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THE HILL TIMES

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NEWS

Canada 'respects and recognizes' Guaidó ouster, opposition Venezuelan envoy begins closing mission

BY NEIL MOSS

After a Venezuelan National Assembly vote ousted Juan Guaidó, who Canada had recog-

nized as the interim president, and dissolved his government in late December, the federal government says it "respects and recognizes" the assembly's decision.

In 2019, Canada recognized then-opposition leader Guaidó as the legitimate interim president of Venezuela, asserting that Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro had an

"illegitimate" claim to power and putting support behind the "democratically elected" National Assembly. Three of the four major opposition groups in Venezuela voted

on Dec. 30 to remove Guaidó as interim president and dissolve his government. "Canada respects and recognizes the National Assembly's decision to extend its authority as it is the last remaining democratically elected institution," Global Affairs Canada said in a Jan. 6 statement. "Canada also respects

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NEWS

Federal oversight of health-care funding 'basic common sense' after public money disappeared down 'provincial ratholes': Fisman

BY STUART BENSON

A parliamentary petition calling on the Liberal government to appoint a federal agency to audit health transfer allotments gained more than 30,000 signatures in the first two days of 2023, indicating that the nation's health-care crisis remained top of mind even as Canadians wrapped up the holidays.

Sponsored by NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen (London-Fanshawe, Ont.), the petition called for the appointment of a federal agency to audit the allotment of health transfers to the provinces and the minister of health's funding mandates; "restrict private

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NEWS

Via Rail holiday travel disruption prompts calls to explore rail passenger rights protections

Transport Action Canada president Terence Johnson says the federal government 'needs to have a proper passenger rights framework for every [type of] passenger—air, rail, and bus.'

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

After the Christmas-time Via Rail service disruptions that saw dozens of trains cancelled and hundreds of passengers stranded overnight, an NDP MP and a transport advocate are

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A Via Rail train sits in the Ottawa station on Nov. 30, 2021. The House Transport Committee will kick off a study looking into Via's holiday train service disruptions on Jan. 12. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

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Mike Lapointe

Heard On The Hill

Senate parliamentary affairs adviser Alan Fleming dies suddenly, age 63



Alan Fleming, who most recently served as Independent Senator Dan Christmas' director of parliamentary affairs, died suddenly on Jan. 7, at the age of 63. Photograph courtesy of Facebook, The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

Alan Fleming, who most recently served as Independent Senator **Dan Christmas'** director of parliamentary affairs in a "role which he often shared how honoured and proud he was to hold," died suddenly on Jan. 7, at the age of 63.

Fleming began working for a number of Senators in January 2009, where he "quickly earned a reputation for his generosity, intelligence, kindness and team spirit," according to a tweet from the Independent Senators Group.

"We are forever grateful for Al's important contributions to the ISG," according to the Senate group. "We will sorely miss his impressive skill set, professionalism and, of course, friendship."

Conservative Senate Leader **Don Plett** tweeted that he was "saddened to learn of the passing of a dear friend" and sent his condolences to Fleming's family and friends on behalf of himself and the Red Chamber's Conservative caucus.

Prior to his time working in the Senate, Fleming was the director of public affairs for the Congress of Aboriginal Peoples from August 2005 to January 2009, as well as a senior communications executive for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada from November 2001 to August 2005.

He was also the co-host of *Middle Age Bald Guys Talking Rock and Roll* on NewsTalk Radio 580 CFRA from 2002 to 2009, according to his LinkedIn.

A celebration of life will be held at 11 a.m. on Jan. 13 at Sunnyside Wesleyan Church in Ottawa, followed by a reception in the church basement. The service will be livestreamed on YouTube for those who are unable to attend in person.

Sen. Christmas, appointed by Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** in

2016, previously served in various leadership positions in the Mi'kmaw Nation of Nova Scotia. He announced his retirement from the Red Chamber on Dec. 15, 2022, at the age of 66—well before the mandatory retirement age of 75.

After losing his wife **Arlene "Dozay" Christmas** in 2019, he said he "seriously considered" resigning from the Senate after he became the single parent of his nine-year-old daughter, according to his statement announcing his retirement.

With the pandemic descending, however, hybrid sittings allowed the Senator

to both be at home with his daughter and continue his work. When in-person sittings resumed, Christmas made



Independent Senator Dan Christmas, appointed to the Red Chamber by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau in 2016, announced his retirement on Dec. 15, 2022. Photograph courtesy of Senator Christmas' office

the decision to step down, and assured his colleagues that his resignation "had nothing to do with the work of the Senate or the opportunity to work with all of you," and that if his personal circumstances had been otherwise, he would have been "very happy to continue to work with you."

"Please don't think that my decision to be with my family is a difficult or challenging one. It is not," said Christmas. "There is nothing more rewarding or satisfying in my life than being a father for my three children and a grandfather to my two grandchildren. I thoroughly enjoy being with them, and I look forward to raising my youngest daughter to adulthood."

Investigative Journalism Foundation launches

Brainchild of award-winning investigative reporter and national chair of the Canadian Association of Journalists **Zane Schwartz**, the Investigative Journalism Foundation, a new non-profit newsroom focused on public interest journalism, officially launched on Jan. 4.

According to a tweet announcing the launch, the team is "building a new journalism model" that is "data driven," "radically transparent," and "laser-focused on serving the public and speaking truth to power."

In addition to investigative reporting, the site will feature constantly updated public interest databases on topics like political donations, lobbying, and money the government gives to

companies, according to a Jan. 4 post authored by Schwartz, CEO and editor-in-chief of the platform.

Schwartz heads a team including contributing editors **Michael Pereira** and **Fatima Syed**, as well as reporters **Xavier-Richer Vis**, **Hanna Carty**, **Kayla Zhu**, **Roberto Rocha**, **Kate Schneider**, and **Rianna Lim**.



CEO and editor-in-chief of the Investigative Journalism foundation Zane Schwartz. Photograph courtesy of Twitter

The board of directors includes **Brent Jolly**, president of the CAJ; **Karyn Pugliese**, editor-in-chief of *Canada's National Observer*; **Sadia Zaman**, CEO of the Inspirit Foundation; and **John Ruffolo**, founder and managing partner of Maverix Private Equity.

Schwartz also indicated that the foundation has raised \$789,541.11 from supporters including the Balsillie Family Foundation, the Trotter Family Foundation, the McConnell Foundation, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council, the University of Toronto Scarborough, and **John Campbell** and **Denise Fujiwara**.

"We believe in a collaborative model and are proud to partner with other media outlets, post-secondary institutions, non-profits, and other organizations, to ensure our journalism has as wide a reach as possible," wrote Schwartz.

Former Hill journalist Joan Bryden's dad dies just short of 100



Richard Alan Bryden, father of former Hill journalist Joan Bryden, died on Christmas Day, just five months short of his 100th birthday. Photograph courtesy of Legacy.com

Richard Alan Bryden, father of former Hill journalist **Joan Bryden**, who covered federal politics for decades with The Canadian Press before she retired last year, died on Christmas Day, just five months short of his 100th birthday.

"His kindness, patience, generosity, thoughtfulness, and penchant for bad puns will be sorely missed by all who knew him, especially his family for whom he was a constant source of calm reassurance and the rock we all relied upon," according to his obituary.

A chemical engineer by trade, he developed a new method to adhere cloth backing to vinyl, starting his own business Shirlite, named after his wife of 66 years, **Shirley**.

Joan retired from The Canadian Press' parliamentary bureau back in February 2022 after 40 years working as a journalist—34 of which were spent covering Parliament Hill and federal politics.

Toronto Star national columnist **Susan Delacourt** wrote that she and Bryden "have lived such parallel lives over four decades—in our careers, in our personal lives, our friendships and obsessions (dogs)."

"In ongoing parallel developments, I am sorry to report that my dear friend lost her beloved father in 2022," noting that her own mom, **Vera Delacourt**, would have turned 90 years old on Jan. 6.

"I mostly knew Joan's dad by her stories, but I met him a few times and it was clear he was a remarkable man," wrote Delacourt. "Much love and condolences to my parallel-life friend."

Visitation and a memorial service for Bryden will be held at the Erb & Good Family Funeral Home in Waterloo on Jan. 12.

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Neil Moss

Diplomatic Circles

G7 can't accept unilateral attempts to alter 'very shaky' international order, says Japanese envoy



Ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi and Japan are marking 95 years of diplomatic relations with Canada this year. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

'We see a lot of unilateral attempts by China to change the status quo in the South China Sea or East China Sea,' says Japanese ambassador Kanji Yamanouchi, noting Beijing will be a topic of discussion for the G7.

As Japan takes over the G7 presidency, its ambassador in Canada says the Group of Seven needs to ensure the international order isn't disrupted by rogue states.

Around the world, many have increasingly raised concerns about the ongoing battle between the future of democracies and the threat of authoritarianism, seen through Russia's invasion of Ukraine and China's threatening of Taiwan.

Japanese Ambassador to Canada **Kanji Yamanouchi** said the status quo of the international order needs to be protected.

"We see a lot of attempts to change the status quo by utilizing force unilaterally in Ukraine, or in the South China Sea or East China Sea," Yamanouchi told *The Hill Times* during a Jan. 9 interview at the Japanese Embassy. "The international order has been very shaky these days, so now is the time for us ... to walk together to make sure that the international order [is] based upon rule and law."

Japanese Prime Minister **Fumio Kishida** is in the middle of a weeklong, five-country trip visiting most G7 nations, taking him to Italy, France, the United Kingdom, Canada, and the United States. He will be making his first visit to Canada as prime minister on Jan. 12.

During the trip, Kishida will start to pave the way in hopes of ensuring the G7 summit in May is a successful one.

Yamanouchi said the visit is coming at an opportune time, with Canada having released its Indo-Pacific Strategy in late November and Japan having announced its National Security Strategy in December, which included plans to double defence spending.

"Now the prime minister [will] come and talk how to realize a free and open Indo-Pacific based upon [the] respective strategies," he said, adding that the visit will serve as a good opportunity to speak about regional issues, including Ukraine, North Korea, and China, and to "compare notes."

The Japanese ambassador said Canada's Indo-Pacific plan was "carefully crafted" and "well crafted," noting that Tokyo welcomes the strategy.

Japan and Canada are celebrating 95 years of diplomatic relations this year. Japan opened a diplomatic mission in Ottawa in 1928, prior to Canada officially having control over its foreign policy with the Statute of Westminster in 1931. Canada opened a mission in Tokyo in 1929.

Responding to the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Yamanouchi said the G7 does its best work together, including with sanctions. He noted that there is no "crystal ball" to see how the conflict will end, remarking that what is happening in Ukraine can spread to other parts of the globe.

"Today's Ukraine might be tomorrow's Asia," said Yamanouchi, echoing the words of Kishida. "The Ukraine issue is not just about ... European affairs; its connotation

is global. So, we have to do our best to address this issue," he said.

He added the G7 will discuss how to address the rising challenge of the Chinese government, which is described in Canada's Indo-Pacific Strategy as an "increasingly disruptive global power."

"We see a lot of unilateral attempts by China to change the status quo in the South China Sea or East China Sea," he said, remarking that China-Russia co-operation needs to be addressed, as does international economic dependence on Beijing, and China's refusal to deny the use of force across the Taiwan Strait.

"In that sense, China is a sort of a matter of great concern," Yamanouchi said. "So, the G7 leaders will talk on China."

Time to push for nuclear disarmament: Yamanouchi

Japan's ambassador in Canada said it is time for G7 leaders to "take the lead" to advance the cause of nuclear disarmament amid sabre-rattling from Russia.

"More than ever, the G7 needs to address the nuclear disarmament and nuclear non-proliferation because it is very significant," he said.

Russian President **Vladimir Putin** has said that nuclear weapons could be used in Ukraine if needed, but many have minimized the likelihood that the 78-year nuclear taboo will be broken.

Yamanouchi said Kishida views the issue as "very, very important," remarking that he addresses it whenever he has the opportunity.

The G7 summit in May will take place in Hiroshima—one of the two cities on which the U.S. dropped nuclear bombs during the tail end of the Second World War—which is also Kishida's hometown. Yamanouchi is from Nagasaki, the second city where the Americans dropped a nuclear bomb in 1945. The two bombings killed an estimated 130,000 to 226,000 people.

"I think Hiroshima is a great venue [for the summit]," he said. "If they visit the actual site in Hiroshima, there are so many remains and documentations and photographs. Anybody who sees it ... [will have] a pretty strong appeal to nuclear disarmament."

"Now's the time for G7 leaders to take a lead," he said.

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News

Could Canada be facing another trade dispute in Bill C-11?

Trade lawyer Lawrence Herman says he doesn't expect Bill C-11 to become a trade dispute between Canada and the U.S., but if it does, he asserts Canada has a sound backing.

BY NEIL MOSS

Ottawa will have a credible defence if the United States pursues retaliatory tariffs that some have suggested Canada could be slapped with over potential trade harms stemming from Bill C-11, according to one trade lawyer.

In meetings with International Trade Minister Mary Ng (Markham-Thornhill, Ont.) on July 8 and Nov. 30, 2022, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai raised concerns over "pending legislation in the Canadian Parliament that could impact digital streaming services," according to American readouts of the meetings. The Canadian readouts of the meetings made no reference to the legislation.

The concern is a reference to Bill C-11, the Online Streaming Act, which seeks to regulate how large streaming services contribute to Canadian content. The bill is currently in third reading in the Senate after passing clause-by-clause consideration last month, with the inclusion of a number of amendments.

After passing the clause-by-clause review, the Senate Transport and Communications Committee attached a series of "observations," including from the Conservatives on the committee noting the threat of "retaliatory measures under CUSMA [Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement] that could affect other sectors of Canada's economy."



In two meetings with International Trade Minister Mary Ng, right, U.S. Trade Representative Katherine Tai, left, has raised concerns over 'pending legislation in the Canadian Parliament that could impact digital streaming services,' according to American readouts of the meetings. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Former Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) chair Konrad von Finckenstein has raised concerns over trade retaliation under CUSMA, noting that while there is a cultural exemption in the North American trade pact, it also gives the ability for the injured party to apply retaliatory measures in industries beyond cultural ones.

"It's a self-help mechanism. The other country decides you have hurt their industry to the tune of \$500-million. Therefore, they will put \$500-million," he told the Senate committee in June.

"What I'm worried about is that we're going to ask Prime, Netflix, YouTube and all these American firms to pay large amounts into a fund for Canadian production. Fine, they will do that. But in the end, they may say, 'We paid into it, but now we can't get anything out of it,'" he said. "The net effect of it is YouTube, Prime, and others lose, in my example, \$500-million, or whatever number you want. Therefore, [they] will extract that from us in another fashion."

He said there is a "distinct possibility" that Canada could be subject to retaliatory measures, and to avoid it, he advocated for allowing contributing firms to be eligible for the fund.

On Dec. 7, Conservative Senator Fabian Manning (Newfoundland and Labrador) proposed an amendment to allow foreign entities to benefit from a fund they pay into. He told the committee that it was "vital" to adopt the amendment to ensure "Canada does not run afoul of its international trade obligations and risk retaliatory action."

The amendment was defeated 3-10.

International trade lawyer Lawrence Herman told *The Hill Times* that, ultimately, Bill C-11 won't fall under the cultural section of CUSMA. That would both limit the exception given and the ability of an injured party to retaliate.

"I don't think Canada has to rely on the cultural exemption to justify Bill C-11. I think Bill C-11 stands on its own merits," he said, adding that he doesn't think it is a piece of cultural legislation. "Broadcasting isn't a cultural industry. It's a standard economic endeavour and I don't believe this measure would need to be justified under the cultural exemption."

He said the bill doesn't discriminate against the U.S. and thus wouldn't contravene CUSMA, noting that it sets out a framework to regulate digital service providers and the same rules are being provided as would be on any conventional broadcaster.

"So, there's no discrimination. In fact, I think you could arguably say that the fact that online platforms are not discriminated [against], it is giving them a preference and discriminating against Canadian broadcasters or providers of communications

services," Herman said, suggesting that Canada and the U.S. are "very far away" from making the issue a trade dispute.

If the U.S. chose to challenge the law under CUSMA, Herman said they would have to prove they are being discriminated against compared to Canadian companies. That would involve a lengthy process, which could take several years, starting with consultations.

"One thing the Americans might argue is that when you dig down into the measure, it is being unfairly targeted against companies from the United States. I think that would be a very hard point to justify," he said. "They would have to show that somehow it was devised to specifically target American companies based on nationality or national origin, but that is not the intention and nothing in the legislation and the history of the bill ... suggests that the intention is to target American digital media."

The Canadian government has said that the bill isn't discriminatory.

University of Ottawa professor Michael Geist, Canada Research

Chair in internet and e-commerce law, said Bill C-11, as well as Bill C-18, the Online News Act, are on the Americans' radar.

"The government may be underestimating the prospect of a trade backlash. Indeed, Canada's internet policy is shaping up to be a significant source of tension that could result in serious retaliation," he said in an email.

In September 2022, Geist suggested that Bill C-11 could open "the door for the possibility of hundreds of millions of dollars in retaliatory tariffs."

He told *The Hill Times* that the discriminatory aspects of the law could depend on how the CRTC interprets the legislation.

"There is definitely some risk here, particularly if only Canadians are eligible for certain benefits, but U.S. entities must pay into a system that they can't benefit from," Geist said. "The cultural provisions in the agreement may permit the discrimination, but the threat of retaliatory tariffs could result in very significant tariffs on sensitive Canadian sectors."

The internet law professor first raised the concern over retaliatory tariffs under CUSMA while the trade implementation bill was being debated in Parliament in 2020, noting at the time the ability for the U.S. to respond with retaliatory tariffs on non-cultural industries makes Canada "very vulnerable."

Geist suggested that the U.S. may be even more concerned about Bill C-18, which would require web giants to compensate news outlets for posting their news content to their platforms.

"C-18 may be the bigger problem from a trade perspective given that certain Canadian broadcasters are treated as eligible news organizations without a requirement to produce news. There is no such availability for U.S. broadcasters, which raise discrimination concerns," he said.

Bill C-18 completed first reading in the Senate in December.

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University of Ottawa professor Michael Geist says Bill C-11 could lead to 'serious retaliation.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



The Senate Committee on Transport and Communications, chaired by Conservative Senator Leo Housakos, finished clause-by-clause review of Bill C-11 last month. The legislation is currently at third reading in the Senate. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

‘Knee-jerk’ travel restrictions ineffective at protecting Canadians, Liberals should demand greater transparency from China: MP Ellis

Wastewater surveillance projects at international airports and across the country are a ‘smoke alarm’ for variants of concern, but experts say sustainable infrastructure is needed to better prepare for future pandemics.

BY STUART BENSON

At a time when Canadian airports are already in chaos, the Conservatives are calling the government’s decision to reintroduce COVID-19 testing requirements for travellers from China “political theatre” that will do little to protect Canadians. Instead of the apparent “knee-jerk reaction” to bring back restrictions, the Liberals should be demanding more transparency from the Chinese government to better inform Canadians as they “learn to live with COVID.”

As of Jan. 5, all travellers over two years of age arriving on flights originating from the People’s Republic of China, Hong Kong, or Macao will need a negative COVID-19 test result, taken no more than two days before departure.

Announced on Dec. 31, 2022, the Public Health Agency of Canada (PHAC) said the temporary measure is in response to a surge of COVID cases in China and the limited availability of epidemiological and other related data from the Chinese government. The temporary measure will remain in place until Feb. 4, when PHAC said it will be reassessed as more data and evidence becomes available.

The measure follows China’s easing of its ultra-restrictive “zero-COVID” policy, which led to a drastic rise in infections in the country, spurring other countries—including the United States, Italy, India, and Japan—to impose similar testing requirements.

Conservative MP Stephen Ellis (Cumberland-Colchester, N.S.), the party’s health critic and a former family physician before being elected in 2021, told *The Hill Times* that he believes the measure will do little to stop the virus from entering Canada from China, noting that he isn’t alone in his summation.

“There are lots of physicians, professors, and infectious disease experts around the country who have already weighed in on this and made it clear that it doesn’t work,” Ellis said. “It may slow the spread, but it’s certainly not going to stop the spread of variants.”

Ellis said his party is concerned that the Liberals will use the situation in China to bring back travel restrictions and vaccine mandates “en masse”.

“I don’t think the science supports that, and I don’t think Canadians would support that,” Ellis added, noting that if there was data to show that something had changed significantly, some measures could require re-evaluation.

“That said, this knee-jerk reaction is just political theatre,” Ellis continued. “Canadian airports are already in chaos, and adding more restrictions—if it’s not helpful—doesn’t make sense.”

The same day the measure took effect, the National Airlines Council of Canada (NACC) issued a statement criticizing the decision and stressing “the importance of measures that are

ga Centre, Ont.) defended the decision in an interview on CBC News’ *Power and Politics*, pointing to a study from the University of British Columbia, published in August 2022, which found that travel restrictions barring entry to Canada in March 2020 reduced the number of cases crossing the border tenfold.

“Those measures work,” Alghabra said, adding that while some may criticize the measure for not being “perfect,” it would add a “layer of protection,” and given “the lack of information” forthcoming from China, it was the “prudent thing to do right now.”

However, given that death of information, Ellis told *The Hill Times* the most important question is why the Liberals are not demanding China release more of its genomic sequencing to better understand the developing situation the country is facing and better detect any potential new variants before they can spread to Canada.

At a time when Ellis said he believes many Canadians are “learning to live with

may face a potential new variant due to the increased spread of COVID-19 in China.

On Jan. 4, five days after the World Health Organization (WHO) met with officials from China’s National Health Commission and the National Disease Control and Prevention Administration to reiterate its request for China to more regularly share specific and real-time data on the epidemiological situation, Mike Ryan, the WHO’s emergencies director, told reporters at a media briefing that the current COVID-19 data published by China underrepresents the “true impact” on hospital and ICU admissions and “particularly in terms of deaths.”

On Jan. 9, local health officials in Henan, China’s third most populous province, said that nearly 90 per cent of its citizens had been infected with COVID-19, amounting to almost 88.5 million people.

However, the numbers out of Henan are in direct conflict with the central government, which reports just 120,000 infections and only 30 deaths in the country since the shift in policy.

The number of deaths has also been called into question by the WHO, calling the requirement for respiratory failure associated with a COVID infection to register as a death from the virus a “very narrow definition.”

Wastewater surveillance a ‘smoke alarm’ for new variants: Delatolla

When asked what else the federal government is doing to protect Canadians from a potential outbreak of new COVID-19 variants, PHAC pointed to the pilot project to test wastewater from aircraft at the Vancouver International Airport and the expansion of a similar existing project at Toronto Pearson International Airport.

In an emailed response to *The Hill Times*, PHAC explained that in addition to the current project at Pearson, which focuses on sampling wastewater from terminals to track the emergence of new variants of concern coming into Canada regardless of the flight’s origin, the recent short-term projects will focus on flights from China and Hong Kong.

“The Government of Canada has a strong monitoring program in place with the provinces and territories to identify COVID-19 variants in Canada, including the Omicron variant of concern and its sub-lineages, most notably through a robust genomic sequencing network and through the monitoring of wastewater in Canadian communities,” wrote Nicholas Janveau, an executive assistant for PHAC.

Robert Delatolla, an environmental engineering professor at the University of Ottawa whose research focuses on biological wastewater treatment and surveillance for disease, told *The Hill Times* that as a complement to the requirements already in place, the wastewater testing at airports will provide a “smoke alarm” for the presence of potential variants of concern that do enter into Canada.

While the monitoring will only be able to identify the early signs of variants already circulating in the population, like the newly detected XBB.1.5 subvariant now responsible for 70 per cent of new cases in the northeastern U.S., the lead time early detection wastewater surveillance can provide could be crucial for Canada’s health-care system.

While Health Canada has detected 21 cases of the new subvariant now present in 29 countries, according to the WHO, the presence of XBB.1.5 was only detected “sporadically” and the Canadian agency would not report proportions or growth rates until there was sufficient data.

“It’s a heads-up of what might be coming so we can plan accordingly,” Delatolla explained, adding that the testing at points of entry of flights from China will also help fill the gaps in the genomic sequencing data created by China’s alleged lack of transparency.

Delatolla said the projects can directly sequence the genetic data from the wastewater, determine whether or not any current or new variants of concern are present, and act on that information.

Delatolla said the wastewater surveillance network consists of 342 testing sites across the country, operated primarily through academic institutions, as well as several projects administered by all three levels of government, including 65 sites operated by PHAC. Throughout the pandemic, they have become the primary metric in forecasting where and when new variants of concern are appearing, but he said the projects should be expanded and stabilized, noting that many of the academic projects would be ending within the next few months.

“So the question is, what happens in a couple of months? Do we lose all of this momentum and the infrastructure we built up for wastewater testing?” Delatolla asked, noting that the network has gone well beyond simply monitoring for COVID-19 and is now testing for the presence of influenza and respiratory syncytial virus, and has begun developing methods to detect tuberculosis.

“If we don’t sustain this, we lose all that potential infrastructure for future pandemics, and that’s a real concern,” Delatolla said.

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Following a wave of COVID-19 infections in the wake of China’s easing of its ‘zero-COVID’ policies, Canada introduced temporary requirements for air travellers from China to provide a negative COVID test result, but the Conservatives say the Liberal government should instead be demanding more epidemiological data from China. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

rooted in science and data-based decision-making.”

“Research has found that Canada’s pre-departure testing pandemic policies were largely ineffective in identifying COVID-19 cases and preventing the spread of the virus and should no longer be imposed,” Jeff Morris, NACC president and CEO, said in a statement.

In response to the NACC’s criticism, Transport Minister Omar Alghabra (Mississau-

[COVID-19], rather than reintroducing measures already proven to be ineffective by “history and from experts,” the Liberals should be listening to the current data and evidence to allow Canadians to continue to live their lives in a way that “makes sense.”

Unfortunately, Ellis said, the need for more transparency from the Chinese government regarding their epidemiological data presents a significant difficulty in knowing whether Canada

News

Canada ‘respects and recognizes’ Guaidó ouster, opposition Venezuelan envoy begins closing mission

Canada had previously recognized Juan Guaidó as Venezuela’s interim president since 2019.

Continued from page 1

the decision taken to change the structure of the interim government.”

The statement reiterated Canada’s support for the Venezuelan people and a “peaceful return to democracy.”

“This can only be achieved by holding free and fair elections and working to re-establish democratic order and the rule of law,” the department said, noting its support for the negotiation process.

The Canadian Press reported that prior to recognizing Guaidó as the interim president in 2019, Canadian diplomats had worked to build support for the now-ousted politician among Venezuela’s opposition parties.

Along with a selection of Latin American nations, Canada was a founding partner in the Lima Group in 2018, which sought to isolate Maduro. More recently, a number of countries, including Argentina, Mexico, and Saint Lucia, have left the group, criticizing its ability to improve the Venezuelan crisis.

Maduro remains in control of Venezuela’s government, with the exception of some foreign assets (including shares and money) that Guaidó had taken over in the United States and the United Kingdom.



Prime Minister Justin Trudeau with then-interim Venezuelan president Juan Guaidó on Jan. 27, 2020. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Following Canada’s recognition on Jan. 6, Orlando Viera-Blanco, Guaidó’s representative in Canada, announced on Twitter that he was beginning the steps to close his diplomatic mission.

“We inform the country that we have started friendly talks with [the] minister [of foreign affairs] of Canada to co-ordinate and exhaust the rigorous diplomatic protocols related to the termination of our diplomatic mission,” he tweeted in Spanish. “We respect the decision of the Canadian allied government.”

Viera-Blanco did not respond to interview requests.

In 2019, Canada undertook the unorthodox approach of accrediting Viera-Blanco while Maduro’s representative kept control of the Venezuelan embassy.

Former Canadian diplomat Ben Rowswell, who served as Canada’s last ambassador to Venezuela from 2014 to 2017, said Canada should always follow the lead of local democracy actors and thus it is the right decision to state its respect for the National Assembly’s vote.

“When the Venezuelans tell us what they need to recover democracy in their country, it’s our role to listen [and] to follow,” said Rowswell, now director of the Canadian International Council’s Global Democracy Program.

The former ambassador said a question that needs to be answered is when Canada will reopen its embassy in Caracas.

“The impact of statements that we make from Ottawa or other capitals around the world about support that we offer a distant democracy movement when we don’t have people on the ground standing in solidarity with the citizens that are going through their struggle is not nearly as relevant,” he said, adding that if there was an error in Canada’s approach to Venezuela, it was closing the embassy in 2019.

In 2019, Canada announced it was temporarily closing its embassy as it said Canadian diplomats were “no longer ... in a position to obtain diplomatic accreditation under the Maduro regime and their visas will expire.”

Rowswell said a way should have been found to keep the embassy open.

“There’s many ways that can be done,” he said, noting there has been a pattern of Canada closing embassies around the world.

“It’s been an unfortunate trend in recent government decisions.”

Rowswell said reopening an embassy may require difficult decisions, including re-establishing relations with the Maduro regime.

“It will require eating humble pie, but that is a skill in which diplomats excel if we are focused on the long term, which is showing solidarity with the people of Venezuela,” he said, noting that having an embassy would require “some degree” of official relations with the Maduro government.

St. Francis Xavier University professor Yvon Grenier, who specializes in Latin America and Canadian foreign policy, said the Guaidó strategy “failed” and the opposition in Venezuela no longer sees why he should speak for them.

“There was an opening, but it closed. Maduro won,” said Grenier in an email, noting it is not a surprising development. “Moving forward, Canada will continue calling for free and fair elections in two years, support the negotiations in Mexico, but I don’t see Canada lifting sanctions, because contrary to the U.S., it has no interest in doing so.”

Grenier said he thinks that Canada’s Venezuela strategy might be “tweaked,” but it will remain the same.

University of British Columbia professor Maxwell Cameron, an expert on Latin America, said the hope of backing Guaidó and fostering Maduro’s isolation through the work of the Lima Group didn’t succeed in its goal of leading to free elections.

He added that the Canadian government might be looking at the ouster of Guaidó with a “kind of relief.”

“It gives governments that were part of the Lima Group the opportunity to say, ‘Okay, we tried.’ But now the process of negotiations between government and opposition in Venezuela has moved to a new stage and we don’t need to maintain the fiction of a Guaidó government in exile,” said Cameron. “It reached a point where trying to maintain this pretext really was not being effective in achieving Canada and other Lima Group countries’ objectives.”

In that context, Cameron said the ouster of Guaidó is not bad news, as Canada and its allies will continue to support the last democratic institution in Venezuela: the National Assembly, which was last elected in 2015.

“The path forward for everyone is for Venezuela to commit to holding free and fair elections,” he said.

As the last elections that are considered democratic were held in 2015, Cameron said it is a “serious problem” that the National Assembly has long passed its “best before date.”

“We should have seen democratic elections to replace it. The only reason to stick with it is it’s the last institution that was created through a democratic process,” he said. “As time goes by, the case becomes weaker and weaker, and the need for renewal becomes clearer and clearer. There’s a bit of a sense that the clock is ticking and time is on the side of the [Venezuelan] government.”

Cameron said Canada’s recognition of Guaidó’s ouster isn’t an admission that the opposition has failed and relations will return to the status quo of recognizing the Maduro government, which he noted continues to be seen as lacking legitimacy.

In its statement, Global Affairs maintained that it will continue to work through the Lima Group and with Venezuela’s opposition.

“We reiterate that a resolution of the crisis in Venezuela can only be achieved through the leadership and courage of Venezuelans themselves. We remain committed to working with our partners, particularly through the Lima Group of countries, and with Venezuela’s democratic opposition,” the statement read.

Cameron said Canada will likely continue to work with democratic forces inside and outside of Venezuela.

“But it won’t be behind this sort of fiction of a government, of a sovereign, of a representative of sovereignty abroad,” he said. “That fiction hasn’t worked. And so, they are backing away from that, but I don’t think they are backing away at all from their commitment or support of democratic elements in the Venezuelan system.”

Cameron said Canada needs to be more engaged in Venezuela, remarking that there is an opportunity for Canada to craft its own Venezuela policy that is increasingly independent from that of the U.S.

nmoos@hilltimes.com
The Hill Times



Global Affairs, led by Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly, maintained its support for the Venezuelan opposition in a statement. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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Editorial

New year, new approach?

Many people approach the start of a new year as an opportunity for rejuvenation. There are resolutions made, plans drafted, and cries of “new year, new me” proclaimed.

Those in the political sphere are no different.

Perhaps Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre resolved to do more press conferences in 2023, and answer questions from members of the Parliamentary Press Gallery. He’s off to a flying start, even jumping the gun with a New Year’s Eve media availability in Ottawa where he took five queries, following it up with another appearance on Jan. 10.

Maybe MPs decided to turn over a new leaf this year in the spirit of collaboration, wanting to work together to solve the country’s various ailments. Is that why at a Jan. 9 House Transport Committee meeting, they all fell over themselves to take the credit for calling a meeting into why rail and air travel was a nightmare over the holiday season? Will 2023 feature naught but politicians standing up to congratulate themselves on a job they, specifically and personally, did well to call a meeting where nothing but platitudes and self-serving righteous indignation over who can send an email faster were on offer?

Could 2023 be the year where the refrain of “Canada is broken” becomes

a thing of the past, overtaken instead by the sound of real plans (not talking points) being put into action to swing the needle towards progress?

Or will those who claim to want to fix things continue to ignore systemic rot in favour of the shiny new jet or defence of internet grifters who contribute nothing but more hate and division?

Have any politicians decided that this year, they’ll stop pretending our system of federalism isn’t what it is, helping bring frustrated Canadians out of the dark on who is actually responsible for improving things like health care?

As interest (and mortgage) rates rise, hospitals collapse, light rail transit systems freeze, and war heats up, there’s plenty of room for politicians to make good on resolutions old and new to improve life in Canada. As the past few years have made exceedingly plain, things can be incredibly unpredictable, and we don’t need to wait until we’re plunged into the unprecedented to ensure that the country’s underlying structure is as strong as it could be.

Of course, like most New Year’s commitments, a good 70 per cent will fall to the wayside by February, which is great timing, since the House of Commons returns from its break on Jan. 30.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

The sooner the better in cutting oil and gas production: Alberta activist

Re: “A mixed bag”: committee report on proposed oil and gas emissions cap reflects deep divisions on path forward,” (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 5). Conservative MP Shannon Stubbs is correct in pointing out that an oil and gas emissions cap requires a production cut, but that’s a mathematical truth we must face, and the sooner the better.

Alberta’s oil and gas emissions put our Paris commitments at risk, endangering our country and the entire world. They’re more than just a drop in the global bucket—if Alberta produces oil and gas in line with current Canada Energy Regulator

scenarios, the life cycle emissions will consume about one-eighth of the carbon budget for 1.5 C between now and 2050.

It’s true that, under our Constitution, the provinces have jurisdiction over resource production. But any democracy worth its salt will find a way to do the needful, constitutional provisions notwithstanding. At Alberta Beyond Fossil Fuels, we believe our provincial and federal governments should get on with the job. It’s time to cut oil and gas production.

Andy Kubrin
Calgary, Alta.

Feds still key in financing net-zero transition, says letter writer

Re: “Canada’s banks fundamental to financing the net-zero transition,” (*The Hill Times*, Jan. 4).

While our schools, hospitals, and roads are usually built by contract with private enterprise, we generally want such infrastructure to be owned and controlled by the government to serve public purposes rather than to maximize benefits for private monopolies.

The same can be said for the new energy and transportation systems required to fight climate change. Without strict oversight, financial institutions will prioritize profit and speculation as they always

have, regardless of destructive environmental and social consequences.

Canadian Bankers Association CEO Anthony Ostler makes the self-serving implication that the federal government cannot afford the estimated \$2-trillion needed over the next 30 years to finance the transition to net zero. But when private sector excess leads to great financial crashes, to whom do these financiers go begging for bailouts? They know that ultimate money comes from monetarily sovereign governments that control central banks.

Larry Kazdan
Vancouver, B.C.

Trilateral meeting a good time to move on migrant crisis: Ottawa reader

Since Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has just visited Mexico for the Three Amigos meeting, it is a perfect time to bring up that former Mexican president Vicente Fox advocated for a Marshall Plan for South America to deal with the migrant crisis a few years ago.

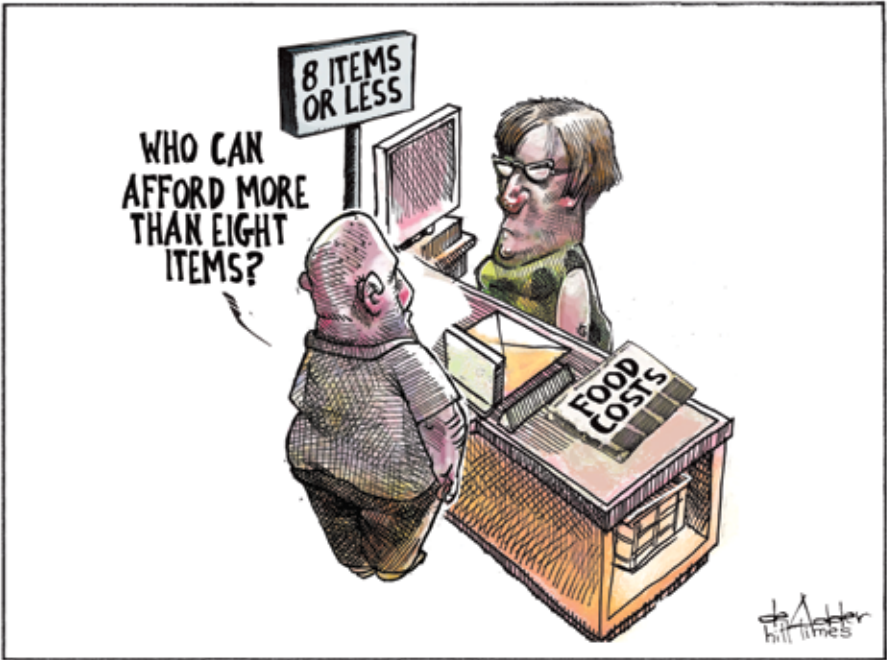
Our PM has talked about replacing humanitarian aid with infrastructure investment and it sounds like a Marshall Plan, in general. The migrant crisis is not going to go anywhere, but will continue from almost all South American countries. Ottawa needs to host an international conference on this subject and bring experts from all areas, opening the door to address this ongoing problem.

United States President Joe Biden visited the U.S.-Mexico border to see firsthand how this issue is being dealt with. This is an opportunity knocking on the door and Canada can play a significant role. It is a global problem and as former

U.S. president Bill Clinton said, in conflict you need co-operation, compromise, collaboration, and to keep the communication door open. He was right then, and he is right now and will be in the future. Fox is right in calling for a Marshall Plan, the way the U.S. did after the Second World War.

I know this is not a combat war, but it’s war nonetheless from a different perspective. You have to ask why anybody wants to come in the first place and the simple answer is that when basic necessities of life are denied in their own country, for whatever reason, human nature dictates going elsewhere. And when it comes to “elsewhere,” the U.S. takes the No. 1 spot. Hence, we need this kind of plan, and with Trudeau meeting with Biden and Mexican President Andrés Manuel López Obrador, it is perfect timing.

Anant Nagpur
Ottawa, Ont.



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Challenges to how Canada operates only likely to deepen in 2023

These situations contribute to potential chaos, distrust of government, and the weakening of the country's system of shared governmental powers.

Les Whittington

Need to Know



OTTAWA—Having a federation that is, by some accounts, more decentralized than the European Union is one thing. Having a populace that often doesn't seem to grasp where the areas of governmental responsibility lie within the federal-provincial system is quite another.

That's part of the reason why, more than at any time in recent

years, the coming 12 months are shaping up as a test of Canada's ability to keep functioning in a stable, cohesive manner.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has been generally biding his time as the provincial premiers rev up their prerogatives and demands and test the limits of Canada's constitutional democracy. Most inflammatory, of course, has been Alberta Premier Danielle Smith, who has yet to be convinced that Canada has a national government. She has moved quickly to lay the groundwork for conflict with Trudeau while simultaneously keeping the flame of separation glowing among the United Conservative Party fringe. But, with an Alberta election coming this spring, Trudeau seems intent on avoiding a confrontation over Smith's legislation allowing her government to order public servants to ignore federal laws she sees as infringements.

In the meantime, Ottawa's plan to help oil and gas workers transition to what Natural Resources Minister Jonathan Wilkinson calls "sustainable" jobs as part of the inevitable long-term shift away from fossil fuels is being characterized by Smith as an attempt to kill the petroleum sector.

"We are not going to be shutting down our oil and natural gas industry. We are not going to be transitioning our workers, who are in good, high-paying, meaningful, important jobs, into installing solar panels, which is the idiocy [federal Green Party Leader] Elizabeth May was first proposing when this kind of thing came out," Smith said on her radio program.

In reality, Smith seems to want Trudeau to play down talk of transition in Alberta's most important economic sector while increasing the billions of dollars in green tech investment Ottawa is making available to help enable carbon capture and other key innovations needed to reduce emissions and meet climate targets. For his part, Trudeau floated the idea that Alberta, which is expecting a \$12.3-billion budget surplus, might want to use some of the oil and gas windfall to increase the province's own green tech investments.

This dispute reminds one of the federal-provincial standoff on health care. The political stakes over who gets blamed for the crisis in the country's provincially administered health-care system are reaching new highs. Hence the premiers seem more determined than ever to try to con-

vince Canadians that Trudeau is responsible for this disaster.

And somehow the fact that many of the provinces are demanding more money from Ottawa for health care while refusing to use their own provincial budget surpluses to save the health-care system gets obscured amid the partisan bluster. Ontario, for instance, is close to a budget surplus. And Premier Doug Ford is spending taxpayer dollars that could go toward improving crumbling health care to appeal a court decision that his law limiting nurse's wage increases to one per cent a year is unconstitutional. This is being done even though the government is well aware that Ford's punitive wage cap is contributing to severe hospital staffing shortages. At the same time, Ford is calling for more health-care money from Ottawa.

This clash pitting Trudeau against the premiers is likely to continue to destabilize national political affairs in 2023, since the prime minister, in keeping with the advice of most health-care professionals, is unlikely to accede to the premiers' demand for billions more in this funding with no accountability.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh, perhaps unwilling to say any-

thing that might jar the NDP government in British Columbia, is systematically enhancing the confusion over which level of government is responsible for health services. He has threatened to force an election unless he sees action by Trudeau to address the whole mess.

Premier Scott Moe is gearing up to challenge Ottawa over natural resource and environmental policy with his Saskatchewan First Act, and Quebec Premier François Legault—like Ford in Ontario—has no qualms about using the constitutional escape clause to undermine guarantees of Canadians' rights and freedoms.

All of these situations contribute to potential chaos, distrust of government, and the weakening of the country's system of shared governmental powers. We've seen where this kind of thing leads in the United States, among other places, in recent years.

No wonder Eurasia Group consultants, in their annual report on global risks, said Canada's "polarized political parties are exacerbating regional divisions; exposure to the U.S. political and social media ecosystem is facilitating cross-border radicalization; and policy issues, especially energy and climate change, are being weaponized for political gain at the expense of national unity. These symptoms are likely to get worse as the next federal elections draw closer."

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.
The Hill Times

An appreciation of the outdoor rink

Canadians are philosophers of the wintertime, revelling in the cold, creating a community landmark.

Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect



Tending an outdoor rink is more of a vocation than a hobby; it's why tens of thousands pop up across Canada every year, and why the impact of climate change is felt so severely where ice is no longer a given, writes Andrew Caddell.

Photograph courtesy of Andrew Caddell

KAMOURASKA, QUE.—The New year brings bracing winds off the Saint Lawrence River, and long, cold nights. And in Kamouraska, the arrival of winter also means the reappearance of *la patinoire*, our local outdoor rink.

Located next to the ornate castle that is the former *palais de justice* (courthouse), it has been a feature of the town for decades. However, in the past few years, a steep decline in the number of children and a paucity of volunteers led to the rink being less of an attraction.

Then the town needed parking space in the summer for RVs, so the previous council decided to take down the permanent hockey

boards. And when the time came to put the boards back up, a much smaller rink appeared. Last year, the boards were disposed of entirely.

It led many to believe the end had come for the rink, which was a shame, as it had at one time been the social hub of the community in winter. In the changing area under the courthouse, the old men of the village would hold court, while nearby children and adults laced their skates, and the rink attendant, "Tit-Vieux," would dole out chips, chocolate bars, and hot cocoa. Meanwhile, outside, an all-day hockey game continued from morning to night.

In 2000, our family came to Kamouraska for the Christmas holidays for the first, and, we thought, only time. There was a certain novelty: no one had been here in winter since my great-grandparents bought our house in 1884 as a summer residence. The magic of those days, walking by the frozen shore, skating at the rink, and playing shinny with dozens of people of all ages, was so memorable we decided to do it again until it became an annual tradition.

When I moved here and was elected to the town council, I presumed the rink would return. And thanks to public pressure

at council meetings, we created a boardless rink so there was ice for the local school's rink day, and a winter carnival in mid-February.

This year, with the mayor's encouragement, I decided to get boards that could be assembled in the fall and taken down after winter, just as they are in cities across Canada. After undertaking too much research and discovering how expensive fibre-glass boards can be, I called up a local carpentry firm and asked if they could make and install hockey boards.

Within days, they had constructed and set up boards at either end of the rink. The rest would come next year. An advertisement for volunteers was placed in the local newspaper, and volunteers came forward. Fortunately, an ice storm turned the town into an icy mess, but on the little patch of asphalt by the courthouse, it was a foundation. A few days of flooding in -10 C weather and we had perfect ice.

Then disaster struck. The warm snap at the new year turned the rink back into asphalt. Eventually, the temperature dropped and our team—Sylvain, Vincent, and Benjamin—watered the pavement for a few days. Under the lights and in the piercing cold of

day, we flooded once, twice, three times. On the fourth flood, there was ice, and we had a rink once again.

I must admit, from the time I was 10 years old, I have been fascinated with outdoor rinks. As an adult, my kids had a rink every year until it became too small. There was a profound satisfaction in looking up at the stars and contemplating life while watching the water find its level. That is why tending an outdoor rink is more of a vocation than a hobby, why tens of thousands pop up across Canada every year, and why the impact of climate change is felt so severely where ice is no longer a given.

There are pejorative words for those attached to outdoor rinks: "hosers" and "rink rats." I wear them with pride. I like to think our passion for outdoor rinks is in our DNA. We are philosophers of the wintertime, revelling in the cold, creating a community landmark. In this unstable and unpredictable world, there are few things that remain the same. The outdoor rink is one of them.

Andrew Caddell is retired from Global Affairs Canada, where he was a senior policy adviser. He previously worked as an adviser to Liberal governments. He is a fellow with the Canadian Global Affairs Institute and a town councillor in Kamouraska, Que. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

Comment



Despite the House Transport Committee's emergency show trial-like hearings to examine what happened over the holidays, it's somehow doubtful that will get your bag back faster or get any real compensation, writes Tim Powers. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Balancing on the tipping point

Broken might be taking it a bit far, but you'd be hard pressed to make a compelling argument that some of the nation's biggest and most important systems are operating at peak efficiency.

Tim Powers

Plain Speak



OTTAWA—I hate being whiny and cranky. That might be a shock to you. But bitter, old curmudgeon is not my favorite posture. However, I have recently begun to think Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre, a person not known for his radiance, was on to something when he suggested Canada is broken.

Broken might be taking it a bit far, but you'd be hard pressed to make a compelling argument that some of the nation's biggest and most important systems are operating at peak efficiency. Whether you consume traditional media or dine on your own curated social channels, you will be fed big portions of information about a health-care system in crisis, an immigration network with major flaws, and the holiday seasonal favourite: an air travel system lost in the fog.

Thanks be to God, we are blessed to have the Sussex family, Harry and Meghan, to help take our minds off our frustration. Thank you, Harry and Meghan, for helping us get perspective. I mean, we could find ourselves in their shoes, and our only option would be a self-indulgent, profitable documentary or bestselling book to work through our anxiety.

Escaping the plight of those who would wear the crown and back to our plebeian reality, let us talk about the holiday hell that many Canadians went through trying to travel to see family or friends, or simply to get a respite. How about a rapid-fire round on its aspects? It is probably the only time you could use "rapid" in any reference to Canadian air travel.

First, the personal: yes, my son and I got caught in the holiday travel roulette. A three-day trip turned into six days. Cancelled flights. Additional hotel nights. A missed family Christmas Day together and finally, a repatriation from the United States to Canada by car. I was lucky I have an excellent travel agent and team who worked constantly to help us, and a seven-year-old who only had one minor meltdown but otherwise viewed it all as one big adventure. My travel was inconvenient, not hellish, like so many others, but I do empathize with those who weren't as fortunate.

What I saw was airlines that weren't yet up to full capacity, and it showed when storms legitimately knocked out travel. While I saw agents trying their best, they either wouldn't or couldn't give full, frank information about what was going on and when passengers could get on their way. Even at this moment, if I hear that oft-repeated and meaningless message from airlines when things go array—"we thank you for your patience"—I burst into uncontrollable swearing fits.

At Canadian airports, security still seems exceedingly slow and inefficient. The government may have indeed hired security screeners as they promised to do, but it's hard to see evidence that things are moving faster. If anything, more people seem to be staring at screens tracking sinister laptops rather than simply opening more lines.

Last week, I went through three of our biggest airports: Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver. I never saw so many bags stranded in my life. Another weird airline anomaly: they drive people to do carry-on baggage, making cabins warzones as people fight for space, then when people check bags, you never seem to get them.

Then there are the politicians, never missing a good opportunity to follow public rage and trying to cash in on it. From the transport minister's empty statements about making things better, to the House of Commons Transport Committee emergency show trial-like hearings to examine what happened over the holidays, they are all looking for oxygen now. Somehow, I doubt that will get your bag back faster or get any real compensation. Best case is that you can vent through them.

Happy New Year all, and thank you for your patience.

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

Opinion

Canada's feminist international assistance policy should be a catalyst for very important questions

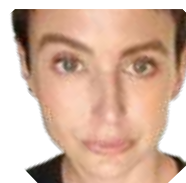


There are many ways one can be a feminist, but confronting the structural barriers and relationships of power that cause inequalities should be central, writes Sarah Moritz. *Unsplash* photograph by Shalom de León

The bodies in charge of international development do not focus on making structural changes to the global economic system and instead put the responsibility on Global South women to make the current system work for them.

Sarah Moritz

Opinion



Our country was among the first to adopt a feminist international assistance policy, which seeks to support equitable human relationships and thriving communities. And I see a feminist approach to this field as necessary to address growing global inequalities. But adopting it is one thing. Defining feminist assistance and putting it into practice are where the challenges, and opportunities, really lie.

An area that I am particularly interested in is economic development and women's empowerment. Why are these two things connected? According to the major bodies in charge of international economic development, getting women to participate in paid labour will lead to their empower-

ment (and get them and their families out of poverty).

And this is the paradigm that major international agencies base their poverty alleviation and women's empowerment programs on in so-called "developing" countries. For instance, medium, small, and micro-enterprises (MSMEs) and job-related training seek to help connect women to paid work. But this is not new, and these programs are consistently designed, implemented, and evaluated hierarchically from the Global North ("the West") to the Global South ("the rest").

Is Canada trying to critically engage with these approaches in its mission to address "gender rights and the empowerment of women and girls" and their "barriers to economic success" or adopting them? Here are some reasons I ask.

First, the global economy today was purposefully designed to exclude women's domestic labour from GDP calculations—the value of which is worth an estimated US\$11-trillion annually. But the bodies in charge of international development do not focus on making structural changes to the global economic system—which relies on the racialization, feminization, and informalization of labour. Instead, their approach puts the responsibility on Global South women to make the current system work for them. Relying on the current economic system as the solution to the poverty and empowerment of Global South women also ignores the fact that women globally have been participating in paid labour at a faster rate than men, and yet are still disproportionately impacted by poverty and human rights violations. There are many ways one can be a feminist, but confronting the structural barriers and relationships of power that cause inequalities should be central.

Continued on page 13

Via Rail holiday travel disruption prompts calls to explore rail passenger rights protections

Transport Action Canada president Terence Johnson says the federal government ‘needs to have a proper passenger rights framework for every [type of] passenger—air, rail, and bus.’

Continued from page 1

calling for protections similar to those introduced for air travellers to be extended to rail passengers.

Members of the House Transport Committee met on Jan. 9 to organize an upcoming examination of the holiday travel disruptions experienced by Via Rail and Sunwing passengers in particular, which will kick off on Jan. 12. The committee has agreed to call on Transport Minister Omar Alghabara (Mississauga Centre, Ont.) to testify, along with representatives from Via Rail, Sunwing, Air Canada, WestJet, CN Rail, the Canadian Transportation Agency, Transport Canada, air passenger advocates, affected travellers, and the Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver airport authorities.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* on Jan. 4, NDP MP Taylor Bachrach (Skeena-Bulkley Valley, B.C.), his party’s transport critic, said he thinks there should be a discussion about whether the kinds of protections given to Canadian travellers through the Air Passenger Protection Regulations introduced in 2019 should extend to rail passengers, as well.

“That conversation is still in its early stages. I think it could take a number of forms moving forward, and I do think that the passenger rail context is different from the air travel context, so it likely deserves a different approach,” said Bachrach.

Separately, Bachrach said he wants to see better policies developed to ensure a “certain level of customer care, even in emergency situations.”

“The circumstances we saw just before Christmas were clearly a case of inadequate emergency response on the part of Via and inadequate customer care,” said Bachrach. “The stories coming from passengers were pretty horrific, and in the future, the hope would be that Via and the federal government will design more effective response plans and take steps to ensure passengers are afforded the care they deserve.”



NDP MP Taylor Bachrach, pictured during the House Transport Committee’s Jan. 9 meeting. Screenshot courtesy of ParlVu

During the Jan. 9 meeting, Bachrach called Canada’s current approach to air passenger protections—which the committee was studying prior to the winter break—“deeply flawed” and in need of improvement (among other things, the Canadian Transportation Agency currently faces a backlog of some 30,000 complaints). He said one thing he wants to hear from Minister Alghabara on is “when he plans to act” on proposed changes to the existing passenger rights legislation.

Terence Johnson, president of Transport Action Canada, said his organization believes the federal government “needs to have a proper passenger rights framework for every [type of] passenger—air, rail, and bus.”

Via Rail’s recent travel woes began as result of severe weather, which caused power outages and downed trees along the tracks—including one that fell on a locomotive—immobilizing nine trains in the busy Québec City-Windsor corridor starting on the evening of Dec. 23. Hundreds of passengers were stuck onboard trains for 18 hours or more, with social media accounts of out-of-service toilets, issues accessing food and water, and complaints over a lack of communication from Via, including from would-be travellers who arrived at stations only to learn their train had been cancelled.

Once trains got moving on Dec. 24, at least one had to stop again to let a freight train pass. A CN train subsequently derailed, causing Via to cancel all trips (more than 25 trains) on its Toronto-Montreal and Toronto-Ottawa routes between Dec. 24 and 26, and operate on a modified schedule on Dec. 27.

Johnson said he thinks part of the issue with Via’s handling of the holiday travel disruptions comes down to the corporation’s pandemic-induced “brain drain,” which he suggested affected its response and communications. In 2020, Via temporarily laid off some 1,000 workers as a result of COVID’s impact on ridership.

“A lot of talent was lost as a result that is very specific to understanding railways and understanding how you should

actually react in these situations ... and that was purely a federal government decision not to put the dollars on the table to keep the talent in place,” said Johnson, adding that while Via has been working to rehire, it’s had a “really hard time with staff shortages this year.”

Via Rail’s most recent corporate plan, published Nov. 8, identifies Via’s “ability to attract and retain qualified personnel” as among its “key strategic risks.”

Johnson also suggested that “a bit of a deep dive” is needed as to whether trains can be better equipped—for example, with a certain level of emergency rations—for similar situations in the future.

In a Jan. 9 response to emailed questions from *The Hill Times*, Via Rail indicated that, in line with its “standard protocols for extreme weather conditions,” it “increased all our supplies of food and water on our trains and at intermediate stations.” But, despite “considerable efforts” to replenish trains overnight between Dec. 23 and 24, “road closures and [the] location of certain trains made it impossible for us to restock with supplies” and left trains “unable to empty the toilets.”

Via Rail has committed to a full refund and travel credit for affected passengers.

Generally, Via’s current policy is to only offer travel credits as compensation “for delays exceeding one hour or trips replaced by

alternate transportation” in the Québec City-Windsor corridor.

In a Jan. 10 statement, Via Rail president and CEO Martin Landry apologized for the holiday travel disruption, saying Via “should have done better in dealing with the situation.” He indicated plans to review Via’s performance between Dec. 23 and 26 “with the help of outside experts,” looking at a range of issues including planning for the storm, Via’s operational response, customer care protocols, communications, and how to better accommodate passengers.

“Despite weather events and a freight train derailment beyond our control, it is clear that lessons will be learned, and changes will be made,” read the statement.

In its email response, Via indicated it has “responded favourably” to the House committee’s request to appear.

Bachrach noted that a key challenge for passenger rail transport in Canada is the fact that CN and Canadian Pacific “own the vast majority of the tracks,” making “passenger rail the poor cousin of the rail transport world” and travel delays and disruptions a “fairly frequent occurrence.”

If you’ve taken Via Rail, chances are you’ve had to stop to let a freight train pass. Almost 98 per cent of the infrastructure network on which Via operates is owned by third parties—83 per cent by CN alone—with access governed by Train Service Agreements (TSAs) negotiated with track owners. As a result, Via competes for track use, and as described in its 2021-2025 corporate plan report, it “does not benefit from the statutory right to priority when operating on the freight railway infrastructure,” and its “inferior negotiating position relative to host railways” means that it “struggles to offer reliable, frequent, and on-time operations.”

Given Via is a Crown corporation that receives public dollars, Johnson argued its TSA with CN

should reflect the financial and reputational costs incurred when there are serious delays, and that Transport Canada should be at the table for TSA renegotiations.

Via’s latest corporate plan report notes its TSA with CN was set to be renewed in 2022, with the expired terms to continue “until a new agreement can be reached.” In its Jan. 9 response to *The Hill Times*, Via Rail declined to comment on “ongoing negotiations.”

“Transport Canada has to be at the table with a renewal of the current train service agreement, because what’s actually happened is that the previous agreement is just being rolled forward at the moment and it needs to be reopened, revisited, done properly,” with the announced High Frequency Rail project in mind, said Johnson.

“There’s huge potential for passenger rail in Canada, but we can’t realize that potential as a country unless we resolve some of these fundamental issues,” Bachrach said.

While the feds’ announced High Frequency Rail project—expected to be operational by the early 2030s—would provide a dedicated passenger rail line in a key transit corridor, connecting Toronto to Québec City, Bachrach said his party has “real concerns” about the approach being taken. For one, he criticized the Liberal government’s decision to use a public-private partnership (P3) model that will see future responsibility for and operation of the rail service—including the setting of fares and schedules—left in a private corporation’s hands.

“Our concern is that the needs of passengers will take a backseat to the profits of the private corporation,” he said.

Moreover, the Toronto-Québec City corridor is Canada’s busiest rail corridor and “currently contributes the vast majority of Via’s revenue.” If a private corporation is able to serve it with dedicated passenger rail tracks, “it raises big questions about the fate of Via Rail” and whether its “service in the rest of the country will suffer as a result,” said Bachrach.

Johnson similarly voiced criticisms of the announced High Frequency Rail project, including the “decision to bumble this into a very large P3” and the slow pace of progress.

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Only House of Commons staff, including committee clerks, were in the room for the House Transport Committee’s Jan. 9 meeting, with MPs taking part virtually. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

News

Federal oversight of health-care funding ‘basic common sense’ after public money disappeared down ‘provincial ratholes’: Fisman

More than 30,000 Canadians signed a parliamentary petition calling for better auditing of the Canada Healthcare Transfer to restrict ‘private capital’ from further encroaching on the public health-care system.

Continued from page 1

capital from billing public health care facilities for profit,” and “monitor any bills passed by the provinces as a workaround of the Canada Health Act and to limit and restrict fair compensation and health care standards.”

Two days before the petition closed for signatures on Jan. 3, it had only garnered a little more than 2,000 signatures since it had been submitted in early October 2022. However, thanks to a social media push on Twitter, the petition skyrocketed to 33,666 names, with more than 21,398 of those originating from the province of Ontario, followed by 4,759 from Alberta, and 3,359 from British Columbia.

Dr. David Fisman, a University of Toronto epidemiology professor at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health and one of the people responsible for the major last-minute push for signatures, told *The Hill Times* that the audit powers requested in the petition seem like “basic common sense” given what he sees as public funding disappearing down “provincial ratholes,” pointing to the \$859-million less than expected spending in Ontario’s health-care sector, according to a report released on Nov. 29, by the province’s Financial Accountability Office.

Fisman said that when he looks at the restrictions the government placed on access to OHIP-covered services, including reducing the amount doctors can bill for one-off video consultations to \$20 and \$15 for telephone consultations; active moves by Loblaws and Shoppers Drug Mart to fill that gap; as well as “massive provincial underspending on health care during a crisis,” it was hard not to view the Ontario government’s strategy as “straight out of the ‘break it so you can privatize it’ playbook.”

NDP MP Lindsay Mathyssen, who sponsored the petition that garnered more than 30,000 signatures in the first two days of 2023, says the public was responding to a threat to the health-care system and the crisis of accessibility in Canada’s hospitals and emergency rooms. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



In an interview with *The Hill Times*, Mathyssen shared a similar comparison, referring to comments made by John Snobelen, former Progressive Conservative minister of education under then-premier Mike Harris. Shortly after his appointment as minister in 1995, Snobelen was filmed arguing that the PC government needed to “bankrupt” the education system and create a “useful crisis” in order to initiate reform.

“I see that playing out now,” Mathyssen told *The Hill Times*, arguing that the current Ontario government led by Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford may be intentionally worsening the crisis to further privatize Canada’s health-care system.

In terms of the response to the petition, Mathyssen attributed the attention to the pride Canadians feel in the fact that their health-care system puts “people over profits” and the frustration they are feeling given the current crisis of access to the needed services.

Mathyssen also pointed to the crises in emergency rooms across the country, including in her own riding, where the London Health Service redeployed staff to the pediatric critical care unit at the London Children’s Hospital to deal with what officials described as “an unprecedented increase in the number of children and youth being brought in for medical care.”

“They see this crisis as a threat to Canada’s health-care system, and this is how they’re responding to that,” Mathyssen said.

While Mathyssen said the federal and provincial governments

had an obligation to fulfill the Canada Health Act and to ensure access to universal and equitable public health care, the NDP is continuing to call on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) to sit back down at the table with the premiers and “not leave until the job is done.”

“Trudeau has gotta put the partisanship aside and put people before profits to make sure that we’re taking care of each other,” Mathyssen said. “I’m not saying it’s easy, and I certainly believe in a ‘strings-attached’ approach ... but there is an obligation for both levels of government to ensure that people receive that equitable universal health care. That is the law.”

When asked how she expects Trudeau to come to an agreement with premiers like Ford, who she said she believes may be incentivized to prolong the conflict and turn the health-care crisis into further privatization of their systems, Mathyssen pointed back to the more than 33,000 people who signed the petition.

“And there are a lot more than those 33,000 who are worried about health care,” Mathyssen said, noting that “time after time,” Canadians rank health care as one of their top priorities alongside the economy. “At some point [the premiers] will have those same people to answer to ... it’s the same constituents whether it’s a provincial or federal election.”

Health Minister Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.), as the minister responsible for enforcing the act, will table his annual report to Parliament next month,

providing a scorecard on how well the provinces are adhering to the legislation’s requirements. If the provinces receive a failing grade, Duclos can withhold the province’s allotted financial transfers.

The health minister’s office told *The Hill Times* that it remains “committed to working collaboratively with all our partners to achieve better health care” and is prepared to increase health-care investments through the health transfer as well as funding “tailor-made agreements with provinces and territories.”

“We are committed to [working] with other levels of government and with all parties to advance health-care priorities and our overall commitments to improve and protect Canada’s public health care,” wrote Guillaume Bertrand, senior communications adviser and press secretary to Duclos. “We will do so by focusing on the ends before focusing on the means because, as we can now see, the old way of doing things does not work.”

Finding solution to health-care crisis requires rebuilding relationship: Ellis

Conservative MP Stephen Ellis (Cumberland-Colchester, N.S.), his party’s health critic, told *The Hill Times* that he has “no sympathy” for the Liberals’ argument for withholding the increases to the health transfer, arguing that the provinces had made it abundantly

clear the transfer was insufficient to fund health-care services.

The premiers have said the federal government is only paying 22 per cent of provincial health-care costs and want the amount boosted by 35 per cent, an increase of \$28-billion to the funding announced in 2022.

On Dec. 16, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) announced the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) would increase by 9.3 per cent in 2023 to \$49.9-billion.

Ellis said that the urgency in dealing with the current “crisis of accessibility” faced by the Canadian health-care system is understood clearly by anyone who has tried to access health-care services in the past three years and as demonstrated by cases like that of Allison Holthoff, the 37-year-old mother of three who died after waiting for more than seven hours at the emergency department in Cumberland County, N.S. on Dec. 31.

“I think the difficulty that we’re having right now is we have a Liberal government that is refusing to work with the provinces, and that kind of attitude is not going to help solve the situation for Canadians,” Ellis continued. “Canadians have an expectation that the prime minister and health minister would be open to negotiations with the provinces.”

While the Liberals can continue to withhold CHT increases to “bludgeon provinces into submission,” Ellis said that would not be the approach he would take if the Conservatives were in government and he was health minister.

“I think it’s very clear from Canadians that an adversarial approach in politics is not what they want to see,” Ellis said. “They want to see us sitting down together to come to a realization of what’s going to work when a Canadian is ill and needs access to care.”

Instead of the “top-down approach” where the federal government dictates what the provinces must do with their health-care funding, which Ellis said is akin to telling the provinces they don’t know how to deliver health care on their own, he said he believes that, like anything else, success will depend on rebuilding the relationships between the federal government and the provinces.

While not necessarily part of his role as the health critic for the official opposition, Ellis told *The Hill Times* that he has already begun meeting with provincial health ministers to better understand their position and what their funding needs are.

“I’ve met with the provincial minister from New Brunswick and Nova Scotia; Newfoundland and P.E.I. are next on my list,” Ellis explained. “It’s important to understand and to prepare our party to be the next governing party to take on and tackle an issue like health care. It’s important that I do have relationships with those provincial ministers and also that I understand what it is they want.”

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Comment

Opinion

Canada not getting the bang for its defence procurement buck

There should be an appreciation for just how much money the government is spending in return for almost nothing tangible in terms of increased defence capability.

Scott Taylor

Inside Defence



OTTAWA—Over the Christmas holiday, there were three *Ottawa Citizen* reports on defence procurement projects. The net sum takeaway from these articles was an appreciation for just how much money the government is spending in return for almost nothing tangible in terms of increased defence capability.

The first story noted that Canada has already spent \$4.8-billion on new warships, the construction of which will not even begin until 2024.

The genesis for the news story were the latest figures presented to the House of Commons detailing the spending so far on the Canadian Surface Combatant (CSC) project.

For those Canadians unfamiliar with this program, it is high time that you took note.

With the parliamentary budget officer estimating the total cost to exceed \$300-billion, the CSC acquisition is the largest federal purchase in history.

While that sum includes the life-cycle cost of operating the 15 new warships, the estimate for the construction of these ships has already skyrocketed from an original \$26-billion to the current estimate of \$84.5-billion.

That amounts to roughly \$5.6-billion to build each of the 15 new 7,000-tonne frigates.

Although I will be accused of comparing oranges to pumpkins, the British Royal Navy recently completed the construction of HMS Queen Elizabeth, their new 65,000-tonne aircraft carrier, at a cost of just \$4.5-billion.

While we are comparing the “bang for the buck” that Canada receives in comparison to our allies, the *Citizen’s* second report was entitled “Analysis: Canada’s price tag for F-35 jets raising questions.”

The cornerstone of this article was the announcement that Treasury Board had approved the spending of \$7-billion for the purchase of 16 F-35 Joint Strike Fighter Jets.

In March 2022, the Liberal government announced that Canada would acquire a total of 88 F-35s to replace the RCAF’s aging fleet of CF18 fighters. Defence Minister

Anita Anand confirmed on Jan. 9 that deal had been finalized. That project is expected to cost between \$15-billion to \$19-billion for the aircraft acquisition, with a total life cycle cost of \$77-billion.

However, this initial purchase contract worth \$7-billion for the 16 F-35s has raised some eyebrows among military procurement specialists. Even if you factor in the fact that this initial price tag includes spare parts and the construction of new hangars, the unit price is significantly steeper than what allied nations are paying for the same aircraft.

For instance, Switzerland just placed an order for 36 F-35s at a cost of \$8.5-billion. That works out to roughly \$236-million per plane.

Finland ordered 64 F-35s for the equivalent of \$15-billion, or approximately \$234-million per fighter. Germany’s purchased order for 35 F-35s will set back German taxpayers \$12-billion, which equates to \$340-million per plane.

In all of those purchases, the individual deals do include provision for related systems and training. That said, Canada’s first batch of F-35s works out to a comparatively expensive \$438-million per jet.

The third *Citizen* report was headlined “Cost of new Arctic Patrol Ships jumps by \$780-million.”

Once again, for those who closely follow such major defence procurement projects, it is not news that the Arctic Off-shore Patrol Ship (AOPS) project has been plagued with delays and cost increases from the outset.

In January 2015, the federal government awarded Irving Shipbuilding a \$2.6-billion contract to build five AOPS. In 2018, that deal was expanded to include a sixth ship for the Royal Canadian Navy. However, by 2021, those initial cost estimates had increased to \$4.3-billion, and the most recent figures have risen to \$4.98-billion.

The reason given for the latest price hike is the extra costs associated with the additional safety protocols as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Also cited for the extra cost were increased transportation costs and increased expenses for labour.

Fair enough.

However, taxpayers should also take note of what exactly Canada’s Navy is receiving in return for \$4.98-billion. Back in 2017, the Senate Defence Committee questioned the purchase of the AOPS. Their report stated, “This (concern) is based on the fact that these ships cannot operate in ice more than a metre thick, are slower than a BC Ferry, can only operate in the Arctic from June to October and will require a Coast Guard escort in northern waters.”

As a result of their findings, the Senators concluded, “These limitations are troubling and raise the question of whether the taxpayers are receiving value for the monies spent.”

Let me answer that question, in a single word: No.

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

The Hill Times

Canada’s feminist international assistance policy should be a catalyst for very important questions

Continued from page 10

I say *should* because it has been central to intersectional feminism—which came from the feminist work of BIPOC and trans women—but not to white feminism. White feminists have a long history of trying to make the patriarchal, capitalist system work for them (and often solely them). But this ignores the disproportionate negative impacts this system has on women who are not white, cis, and heterosexual, and the challenges—if not impossibilities—that come from trying to make it work for this majority.

Is Canada’s feminist international assistance intersectional, or white? Will Canada stick with the status quo of trying to make an exploitative system work for Global South women, or take this as an opportunity to find new ideas?

Second, it is important to avoid the assumption that participation in paid labour is unilaterally beneficial. Global South women who participate in development programs—and are commonly (and condescendingly) referred to as the “beneficiaries” of these programs—report highly mixed reviews regarding their experiences. For example, in Jordan, some women report positively about their ability to contribute to the home financially, and others have found the burden of having to balance paid work with their unpaid domestic labour exhausting and stressful. Others explain that it is more important that the men of their households find work. Many report issues related to exploitative work environments, while others have said working creates or exacerbates social or private issues. In other words, participating in paid labour is not necessarily empowering for women. It can also be disempowering and contrary to their expressed needs.

There is also weak evidence that international economic development programs necessarily contribute to alleviating poverty sustainably, or on community levels. The current ones can help get individual households out of (extreme) poverty, but this is usually in forms of employment that are vulnerable to shocks and offer no social security. And research has shown that economic training programs—like soft skills training—often fail to make meaningful systemic changes to poverty or women’s rights. One established reason is that these programs do not address the structural causes of poverty and rights violations.

Another that I have identified is a lack of consideration of the economic and political landscape of the countries in which these programs are being implemented. Landscapes which, when examined, make it clear that the possibilities for economic programs to lead to significant or sustainable changes for these women are quite limited.

Yes, extreme poverty has been reduced over the last several decades, but the astounding amount of money it took may have had more significant impacts if it had been used differently. Is Canada’s feminist international assistance policy going to collaborate on new approaches?

Lastly, because feminism should seek to address structural barriers, it also needs to be decolonial. When it comes to development assistance, this means actively addressing the patriarchal and colonial foundations of many of its methodologies and approaches, and being aware of the role that colonialism has in the so-called “underdevelopment” it seeks to address. A small but growing number of organizations have started putting in this work. We should join them.

The fact that Canada is among the first countries to take on a feminist approach to international assistance speaks to the country’s recognition about how vital feminism is to positively

contribute to the world. But it is also an opportunity to expand what we in the Global North understand as “development” and the tools we use in this work; to treat Global South women as agents of change, rather than “beneficiaries” of programs; and to learn *from* and *with* them instead of assuming that we only need to teach. Lastly, it is an opportunity to expand what we understand as being valuable knowledge, and to be aware of the limitations of technocratic approaches, which tend to erase people and power structures from research and decision-making. There is huge potential in Canada’s feminist international assistance policy, it just depends on how the powers that be define and use it.

Sarah Moritz is a published editor, researcher, and analyst, with a master’s in sociology where she concentrated on public policy and international affairs. She has lived, worked, and conducted research in Lebanon and Jordan, where her interests have been Global North-South relations, international development, and how they intersect.

The Hill Times



International Development Minister Harjit Sajjan arrives for a Liberal caucus meeting in the West Block on Oct. 26, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Laura Ryckewaert Hill Climbers



Foreign Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly arrives at the Procedure and House Affairs Committee as part of its study on election interference on Dec. 13, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

New year, new chief of staff for Foreign Affairs Minister Joly

Plus, Seniors Minister Kamal Khera is down a director following Elaine Nixon's departure as head of operations, among other moves.

Foreign Affairs Minister **Mélanie Joly** will soon have a new chief of staff on board following **Sandra Aubé's** departure from the post.

Aubé stepped into the role a little more than a year ago. While it marked her first

time working on the foreign affairs file, she'd previously spent roughly a year as chief of staff to Joly as minister of economic development and official languages from September 2020 up until the 2021 federal election. Post-election, Joly was shuffled into the foreign affairs portfolio and brought Aubé along to continue as her top aide.

Speaking with *Hill Climbers* on Jan. 4, Aubé said working for Joly and the Trudeau government "has been the honour of my life."

"I'm very proud of the work that I've been able to do thanks to my team and to an incredible minister, and now I look forward to spending a bit more time with my family for the next little while," said Aubé, who is a mother of two.

Aubé also addressed the move in a LinkedIn post, writing that after seven years working on Parliament Hill, she had "come to the conclusion it is time to take a little step back ... in order to look forward."

Noting her time running Joly's office as economic development minister came in the midst of the pandemic, she wrote "these were incredibly challenging times for Canadians, and [we were] right there, by their side."

Aubé's exit came shortly after the release of the federal government's much-anticipated Indo-Pacific Strategy on Nov. 27, which included a commitment for \$2.3-billion in spending over five years.

Most of Aubé's almost seven years working for the federal government were spent as an aide to Joly.

A former senior communications adviser for the Association québécoise des centres de la petite enfance, Aubé began her career on the Hill in early 2016 as an

issues manager to Joly as then-heritage minister. She moved over to Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office in 2017, where she worked as an issues adviser for almost a year and a half before being hired as director of communications to then-small business and tourism minister **Bardish Chagger**. Following the cabinet shuffle a few months later in July 2018, Aubé returned to Joly's employ, this time as communications director in Joly's office as then-minister of tourism, official languages, and La Francophonie. Aubé followed Joly when she was shuffled to the economic development portfolio after the 2019 election, serving as director of parliamentary affairs and issues management until her promotion to chief of staff almost one year later.

Off the Hill, Aubé also previously worked for Radio-Canada in Montreal and as a senior adviser to the chief of staff and director of communications at CHUM, the Centre hospitalier de l'Université de Montréal.

Since Aubé's departure in December, deputy chief of staff **Chantal Gagnon** has been filling in as Joly's acting chief.

On Jan. 6, *The Toronto Star* reported that **Peter Wilkinson**, who was chief of staff to then-Ontario Liberal premier **Dalton McGuinty** from 2006 to 2010, has been tapped as Joly's new chief of staff. Wilkinson has been global head of regulatory and public affairs with Manulife Financial since late 2019, and has been working for the company overall since 2010, starting as senior vice-president of government relations.

A former government staffer who spoke with *Hill Climbers* said Joly's new chief of staff will bring needed senior political experience to the office.

"They're dealing with some really big stuff ... the responsiveness has to be good, and the content has to be thoughtful, and they have to do the right job of asking the department the right questions and challenging them and channeling things properly," said the source.

During his almost seven years working at Queen's Park, Wilkinson also served as chief of staff to then-Ontario Liberal finance minister **Greg Sorbara**. He brings experience as the Government of Ontario's trade representative for South Asia, for which he was based in New Delhi, India, between 1988 and 1990. Additionally, Wilkinson is a former director of government affairs with the Institute of Chartered Accountants of Ontario and an ex-vice-president of communications, external, and government relations for the Canadian Institute of Chartered Accountants.

A government source confirmed Wilkinson will take over as chief of staff to Joly at the end of January.

Seniors Minister Khera down a director

Seniors Minister **Kamal Khera** is in need of a new director of operations following **Elaine Nixon's** recent departure.

Nixon spent one year in the role in all, having joined Khera's then-new ministe-



Elaine Nixon, pictured with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

rial team in December 2021 straight from Liberal Party headquarters, where she'd been a senior national field manager since September 2020. During the 2021 election, Nixon was a deputy national field director for the federal Liberal campaign.

Nixon spent most of 2020 as a special assistant for operations in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office, but from 2017 until joining the PMO in early 2020, she was at party HQ in Ottawa, working her way up from a summer internship, to national field co-ordinator, to senior field co-ordinator. She worked the 2019 election as a national campaign mobilization manager for the party.

With her exit from Khera's team, chief of staff **Lindsay Hunter** is filling in as acting operations director.

In other director-level news, **Stephanie Muccilli** returned from maternity leave in December and is once again in charge of the seniors minister's policy team. Policy adviser **Maria Campbell** had most recently been acting director of policy in Muccilli's stead.

Muccilli has been with the seniors team since the 2019 election, starting under then-minister **Deb Schulte**. She previously ran then-science and sport minister **Kirsty Duncan's** policy shop, and is an ex-senior policy analyst with Polytechnics Canada, amongst other past experience.



Stephanie Muccilli has returned to the seniors minister's office. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Patrick Vaughan is a new hire to Khera's ministerial team and recently started as a communications adviser and stakeholder relations manager. He was previously working as a legislative assistant in Khera's constituency office as the Liberal MP for Brampton West, Ont., since October 2021, having been hired on full time after completing a summer internship.

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Sandra Aubé has bade farewell to the Hill after almost seven years working for the Trudeau government. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Japanese PM sits down in Ottawa on Jan. 12

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 11

House Not Sitting—The House has adjourned for the Christmas break and is scheduled to sit 26 weeks in 2023. It will resume sitting Monday, Jan. 30, and will sit for three straight weeks (Jan. 30-Feb. 17). It will break on Friday, Feb. 17, and will return on Monday, March 6. It will sit for one week and will adjourn on Friday, March 10. It will return on Monday, March 20, and will sit for two weeks (March 20-March 31). It will break again on Friday, March 31, for two weeks and will return on Monday, April 17, and will sit for five consecutive weeks (April 17-May 19). It will adjourn on Friday, May 19, for one week and will return again on Monday, May 29, and will sit for four consecutive weeks (May 29-June 23). It's scheduled to adjourn for the summer on June 23, 2023. It will break for 12 weeks (June 23-Sept. 18) and will resume sitting on Monday, Sept. 18. It will sit for three weeks (Sept. 18-Oct. 6), and will adjourn on Friday, Oct. 6, for a week. It will resume sitting on Monday, Oct. 16, and will sit for four consecutive weeks (Oct. 16-Nov. 10). It will break for one week (Nov. 13-Nov. 17) and will resume sitting on Monday, Nov. 20, and will sit for four weeks (Nov. 20-Dec. 15).

Canada's Best Political Economic Forecast Lunch—The Canadian Club of Toronto and the *National Post* host "Canada's Best Political Economic Forecast Lunch," a forecast luncheon on the economy, the markets and political issues that will affect Canadians in the year ahead on Wednesday, Jan. 11, in Toronto at 11:45 a.m. EST. Participants include Kevin Carmichael, editor-in-chief, *Financial Post*; Amanda Lang, host, Taking Stock, Bell Media; Dennis Mitchell, chief executive officer and chief investment officer, Starlight Capital; and Jean-François Perrault, senior vice-president and chief economist, Scotiabank. Register at canadianclub.org.

Lecture: 'Language, Inclusion, Immigration and Unity'—McGill University hosts a lecture on "Language, Inclusion, Immigration and Unity: A personal perspective on the future of the Parti libéral du Québec," featuring David Birnbaum, recently retired Liberal MNA, on Wednesday, Jan. 11, at 4 p.m. EST in Montreal. Following the Parti libéral du Québec's worst electoral results in its history last October, Birnbaum will discuss how this political movement should redefine its future, re-establish its roots and rebuild its connection with Quebecers. Register via Eventbrite.

THURSDAY, JAN. 12

Japanese PM Visits—Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio will visit Ottawa on Thursday, Jan. 12 to discuss with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau Japan's priorities for its upcoming G7 Presidency.

Reflections on the Use of COP-style Negotiations—The University of Saskatchewan hosts a forum: "Reflections on the use of COP-style negotiations for environmental sustainability." Two participants from December's COP15 in Montreal, Dr. David Castle and Dr. Stuart Smyth, will discuss their experience and reflect on the COP model of advancing public policy. Castle was part of the official Canadian Delegation while Smyth was there as an expert as part of



Japanese Prime Minister Kishida Fumio will visit Ottawa on Thursday, Jan. 12 to discuss with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau Japan's priorities for its upcoming G7 Presidency. *Photograph courtesy of Wikimedia Commons*

an industrial group sponsored by Crop Life International. This event will take place online on Thursday, Jan. 12 at 12 p.m. EST. Details: schoolofpublicpolicy.sk.ca.

FRIDAY, JAN. 13

Growing Disinformation in Climate Spaces—Carleton University hosts a lecture, "Growing disinformation in climate spaces," with Melissa Aronczyk, author and associate professor at Rutgers University. Climate disinformation is sprouting up all over the world: on the ground, on platforms, and throughout public and private airways, landscapes, and flow zones. How bad is it? How does it work? And what can we do about it? This event will take place on Friday, Jan. 13, at 12 p.m. EST in Room 1811, Duntun Tower, 1125 Colonel By Dr. Details: events.carleton.ca.

China's Renminbi and Global Monetary Disorder—Carleton University hosts a lecture on "China's Renminbi and Global Monetary Disorder," part of NPSIA's seminar series. Gregory T. Chin, associate professor of politics at York University, will discuss why it's imperative for China to increase the global use of its currency, the Renminbi, amid the fracturing of the global liberal monetary order that has held since the end of the Second World War. This event will take place on Friday, Jan. 13, at Carleton University, Richcraft Hall, 9376 University Dr., at 2:30 pm EST. Reserve your spot via Eventbrite.

MONDAY, JAN. 16

Ex-GG to Discuss New Book—Former governor general David Johnston will discuss his new book, *Empathy: Turning Compassion into Action*, hosted by the Ottawa International Writers'

Festival. Written for a post-pandemic world and based on Johnson's personal experiences, this book explores how awakening to the transformative power of listening and caring permanently changes individuals, families, communities, and nations. This event will take place on Monday, Jan. 16, at Library and Archives Canada, 395 Wellington St., at 7 p.m. Details: writersfestival.org.

TUESDAY, JAN. 17

Panel: 'ArriveCANNED'—The University of Ottawa hosts a conversation entitled "ArriveCANNED" exploring the circumstances and concerns around the introduction and prolonged use of the federal government's ArriveCAN app, highlighting key issues at play in this form of surveillance. This event will take place on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at the University of Ottawa, Fauteux 302, 57 Louis Pasteur, 4-5:30 p.m. EST. Tickets via Eventbrite.

The Walrus Talks: Inequality—The *Walrus* Magazine presents "The Walrus Talks at Home: Inequality." Oxfam's annual report on the state of global wealth disparity looks at the why and how of who is winning and who is losing in today's economy. Panellists include Lynne Groulx, CEO, Native Women's Association of Canada; Alexandra Haas, executive director, Oxfam Mexico; Sohaib Shahid, director, Conference Board of Canada; and Joel Solomon, author and co-founding partner, Renewal Funds. This event will happen on Tuesday, Jan. 17, at 7 p.m. EST. Register via Eventbrite.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18—THURSDAY, JAN. 19

Crown Corporate Governance Conference—The Canadian Institute

hosts the "Crown Corporate Governance" conference from Jan. 17-18, featuring programming addressing the most critical challenges, create solutions, and provide guidance for decision-makers of crown corporations and public sector entities. This year's co-chairs are Teresa Woo-Paw, chair at Canadian Race Relations Foundation; Colleen Ouellette, deputy secretary and director corporate secretariat at Export Development Canada; and Thomas Yeo, partner at Torsys LLP. Speakers include Anne-Cécile Lequain, general manager, employee services and diversity, Canada Post; Chantal Guay, CEO at Standards Council of Canada; Frederic Duguay, general counsel and corporate secretary, Canada Infrastructure Bank; and other key stakeholders. Join the chairs and board members of leading federal and provincial crown corporations, as well as government and public sector executives, as they share insights and practical solutions on obstacles and challenges impeding board directors today. Jan. 17-18, 2023. Save 10 per cent with the Hill Times Publishing promo code: D10-999-HILLTIMES. For more, visit: bit.ly/3S9nsc4, email: customer-service@canadianinstitute.com, or call 1-877-927-7936.

WEDNESDAY, JAN. 18

Luncheon: 'The Future of Canada's Life Science Industry'—The Canadian Club of Ottawa hosts a panel discussion on "The Future of Canada's Life Science Industry" featuring Gordon C. McCauley, president and CEO of adMare Bio-Innovations; Cate Murray, president and CEO of Stem Cell Network; and Rob Annan, president and CEO of Genome Canada. This event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the Château Laurier, 1 Rideau St., at 11:30 a.m. EST. For details and to purchase tickets, visit canadianclubottawa.ca.

The Restitution Dialogues—The Bill Graham Centre for Contemporary International History hosts a conference, "The Restitution Dialogues: Exploring the Vatican Archives." Panel participants will discuss the broader impact of the contemporary 'restitution revolution', the nature and provenance of Canadian Indigenous material in the Vatican collection, institutional best practices in restitution and repatriation, and the cultural impact of return and renewal. This event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, online, at 12 p.m. EST. For information and register, visit billgrahamcentre.utoronto.ca.

Lecture: 'Deploying Feminism'—The Balsillie School for International Affairs hosts a hybrid lecture on "Deploying Feminism: The Role of Gender in NATO Military Operations," featuring Stéfanie von Hlatky, Canada Research Chair (Tier 2) in Gender, Security, and the Armed Force and the Associate Dean (research) of the Faculty of Arts and Science at Queen's University. This hybrid event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, 67 Erb St. W. Waterloo, Ont., at 12:30 p.m. EST. Details: balsillieschool.ca.

Panel: 'Power, Policy and Queerness'—McGill University hosts a panel discussion on "Power, Policy and Queerness," highlighting diverse views of people and groups working on policy issues affecting 2SLGBTQI+ communities across Canada, reflecting on

how changes in the policy landscape have impacted their work, and sharing recommendations for the way forward in Canada. Participants include Curt Wackett, programs and policy research officer, Rainbow Railroad; Jaime Sadgrove, manager of communications and advocacy, Canadian Centre for Gender and Sexual Diversity; and Chris Karas, present litigant in the federal case of Christopher Karas v. Canadian Blood Services and Health Canada. This event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at Thomson House, 3650 rue McTavish, Montreal, at 2 p.m. EST. Register via Eventbrite.

Panel: 'The Future of Canada's Natural Resources'—The Economic Club of Canada hosts a panel discussion on "Challenges and Opportunities Facing the Future of Canada's Natural Resources." Participants include former MP Dan McTeague, president, Canadians for Affordable Energy; Alex Pourbaix, president and CEO, Cenovus Energy; Catherine Cobden, president and CEO, Canadian Steel Producers Association; and James Scongack, executive vice-president, operational services and chief development officer, Bruce Power. This event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at the Hilton Hotel, 145 Richmond St. W., Toronto, starting at 11:45 a.m. EST. Details and tickets: economicclub.ca.

Book launch: *Canada and China: A Fifty-Year Journey*—York University hosts the launch of Prof. B. Michael Frolic's new book, *Canada and China: A Fifty-Year Journey*. A panel discussion on past, present, and future Canada-China relations will follow. This event will take place on Wednesday, Jan. 18, at York University, 519 Kaneff Tower, 4700 Keele St. North York, Ont., 3 p.m. EST. Register via Eventbrite.

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