few summers now, blaming Canada for smoke-filled evenings and ashtray air. Apparently, they are oblivious to the fact they have fires raging

in their country, currently burning more than 5,000 square miles of territory—but, no, it's us.

I guess the brainiac blame-Canada-for-the-crappy-air crowd knows more than the rest of us. Not only is the world flat, but apparently prevailing winds know boundaries, and pissed-off Canadian air is determined to pollute America. Equally, American wildfire pollution comes with its own HEPA filter, thus, it is incapable of harming anyone. If only science was this instructive. No wonder the president is suggesting he might have to levy

more tariffs on Canada unless we stop the fires.

According to the Trump, he expressed his concern about Canadian wildfire smoke to Prime Minister Mark Carney while both were at the World Cup final this past weekend. There's no word on how the prime minister responded, and, to date, Carney has offered no public commentary, proving that—sometimes—if you ignore the crazy talk, you could be doing yourself and the country a favour.

As Trump fulminates about fires, we can take some comfort that when it comes to actually dealing with them, he and his brainiac buddies aren't charged with their day-to-day management or other cross-continental calamities. The U.S. and Canada are blessed with legions of professional climatologists, forest-management experts, firefighters, and disaster-recovery planners who work effectively together to battle the challenges we face.

These people don't get caught up in the games of their political masters; they respond as asked, and try to save lives. Shame on

Trump, or anyone for that matter, who drives such grandiose BS that it threatens lives because it challenges responses or creates uncertainty that influences behaviour.

According to the prime minister, in Canada there are more than 900 fires burning, 100 are out of control, 5,000 people are fighting the fires, and 300 waterbombers, helicopters, and other aerial vehicles are being used. I imagine that in the U.S., the numbers are similar for the fires they are fighting. They are putting themselves at risk while the American president senselessly flaps his gums to distract from whatever mess of the day he wants to avoid discussing. Or maybe he somehow hopes his musings will encourage Canadians to put their hands up to be a 51st state. Because, clearly, Mother Nature would be far gentler to us if we became the 51st star on the Stars and Stripes.

If you see a firefighter, run into a climatologist, or come across a disaster planner from either country, say thank you, and tell them it is unfortunate to see the work they do undermined or challenged by politicians in search of distraction.

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

The Hill Times

COMMENT

Canada cozying up to fascism under false pretence of co-operation

It's easy to see the Canadian government engaging in deference to U.S. terrorism strategies as normal, but it's only a matter of time before there's a crack down on left-wing political speech, thought, and organizing.

Erica Ifill

Bad+Bitchy



OTTAWA—There is a phrase in politics that could describe the overall tenor of the Carney government: scratch a liberal and a fascist bleeds. We are not standing up to American fascism, we are joining them.

On July 16, *The Toronto Star* reported on a seemingly innocuous, run-of-the-mill counterterrorism meeting hosted by United States Secretary of State Marco Rubio: "The Trump administration is urging the Carney government and other allies to treat left-wing extremism as a top national security threat, advancing a major shift in counterterrorism strategy that is raising concerns about civil liberties and the potential impact on Canada." The article goes on to say that Rubio, and the Prince of Darkness, White House

adviser Stephen Miller, "laid out that priority Thursday in front of a senior Canadian embassy official and representatives from more than 60 other countries, including the entire G7." Although Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand was invited, a senior public servant from Global Affairs was sent in her stead.

The department tried to downplay its attendance citing its long history of co-operation with the U.S., but there is everything to see here. What we are talking about is possible co-ordination amongst G7 governments to criminalize political views, free speech, and freedom of assembly. These are the same governments that lamented the loss of free speech when marginalized people were fighting for equal rights, which shows that they only hate freedom of speech when something is said that they don't like.

Following the meeting, the White House announced on its website: "Today, the Trump Administration convened senior officials from governments around the world to launch an unprecedented global offensive against the transnational threat of Radical Left terrorism." I have trouble naming an incident of left-wing "terrorism" where multiple people died. I do know that much of the danger attributed to the left wing is false. As I recall, the greatest threats to democracy in the U.S. and Canada were the Jan. 6, 2021, invasion and the 2022 Ottawa Convoy, respectively. Those are right-wing movements.

Rubio specifically mentioned Antifa, which has been the boogeyman to distract us from right-wing violence and growing authoritarianism since U.S. President Donald Trump first took office in 2016. In the

journal, *Perspectives on Terrorism*, historian Nigel Copsey and sociologist Samuel Merrill stated that through their research, "calls have been made by conservative right-wing politicians to designate Antifa a 'domestic terrorist organization' in the United States ... And yet, the evidence for such an equation has been mostly limited to a handful of instances that usually bare the hallmarks of political exaggeration or are alternatively attributable to individuals loosely associated with the Antifa movement." In other words, the greatest sin Antifa—short for anti-fascist—has made is being opposed to growing fascist authoritarianism; they are not even a group or an organization. On JSTOR, which is one of the world's greatest sources of scholarly research, their *JSTOR Daily* post on this subject laid out the creative criminalization of left-wing participants: "Antifa groups in the U.S. today are autonomous, ad hoc groups that exist for the narrow purpose of confronting white supremacists and other fascists."

So now we know the danger attributed to left-wing movements is exaggerated: "They define fascism—a notoriously difficult concept to pin down—as innately involving the use of violence and threats of violence, from street attacks on people of colour to genocide. In contrast, Antifa members attempt to stick to tactics that harmonize with their anti-authoritarian and humanist values." This is how easy it is to criminalize anyone who is against a growing authoritarian government. Given Carney's authoritarian fantasies of leadership and the stripping away of institutions meant to protect the public, it is also easy to see the Canadian



Canada's recent participation in a meeting hosted by U.S. Secretary of State Marco Rubio aimed at left-wing extremism is the latest example of liberals laying down with fascists to legislate the punishment of left-wing political discord, writes Erica Ifill. *White House photograph by Molly Riley*

government engaging in deference to U.S. terrorism strategies, like they've always done. It is only a matter of time before this government, along with the opposition, crack down on left-wing political speech, thought, and organizing. In February, Global News reported: "A Conservative MP wants to identify the number of federal public servants or members of the Canadian Armed Forces who sympathize with the left-wing Antifa movement." That MP's name is Garnett Genuis, who apparently is already starting the witch hunt on rooting out dissent.

This is not about Antifa. This is about political dissent, and throughout history, liberals have

laid with fascists to legislate the punishment of left-wing political discord. It is not clear that that is what the Carney government will end up doing, but it is making moves towards such proclivities. With the pushing of artificial intelligence down our throats, the lack of accountability mechanisms for law enforcement, the expansion of surveillance in the form of Bill C-22, and Carney's consolidation of power by systemically removing parliamentary oversight (I'm especially thinking of the privacy bill), this government is proving it is not against the fascism left-wing groups aim to prevent.

Erica Ifill is host of the *Bad+Bitchy* podcast. *The Hill Times*

The CAF's recruitment illusion

Continued from page 6

restricted duties, and a growing number of individuals who have completed their basic military training but are sitting as Personnel Awaiting Training on bases all across Canada.

So, if the real problem has always been a lack of training capacity rather than a shortage of recruits, the question begs how well is the Liberal government's solution actually working? Luckily, we do not need to speculate as Lt.-Col. Marc Kieley, the Commandant of the Canadian Forces Leadership and Recruit School (CFLRS), compiled an internal

evaluation report, which was tabled on Jan. 27.

That document was subsequently leaked to *Juno News* in April. According to Kieley's report, since implementing the new changes to the screening process, the recruit success rate has dropped to 77 per cent from a previous average of 85 per cent. Those candidates requiring multiple attempts prior to graduation jumped to 14.89 per cent, up from 8.44 per cent in 2024. One startling item in the report was the statistic that 92 recruit candidates had been sent to outside hospitals and medical clinics on multiple occasions due

to mental health episodes. "The local suicide crisis centre is typically filled to full capacity with CFLRS candidates," wrote Kieley, adding that a number of the recruits aren't disclosing their mental health conditions during their initial enrolment.

The report also noted that the new influx of PR recruits posed an additional challenge as many of those enrolled were not proficient enough in either French or English to comprehend aspects of the training. "These initial platoons were also made up of candidates with as little as three months residency in Canada, leading to a significant culture

shock as candidates had not yet acclimatized to Canadian society, let alone Canadian military culture," wrote Kieley.

One challenge for some of these PR recruits was the expectation for them "to treat women as their peers." Not unexpectedly, these largely PR units had a higher rate of failure, with one French-speaking class of misfits graduating just 48 per cent of the original candidates.

Given the increased challenges posed by these new lowered entry standards and the reality of lower success rates, morale among the CFLRS staff has undoubtedly been affected.

Add to this the fact that, in terms of instructors, just 424 positions of an authorized 534 are presently filled, this means the CFLRS is at only 80 per cent training capability. That, of course, is only the starting point, as those who do successfully graduate basic training at CFLRS then sit waiting for the trades training that will eventually make them contributing members of the CAF team.

In other words, the Liberals have fixed a problem that didn't exist, and as a result they are enrolling less capable recruits into an already over-stretched training system.

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

The Hill Times



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Editorial

Editorial

Wildfires should be putting climate change in stark relief

This past weekend, Prime Minister Mark Carney reportedly had to sit through a lecture from United States President Donald Trump about the state of Canadian forest management, and how it was resulting in wildfire smoke callously ignoring the border and wafting into American skies.

Leaving aside that this came from a man who early last year had reservoirs opened in northern California to “help” combat the drought conditions that led to devastating fires in the southern part of the state that was in no way connected to those rivers, it’s no surprise that Trump (who has done everything possible to be a un-neighbourly as he can) felt it was appropriate to offer criticism instead of offers of support.

Regardless of any noise being made down south, it’s an incontrovertible fact that there is real danger and damage caused by wildfires in Canada, there has already been loss of life of first responders from both sides of the border, and thousands of people have had to leave their homes and communities, not knowing if they will see them again.

And whenever smoke chokes the skies, people often find themselves asking, ‘How did we get here?’ New polling from the Angus Reid Institute has some concerning insights into how Canadians may be answering that question.

“Despite a majority saying climate change is playing a major role in the wildfire spread, the number of Canadians who feel climate change is human-caused has dropped over the past five years—from 71 per cent in 2021 to

59 per cent now, a 12-point decline,” the firm said in a July 20 release.

And though Conservatives and older Canadians have seen the largest shift in that direction, the change still spans “every age group, gender, and political affiliation,” the Angus Reid Institute highlighted.

It’s not a change that’s coming out of nowhere. As the release goes on to say: “climate change has had to compete with inflation, housing costs, health-care pressures, and economic uncertainty for Canadians’ attention, and the issue has become more politically entangled with carbon pricing and energy development.”

This comes at the same time that the federal government is moving away from the climate-focused policies of its predecessor to economic-aimed strategies to shift away from reliance on the U.S.

To be clear, no one is blaming drought conditions and heat waves on announcements for pipelines that are years from being built.

But as the recent polling—which was in the field shortly before the latest spike in wildfire intensity—suggests, Canadians aren’t overly optimistic, responding that they “are now half as likely to say wildfire impacts will improve over the next 10 to 20 years as they were in 2023, while the majority—56 per cent, up slightly from 55 per cent—say this is something that will get even worse.”

Now is the time for governments to demonstrate that they’re serious about tackling climate change, and can give people something to believe in for the future.

The Hill Times



Letters to the Editor

What is the Poilievre effect?: B.C. reader



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre’s style isn’t resonating with the broader public, writes William Perry. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Under Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, the official opposition has adopted a highly confrontational strategy. While this approach successfully channels the economic anxiety and voter fatigue of many Canadians, critics argue that the relentless criticism—and framing the current government’s policies as catastrophic—creates political polarization.

Polling data frequently highlights this divide. While the Conservative base

strongly supports Poilievre’s combative style, national polling by organizations like the Angus Reid Institute shows that a large segment of the broader public holds an unfavourable view of his leadership.

What the party is perpetuating now is not helpful to national unity or cooperation, and only brings a smile to their supporters and U.S. President Donald Trump.

William Perry
Victoria, B.C.

We can’t afford the cost of waiting, says letter writer

COVID-19 showed how quickly life can change. One week I was in school, and the next everything shut down. My grandfather passed away during that time. He did not have COVID-19, but I saw how an overwhelmed health-care system affected the care he received. It made the pandemic feel painfully real and close to home.

Today, the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo is another reminder that outbreaks do not wait until we are ready. Hospitals are reaching capacity, protective equipment is in short supply, and rural communities face delays in accessing care. When health systems

are stretched to their limits, every delay can cost lives.

These experiences show why preparedness matters. The Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation’s (CEPI) 100 Days Mission aims to develop safe and effective vaccines within 100 days of identifying a new pandemic threat. Acting early could stop outbreaks before they become global crises.

Canada has the opportunity to lead by investing \$125-million over five years in CEPI. The next pandemic is not a question of if, but when. We cannot afford to wait until it is already here.

Aadya Karwal
Caledon, Ont.

COMMENT

Challenges, hopes, and reality: can Carney reinvent Canada's economy?

Les
Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Ensuring the go-ahead of a new Windsor-Detroit bridge that will bring significant trade benefits to Canada is only the latest in Prime Minister Mark Carney's efforts to re-invent this country's economy.

As with other crises that impose generational threats to a country's very existence, like wars, the Canada that comes out the other side of the multi-year economic struggle with President Donald Trump's America will be very different from the one we knew in 2024.

With the business environment and peoples' livelihoods having been tied in a generally positive way to the United States for 65 years, the upheaval set in motion by Trump's anti-Canadian policies has wreaked damage in nearly every corner of the economy.

Consequently, the job taken on by Carney and his government is nothing less than developing a new top-to-bottom approach to Canadians' productive business capacity across the entire economic landscape.

And it's a job that has to be undertaken at a time when the economy is on life support as a result of Trump's attempt to de-construct this country's closely integrated trading relationship with the U.S.

That critics such as Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre neglect to mention Trump's full-bore assault on Canada when discussing the currently weak state of our business climate never fails to amaze.

In a flurry of action unlike anything seen by a prime minister in recent times, Carney has launched a wall-to-wall overhaul of the federal government's approach to the economy writ large.

The Liberal government has pushed hard to chip away at absurd, counterproductive provincial trade barriers; kick-start infrastructure spending; give new life to the oil and gas industry; flip Canada's export dependence away from the U.S.; put this country on the world stage as an investment destination; strengthen economic and security links with Europe and Asia; energize the housing sector, and reverse decades of low spending on defence.

In hopes of creating what would basically be a new, dynamic, and better-paying economy out of the mire of underperformance in recent years, Carney has pledged to invest nearly \$300-billion in the next five years to renew infrastructure across the country, and catalyze private investment. The idea is to build projects of national importance, and increase economic capacity at a rate unseen for many decades, as Carney has said.

This strategic thinking is, in some cases, unassailable. Putting billions of dollars into the establishment of a serious defence industry, and rearming the military with tied domestic manufacturing spinoffs makes a lot of sense. It will provide well-paying jobs, economic stimulus, and export opportunities while strengthening alliances, fulfilling

NATO commitments, and making vital improvements in national security.

But, beyond defence, it's not at all clear that the transformation envisioned by the Liberals can be realistically accomplished in the short time frame needed.

Significantly switching trade away from the U.S. to Europe and the Indo-Pacific may take decades. The economic benefits of free trade within Canada are, as always, proving difficult to realize. And fixing the housing mess, which is mostly a provincial issue, has Ottawa spinning its wheels.

Business investment—the key to growth—has been weak ever since the 2015 oil price collapse nullified a main driver of such financial commitments. And trying to revive it at a time of extreme uncertainty caused by the U.S. trade war is, unsurprisingly, an immense challenge.

With no private interests emerging to finance a new Alberta-to-the-West-Coast pipeline, for instance, Carney has been forced to designate taxpayers to do so with the help of a federal Crown-owned company. Based on demand and production stats, that proposed pipeline to Vancouver will probably go down as an unfulfilled gesture meant mainly to appease separatist-curious Albertans. But oil exports, incidentally, will increase to Asia through an expansion of the existing Alberta-to-Vancouver Trans Mountain pipeline, and/or to the U.S. through a modified version of the Keystone XL line.

Carney is counting on foreign investors to help finance the building of Canada's next economy. And there are indications that foreign financial interests—attracted by this country's high credit rating and reliable reputation in an increasingly unpredictable world—are buying Canadian federal bonds at a record pace. As well, the feds have established Canada as host of the multilateral Defence, Security, and Resilience Bank, and set up the Canada Investment Summit bringing global heavy-hitters to Toronto in September. Such initiatives are likely to intensify foreign interest in this country's financial opportunities, and perhaps support the prime minister's "ambitious plan" to prompt \$1-trillion in total investment here over five years.

To succeed, Carney's economy-wide rebuild will have to overcome a range of major obstacles, including improving the country's dismal productivity performance, addressing competition issues, harnessing AI appropriately, managing the currently halting post-carbon transition, overhauling the workforce, incentivizing a new vehicle industry, upgrading all sorts of infrastructure, and laying the groundwork for the development of more national business champions.

Trump is forcing change in this country, and the real question is whether Canadians can respond with the determination, vision, and adaptive capacity needed to limit the destructive impact and perhaps find a better way forward. Much will hinge, of course, on the outcome of the current free-trade negotiations with Washington. Containing the current damage will, at the very least, be essential if Carney is to have a reasonable chance of making his plan to nurture an economy of the future a reality.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

Labrador doesn't belong to Quebec

The Parti Québécois eyeing the territory of a neighbouring province sends a message about how hostile their government would be to the rest of Canada.

Andrew
Caddell

With All Due Respect



Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Tony Wakeham has responded to the *Livre Bleu* with an outright dismissal of the Parti Québécois' claims to Labrador, writes Andrew Caddell. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

KAMOURASKA, QUE.—In the news media, the deep summer is known as the "silly season" because there is normally not much hard news, so obscure stories make headlines. This year, there's no lack of news: smoky cities, wildfires, federal government purchases, and the perpetual shadow of United States President Donald Trump.

However, in the spirit of the "silly season," the Parti Québécois is questioning the ownership of Labrador. The average Canadian presumes the matter is settled as the name of our newest province is Newfoundland AND Labrador. However, in late June, the PQ published the latest chapters of its 524-page *Livre Bleu* (Blue Book) on its plans for an independent Quebec, which include Labrador.

I have not yet read it, but from summaries, the *Livre Bleu* appears to be science fiction. It presumes all will be rainbows and unicorns if Quebec were to separate: no economic disruption, no one will leave, no businesses will move, there will be a Quebec military, a Quebec currency, and Canada will agree to all its demands.

Someone in the Government of Newfoundland and Labrador read the *Livre Bleu* chapter on Labrador, which demands reparations for the "theft" of Labrador from Quebec.

Here is some background: in 1927, in a forestry dispute, Quebec and Newfoundland agreed to have the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council in London, U.K.—then Canada's highest court of appeal—adjudicate on the status of Labrador. It awarded Labrador to Newfoundland, then an independent country. Since then, Quebec maps have indicated the Labrador border as "the line drawn by the Privy Council in London in 1927."

Newfoundland and Labrador Premier Tony Wakeham responded to the *Livre Bleu* chapter with an outright dismissal: "This issue was settled a long time ago." However, to show they were deadly serious, two PQ MNAs, Alex Boissonneault and Pascal Paradis, wrote a letter to *Le Devoir* on July 17. Calling the decision on Labrador a "grave injustice," they said the Privy Council "amputated the territory of Quebec."

They also slammed the current Coalition Avenir Québec government for its attempted deal with Newfoundland and Labrador on the Churchill Falls power contract, which has earned Quebec tens of billions of dollars since the 1960s (and Newfoundland almost nothing) and expires in 2041. The MNAs said, "The dispute over the border with Newfoundland remains, and it will necessarily be, the subject of negotiations in the event of Quebec's independence."

I spoke to Andrew Parsons, former Newfoundland and Labrador minister of energy, who was involved in the negotiations leading to the 2024 agreement. He said, "the border never came up in discussions I was involved in: it was a non-starter. It shouldn't be part of any conversation between the two provinces."

There are several problems with the PQ's position. First, Quebec last had a claim on Labrador when the Quebec Act assigned it to the new colony in 1774, along with parts of present-day Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois. The U.S. took back those lands after the American Revolution, and in 1809, Britain gave Labrador back to Newfoundland, which had been administering Labrador's fishery.

Over time, Newfoundland worked with Indigenous populations in the interior, and beginning in 1892, the famed Grenfell Mission brought health and community services to remote villages. Newfoundland had a substantial claim to Labrador in 1927; even more so now as a province of Canada.

Second, the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council established several precedents loosening the bonds of Canadian federalism from 1867 to 1949. The PQ desire to relitigate the 1927 decision would mean those precedents are on the table.

Third, in 1898 and 1912, Quebec was enlarged by the federal government to include James Bay and the enormous northern region known as Nunavik. These lands hold huge hydro and mineral resources of enormous value to Quebec. But, as they were created by a federal law, Ottawa could reclaim them and give them to the Cree and Inuit as a federal territory if border negotiations were opened up after independence.

If, as expected, the PQ wins power in the province's October election, Boissonneault and Paradis will probably be the ministers for Canadian relations and international affairs. In promising to "demand the powers that are ours and to defend Quebec's interests," they are sending the message that a future PQ government led by Leader Paul St-Pierre Plamondon will be overtly hostile to the rest of Canada.

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The Hill Times

NEWS

Carney shielded from political fallout from lagging U.S. trade talks as Canadians place blame on Trump, say pollsters

Despite recurring tariff threats, waiting for a good deal puts Canada in a better position than countries that have rushed to sign pacts with the United States, say trade analysts.

Continued from page 1

[Carney] enjoying right now, just because of who he's dealing with and who the alternative is," said pollster Nik Nanos, chief data scientist of Nanos Research.

"Everyone knows that Donald Trump is a difficult politician to deal with," he said. "The fact of the matter is that every major NATO ally and every major American trading partner is having difficulty dealing with the Trump administration—it's not like Canada is an outlier on that front."

The Trump administration launched the latest tariff threat against Canada on July 20 with a planned 50-per-cent levy on a wide range of Canadian exports. The tariffs are set to come into effect on Aug. 19. The U.S. cited Canadian discriminatory treatment of American alcohol, dairy, and auto exports. According to the White House, goods covered under CUSMA won't be exempted from the new tariff, but goods already hit with Section 232 tariffs will be, such as steel and autos, as will energy, potash, fish, and critical mineral exports.

The American president had also previously threatened a tariff on Canada over smoke from wildfires drifting south of the border.

In a statement following Trump's announcement, Carney said that "over the past 18 months, Canada has made a series of detailed and comprehensive proposals to resolve this dispute and to modernize CUSMA. We stand ready to intensify those discussions in the coming weeks."

Nanos said that being compared to Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre (Battle River–Crowfoot, Alta.) also serves to shield Carney from any potential criticism, remarking that Canadians have consistently suggested they think that Carney is the "best person" to manage the Canada-U.S. file.



President Donald Trump unleashed his latest tariff threat on Canada on July 20. White House photograph by Daniel Torok

"The fact of the matter is that as long as he's not seen as being weak and capitulating—even if the deal is not great—average Canadians are probably likely to think no one could've done any better," Nanos added.

He said that Canadians' anger is directed at Trump and not at any actions Carney is taking to address the dispute.

"He does have a better chance for surviving a great amount of turbulence than in a normal situation when there are difficulties with the Americans just because Donald Trump has become such a lightning rod that the first inclination for Canadians will be to lash out at Donald Trump and the Americans, and to blame them for whatever economic misery that Canada may have to face as a result of the uncertainty in free-trade discussions," Nanos said.

Carney's approach to the U.S. has not been without criticism from multiple corners.

The Conservatives have criticized Carney for slow-walking negotiations with the Trump administration while the U.S. and Mexico are in active talks.

In a July 20 statement, Conservative critics focused on the areas of cross-border trade said: "Canada is in a major crisis, and despite making promises to Canadians to secure a deal, the Liberals are failing to meet the moment with the urgency it deserves. Liberals have failed to explain anything to Canadians, obscuring transparency and relying on ad hominem attacks on the opposition."

Old-guard Liberals took aim at the federal government's decision to rescind the digital services tax to restart trade talks last summer. Those talks were later paused

again last October, citing an Ontario government anti-tariff ad that played on U.S. airwaves.

Carney has also been under fire for placating Trump's alleged breaches of international law, including in the Iran War.

The waiting game

Trade analysts told *The Hill Times* that waiting for a satisfactory deal is better than signing a bad one.

Carlo Dade, director of the University of Calgary's New North America Initiative, said that the best approach for Canada is to continue to wait out the Trump administration.

"There is no pressure on us other than pressure that we create for ourselves," he said. "The U.S. still needs Canadian inputs and co-operation with Canada."

He said that ragging the puck put Canada in a better situation when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down tariffs levied under the International Emergency Economic Powers Act compared to countries that had made agreements with the Trump administration.

"Countries that have rushed in have not done well with the U.S.," Dade said, but added that the federal government could do a better job of explaining what it is doing.

"However, the reality is that how do you carry out the public communication strategy in Canada that references the Trump administration without risking exposing your hand, and giving them ammunition to take something the wrong way?" Dade said.

He said many countries have thought they had agreements with the Trump administration

only to have to offer more concessions.

Trade consultant Eric Miller, president of the Rideau Potomac Strategy Group, said that anyone can make a bad deal quickly.

"Taking a bad deal—particularly with the Trump administration—is not a good decision because in the Trump administration, concessions beget demands for concessions," he said.

"One of the things that Canada will have to be very mindful of as it goes forward is embedding structural disadvantages within its trade rules," he said, remarking that Canadian businesses cannot compete with American counterparts if they are tariffed while their southern neighbours enter the Canadian marketplace without a levy.

Miller said that the U.S. has wanted Canada to make additional concessions before restarting talks, remarking that it is something that this country has been unwilling to do.

"Having seen that there is no corresponding benefit from offering a concession, it's not surprising that Canada has grown skeptical about this," he said.

He said offering a concession on the digital services tax made sense at the time to restart trade talks.

"It's sort of fool me once, shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me," Miller said. "That's why Canada has been resistant, particularly on alcohol." The alcohol restrictions are provincial, with all governments except Alberta and Saskatchewan currently refusing to stock U.S. booze.

"This is a known irritant and a known area where U.S. companies are feeling the commercial pressure from what's been

happening. This is why U.S. officials at the senior level have been very focused on trying to get this alcohol issue resolved," Miller said. "Part of the reason Canada is holding out is because it feels like it has leverage because this is something the U.S. clearly wants."

Center for North American Prosperity and Security executive director Jamie Tronnes said that the lack of transparency over the state of the negotiations has become a concern for businesses.

She said that acknowledging how much discussions are happening would be a beneficial first step.

"At the moment, it seems like this could drag on for a lot longer than people are expecting at the rate that it is going," she said. "The government should tell people at least about some of the discussions behind the scenes, and whether or not they are happening."

She added that if they are not happening, Canadians need to know why, adding that it's still better to wait for the best deal as opposed to rushing into a bad one available sooner.

"Right now, the prime minister has some political capital in order to do that. But simply telling Canadians if that is the plan [should happen]," Tronnes said.

She said that businesses are getting to a point where they would "almost" trade an end of uncertainty for some degree of tariff punishment.

"The situation of uncertainty is really getting that bad," she said.

Canadians not expecting Carney to strike U.S. deal: pollsters

Pollster Greg Lyle, president of the Innovative Research Group, said there is no sign that Carney is being hurt by any failure to reach a deal with the U.S.

"Most Canadians don't think you can get one," he said. "If you can get one, most Canadians don't think Trump will stick to it."

He said that Canadians have viewed managing the Canada-U.S. file as not about getting a deal, but about managing Trump and avoiding being targeted.

EKOS Research president Frank Graves said Carney's ability to land a trade agreement with the U.S. isn't likely going to be a "make-or-break" issue for voters.

"I don't think most people really, really think that we're going to get another deal anytime soon, or that it's going to have any permanence," he said.

Lyle said that voters aren't expecting follow-through on Carney's campaign promise to get a deal with the U.S.

"They voted for him because he sounded less like Donald Trump than Poilievre did," he said.

Lyle said the majority of Canadians will blame the U.S. for economic shocks related to not getting a deal, and that attacking the government on its handling of the Canada-U.S. file is not a winning issue for the Conservatives.

"They can try and do that, but good luck," he remarked. "It's 4-1 that it's Trump's fault, not Carney's fault."

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Feds urged to simplify procurement as contractors flag persistent issues with system

Former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick says he's heard the government has become harder to do business with since the ArriveCan scandal by reverting 'to old cost-based methodologies.'

Continued from page 1

achieving measurable results rather than specifying detailed inputs or tasks," according to the report. Suppliers told the government that such an approach could "encourage innovation and flexibility."

Public Accounts show that the federal government's spending on professional services contracts has steadily increased since 2021, with total expenditures between the 2021-22 and 2025-26 fiscal years reaching more than \$94-billion. This means the group of suppliers who responded to PSPC's request for information secured almost one-third of all federal money spent on procuring professional services in the last five years.

PSPC said in its response to the industry that it "sees value in exploring outcomes-based procurement in appropriate contexts," and that it will help advance this approach by "developing practical guidance, tools, and examples to help departments define measurable outcomes, acceptance criteria, and performance measures."

The department rolled out new rules in July 2025 aimed at strengthening oversight of professional services contracts and shifting towards "outcome-based" procurement practices amid years-long criticism over major delays in project delivery, cost overruns, and heavy reliance on external consultants. The new measures include implementing a \$20-million cap on task- and time-based contracts to reduce the government's reliance on professional services contracts. However, it is not clear how many contracts have been awarded under an outcome-based process since then.

Problems with the solicitation phase of federal procurements, such as lack of clarity and ambiguity in requirements and deliverables, were also raised in the June report. Some suppliers noted that the government's debriefings did



Minister Joël Lightbound leads Public Services and Procurement Canada. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

not consistently provide useful feedback.

In its response, PSPC committed to streamline and standardize solicitation processes to reduce administrative burden.

Other challenges raised included inconsistent invoicing, delays in approvals, inconsistent contract management practices, and limited co-ordination between contracting and technical authorities after a contract is awarded. Suppliers outside Ottawa said they are facing persistent barriers such as location-dependent contract requirements and limited outreach, and called for more regionally inclusive procurement strategies. Suppliers also noted that rigid rules could limit flexibility in specialized fields.

In its report, PSPC said it would reduce unnecessary administrative burden while maintaining accountability, and committed to improving regional accessibility.

Procurement Ombud Alexander Jeglic said in a statement to *The Hill Times* that PSPC's report highlights several issues his office has consistently heard from suppliers for "many years."

"This suggests that many of the challenges identified are systemic rather than isolated to a particular sector or group of suppliers," he said, adding that the findings related to procurement simplification, consistency in procurement practices, transparency, and reducing administrative burden reflect long-standing concerns within the federal procurement system.

"I cannot underscore enough that simplification efforts must be the focus of the government, as complexity remains a significant

barrier to entry for most small and medium-sized Canadian suppliers," he said.

Government report 'waters down' recurring issues: Wernick

Experts told *The Hill Times* the government minimized those consistent issues in its June report.

Former Privy Council clerk Michael Wernick said that while it is "good that PSPC reached out and listened to the supplier community," the resulting report "waters down the issues" in procurement.

Wernick said suppliers would be much more blunt in their assessments privately, and that several have shared with him that the federal government has become harder to do business with in recent years in the wake of the ArriveCan scandal.

Auditor General Karen Hogan's 2024 report on the procurement of the ArriveCan application was the first to reveal major weaknesses in federal contracting, from poor documentation and oversight to lack of transparency and favouritism. A series of investigations—including one by the RCMP—on ArriveCan found that GC Strategies, a two person IT-firm at the centre of the controversy, received \$64-million without doing any work on the app but outsourced the work to a web of subcontractors.

Since the ArriveCan issue, the Liberal government under Prime Minister Mark Carney (Nepean, Ont.) has pledged to reform Canada's broken procurement system. A series of measures—including efforts to remove barriers for smaller firms, implementation of

a Buy Canadian policy, and a new "reciprocal" procurement policy that limits foreign suppliers from bidding on federal contracts—have been rolled out since the Carney government came to power last year.

Despite these changes, Wernick said he understands from feedback he's heard from those dealing with the procurement system that their experience now is much as it was prior to ArriveCan and the caution that scandal inspired.

"They report a reversion to old bad habits of tick-box paper burden and incessant time-sheet checking, and that task authorizations that used to take days now take weeks as middle managers have been disempowered," Wernick told *The Hill Times*.

Wernick said, from what he's heard anecdotally, "the government has reverted to old cost-based methodologies and away from any flexibilities offered by results-based contracts."

Sahir Khan, a former assistant parliamentary budget officer and current vice-president of the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) at the University of Ottawa, told *The Hill Times* that what struck him the most in the report was "how closely its findings align with issues that have been raised for more than a decade in federal procurement."

Khan explained that IFSD research conducted for the Office of the Procurement Ombudsman in 2015 found that complaints related to service contracts significantly outnumbered those related to goods, despite goods contracts being more numerous overall.

"Our analysis suggested a structural mismatch between a procurement system historically

designed to buy inputs and goods, and the growing need to procure complex, outcome-oriented services, like management and IT consulting (solutions not body shops)," he said by email.

"We also found that most complaints arose during the requirements, solicitation, and evaluation stages, not during contract delivery, which points to challenges in defining needs, designing evaluation criteria and assessing solutions rather than problems with contractor performance itself," Khan explained.

According to Khan, the strong interest expressed in outcomes-based procurement by contractors who responded to the RFI can be seen as part of a much broader and long-standing hope to shift procurement away from process compliance and toward targeting results.

"But this is a fundamental change from the traditional model. The challenge for the government will be building the procurement capacity, and putting it in the right places, evaluation approaches, and risk-sharing frameworks needed to make that transition successful," he said.

According to the report, suppliers wanted more privacy around the disclosure of their subcontractors, arguing that third-party information about rates and commercially sensitive details should not be required during the solicitation process with the government. In response, PSPC committed to keeping a "strong focus on prime contractor accountability," and said it would "consider approaches to enhance transparency and traceability in a way that protects commercially sensitive information and competition."

Out of the 73 suppliers, 36 were based in Toronto, 26 were based in the National Capital region (which includes Ottawa and Gatineau, Que.), and three were based in Montreal. The remaining eight were made up of one company each from Calgary; Guelph, Ont.; London, Ont.; Laval, Que.; Nova Scotia; Quebec City; Vancouver; and South Africa.

Almost half—47 per cent—were informatics services companies, while 31 per cent were management consulting services companies. Another 12 per cent were identified as "other professional and special services companies," but their area of work was not specified. Seven per cent were temporary help services companies, while three per cent were in architecture and engineering sectors. Fifty-two of the 73 respondents requested a meeting with PSPC officials to discuss the matter further.

PSPC manages approximately \$37-billion in procurements overall annually on behalf of federal departments and agencies. Over the last couple of years, the department has faced criticism due to a series of contracting controversies, political scrutiny, committee showdowns, scathing watchdog reports, the historic admonishment of a contractor, and multiple RCMP investigations.

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FEATURE

Bringing a prison abattoir back from the dead

Public Safety Canada has reopened the door to a controversial operation that offers up federal inmate labour at an Ontario slaughterhouse, according to tender documents.

BY CALVIN NEUFELD

Four years after the Correctional Service of Canada closed its last abattoir, a tender has been issued seeking a private company to lease the slaughterhouse at Joyceville Institution in Kingston, Ont., with the promise of free prison labour.

The proposed lease commits the Correctional Service of Canada (CSC) to “providing a minimum of two eligible offenders at a time.” The company will pay rent, but “is not responsible for any payment to CSC or the offenders for the training of the offender-trainees.”

All meat will be sold commercially.

Built in 1958 to feed prisons, the abattoir was commercialized in 1995 and operated by Wallace Beef for 27 years under a provincial licence, which permitted meat sales throughout Ontario. The abattoir closed in September 2022 when the owner of Wallace Beef retired.

One potential bidder at the June 11 mandatory site visit I attended said they intended to seek a federal licence, opening interprovincial and international markets.

The free carceral labour, according to the potential bidder, was a welcome prospect since “no one wants to do this job.”

Political-penal tug-of-war

While the abattoir has seemingly lain dormant since its 2022 closure, access-to-information records reveal four years of friction between CSC and its governing authority, Public Safety Canada.

The records are clear: CSC does not want to lease the abattoir.

After the closure, CSC’s chief financial officer Tony Matson informed then-public safety minister Marco Mendicino that “we do not support the leasing of the abattoir.”

“Maintaining the abattoir in our portfolio for the training of 2-3 inmates (as was the case in the past), goes against TBS



Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree oversees CSC, which is seeking a business to independently operate a currently defunct abattoir at Kingston, Ont.’s Joyceville Institution. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The 68-year-old abattoir is in extremely poor condition, even for its age, writes Calvin Neufeld. *Photographs courtesy of Calvin Neufeld*

[Treasury Board Secretariat] policy and is not appropriate stewardship of government resources.”

CSC’s senior director facilities François Sauvé added that their industry training arm, CORCAN, “has confirmed that they do not need the abattoir to provide vocational training to inmates.”

CSC’s “bottom line” was that any recommendation to reopen would violate government policy and “may invite scrutiny by TBS analysts.”

As CSC began developing a “business case for divestment,” the Liberals mobilized, making a federal priority out of this localized issue.

Spearheading the lobbying was Liberal MP Mark Gerretsen, who rallied farmers, industry groups, and allied politicians calling for the government to revive slaughter services at Joyceville Institution so farmers can bring their meat to market “ethically, and profitably.”

Gerretsen scored a victory after bringing then-public safety minister Dominic LeBlanc to the

abattoir in May 2024. Days later, LeBlanc ordered CSC to post an expression of interest (EOI) for leasing the abattoir.

CSC did not identify the abattoir in the EOI, describing it only as “a building(s)” for potential lease.

After LeBlanc was replaced by then-minister David McGuinty in December 2024, CSC prepared to notify bidders that “the Correctional Service Canada has decided against leasing the building(s).”

After McGuinty was replaced by now-Public Safety Minister Gary Anandasangaree in May 2025, CSC briefed Anandasangaree of its decision not to lease. That decision was overruled after Anandasangaree visited Gerretsen in July 2025 to discuss “management of federal properties owned by Correctional Service Canada.”

When Conservative MP Scott Reid questioned the subversive steps towards a new abattoir lease in November 2024, the government answered: “ministers and politicians do not get involved.”

A history of ministers and politicians getting involved

As per access documents, in 1997, two years into the “co-venture” with Wallace Beef, CSC terminated the partnership over violations and demanded an “orderly evacuation of the premises.” For undisclosed reasons, this did not occur.

In 2003, the abattoir closed for investigations into improper slaughter, drug trafficking, money laundering, and other alleged activities “dramatically complicating security.” A month later, the abattoir reopened under a “temporary agreement,” with two significant changes: CSC increased security, and removed the meat from prison menus. Thenceforth, the prison meat was eaten only by “unsuspecting consumers” served by hundreds of Ontario farms, restaurants, and businesses.

In 2009, CSC decided to close the abattoir on March 31, 2011, but industry lobbyists persuaded then-Conservative public safety

minister Peter Van Loan to overrule CSC’s decision because, among other reasons, they said the abattoir allows farmers to “realize more profitability in their businesses.”

In 2014, when the abattoir was dumping blood into the prison’s water treatment system, CSC staff wanted “to cease operation of the facility” since “we cannot be policing the abattoir at all times.” Instead, the operation continued because of “commitments made by the Commissioner to the Minister [in 2009] to keep the abattoir open.”

Problems persisted, and in 2018, CSC prepared to notify Wallace Beef “of the lease termination.” Instead, the lease was renewed “because of the unknown farm matters”—referring to then-Liberal public safety minister Ralph Goodale’s as-yet-unfulfilled plan for CORCAN to milk thousands of goats at Joyceville Institution to supply a Chinese infant formula company.

Wanting to “distance ourselves,” then-CORCAN CEO Kelly Hartle emphasized in internal communications that “the Abattoir is NOT part of the CORCAN agriculture program,” and “we should not make any statement about CORCAN and the abattoir.”

Under the old partnership, Wallace Beef paid prisoners \$1.50 to \$3.00 per hour, channelled through CORCAN. Since the closure, CORCAN has “no interest” in a new abattoir lease.

The new lease, which waives payment for prisoners, makes no mention of CORCAN.

Industry muscle and political machinations

Several politicians have joined the pro-abattoir chorus. Ontario Senator Robert Black supports the “profit-sharing venture,” and Kingston Mayor Bryan Paterson says reopening will benefit “inmates and the broader economy” by “fostering a symbiotic relationship between farmers and the abattoir.”

The relationship might be better described as parasitic.

Beef Farmers of Ontario resolved in 2023 to lobby Ottawa to reopen the abattoir, condemning the spread of “disparaging mistruths” about training prisoners to kill. The “mistruths” consist of peer-reviewed academic research establishing links between slaughter work and increased rates of aggression, domestic violence, sexual assault, child abuse, trauma, and substance abuse. The work also carries high risk of injury.

CSC staff were aware of the dangers of slaughter work, refusing to conduct medical and psychological assessments to place prisoners in abattoir jobs, citing “liability concerns.”

Ignoring the evidence, Mendicino said slaughter gives prisoners “the tools, the experience and the skills that are necessary to safely reintegrate into their communities.”

In May 2022, Reid questioned the carceral labour in Joyceville’s abattoir. Then-Liberal MP Pam

FEATURE

Continued from page 12

Damoff, Mendicino's parliamentary secretary, said she had visited the prison and "to my knowledge, there is no slaughterhouse." Not to be mistaken for ignorance, records show that weeks earlier, Damoff had passed along correspondence to Mendicino's office about the abattoir.

More dramatically, on March 18, March 21, March 22, April 19, and April 30 of 2024, Gerretsen presented repeat petitions to reopen the abattoir. Each time, he made a point of saying that the petitions are "from farmers primarily from the riding to the north of mine, which is Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston," and, "I do not know why the member for Lanark-Frontenac-Kingston [Reid] did not present this, but I will do it on behalf of his constituents."

This ignorance, too, was feigned. According to CSC's notes, the petition was Gerretsen's idea during an abattoir visit with farmers on March 6, 2024: "MP Gerretsen encouraged a group of the guests to submit a Petition through Parliament to lobby for the reopening of the Abattoir."

The tender was posted May 28, the day Public Safety's Talal Dakalbab formally replaced Anne Kelly as CSC's commissioner. Dakalbab has committed to "talk to the media" and promote greater transparency by CSC.

The Hill Times invited CSC to comment about the rehabilitative value of training prisoners to kill. Jordan Crosby, CSC's manager of issues management and media relations who drafted Public Safety's abattoir speaking notes, responded by terminating this journalist's media access.

Reality check

The 68-year-old abattoir is in extremely poor condition, even for its age. Its depreciated market value is \$61,245.

Since 2022, CSC has spent up to \$2.3-million cleaning, disinfecting, repairing, and maintaining the empty abattoir and assessing its condition (saving as much—\$2.4-million—firing prison librarians). This includes \$435,000 spent in 2022, \$500,000 forecast for 2023, \$678,401 forecast for 2024 and 2025, and \$714,664.52 spent on reports assessing further costs of repairs.

Demolishing, by comparison, would cost between \$738,000 and \$955,000.

Despite the "minor" work that CSC has undertaken to "stabilize the building condition while options are explored," the abattoir still has visible rot, debris, pests, snakes, birds, and other "conditions that may interfere with its hygienic operation or contaminate carcasses," potentially making a new licence unattainable.

Further repairs are assessed at \$2,557,101 for the abattoir and \$2,514,409 for the adjoining barn, based on a visual review only, not including costs to

"upgrade" or "modernize" to a higher level to match the standards found in a newer facility."

Under the proposed five-year lease, all such costs must be borne by the leasee, and CSC makes no guarantee that the abattoir could ever meet modern licensing standards.

CSC reserves the right to "terminate this Agreement immediately, without prior notice" if CSC determines, "in its sole discretion, that continued use of the premises by the Licensee is no longer compatible with CSC's operational, safety, security, or institutional requirements," or "other policy reasons."

Should CSC terminate at any time, for any reason, the leasee must vacate immediately and will not be compensated for any improvements.

The deadline for bids was June 19.

Who benefits?

It is clear CSC will not benefit from reopening the abattoir, and it is unclear how a private company would benefit from investing millions into a Crown facility without guarantees.

Farmers would certainly profit from an abattoir subsidized by taxpayers and carceral labour, and politicians might benefit from pleasing influential industry groups. Consumers, however, may not see it as a win for prison-produced meat to re-enter the market.

But those who stand to lose the most by the abattoir reopening are the ones it allegedly benefits: prisoners.

Shaun Shannon, incarcerated for 23 years, worked in an abattoir after his release: "I was pushing guts off the floor and I lost it after a couple of months. I lost it, I couldn't do it anymore, I lost it. How can you do that? I couldn't do it every day. I just lost it. I said 'enough is enough.' I broke down."

Regarding the Joyceville abattoir, Shannon said: "Somebody, an ex-prisoner such as myself, should talk to the media about teaching killers how to kill ... they're teaching you how to kill cleanly working in an abattoir."

It is "one of the worst jobs a person can have mentally and emotionally," he said, adding that prisoners "are broken already, and they're putting them under the stress of doing this."

As for the people gunning to get prisoners on the kill line again, Shannon does not mince words: "They deserve to be in prison."

"And they called me an animal."

Calvin Neufeld is a researcher and investigative journalist. In 2022, he published Bloody Bad Business: Report on the Joyceville Institution Abattoir. In 2025, he was awarded the King Charles III Coronation Medal for his work.

The Hill Times

Liberal MP Mark Gerretsen has presented multiple petitions in the House in support of reopening the abattoir. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



OPINION

Feds should show low-income Canadians the same grace extended to yacht and private jet owners

CERB was a lifeline for many low-income Canadians, but for those deemed to have received an 'overpayment,' it has become an anchor.

Amanda Therrien
& Leila Sarangi

Opinion



In 2020, one in four workers relied on financial support from federal benefits like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit to survive the economic shutdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Most of these recipients had pre-pandemic incomes of less than \$50,000. Indigenous people, racialized women, refugees, and young workers were among those most likely to depend on benefits like the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

These benefits were not windfalls, they were lifelines.

The CERB actually decreased poverty rates in Canada by a significant margin during the first year of the pandemic. However, as emergency benefit programs were discontinued, these rates rebounded. Many industries did not fully recover following the pandemic, and, today, the ongoing global political instability, inflation, and persistent threat of tariffs continues to erode the economic security of some of Canada's most vulnerable people.

Bewilderingly, it's in this context that the government has elected to intensify efforts to recover overpayments related to pandemic emergency benefits, with Budget 2025 allocating \$123-million to Employment and Social Development Canada and the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) for that purpose. The government framed this measure as contributing to a "more efficient utilization of public funds," but using public money to hound low-income individuals who received modest pandemic overpayments, rather than repairing Canada's fraying social safety net, is an example of extreme inefficiency and short-sightedness.

Additionally, the government's own impact assessment acknowledges that these collection efforts "could impose a burden on low-income Canadians." While the budget states that enforcement will focus on those with the highest likelihood of repayment, and that flexible repayment arrangements will be available, media reports indicate that the government is taking a far more aggressive approach, including wage garnishment.

While most pandemic benefit legislation technically establishes a six-year limitation period for the collection of overpayments, that period can be extended through broad exceptions, including something as simple as acknowledging the debt, even while disputing it.

Despite Budget 2025's suggestion that collection activities will continue until March 31, 2028, it's clear that, without a significant policy shift, debt collection could persist far longer, pushing already precarious workers deeper into poverty and undermining the very objective of these emergency supports.

What began as a lifeline risks becoming an anchor.

In that same budget, while the federal government set a plan in action to pursue largely low-income Canadians, it gifted a tax break to the rich.

The budget eliminated luxury taxes on aircrafts and vessels on the basis that they were "inefficient, costly to administer, and challenging for Canadian industries at a time of ongoing global uncertainty." Despite being framed as a move towards greater administrative efficiency, the impact assessment starkly outlined exactly which population would be most affected by such a change: "individuals who are disproportionately higher income and primarily men."

The contrast is difficult to ignore.

The government is prepared to forego revenue from those at the top end of the income distribution scale while pursuing repayment from some of the lowest-income Canadians who relied on emergency benefits during a national crisis.

Luxury asset owners are relieved of tax obligations on the grounds that enforcement is burdensome, while significant public funds are redirected toward recovering comparatively modest overpayments from low-income workers. One is framed as administrative efficiency, the other as fiscal responsibility, but the end result is that individuals who are struggling to stay afloat are forced back underwater.

Emergency benefits were delivered quickly because the crisis demanded speed over perfection.

Clawing them back years later reframes that urgency as error.

While the CRA claims that it is owed \$10-billion in pandemic related benefits, the amounts being pursued at an individual level are often quite modest, even while the human cost is not. For many low-income workers, repayment demands can mean depleted savings, renewed debt, or missed rent.

Those who wish to challenge the CRA's decisions often lack the financial means to obtain legal counsel, and are, therefore, forced to navigate the complex judicial review process unrepresented.

The government can, and should, cease its pandemic benefit collection efforts. If not in the name of strengthening the economic security of low-income Canadians, then—as with their eradication of the luxury tax—in the name of administrative efficiency and simplicity.

It's time for the government to show low-income Canadians the same grace it extends to the owners of yachts and private jets.

Amanda Therrien is the senior staff lawyer at the National Association of Women and the Law.

Leila Sarangi is the national director for Campaign 2000: End Child and Family Poverty.

The Hill Times

Hill Climbers

By Laura Ryckewaert



Public Works Minister Lightbound in search of a new comms team

Plus, Housing Minister Gregor Robertson has hired Jenna Ghassabeh as his new director of communications.

Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound finds himself in need of both a new director of communications and a new press secretary after both were snapped up by different cabinet offices.

Laurent de Casanove, as recently reported by *Hill Climbers*, has exited as communications director to Lightbound to join Prime Minister Mark Carney's office as a media advance as of July 8.

De Casanove had been running communications for Lightbound as public works minister since September 2025, and before then was most recently press secretary and senior communications adviser to National Defence Minister David McGuinty.

De Casanove's exit from Lightbound's office follows that of press secretary Leela Polushin, who bade the team farewell in mid-June to become press secretary to Artificial Intelligence and Digital Innovation Minister Evan Solomon, who is also the minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario (FedDev Ontario).

Previously, Sofia Ouslis was press secretary and issues adviser to Solomon, but, as has been reported, she left in May to become a press secretary to Carney.

Polushin had been working for Lightbound since October 2025, and before then spent almost a year as an issues and communications adviser to the federal transport and internal trade minister, starting under then-minister Anita Anand and ending under then-minister Chrystia Freeland.

Lightbound has a separate team supporting him as Quebec lieutenant, which includes director of communications Laurence Gagnon.



Government Transformation, Public Works, and Procurement Minister Joël Lightbound recently bade farewell to both a director of communications and a press secretary. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

With de Casanove and Polushin's exits, *Hill Climbers* understands that director of regional affairs Victor Kandasamy is currently covering communications duties for Lightbound as public works minister.

Allie Chalke is chief of staff to Lightbound as public works minister, while Ann-Clara Vaillancourt oversees his office as Quebec lieutenant.

Along with Polushin's hiring, there are a few other staffing moves to catch up on in Solomon's shop.

Director of operations Meron Cheway has officially left the AI minister's office.

Cheway went on leave at the beginning of this year, and had been working for Solomon since

shortly after last year's federal election, prior to which Cheway led operations for then-women and gender equality and youth minister Marci Ien.

Cheway started on the Hill at the end of 2021 as a special assistant for policy to then-housing and diversity and inclusion minister Ahmed Hussen. He's since also been West and North regional adviser to Ien as women and gender equality minister.

Klara Mancini-Hupel, who had stepped in as acting director of operations in Cheway's absence at the start of the year, has now permanently taken over the role.

Mancini-Hupel joined Solomon's office as a Quebec and Atlantic regional adviser last summer after spending the election as campaign manager to now-Quebec Liberal MP Eric St-Pierre. She previously spent roughly two-and-a-half years as director of campus programming for the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee.

As reported back in March, after Mancini-Hupel stepped into her acting role, Diakaria Diallo was hired as a new Quebec regional adviser to Solomon.

In another—belated—office update, Luca Bonifacio-Proietto, who had joined Solomon's team as a policy and parliamentary affairs adviser this past spring, recently exited from the AI minister's team. Bonifacio-Proietto started this Parliament as an issues, communications, and parliamentary affairs adviser to Secretary of State

for the Canada Revenue Agency and Financial Institutions Wayne Long. He previously worked for now-Canada-U.S. Trade Minister Dominic LeBlanc since 2024, beginning as a policy adviser to LeBlanc as then-public safety, democratic institutions, and intergovernmental affairs minister—a title Bonifacio-Proietto maintained after LeBlanc was made finance and intergovernmental affairs minister at the end of that year.

Speaking of staff dropping “acting” from their titles, Anushka Kurian is now officially policy director to Solomon. She stepped into the role on an interim basis this past March after director of policy and parliamentary affairs Michael Paramathasan left the office.

Kurian originally joined Solomon's office in September 2025 as a senior policy adviser after more than a year and a half working for Rogers Communications as a senior manager for government relations. Among other things, she's also an ex-consultant with McMillan Vantage Policy Group.

Simon Wood, who joined Solomon's office last fall as a parliamentary affairs and issues adviser, has been promoted to senior parliamentary affairs adviser to the minister. Wood is a former assistant to Ontario Liberal MP Marcus Powlowski.

Anson Duran is chief of staff to Solomon, supported by deputy chief of staff and director of communications Peter Wall. Also currently working for the minister are: Alfred Burgeson, senior adviser; Salam Samara, Ontario regional affairs adviser;

Benjamin Ebadi, regional adviser for the Prairies, West, and North; Kheyi Isichei, digital communications adviser; Érika Dupuis, part-time communications assistant; Emma Northcott, executive assistant; and Daniel Rozon, driver.

Plus, focused on the FedDev file are



Jenna Ghassabeh is now communications director to Minister Robertson. *The Hill Times* photograph by Stuart Benson

senior special assistants for operations and stakeholder engagement Hamid Mohamed and Tanveer Tur. Finally, there's a new communications director in the office of Housing and Infrastructure Minister Gregor Robertson, who is also the minister responsible for Pacific Economic Development Canada.

Jenna Ghassabeh marked her first day leading communications for Robertson on July 13, and replaces Mohammad Hussain, who *Hill Climbers* understands has left the minister's office.

Ghassabeh had, until recently, been running communications for Environment, Climate Change, and Nature Minister Julie Dabrusin since last

year's election. Before that, she spent more than two-and-a-half years working in then-prime minister Justin Trudeau's office, starting as a special assistant for communications in December 2022, and ending as lead press secretary to Trudeau. Ghassabeh is also a former assistant to Burlington, Ont., Liberal MP Karina Gould.

Hussain, who'd similarly been leading communications for Robertson since the 2025 election, previously did the same for then-tourism minister Soraya Martinez Ferrada. Hussain is also an ex-Trudeau PMO staffer, having worked at 80

Wellington St. for almost two years, as press secretary and later lead press secretary (he was succeeded by Ghassabeh).

He also previously worked as press secretary to Gould as then-families minister, as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs to then-innovation minister

Navdeep Bains, and as an aide to now-Secretary of State for Sport Adam van Koevorden in his capacity as an Ontario MP.

As recently reported by *Hill Climbers*, other recent communications-related changes in Robertson's office include Arianna Durgerian's promotion to press secretary, and Owen Lloyd-Ellis' hiring as a digital media manager. Marie-Pascale Des Rosiers is chief of staff to Robertson, supported by deputy chief of staff Thomas Simpson.

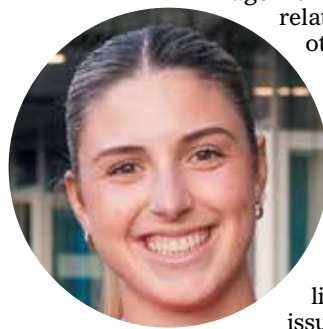
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Leela Polushin is now press secretary to Minister Solomon. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Meron Cheway is no longer working for Minister Solomon. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Klara Mancini-Hupel is now officially director of operations to Minister Solomon. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Simon Wood has been promoted to senior parliamentary affairs adviser to Minister Solomon. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Luca Bonifacio-Proietto has left Minister Solomon's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*



Parliamentary Calendar

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

Deal or no deal, CUSMA edition: July 23 webinar breaks down trade talks



Foreign Affairs Minister Anita Anand, right, with Mexico's Secretary of Foreign Affairs Roberto Velasco Álvarez in Ottawa on July 17. The Toronto Association for Business Economics is hosting a webinar on Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement talks on July 23. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

WEDNESDAY, JULY 22

Webinar: 'Canada's Largest-Ever Defence Deal'—The Canadian International Council's national capital branch hosts "Strategic Briefing: Canada's Largest-Ever Defence Deal" featuring military and technology analyst Shahryar Pasandideh. Wednesday, July 22, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: thecic.org.

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

THURSDAY, JULY 23

Webinar: 'Scenarios for a CUSMA Deal—or No Deal'—The Toronto Association for Business Economics hosts a webinar on "Scenarios for a CUSMA Deal—or No Deal." The C.D. Howe Institute's Daniel Schwanen will present an updated economic and political backgrounder to the CUSMA talks, what a revised agreement might look like, and how that would impact Canada's economic policy choices. Thursday, July 23, at 12 p.m. ET happening online: cabe.ca.

Webinar: 'Mental health funding at risk'—The Canadian Mental Health Association examines the upcoming expiry of the \$5-billion mental health and addictions bilateral agreements and makes the case—at a time of growing demand for services, shortage of family physicians, and affordability challenges to pay for private care—for federal renewal. Thursday, July 23, at 1 p.m. ET happening online. Register at cmha.ca, or by email smsansouci@cmha.ca.

MONDAY, JULY 27

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

TUESDAY, JULY 28

Should You Date a Lawyer or a Politician?—Topsy Scholars hosts "Should You Date a Lawyer or a Politician?" Law student Jasmine Jin, a

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

WEDNESDAY, JULY 29

Minister Hodgson and ParlSec Chi to Attend Fundraiser—Energy and Natural Resources Minister Tim Hodgson and parliamentary secretary for health Maggie Chi will take part in a party fundraiser for the Don Valley North Federal Liberal Association. Wednesday, July 29, at 5:30 p.m. ET at Bayview Golf and Country Club, 25 Fairway Heights Dr., Toronto. Details: liberal.ca.

THURSDAY, JULY 30

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

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 19

Women's Introduction to AI: Beacon North Mentorship Academy hosts a free, beginner-friendly virtual session for women who want to better understand artificial intelligence. Stephanie Mitton will explain what AI is, why it matters, and how to start using it with confidence. Wednesday, Aug. 19, at 12 p.m. ET on happening online. Register: beaconmentorshipacademy.com.

WEDNESDAY, AUG. 19—SATURDAY, AUG. 22

2026 Basic Income Earth Network Congress—The Basic Income Earth Network Congress brings together researchers, policymakers, advocates, filmmakers, and people with lived experience from around the world to explore basic income as a response to today's overlapping challenges, including affordability, inequality, artificial intelligence, climate change, and democratic instability. Wednesday, Aug. 19, to Saturday, Aug. 22, in Toronto. Register: bien2026.net.

MONDAY, SEPT. 14—TUESDAY, SEPT. 15

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

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 16

Housing Inc. with Leilani Farha—Former United Nations special rapporteur on the right to housing Leilani Farha, who is this year's CBC Massey Lecturer, will take part in a conversation about her book *Housing Inc.*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers' Festival. Wednesday, Sept. 16, at 7 p.m. ET at Christ Church Cathedral, 414 Sparks St., Ottawa. Details: writersfestival.org.

MONDAY, SEPT. 21

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

TUESDAY, SEPT. 22

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

House Speaker's Garden Party—House Speaker Francis Scarpaleggia invites MPs, foreign heads of mission to Canada, and members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery to a garden party at his official residence. Tuesday, Sept. 22, at 6 p.m. ET at The Farm, 15 Barnes Rd., Kingsmere, Que.

TUESDAY, SEPT. 29

GCXpo 2026—Invest Ottawa and Area X.O host GCXpo, a live technology demonstration event bringing together government, procurement leaders, industry, investors, researchers, innovators, and ecosystem partners

for an immersive day of discovery, collaboration, and real-world innovation. Experience cutting-edge Canadian technologies operating in live environments. Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 8 a.m. ET Area X.O 1740 Woodroffe Ave., Ottawa. Details via Eventbrite.

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

Patrons Circle Dinner with Bob Fife—The C.D. Howe Institute hosts a Patrons Circle Dinner featuring special guest Bob Fife, former Ottawa bureau chief for *The Globe and Mail*. Tuesday, Sept. 29, at 5:30 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

WEDNESDAY, SEPT. 30

Women, Truth and Reconciliation—Author and *Hill Times* columnist Rose LeMay and author Tanya Talaga will take part in a special panel conversation in recognition of the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation focused on what reconciliation looks like in practice, not just in principle, hosted by The Honest Talk. Wednesday, Sept. 30, at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Details: nac-cna.ca.

MONDAY, OCT. 5

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

MONDAY, OCT. 19

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

TUESDAY, OCT. 20

CUTA 2026 Policy Forum—The Canadian Urban Transit Association hosts its 2026 Policy Forum. Public transit leaders, urban mobility experts, government representatives, and decision makers will discuss industry priorities with public policy and the future of public transit. Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 8:30 a.m. ET at the National Arts Centre, 1 Elgin St., Ottawa. Register via Eventbrite.

Financial Crimes Agency Deputy Minister to Deliver Remarks—Rob Stewart, deputy minister leading the

newly created Canada's Financial Crimes Agency, will take part in a roundtable lunch hosted by the C.D. Howe Institute. Tuesday, Oct. 20, at 12 p.m. ET at the C.D. Howe Institute, 110 Yonge St., Suite 800, Toronto. Register: cdhowe.org.

THURSDAY, OCT. 29

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

THURSDAY, NOV. 4

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

TUESDAY, NOV. 17

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

FRIDAY, NOV. 20

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

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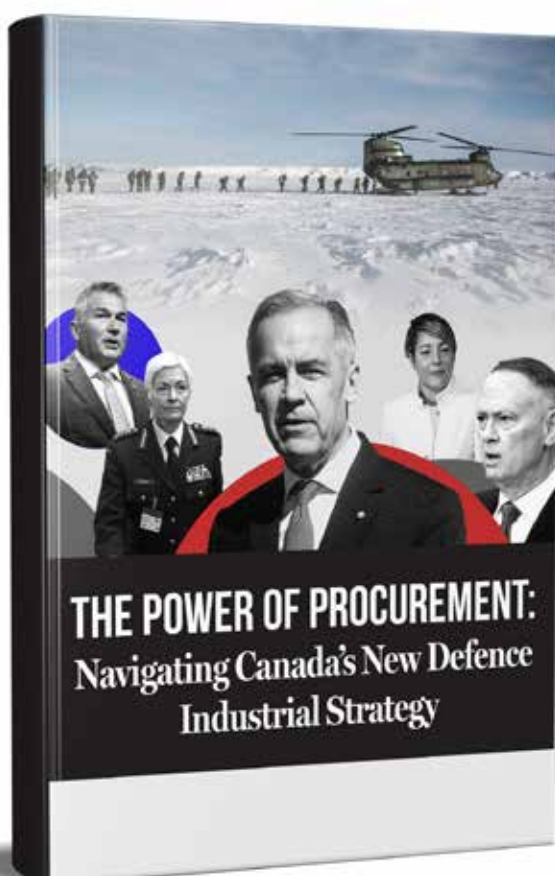


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