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THE HILL TIMES

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Feature Public service

Situation ‘changing hourly’ as feds, unions, public service contend with COVID-19 work-from-home confusion

‘The government of Canada will be as flexible as possible and will not only allow, but encourage teleworking whenever and wherever possible,’ says Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos.



President of the Treasury Board Jean-Yves Duclos is pictured at the National Press Theatre for a press conference to give an update on the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic on March 16. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

BY MIKE LAPOINTE

With calls from the prime minister for Canadians to stay at home in the face of COVID-19,

union leaders say they are aware of some concerns being raised by federal public servants regarding confusing messaging from some government departments around

telework conditions, and that they're raising issues with the Treasury Board as they come up.

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News Coronavirus

‘Together we will beat this’: MPs urge care and calm for those most at-risk with COVID-19

BY SAMANTHA WRIGHT ALLEN

For the Canadians at the greatest risk amidst the COVID-19 outbreak, Parliamentarians who

have been immunocompromised once before have pragmatic words of encouragement: trust the science, listen to health professionals, try to be positive, and be very, very careful.

Though none of the four cancer survivors who spoke with *The Hill Times* felt they were person-

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News Legislation

‘Decisive action was required’: how MPs and Senators hammered out deal to close Parliament late into the night

BY PETER MAZEREEUW

It was about 10:30 on the night of March 12 when a small group of MPs and top staffers struck a deal to suspend Parliament amid the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

That deal was laid out in a single motion passed in the House the next day, one that included rushing two supply bills through Parliament, and another extraordinary piece of legislation to give the government the power to spend money during the suspension without parliamentary oversight—one of the most fundamental functions of the legislature

under Canada's parliamentary system.

It also pushed the implementation bill for the new NAFTA trade agreement through to the Senate, where all four pieces of legislation were passed almost immediately by the Upper Chamber the following day.

The speedy passage of those bills and the suspension of Parliament were a marked departure from the partisan tactics employed regularly in the Chamber by all caucuses. Government MPs often accuse members of the opposition of deliberately stalling

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News Canada-China relations

‘They have no right to ask me to be there,’ says Chinese ambassador on possibility of appearance at Canada-China Relations Committee

BY NEIL MOSS

China's top diplomat in Ottawa says Members of Parliament on the Special Canada-China Relations Committee don't have “a right” to ask him to appear before the body.

Speaking with *The Hill Times* at the Chinese Embassy on March 12, Cong Peiwu said he wanted to see “more positive energy” being

put into the committee, which was struck in December after a push by opposition MPs, but he spoke against the idea of appearing in a hearing-style committee meeting, a possibility that's been floated by committee members.

“I think if they invite me to take part in a roundtable discussion, that's good. But if it's just

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HEARD ON THE HILL

by Neil Moss

Coronavirus hits home for the Hill



Assunta Gerretsen, the mother of Liberal MP Mark Gerretsen, pictured here at a House Committee meeting in 2016, recently tested positive for COVID-19 after a cruise vacation. *The Hill Times* file photograph

After returning to Canada following a cruise vacation, **Assunta Gerretsen**, the mother of Liberal MP **Mark Gerretsen**, tested positive for COVID-19.

Ms. Gerretsen returned to Canada last week. She and her husband, **John Gerretsen**, a former Ontario MPP and Kingston mayor, were subsequently quarantined at CFB Trenton after disembarking on March 9 from the Grand Princess cruise in California, which had more than 21 people test positive on a previous voyage.

"Mom has tested positive for COVID-19. She remains in quarantine at CFB Trenton and has been moved to a new area and separated from Dad (he will not be tested unless he shows symptoms)," tweeted Mr. Gerretsen, who represents Kingston and the Islands, Ont., on March 16.

"Other than a cough she has no other symptoms and is in great spirits. Unfortunately this has reset the clock on Dad's 14-day period and Mom will remain until she repeatedly tests negative," he added.

Meanwhile, another Hillite is trying to get back to Canada while on a cruise vacation.

Former Liberal MP and Senator **Art Eggleton** and his wife, **Camille Bacchus**, are on a South American cruise that is unable to find a port willing to accept the ship, according to *The National Post*. The vessel doesn't have any cases of coronavirus, the former MP told the newspaper.

Mr. Eggleton was a Liberal MP from 1993 to 2004, before joining the Red Chamber in 2005 where he sat until his mandatory

retirement in 2018. The former Toronto mayor has held numerous cabinet files including minister of defence, infrastructure, and international trade, as well as the president of the Treasury Board.

As of now, the ship is heading north on its way to Miami. Earlier this month, Canada's public health officials warned Canadians against taking cruises.

What's keeping the PM?

As Canadians waited for **Justin Trudeau** to deliver one of the most consequential speeches of his five years in the Prime Minister's Office on the latest measures to respond to COVID-19, politicians wondered where the PM was.

Mr. Trudeau walked down the front steps at Rideau Cottage at

1:39 p.m. on March 16 to speak to reporters, 39 minutes after the speech was set to begin.

"The PM's press conference, currently almost half an hour late, is characteristic of his governments response efforts thus far," tweeted Conservative MP **Dan Albas**.

Mr. Trudeau is known to frequently run late for most press conferences as he and his team iron out last minute details.

"The PM has always been late for news conference. Maybe, in this time of great destabilization and anxiety, he is trying to maintain some sense of normalcy," tweeted the CBC's **Aaron Wherry**.

In the mean time on the public broadcaster, CBC's **Rosemary Barton** and **Vassy Kapelos** had to fill the air as they waited for Mr. Trudeau to appear.

"What possible excuse is there to start a pandemic press conference 15 minutes late and counting especially after announcing it late yesterday afternoon," Conservative Senator **Linda Frum**

chimed in. Cabinet ministers hinted on March 15 that there would be an announcement on tougher barriers to travels entering Canada coming the next day.



Justin Trudeau was nearly 40 minutes late to a March 16 press conference. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

the spread of COVID-19. During his speech, Mr. Trudeau announced that Canada is restricting air travel to Canada from all countries except for Canadian citizens, permanent residents, diplomats, and Americans, as well as a few others such as pilots.

His press conference the next day had a more punctual start—starting less than 10 minutes late.

Charlie Angus attempts to hold pop-up St. Patricks Day concert 'for the shut-ins'

As St. Patrick's Day celebrations were muted in order to contain the spread of COVID-19, NDP MP **Charlie Angus** tried to hold a remote concert for those stuck at home.

"You have to supply your own Guinness," Mr. Angus tweeted on March 17.

"For all those who can't get out to St. Patrick's Day celebrations I will be hosting a Charlie Angus NDP Facebook Live celebration of Irish music this afternoon," he wrote, noting that he would be performing songs from the Dubliners, the Clancy Brothers, and Christy Moore.

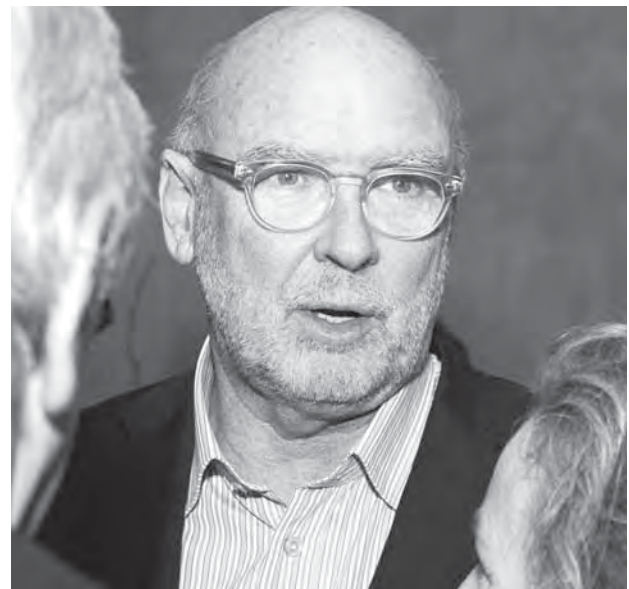
The MP who since 2004 has represented Timmins-James Bay, Ont., plays in a band, the Grievous Angels. In the past, he was a member of L'Étranger, with Peter Duffin and former NDP MP Andrew Cash.

However, technical difficulties derailed the show. "Sorry folks. My computer has COVID-19 and a safari server. It is not allowing me to go live. Gonna have a [Jame-son's] and get my life together," Mr. Angus wrote on Facebook, later saying he would make another attempt.



NDP MP **Charlie Angus** took out his guitar on March 17 to bring some cheer to those in isolation. *Photograph courtesy of Twitter/Charlie Angus*

'Still have a few columns left in me': Neil Macdonald still has some writing to do



Neil Macdonald has more than 40 years of experience covering politics. *The Hill Times* file photograph

Just because he left the CBC, **Neil Macdonald** isn't done writing columns. He announced on March 15 that he has started a blog on his personal website.

"Still have a few columns left in me. So I've added a blog to my website," Mr. Macdonald tweeted.

The longtime CBC columnist left the public broadcaster at the start of this year. In the past, he covered Parliament Hill, as well as serving as a correspondent in Washington, D.C., and the Middle East.

His first blog post asked: "So. Who gets the ventilators?"

In light of **Sophie Grégoire Trudeau** testing positive for COVID-19 on March 12, he wrote in terms of health care, "privilege has its privileges."

"At the same time—and here comes the kicker—I am not at all certain that, if I or any of my aged relatives come down with the disease in the uncertain and increasingly terrifying weeks to come, there will be ventilators for us," he wrote.

"So the big question—the crucial, life-or-death question as this virus tears through the population—will very quickly be this: who gets the ventilators?"

Mike Rouleau named new vice chief of the defence staff

Replacing outgoing Lieutenant-General **Jean-Marc Lanthier** as vice chief of the defence staff will be Lieutenant-General **Mike Rouleau**.

Lt.-Gen. Lanthier announced last week that he will retire in the summer.

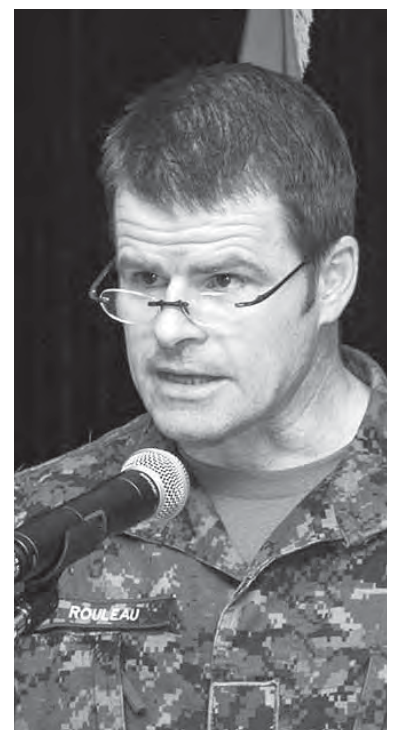
Lt.-Gen. Rouleau has been the commander of the Canadian Joint Operations Command (CJOC) since 2018, which oversees and anticipates the operations of the Armed Forces.

Replacing him as the commander of CJOC will be Lieutenant-General **C.J. Coates**, who is the deputy commander of Norad.

Lt.-Gen. Rouleau made headlines in 2016 when he pled guilty for mistakenly firing a weapon while deployed in Iraq, for which he was fined \$2,000.

He is Canada's sixth vice chief of the defence staff since 2017. The turnover in the post started during the investigation into then-vice chief **Mark Norman**, who was replaced by **Ron Lloyd** and **Alain Parent**—both of whom served in the position in an acting role—**Paul Wynnyk**, and then Lt.-Gen. Lanthier.

"An outstanding officer who would make an excellent CDS [chief of the defence staff]. Just like each of his six immediate predecessors as Vice Chief of the Defence Staff over the last 5 years," tweeted former



Lieutenant-General **Mark Rouleau** will be the sixth vice chief of the defence staff since 2017. *U.S. Air Force photograph by Philip Carter*

Liberal MP **Andrew Leslie**, who is a retired lieutenant-general in the Canadian Army.

Lt.-Gen. Rouleau is the seventh vice chief that Gen. **Jonathan Vance** has had as chief of the defence staff.

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Canada's approach to suicide prevention is broken

We need a new conversation, and phone number, to find solutions and build a national strategy to save lives.



Kathleen Finlay

Suicide prevention

The ceaseless beat of suicide and the tragedy it unleashes echo across Canada day after day. Every 24 hours, 11 Canadians take their own lives. Four thousand die by suicide, and another 100,000 attempt suicide every year. And here's another shocker: If Nunavut were a country, it would have the highest rate of male suicide in the world.

Canada should be doing everything it can to prevent suicide. But the fact is we're not doing nearly as much as many other countries. And the status quo is simply not acceptable.

That reality has come into sharp focus for me in recent months. I have been campaigning for a new idea that can make it faster and easier for those facing a mental health crisis to get help. It's a new, easy-to-remember three-digit number, 988, for the national suicide crisis hotline that would replace Canada's existing 11-digit hotline. Think of it as 911 for the brain.

That new three-digit hotline system is about to be rolled out in the United States. The move has the full support of the mental health community and, surprisingly, the blessing of the U.S. Congress on a rare bipartisan basis. Experts like the idea because it will get help to people faster when seconds count. The American Psychiatric Association says it will also help reduce the stigma that too often prevents people in crisis from coming forward.

But, in stark contrast to the strong support of U.S. politicians for 988 in that country, Canada's federal leaders don't seem the least bit interested in it. Over the past six months, I've repeatedly reached out to the prime minister, the minister of health, and key cabinet ministers with responsibility for Indigenous communities and other populations at disproportionately high risk for suicide. Even after CTV National News anchor Lisa LaFlamme called 988 "three numbers that could make all the difference," they've been completely silent on the subject.

Dig a little deeper and you'll discover that Canada is off-side on a lot of practices other countries have adopted.

The World Health Organization said a national suicide prevention strategy is

essential for combating suicide. The U.S., U.K., Australia, New Zealand, and dozens of other countries have one. Canada does not. In fact, Canada is the *only* member of the G7 without such a strategy. Richard Ramsay, one of Canada's most respected experts in suicide prevention, told me advocates have been calling for a made-in-Canada national strategy for more than 30 years.

Having a national strategy has been shown to be an indispensable building block in suicide prevention. In 2016, the United Kingdom set a national goal of reducing suicides by 10 per cent over the next four years. In 2018, its suicide rate was the lowest on record.

True, Canada has something it calls a federal framework for suicide prevention. But it's missing so many essential components that the framework is little more than a faint hologram of what a real strategy looks like and does.

One of the benefits of a national strategy is that it typically reflects a strong political will to combat suicide. On that front, you have to really wonder about Canada's commitment. During the two English party leaders' debates of the 2019 federal election, the subject of suicide was not raised even once.

Nor is the word suicide mentioned in the mandate letter for the federal minister of health, which was issued following the election. By contrast, the United Kingdom has formally recognized the urgency of suicide as a public health crisis in that country by designating a minister of health whose responsibilities include suicide prevention in her title.

Other shortcomings stand out. The Public Health Agency of Canada, the federal body that has been given the lead for suicide prevention, doesn't even display the number for Canada's existing 11-digit suicide prevention crisis line on its website. In fact, you have to really dig to find suicide mentioned anywhere on the agency's site. Even then, the one and only reference is to a study published 16 years ago.

We have to do better.

Canada should immediately set in motion the process that will lead to the transition to the 988 national suicide prevention hotline. But beyond that, we need a more comprehensive approach to preventing suicide.

That's why I'm calling for the creation of a national roundtable on suicide prevention with funding from the federal government. With representation from key stakeholders, including suicide survivors, families of loved ones taken by suicide, Indigenous and First Nations leaders, mental

health advocates, and clinical experts, and leaning heavily on virtual technology and social media, the roundtable would engage Canadians in a frank and robust discussion across the country. Its mission would be to raise awareness about the mental health crisis of suicide in Canada, seek out the best prevention ideas at home and around the world, like 988, and produce the schema for a world-class suicide prevention strategy that sets out national goals, timelines for achievement, and reliable funding commitments.

Since I began my campaign to bring 988 to Canada, I've heard from dozens of people who have lost loved ones to suicide. I am one myself. We all want to see Canada become what it should be: A world leader in preventing suicide and a champion for a more healing and compassionate approach to mental health issues.

It's time for our politicians to show the leadership to make that happen.

Kathleen Finlay is a sexual trauma and mental health advocate and founder of The 988 Campaign for Canada.

The Hill Times



Suicide prevention was not mentioned in the mandate letter Health Minister Patty Hajdu received from the prime minister in the fall, and Canada needs a national strategy, not just a suicide prevention framework, writes Kathleen Finlay. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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News Centre Block renovation

BOIE settles on reno feedback forum, initial list of sacred Centre Block spaces to preserve

The Board of Internal Economy's initial list of spaces where it doesn't want to see major overhauls includes the House Chamber, the Hall of Honour, and La Francophonie room.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Before it adjourned amid COVID-19 precautions, the House of Commons' Board of Internal Economy struck a new subcommittee to oversee Centre Block renovations and ruled out the possibility of expanding the existing House Chamber, among other things.

Only representatives from recognized parties in the House—those with at least 12 sitting MPs—were involved in those decisions. In turn, Green Party parliamentary leader Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) is now seeking a seat at the table.

"I'm concerned about a number of aspects" related to Centre Block's renovation, she said, including "what we preserve in terms of heritage, what we do in terms of modernization to ensure energy efficiency and conservation, and beyond that, of course, what we do to make sure that MPs, as a group, are consulted."

On March 12, the House Board of Internal Economy (BOIE) unanimously agreed to establish a seven-member subcommittee to oversee and make recommendations on plans for Centre Block's renovation. The group will have three Liberals, two Conservatives, one Bloc Québécois MP, and one NDP MP.

Liberal Whip Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.) said his caucus plans to fill its membership slots with MPs from the Procedure and House Affairs Committee (PROC), which has previously been seized with oversight of the project.

The BOIE has requested that Public Services and Procurement Canada's assistant deputy minister for parliamentary infrastructure—currently Rob Wright—or his designate, act as a liaison for the working group to "make sure there's that connection between the ministerial side and the work of the parliamentary group," explained Mr. Holland.

The new subcommittee will operate separately from the Senate Internal Economy, Budgets, and Administration Committee's subgroup on the Long Term Vision and Plan (LTVP), "but where there was overlap then those two bodies could meet jointly and try to find a way to get on the same page," said Mr. Holland. Previously, the idea of creating a joint process with Senators had been floated.



Public Services and Procurement Canada's assistant deputy minister for parliamentary infrastructure, Rob Wright, centre, is pictured with Jennifer Garrett, PSPC's director general for the Centre Block renovation project, at a House committee meeting in May 2019. The BOIE wants Mr. Wright, or his designate, to act as a liaison for its newly established subcommittee. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

The new group will make recommendations to the BOIE, which will then take them to the House administration, which is working in close co-ordination with PSPC and construction planners, including in a shared, open-concept workspace at 150 Slater St.

"The intention, really, of doing this is ensuring that we don't have multiple different channels for the House administration to be dealing with," said Mr. Holland.

The Board also agreed to some specific directions for the new group, including that heritage preservation should be the "overriding principle" in Centre Block's renovation, and a list of "thou shalt not touch" spaces in the building to guide the new subcommittee and PSPC.

Mr. Holland said the "thou shalt not touch" list is intended to give "specific direction to restore these elements of heritage and not contemplate any amendments or potential destruction of these elements of heritage."

"[There are] some immediate ones that we've [the BOIE] already agreed to as a group in our conversations that should not be touched" and can be stated "categorically today," said Mr. Holland, adding that ultimately the list "will certainly be more expansive."

On the current list of spaces the BOIE has explicitly said it does not want touched is the House of Commons Chamber, the Hall of Honour, La Francophonie room, and the main entrance to the building for Parliamentarians. The BOIE asked PSPC for a list of all heritage spaces within Centre Block to consider at its next meeting, with a view to potentially adding to its "thou shalt not touch" list.

This effectively gives direction to PSPC to rule out the possible expansion of the House Chamber's footprint, a possibility included in some of the options presented by PSPC on Feb. 18 in order to accommodate a future, larger, Parliament.

The question of how to fit in more MPs is one of the biggest challenges facing planners. By the time Centre Block re-opens—

assuming that happens before 2041—the Chamber will need to accommodate an estimated 375 MPs, with 460 MPs expected within 50 years. Already, some rows of five flip seats had to be added to accommodate 338 MPs in the existing Chamber.

Mr. Holland confirmed with officials on March 12 that these directions remove "some of the time pressure that was previously discussed," and that "the urgency is lifted a little bit," giving the BOIE's new subcommittee more time to decide "how best to comport itself and how best to come to the conclusions its going to come to, to come to the recommendations

Anita Anand's (Oakville, Ont.) press secretary, Cecely Roy, said the department is "thrilled" to have Mr. Wright act as a liaison and "encouraged by the bi-partisan collaboration that is being established through this new working group."

"We are also encouraged by the decision from BOIE to move forward in streamlining the process on several key decision points including maintaining the heritage and footprint of the House of Commons Chamber. In moving ahead with this streamlined decision making process, this will help to deliver construction timelines and to stay on budget," she said.



Liberal Whip Mark Holland, pictured at the BOIE's meeting on March 12. *Screenshot courtesy of Parlvu*

they're going give to this body."

"One of the biggest concerns was the decision on the size of the Chamber, as an example, and that's impeding with the ability to proceed with construction," noted Mr. Holland.

Michel Patrice, deputy clerk of the House administration, said directives like this are "very helpful in a way of going forward."

"Taking off, for example, the footprint of the Chamber, if we don't look at that and we keep the same footprint, then we can focus on other elements," he said.

PSPC has targeted late spring or early summer to finalize the schematic design plans for Centre Block's renovation and construction of the final phase of the Visitors' Welcome Centre alongside it.

In response to questions from *The Hill Times*, PSPC Minister

The BOIE, which acts as the governing body of the House of Commons, is a nine-member group. Chaired by the House Speaker, it includes Mr. Holland, Liberal House Leader Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier,

Que.), Deputy Liberal Whip Ginette Petitpas Taylor (Moncton-Riverview-Dieppe, N.B.), Privy Council President Dominic LeBlanc (Beauséjour, N.B.), Conservative Whip Mark Strahl (Chilliwack-Hope, B.C.), Conservative House Leader Candice Bergen (Portage-Lisgar, Man.), Bloc Whip Claude DeBellefeuille (Salaberry-Suroît, Que.), and NDP House Leader Peter Julian (New Westminster-Burnaby, B.C.).

Asked about caucus consultations in the lead up to the March 12 meeting and decisions, Mr. Holland told *The Hill Times* that he's had "informal discussions" with Liberal colleagues "over the last year" on the subject.

"There was unanimity in the belief that the heritage shouldn't be altered," he said.

Liberal MP Larry Bagnell (Yukon), who chaired the House

Affairs Committee during the last Parliament, said he was not consulted specifically in the lead up to the March 12 BOIE meeting, but said he's encouraged that some MPs at least have had a chance to give input on construction plans.

"MPs, whose workplace it is and who know what might be needed, had virtually no input into renovations at West Block, so this is miles ahead of that," he said.

Mr. Bagnell noted that in previous discussions, MPs have been "pretty sensitive" to the importance of heritage in renovating Parliament Hill: "I'm sure that they would not have a hard time convincing a large number of MPs about the [importance of] heritage value."

Ms. May said that, following the March 12 meeting, a member of her staff was briefed on the BOIE's decisions and current design options—having been unable to attend herself due to a time conflict.

Ms. May highlighted further spaces she thinks need to be added to the "thou shalt not touch" list, including the Reading Room and the Railway Committee Room—the large committee rooms which flank the Hall of Honour—as well as the Library of Parliament.

The library, it should be noted, was renovated in 2007 and is not expected to get another overhaul as part of Centre Block's renovation.

Ms. May said she's written to the House Speaker asking "for a role in that [sub]committee as Greens." But overall, she said that after the complete lack of MP consultation on the West Block's renovation, she "really appreciate[s]" that there's now "more opportunity for Members of Parliament to have a say on the renovations for Centre Block."

While not consulted in the lead-up to the BOIE's decision, Ms. May said she agrees with its direction to not change the footprint of the existing Chamber, saying she thinks it's possible to "accommodate more MPs within the space we have," and moreover, that she thinks it's time Canada reconsider the current representation formula. "At some point, we have to stop expanding to more and more MPs."

At the Senate's most recent Internal Economy Committee on March 12, it did not discuss Centre Block renovations or plans for a briefing from PSPC officials on design options developed during the brief public portion before it went in camera to discuss COVID-19 measures.

The Senate—like the House of Commons—has now adjourned until April 21. Manitoba Conservative Senator Don Plett, leader of his party's caucus in the Upper Chamber, confirmed that the Senate Internal Economy's LTVP subcommittee will "definitely not meet until the end of April."

Mr. Holland said he expects the BOIE's new subcommittee will meet "as soon as possible" once Parliament is back in business.

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Remembering Tracey Hubley: a straight-talking, life-loving, humble girl from the Island

Part of all of us will feel a bit empty because she is not around. If she knew that, she'd tell us all to get the 'F' on with it.



Tim Powers

Plain Speak

OTTAWA—Last week, my work wife, friend of 20 years, and the president of Summa Strategies, Tracey Hubley, died unexpectedly. Many have already shared wonderful memories of Tracey, the leader, mentor, and top professional. She was all those things, and more.

Tracey got a six-month head start on me at Summa and never looked back. Hired by Doug Young, Paul Zed, and Ken Whiting because of her smarts, entrepreneurial know-how, and obvious potential, she quickly established herself as a premiere government relations advocate in Ottawa.

A mere six years after joining the company at the young age of 40, she became our president. At that time, having a female leader of a Canadian lobbying business was a rare thing. But that was Tracey—a rare gem from Prince Edward Island who was making it big in the nation's capital.

But Tracey was so much more than a corporate star. Upon hearing of her death last week, my 15-year-old niece burst into tears. She remembered Tracey as the nice woman who always had a treat for her when she visited Summa, took the time to play with her, and always had a keen interest in her life. Tracey herself never had children, but she leaves an army of young fans who all shared a deep fondness for her affection of them.

Tracey's kindness and tender-hearted nature was the stuff of legend. When my dad died nearly seven years ago, she was one of the first people to get to Newfoundland to help our family out. Some 15 years ago, it was Tracey who helped pulled me off the floor when I was in a deep, dark depression. Somehow, she got through to me when others couldn't.

Like in any relationship, Tracey and I had our ups and downs. We had periods of struggle, but I truly believe we never stopped our deep love of friendship for each other. For me, and for many, she will never really be gone from our lives.

This past weekend, many of Tracey's Summa family and many of her friends from Ottawa travelled to P.E.I. to say a temporary goodbye to her. It was a magnificent send-off, attended by three former premiers of Prince Edward Island, numerous Members of Parliament, and a massive sandbox of Tracey's fans from childhood to now.

Talking to Tracey's friends from her early years, a common theme emerged: she remained effectively the same person they grew up with. A straight-talking, life-

loving, humble girl from the Island who never lost track of who she was. A testament to that is few of her school buddies knew what an icon she was in Ottawa and in Canada. Tracey didn't talk about herself much, as she was most often interested in you not in broadcasting her bio to you.

Tracey Hubley was truly one of a kind. My life and that of many others have been forever bettered for the time she lent us. Part of all of us will feel a bit empty because she is not around. If she knew that, she'd tell us all to get the "F" on with it. Strap on your big-girl pants and get shit done.

Tracey leaves behind her mom, Bert, her sister, Tammy, and her partner, Woody. Spare more than a thought for them in the days ahead, because filling the Tracey void is not going to be easy to do. She is now getting her eternal rest in her beloved P.E.I. Sleep well, my friend, you deserve it. We will never forget you and will try to properly honour your memory whenever we can. We'll get the "F" on with it.

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

The Hill Times



Summa Strategies president Tracey Hubley, who died March 5, was truly one of a kind, writes Tim Powers. Photograph courtesy of Twitter/SummaStrategies

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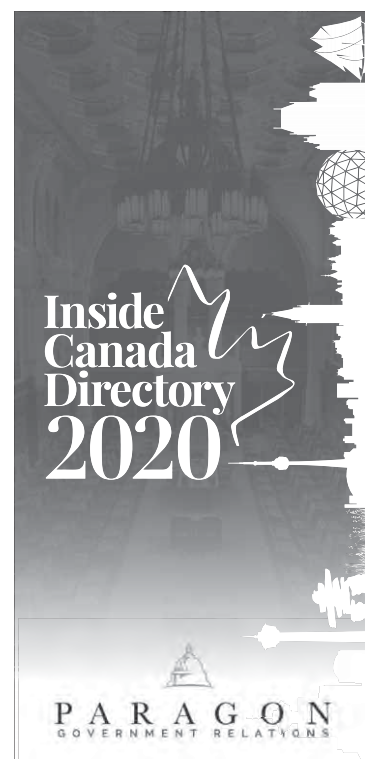
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News Canada-China relations

‘They have no right to ask me to be there,’ says Chinese ambassador on possibility of appearance at Canada-China Relations Committee

‘One would have thought that if the Chinese government feels that they are in the right in the current downturn in relations [between] Canada and China that the ambassador would welcome an opportunity to explain,’ says former Canadian diplomat Charles Burton.

Continued from page 1

like a hearing, simply they have no right to just ask me to be there like a business,” Mr. Cong said.

He said it is not the practice for foreign diplomats to appear before Canadian parliamentary committees. Mr. Cong confirmed on March 12 that he had not yet received a request to appear.

Given Mr. Cong’s diplomatic immunity status, the Chinese ambassador cannot be compelled to appear before the committee.

Former diplomats told *The Hill Times* that Global Affairs has historically been reluctant to have Canadian diplomats appear before external legislative committees, preferring that ambassadors develop informal relationships with foreign legislators.

But in the last Parliament, numerous foreign diplomats appeared before House committees including the ambassadors from Latvia, Finland, and Moldova, among other embassy officials.

Brock University professor Charles Burton, a former counselor at the Canadian embassy in Beijing, said the Chinese government would want more control over any interactions it has with Canadians officials.

“I think that certainly he doesn’t wish to be placed in a position where he is asked direct questions that he would prefer not to answer,” Prof. Burton said, adding that typically the Chinese ambassador invites MPs to the embassy to discuss the relationship over a meal.

Guy Saint-Jacques, who served as Canada’s ambassador to China from 2012 to 2016, told MPs on the Canada-China Relations Committee that Canada should act in “reciprocity” to the actions of the Chinese government, and said cabinet ministers should not accept invitations for lunch or dinner at the embassy.

Although Mr. Cong cannot be compelled to appear before the committee, Prof. Burton said there shouldn’t be anything to stop MPs from inviting him or embassy officials to give testimony to the committee.

“One would have thought that if the Chinese government feels

voice is being heard in Canada,” adding that he wants to see “more sensible and rational voices” being heard about the relationship.

“I do hope that this committee will be serving as an additional channel for the Canadian people and the Members of the Parliament to have a better understanding of China and the importance of the Canada-China relationship,” he said.

The committee was formed through an opposition motion to look at the status of the relationship between the two countries, as tensions have continued to

Canadians that are working on China,” said Mr. Dade.

Committee should follow ‘One China’ policy: Cong

Liberal MP John McKay (Scarborough-Guildwood, Ont.), who doesn’t serve on the special committee, told *The Hill Times* earlier this month that he would like to see the committee hear testimony from Taiwan’s perspective.

“If I had anything to say about it, I would like to see the representatives of Taiwan,” Mr. McKay said. “They seemed to have managed the relationship reasonably



Cong Peiwu says he wants to see more ‘positive energy’ put into the Special House Committee on Canada-China Relations and have ‘more sensible and more rational voices’ being heard. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

that they are in the right in the current downturn in relations [between] Canada and China, that the ambassador would welcome an opportunity to explain,” he said.

Earlier this month, Liberal MP Robert Oliphant (Don Valley West, Ont.), a member of the committee and parliamentary secretary to the foreign affairs ministers, told *The Hill Times* that one perspective that the committee needs to hear about is China’s approach to the world.

“We may need to get that from the Chinese,” he said in a March 2 phone interview. “I often think that when you are trying to understand people it’s best to talk to them. So we have to find a way to do that and to do it in a constructive way.”

Mr. Cong said he will “do whatever I can to make sure our

deteriorate since the December 2018 arrest of Huawei executive Meng Wanzhou, and the subsequent Chinese detention of Canadian citizens Michael Kovrig and Michael Spavor in apparent retaliation.

Some witnesses who have appeared before the committee have raised concern with the line of questions being asked, calling it McCarthyite-like.

Committee witness Carlo Dade, a director with the Canada West Foundation’s trade and investment centre, in particular criticized the way in which Conservatives MPs questioned Canadian ambassador to China Dominic Barton and University of British Columbia professor Yves Tiberghien.

“What I’m hearing from the Conservatives is just attack, and not just attack China, but attack

well, and they’re much closer and more tied to us.”

Mr. Cong wouldn’t directly answer what the Chinese government’s response would be if the committee invited a representative of the Taiwanese government to appear.

“Taiwan is part of China, and I think when it comes to Taiwan the ‘One China’ principle has to be followed,” he said.

Mr. Saint-Jacques told *The Hill Times* that when Canada and China began diplomatic relations with the People’s Republic of China in 1970, Canada took note of the Chinese position on Taiwan.

“We never recognized officially their view on Taiwan, and I think it’s something that we have to maintain this ambiguity,” he said.

Prof. Burton said there is no basis in Canada’s diplomatic relationship with China to not call a representative of Taiwan.

“I would imagine that if the committee does call the representative of Taiwan to give evidence that it’s likely that they will designate that he is speaking as an individual, and not as a representative of the Republic of China,” he said. “I don’t see any barrier to a parliamentary committee calling anybody to give evidence.”

Mr. Saint-Jacques said the issue isn’t something for Mr. Cong to comment on.

Mr. Cong said he hopes that both the Canadian government and Parliament would “make a right decision, because they are aware of the importance of upholding the ‘One China’ principle.”

“I think, whether it’s [the Canadian] government [or] it’s Parliament, [they] should always abide by the foreign policy of Canada and for the foreign policy of Canada, one part of that is to make sure to follow the ‘One China’ principle.”

Mr. Cong wouldn’t answer when asked if a committee appearance from a Taiwan representative would flout that principle.

Parliamentary committees are distinct from the government and are controlled by the committee members, and not the executive.

“Of course, the Chinese ambassador has a difficulty to make the difference between government and Parliament because in China it’s one thing—it’s the same thing,” Mr. Saint-Jacques said.

Ron MacIntosh, who served as the executive director of the Canadian Trade Office in Taipei from 2006 to 2009, said committee members should be “pragmatic” when dealing with a Taiwanese representative.

“If I were giving unsolicited, unpaid advice to the committee leadership, I suggest that they might be able to get away with it and have less consequences for Canada’s other interests with China if they made this as informal as possible and not part of their formal committee hearing structure,” said Mr. MacIntosh, a senior fellow at the University of Alberta’s China Institute.

“Having said that, China still will not like it. It’s just a question of finding out at what point will there be consequences that will flow from such an experience,” he said.

Taiwan is a “core” concern for the Chinese Communist Party, added Mr. MacIntosh, and no signs of “weakness” can be tolerated.

“They’re taking it further, that consequences will flow from perceived departures from ‘One China’ policy and they may be manifest in the area of trade and exchange activity,” Mr. MacIntosh said. “I think under [Chinese President] Xi [Jinping] there’s generally even thinner skin on what constitutes a departure.”

Prof. Burton said if China punished Canada for a representative of Taiwan appearing before the committee, it would be a “gross violation of the norms of international diplomacy and trade.”

“It could end with a similar situation as we’ve had when Canada leaders have met with the Dalai Lama, which is a lot of threats followed by no actual substantive action in the wake of it,” he said.

—with files from Samantha Wright Allen
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The Hill Times

‘Decisive action was required’: how MPs and Senators hammered out deal to close Parliament late into the night

‘We are in unprecedented times,’ says Conservative Whip Mark Strahl.

Continued from page 1

the government’s bills to hold up its legislative agenda and shorten its list of accomplishments; opposition MPs accuse the government of ramming legislation through Parliament with no regard for meaningful debate or study.

For the opposition, giving the government a temporary carte blanche to spend money was an exceptional concession amid what has become a national crisis—one that was made only after the government agreed to allow a retroactive study of government spending during the suspension by a House committee when MPs return to work, and additional scrutiny from Canada’s auditor general.

“Decisive action was required” said Conservative MP Mark Strahl (Chilliwack-Hope, B.C.), his party’s whip in the House.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) said on March 16 that the government was putting together a spending package to help Canadians weather the crisis, caused by the new virus that has spread rapidly across the world over the past few months.

On March 17, Mr. Trudeau told reporters he had asked House leaders to negotiate a brief recall of Parliament to pass legislation that would enable the government to provide some of that aid, including changes to Employment Insurance. Later that day, NDP Whip Rachel Blaney (North Island-Powell River, B.C.) told *The Hill Times* she expected it to reconvene in smaller numbers “some time next week.”

Members of the House Board of Internal Economy met behind closed doors for more than four hours during the day on March 12 to negotiate the terms un-

der which they would suspend Parliament amid the COVID-19 crisis. They continued to work into the evening following that meeting, periodically gathering in the office of Government House Leader Pablo Rodriguez (Honoré-Mercier, Que.) to discuss terms, then breaking off, with Conservative, NDP, and Bloc Québécois members of the Board returning to their own House leadership offices to discuss their next steps. Not all of the Board members participated in all of the face-to-face meetings.

The deal was negotiated out of the public eye—and under the usual condition of confidentiality—so that the MPs from the four recognized parties would have the freedom to propose ideas without fear of having their words thrown back at them later by their adversaries for political purposes, said Liberal MP Mark Holland (Ajax, Ont.), the chief government whip.

“We were able to have frank conversations where we trusted each other,” he said.

The members of the Board wanted the parties to act “in unison” as they responded to the spreading virus, and closed Parliament until April 20—and perhaps longer—said Mr. Holland, to avoid adding to public confusion about the crisis.

The negotiations on March 12 followed two weeks of informal discussions between the parties about how Parliament should respond to the growing crisis, he said.

“Over those two weeks there was just a lot of trust built,” he said. “Everybody had their self-interest take a back seat.”

MPs felt an obligation to protect Parliament from being

hamstrung for an even longer period of time if the virus began to spread among MPs and staff, said Mr. Strahl.

“We also recognized that the government couldn’t simply lose its ability to respond” to the crisis by losing spending power with Parliament shut down, he said.

Instead, the MPs agreed to what became Bill C-12, giving the government the ability to spend money “where a payment is urgently required for the public good,” with approval from the Governor General.

“We are in unprecedented times,” he said.

The NAFTA implementation bill was thrown into the deal because MPs expected to wrap up their debate on the legislation the following day anyway, and then

the government power to spend new money would have been meaningless without approval by the Senate.

On the afternoon of March 12, when MPs were still hours away from finalizing their deal, the Senate had already adjourned until March 24. Senate leaders and Senate Speaker George Furey (N.L.) were informed that the House negotiations were underway.

A little more than an hour after the Senate adjourned, Conservative Senate Leader Don Plett (Landmark, Man.) sent out an email to members of his caucus, asking any who had not yet caught a flight to their home province to stay in Ottawa until the following day.

Sen. Plett said he spent much of the night talking to Conservative Board of Internal Economy members Candice Bergen, left, and Mark Strahl. Members of the Board negotiated a deal to keep the government running while Parliament is shut down amid the COVID-19 crisis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

ate leaders worked out their own deal for suspending the Upper Chamber.

“There was constant communication going on by phone and in person as the evening progressed,” he said.

The Senate leaders reached a deal around the same time as MPs finished off theirs on the evening of March 12, he said. The Red Chamber was recalled the following day, and 38 Senators showed up to move all four bills through every stage in quick succession before suspending until April 21.

Sen. Plett, Conservative Senator Larry Smith (Saurel, Que.), and ISG Senator Peter Boehm (Ontario) all took a few minutes to deliver speeches about the NAFTA implementation bill before it was passed. Sen. Boehm

was the bill’s sponsor in the Senate.

Sen. Plett criticized the government for not advancing the NAFTA bill through Parliament earlier, both in the Chamber and later in an interview with *The Hill Times*. The Conservatives supported the bill and the trade agreement, but wanted more time to call attention to its deficits—for example, challenges it could pose to dairy producers and other farmers, and the aluminum sector.

“We had no choice but to pass it,” he said, adding it would have been “unfair” to hold onto the bill until Parliament returned.

“We don’t know if we’re going to be back in four or five weeks,” he said. The Senate is, for now, suspended until April 21.

Giving the government extraordinary powers to spend amid the crisis was “something that had to be done,” he said.

“This is almost like a war measures act. They need to be allowed to operate.”

The Senate negotiations weren’t especially difficult, he said.

“Was there a lot of arm-twisting? No. We were all of the mindset that we needed to do exactly what we did, so that we could keep ourselves, our families safe, but also so we could keep the rest of Canadians safe.”

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The Hill Times

Members of the House of Commons Board of Internal Economy

Chair

Liberal MP Anthony Rota (House speaker)

Members

Liberal MP Pablo Rodriguez (government House leader)
Liberal MP Mark Holland (government whip)
Liberal MP Ginette Petitpas Taylor (deputy government whip)
Liberal MP Dominic LeBlanc (president of the Privy Council)
Conservative MP Candice Bergen (opposition House leader)
Conservative MP Mark Strahl (opposition whip)
NDP MP Peter Julian (NDP House leader)
Bloc Québécois MP Claude DeBellefeuille (Bloc whip)



‘We were able to have frank conversations where we trusted each other,’ says Liberal Whip Mark Holland, left, of his negotiations with Conservative Whip Mark Strahl and other members of the Board of Internal Economy. *The Hill Times* photographs by Rachel Aiello and Andrew Meade



Conservative Board of Internal Economy members Candice Bergen, left, and Mark Strahl. Members of the Board negotiated a deal to keep the government running while Parliament is shut down amid the COVID-19 crisis. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

hold a vote on the first day back following the regularly scheduled break week, said Mr. Strahl.

“I think all parties recognized that the USMCA, NAFTA 2, was a hugely important piece of legislation for the economic interests of Canadians,” said Mr. Holland.

The cross-partisan deal did not include the passage of Bill C-7, the government’s move to expand the assisted dying law, as ordered by Quebec’s Superior Court. The government has a court-ordered deadline of July 11 to change the existing assisted dying law. The Conservatives have argued that the Liberal bill goes beyond what is needed to comply with the court’s order to change the law.

The House’s move to approve two supply bills—authorizing pre-planned government spending—the NAFTA bill, and to give

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Editorial

Feds, provinces should speak with one voice on COVID-19

It's time for the federation to work together. As efforts to stop the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19, ramp up, the disparate approaches taken by various provinces and territories have potential to sow confusion.

On March 15, Quebec Premier François Legault announced the closure of bars, clubs, concert halls, and a plethora of recreational sites in his province, after invoking emergency measures in Quebec's Public Health Act the day prior. The provincial government had already banned visits to hospitals and elderly care homes, and recommended that its residents over the age of 70 stay indoors.

Next door, in Ontario, Premier Doug Ford announced a provincial state of emergency on March 17, ordering the closure of most public businesses, with the exception of grocery stores, convenience stores, pharmacies, manufacturing facilities, public transit, important public services, construction sites, and office buildings.

In British Columbia, which has been hit with the greatest number of coronavirus-related deaths (four, as of filing deadline on March 17), public gatherings of more than 50 people were banned, and casinos were closed on March 16. Restaurants and bars were not specifically ordered by the government to close, but many shuttered as they wouldn't be able to keep to the less-than-50-person limit.

Much like the U.S.-Canada border, interprovincial borders are not closing, so even though the situation on the ground in terms of the spread of the virus may differ from province to province to territory, it wouldn't take much for lax rules in one province to have an affect on another,

if someone was so inclined to ignore pleas to stay home.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and members of his cabinet have faced questions in the past couple of days about the differing messaging.

Co-ordination is happening among the public health authorities, Health Minister Patty Hajdu said during a March 16 press conference.

"There are baseline guidance provisions at all different levels, at technical guiding levels for hospitals and practitioners, a variety of other considerations including procurement of professionals that are working across jurisdictions to make sure we have a scope of the knowledge about what's needed, where the gaps are," she said.

Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland said a plan is now in place to have "regular calls" with first ministers "to co-ordinate our national response."

On March 17, Mr. Trudeau said that while various recommendations will come from different jurisdictions, the message from all orders of government is "very, very similar," which includes the call to "stay home as much as you possibly can" and engage in social distancing.

"Right now, we must all work together," Mr. Trudeau said.

That's absolutely true and should extend country wide. Premiers of provinces and territories have no problems getting together to call on the federal government for money and other asks. They should use that same energy to collaborate so that every province and territory is moving in lockstep with each other, and the feds, to ensure that Canadians are as safe as possible.

The Hill Times

MPs give parting words on House suspension

On March 13, the House of Commons unanimously agreed to suspend its sitting for five weeks, until April 20, in a bid to not contribute to the spread of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. Here are some of their parting words:

“These are extraordinary times. With the World Health Organization declaring COVID-19 a global pandemic, it is incumbent on everyone to exercise the highest degree of caution. My colleagues and I, in direct collaboration with our friends across the aisle, have come to an arrangement to suspend Parliament while ensuring the government continues to have the authority and capability to provide our country with necessary financial supports.

“There continue to remain significant questions about the Government of Canada’s management of this pandemic. While we understand that COVID-19 does not respect borders, the government can consider measures to further contain the virus from spreading, such as more vigorous screening upon entry, mandatory quarantine for those who enter from high-risk countries and potentially stopping incoming and outgoing flights from high-risk areas. The government’s relying on Canadians to have enough supplies to weather the pandemic is simply not enough.”

— Conservative House Leader Mark Strahl

“It is also my wish that we deal with this challenge before us swiftly, wisely, and carefully. I ask that we restrain our propensity for playing politics and instead become protectors of the common good. That is what the Bloc Québécois will do.

“Nevertheless, the suspension of Parliament should not mean and will not mean that the Bloc Québécois will be less present or less vigilant with regard to anything that might be detrimental

to the interests of Quebec. The Bloc will continue to offer proposals to better serve those interests.

“In light of how vigorously and quickly the coronavirus is spreading, numerous possible responses have been proposed. Time will tell which responses were appropriate. We will have to learn from this experience.”

— Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet

“In this place, Canadians often see how our parties differ, and the differences we have. They see the questions we ask each other in Question Period. What Canadians often see is the variety of opinions within this House of Commons.

“Today, however, we see all parties and all Members of Parliament coming together with the same mission. That mission is to confront the challenge of coronavirus in Canada and to do our part to minimize the dangers of this virus going further in the public sphere.

“Unanimity is rare, but it is important when we face a challenge that affects all of Canada. It is important that Members come together and confirm that we will work collaboratively.

“Canadians come together when there are challenges. That has always been the hallmark of our character. Today, as we know, public health officials told us that it is important for members of Parliament, like everyone else in Canada, to maintain the social distancing that is so important to assure we do not see a rapid multiplication of the virus.”

— NDP House Leader Peter Julian

“We cannot tell moment to moment what lies ahead with the spread of COVID-19. I want to express thanks to the Canadian public health authorities at every level and in my own province ... who have taken strong precautionary action.

“I have confidence in our health authorities. I have confidence in Canadians. We gather in groups, and goodness knows, as Members of Parliament, we gather in groups and travel on airplanes. It is incumbent upon us to accept that

we have to stop our work in this place. Hopefully it is only for five weeks, so we again can take on the business of the nation. I think it is fair to say that as much as we travel on airplanes, we do not want to find, when history looks at what happened with COVID-19 in Canada, that members of Parliament were vectors of disease. We need to take on board our responsibilities.”

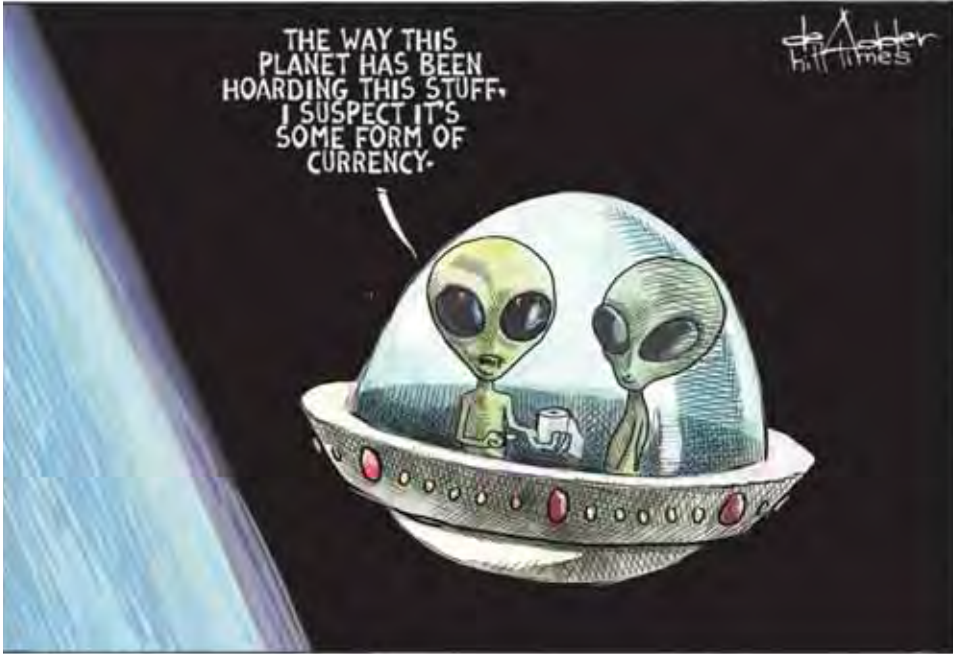
— Green Parliamentary Leader Elizabeth May

“Our action today demonstrates that we take this challenge seriously. I want to thank all of the health care workers and professionals.

“From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank all health care professionals, who are going through tough times at work as they help us through this crisis.

“To Canadians, workers, and families; to children concerned for their parents; to sisters and brothers concerned for loved ones and friends, we are all united. We will face this together, and we will get through this together.”

— Government House Leader Pablo Rodriguez



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Canadians shouldn't have to experience buyer's remorse for Iraq mess

Like the sign says in the china shop, 'if you break it, you bought it.' Canada did not break Iraq.



Scott Taylor

Inside Defence

OTTAWA—Almost completely forgotten amidst the avalanche of news concerning the worldwide COVID-19 pandemic is the ongoing conflict in Iraq.

Canadians should be aware of the deteriorating situation because we still have some skin in the game to the tune of approximately 850 military personnel.

On March 11, as many as 18 Katyusha rockets slammed into the Allied base in Taji, Iraq, killing

three coalition personnel and wounding a dozen others.

No Canadians were reported injured in the attack, but Canadian military trainers are based in Taji. For security reasons, the Department of National Defence does not identify exact numbers of personnel deployed to Iraq.

It was believed that the rocket attack was perpetrated by an Iranian backed Iraqi Shiite militia known as Kataib Hezbollah.

This incident supports the March 9 testimony made by Canadian Lt.-Gen. Mike Rouleau before a House of Commons committee. Rouleau told the National Defence Committee that Iranian-backed, Iraqi Shiite militia are his No. 1 concern in Iraq, because "Daesh has been defeated militarily."

Astoundingly, Rouleau's statement caused not a ripple of response despite the magnitude of what his words mean.

Canada first deployed troops into Iraq in September 2014 to assist in the U.S.-led coalition effort to defeat Daesh (a.k.a. ISIS, ISIL, or IS). At the time, our soldiers were employed as trainers to assist Kurdish militia in the fight against Daesh.

Allied with us in that effort were a large number of Iranian-backed, Iraqi Shiite militia. One of the reasons for this was that

the U.S.-trained and -equipped Iraqi government army had simply melted away the minute Daesh appeared on the battlefield.

Now Rouleau is saying that our erstwhile allies in the successful battle to defeat Daesh are Canada's biggest threat. The question begs, when did Canada authorize our troops' participation in an inter-factional civil war in Iraq?

In addition to an ill-defined role for Canadian Special Forces personnel in Iraq, Canadian troops are deployed to that country to assist in a NATO-led initiative to train Iraqi government forces.

This initiative involves approximately 250 Canadian soldiers, and the overall NATO mission is commanded by Canadian Maj.-Gen. Jennie Carignan.

Carignan and the majority of those trainers have been relocated to Kuwait since early January following the U.S.'s targeted killing of Iranian General Qassem Soleimani.

Iran vowed revenge, and this sentiment was echoed by the Iraqi Shiite militia which Soleimani once commanded.

It was considered best to suspend the training in Iraq and have Carignan and company sit



Canadian Major-General Jennie Carignan officially assumed command of the NATO Mission Iraq on Nov. 26, 2019. Scott Taylor asks: when did Canada authorize our troops' participation in an inter-factional civil war in Iraq? DND photograph courtesy of Cpl. Ryan Moulton

things out in Kuwait until the dust settles. The DND website assures us that these personnel "remain ready to return to their mission when conditions are right to do so."

Even if rooted in blind optimism, that statement runs in stark contrast to reality of the situation on the ground in Iraq.

The Canadian-led NATO training mission is tasked with training an Iraqi government army. The problem with that equation is that Iraq does not have a functioning government. When last summer's parliamentary election failed to produce a verifiable result, it was determined that a recount be conducted. Before that could happen the warehouse containing the ballots burned down. I kid you not.

Last November, interim prime minister Adel Abdul-Mahdi was forced to step down following nation-wide violent protests. In recent weeks, it appeared that a

man named Tawfiq Allwai was set to form a government and serve as prime minister. Internal dissent collapsed those plans on March 2, extending the power vacuum.

At present, the most powerful figure in Iraq is the Shiite warlord Muqtada al-Sadr, who leads the coalition of Shiite militia.

If they are now the biggest threat to Canadian military personnel, it is time we walk away from this conflict.

The U.S. does not have the luxury of walking away from this mess because they set it in motion in 2003 when they invaded Iraq under the pretext of securing non-existent weapons of mass destruction. Like the sign says in the china shop, "if you break it, you bought it."

Canada did not break Iraq. Bring our troops home now.

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

The Hill Times

'Safari Arie' is the new Man in Motion

In this time of fear and isolation, it is nice to hear of someone who beats the odds.



Andrew Caddell

With All Due Respect

OTTAWA—Arie Hoogerbrugge is a man on a mission. Two missions, in fact: first, ride his bicycle to Tuktoyaktuk in the Arctic Circle, and then to the southern tip of Argentina, for a total of 55,000 kilometres. And once that's done, he intends to plant one million trees. Not unlike Rick Hansen's tour of the world

in a wheelchair in the 1990s, he is a man in motion.

The bike riding part sounds daunting enough, but consider this: he left St. John's, N.L., in late November and continued through the winter. He spent most of December crossing Newfoundland, then on to Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island for Christmas. Then New Brunswick and Quebec, before arriving in Ottawa on March 12. He has faced withering snowstorms, freezing rain, and heavy headwinds over his 4,560 kilometre journey.

The 46-year-old long-haul truck driver has camped overnight dozens of times, often sleeping in the shadow of a local Tim Horton's. Photographs of his little tent covered with snow in small towns have touched his more than 2,000 followers on social media. So much so they have reached out to offer shelter. "I did not foresee the response I received," he admits. "I expected to camp most of my time, but Maritimers were very generous." People stopped him on the road, took them into their homes and fed him, gave him money and generally encouraged him along the way.

As a result, he changed his route through Nova Scotia to travel around the province from Halifax to Yarmouth before embarking on the ferry to Saint John, N.B. Then across New Brunswick to Quebec City, Montreal, and Ottawa. He plans to go south to Hamilton before heading to Northern Ontario in April.

Paradoxically, Arie doesn't like winter, but he was nursing a broken heart after his fiancée split up with him last May, and needed something to take his mind off the hurt. His past experiences with long-distance biking in various parts of Canada inspired him to do this marathon, and for an extra challenge, to begin in winter.

As someone who cycled across Canada in the warmer months, I can attest to it being difficult enough in 25 C. And even though I winter biked for my commute in Ottawa, cycling 100 kilometres a day in -30 C is hard to fathom. Still, "Safari Arie," presses on, pulling a small trailer with 185 pounds of gear.

His impressions? "In winter, there is not a lot of pretty landscape, with the exception of

the coastline of Nova Scotia." As a truck driver travelling the continent, he is accustomed to long hours of solitude. But he admits it is hard to be lonely, "when people are always recognizing me and taking me in."

He should be in Tuktoyaktuk by summer; from there he plans to head south to Vancouver, the United States, then Central and South America. He owns a 40-acre property in the Central American country of Belize, where he has planted trees. This led to considering reforestation on a grander scale, and his second project kicked in.

"I have always been passionate about planting trees for a better environment. I felt, as an unemployed truck driver, I could not get much attention from the public or sponsors to plant a million trees. But I thought I might have some credibility after cycling 55,000 kilometres." Arie's project should resonate with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and the Canadian Forestry Service, which has been tasked with the government's throne speech promise to plant two billion trees in the next decade as a carbon sink.

At every stop, he is asked if he is undertaking the ride for a charity. So, he polled his social media followers on raising money for a cause. A resounding majority was against it, preferring the theme of "one human against the elements." So he will talk about tree planting, and see if the opportunity presents itself to raise funds for the campaign as the trip continues.

To some, the tall, thin, goateed cyclist might be seen as an eccentric, or even somewhat crazy. But he set an objective to ride a bicycle through cold, snow and ice, and the kindness he received has warmed his broken heart. For many long distance cyclists, his story is one to admire, and his cause a good one. In this time of fear and isolation, it is nice to hear of someone who beats the odds.

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 principal of QIT Canada. He can be reached at pipson52@hotmail.com.

The Hill Times

Comment

Splendid isolation: survival tips for #workingfromhome



From avoiding the home-office hunch to finding cat-video-sized distractions, Lisa Van Dusen offers insight for the work-from-home amateurs. Photograph courtesy of Pixabay

Working from home is not for amateurs. It requires a knack for troubleshooting and a few handy props.



Lisa Van Dusen

What Fresh Hell

Having worked from home as an editor and columnist for years, I welcome to the club those who, due to the public health demands of the pandemic currently stalking humanity, suddenly find themselves telecommuting. Hereby, a list of helpful tips for adapting to a home office environment:

1. The glass half-full rule: For days when you feel the tug of nostalgia for a workplace full of human beings, have a carousel of creative visualization moments to play back, representing the downside of meat space professional life: that time your boss told you unironically that he wanted more stories about cannibals on the wire, or that time your other boss suggested bikram goat yoga as a team-building exercise.

2. It's all about alchemy: For every—in my case Donald Trump news conference, in yours, perhaps Power Point of the second quarter regional sales figures—10 minutes spent processing soul-shriveling dull, dispiriting, horrid, or regional sales figures content, counter-program with 20 minutes of Aretha Franklin, cat videos, soaring political eloquence, or other positive, uplifting, hilarious content to pre-empt a slump in morale. Next thing you know, it's 11 o'clock and time to watch *The View*.

3. The scourge of inertia creep: Don't sit for longer than two hours without taking a stretching or cardio mini-break. Do five jumping jacks. Touch your toes twice, wherever they are, then go put the kettle on, then come back, then go make tea, then

come back. Whatever you do, don't touch your face, or you'll get coronavirus. I've taken to wearing a goalie's mask, which is just one of the many things you can do while working from home and not get reported to HR.

4. Beware the iHunch: If you don't have an ergonomically sound desk-chair arrangement or you can't be arsed and have taken to working on the couch all day because that's why couches were invented, you will develop a stoop that makes you look like a First World War soldier living in a trench, perpetually braced for incoming artillery fire, or Richard III with carpal tunnel syndrome. Every two hours, yank your copy of *Infinite Jest* off the shelf you slammed it back onto halfway through page 729, place it on your head (don't forget to take the goalie's mask off first) and walk around the coffee table 10 times like a superannuated debutante rehearsing for an imaginary cotillion. Next thing you know, it's 5 o'clock and time for a shot of tequila.

5. Two words—Howard Hughes: No matter how much time you spend alone, don't go cybermonk and start skipping showering or stop trimming your toenails or start working naked just because there's nobody around to see it—that's a very slippery slope. Think of it as *splendid isolation*, which, by the way, is more than a Warren Zevon song or a house in the title of an Edna O'Brien hostage novel. The term was actually coined in 1896 by Canadian MP Sir George Eulas Foster to describe Britain's political distancing from Europe under Lord Salisbury—a timely contrast to deeply un-splendid Brexit isolation. It didn't last as a doctrine because it was stupid, but don't let that deter you from embracing it as a euphemism.

6. No cheating: As tempting as it may be to acquire imaginary friends while #workingfromhome, there's a fine line between sniping at the television during a Trump newser and asking Wolf Blitzer whether these jeans make your ass look fat.

7. In case of cabin fever: Go for a walk, carefully.

Stay well, everyone.

Lisa Van Dusen is associate editor of Policy Magazine and was a Washington and New York-based editor at UPI, AP, and ABC. She writes a weekly column for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times

A crisis defining leadership around the world

The economic and social repercussions of this historic struggle will likely be felt for years. But in Canada, as elsewhere, the legacy of leaders at all levels will be shaped by their ability to rise to this event.



Les Whittington

Need to Know

OTTAWA—Given U.S. President Donald Trump's seemingly congenital inability to confront the potential size of the coronavirus catastrophe, it's been left to U.S. governors and mayors to take decisive action in hopes of slowing the spread of the pandemic among Americans.

Trump's legacy will be defined by his confusing, uninformed, relentlessly clueless response to COVID-19. Unlike most of the issues confronting the president, the virus was not susceptible to bluster, propaganda, and the magician's trick of misdirection. Since January, when news of the coronavirus outbreak in China became well known, Trump has played down the risk to Americans, suppressed scientific warnings, and accused the U.S. media of "doing everything possible to make coronavirus look as bad as possible." And he totally misled Americans about the almost criminal failure of the federal government to provide enough virus testing that would be needed by one small town, let alone the entire U.S. Asked about this, the president said, "I don't take responsibility at all."

Trump's first national address on the issue flopped, leading to a historic stock market sell-off. He recovered somewhat a few days later, declaring a national emergency and freeing up \$50-billion in federal resources. But he still speculated that it might all blow over. And on March 15, as confirmed cases in the U.S. passed 3,000 and one expert said hundreds of thousands of Americans could die, Trump repeated his long-held view that "it's something we have tremendous control of."

In Trump's case, fully recognizing the onrushing disaster would mean candidly accessing the growing risks it poses to his central re-election messaging about a strong economy. At this point, about half of the U.S. public, particularly Republicans, have been receptive to his "What-Me-Worry" message, a recent poll showed. And you have to think Trump's casual attitude to the

whole thing contributed to the heedless demeanour exhibited by Americans who have refused to get serious about the need to slow the spread of COVID-19 by cutting back their social life.

Local and state governments have taken the initiative. New York City closed its schools and many state governors have shut bars, restaurants, and casinos. "The time for persuasion and public appeals is over, the time for action is here," Illinois Gov. J.B. Pritzker said as he imposed restrictions in his state.

British Prime Minister Boris Johnson, another populist more accustomed to pulling things down than fixing anything, has been slammed for his laid-back approach. It didn't help that, in his usual scatterbrained fashion, Johnson mused on TV that "one of the theories" on fighting COVID-19 was that "perhaps you could take it on the chin, take it all in one go and allow the disease, as it were, to move through the population, without taking as many draconian measures." This led to a situation where Health Minister Matt Hancock last weekend had to publicly disavow the concept of herd immunity as government policy.

Canada, too, has been slow off the mark. It's not that Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government and the provinces haven't taken action. But the virus has proved too contagious and fast-moving for political leaders steeped in cautiousness and concerned about being accused of panicking or over-reacting. Finance Minister Bill Morneau has been unable to convey much of a sense of urgency or confidence. As for the official opposition, it wasn't until late last week that the Conservatives switched from berating the Liberals over the deficit to pressing hard for answers on the coronavirus emergency.

Containment in Canada failed as measures that might have kept the disease in check such as closing borders, reducing public gatherings, and stepping up airport screening appeared too little and too late. As of early March 16, for instance, Ontario, despite bringing in a range of useful measures, was still hesitating on shutting down restaurants and bars. As confirmed virus cases shot up, Trudeau decided to close Canada's borders to those with COVID-19 symptoms and those who are not Canadian citizens, with some exceptions, including for trade.

With the outbreak changing all the time, it's impossible to say how bad the situation will get here. Earlier this month, Canadians were giving Trudeau a passing grade on his crisis-abatement efforts. But if the curve of mounting cases is not effectively flattened, there seems little doubt that the medical system will be overwhelmed as in the desperate conditions in Italy's hospitals. And that's not to mention the accompanying recession.

The economic and social repercussions of this historic struggle will likely be felt for years. And a great deal more than politics is at stake. But in Canada, as elsewhere, the legacy of leaders at all levels will be shaped by their ability to rise to this event.

Les Whittington is a regular columnist for The Hill Times.

The Hill Times



HILL CLIMBERS

by Laura Ryckewaert

Former MP Bossio now working for Gender Equality Minister Monsef



Pictured in the West Block on Dec. 6, 2019, Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development Minister Maryam Monsef's office includes a number of familiar faces from her team last Parliament, and new additions to her team include former MP Mike Bossio as senior adviser for rural affairs. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

Meanwhile, Yanique Williams continues as policy director to the minister, while Matthew Pollesel is director of parliamentary affairs, and Christopher Evelyn is operations director.

Women and Gender Equality and Rural Economic Development Minister **Maryam Monsef's** office includes her former caucus colleague, **Mike Bossio**, who's been hired on as a senior adviser for rural affairs.

Mr. Bossio was the MP for the riding neighbouring Ms. Monsef's, Hastings-Lennox and Addington, Ont., from 2015 until last fall, when he was defeated by Conservative MP and leadership candidate **Derek Sloan**, who won the riding with 41.4 per cent of the vote to Mr. Bossio's 37.1 per cent.

In Ms. Monsef's office, Mr. Bossio "will be supporting the minister in delivering on the government's commitment on ensuring the high-speed broadband coverage in rural Canada, investing in infrastructure in rural communities and creating vibrant rural economies," according to the minister's director of communications, **Alexandra "Alex" Howell**.

Mr. Bossio is one of four former Liberal MPs defeated last fall who have since been

hired as ministerial staff. Former New Brunswick MP **Matt DeCoursey**—Ms. Monsef's fiancé—is now a senior adviser to Finance Minister **Bill Morneau**, former Quebec MP **Ramez Ayoub** is now a senior adviser for regional affairs to Quebec Lieutenant **Pablo Rodriguez**, and former Quebec MP **Linda Lapointe** is now caucus liaison for the Prime Minister's Office.



Former MP Mike Bossio, pictured with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. *Photograph courtesy of Facebook*

For her part, Ms. Howell was last working in the infrastructure minister's office, having started there in the spring of 2017 as a special assistant for communications under then-minister **Amarjeet Sohi**, and ending as director of operations and tour to now-former infrastructure minister **François-Philippe Champagne**. She's also a former assistant to then-Liberal MP

Celina Caesar-Chavannes and to Crown-Indigenous Relations Minister **Carolyn Bennett** in her capacity as the Liberal MP for Toronto-St. Paul's, Ont.

Rosalyn Stevens, who was previously a special assistant for digital media and outreach in Ms. Monsef's office during the last Parliament, is now a senior special assistant for communications and planning. A former assistant to Liberal MP **Sonia Sidhu**, Ms. Stevens is a former reporter and editor with EMC Community Newspapers, among other things.

Christopher Evelyn similarly remains in place as director of operations. A former policy adviser with the Canadian Air Transport Security Authority, Mr. Evelyn has been working for Ms. Monsef since December 2015, starting as a policy adviser in her office as democratic institutions minister. After following the minister to the then-named status of women portfolio in 2017 as a policy and Ontario regional affairs adviser, Mr. Evelyn was promoted to his current role in March 2018.



Christopher Evelyn continues as director of operations to Ms. Monsef. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Matthew Pollesel is now Ms. Monsef's director of parliamentary affairs. He joined the minister's office in December and was previously part of then-families minister **Jean-Yves Duclos's** office, starting in June 2017 as a special assistant for media and ending as a senior special assistant for issues management and parliamentary affairs.

He's also a former digital engagement specialist with the U.S. Embassy in Ottawa, a former assistant to then-Progressive Conservative MP **Scott Brison**—who later, in 2003, crossed the floor to the Liberals and was a minister in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** cabinet last Parliament—and a former research and communications assistant for the Progressive Conservative Party, among other past jobs.

Isabella McKenna is working under Mr. Pollesel as a special assistant for parliamentary affairs and issues management; she was previously focused solely on parliamentary affairs in the office, starting in the fall of 2018. Before then, Ms. McKenna had been an assistant to now-former Liberal MP **Borys Wrzesnewskyj**.

Yanique Williams continues as director of policy to Ms. Monsef, who was first put in charge of Women and Gender Equality in January 2017. Ms. Williams first took charge of the minister's policy team in June 2018 and before then was busy as a policy adviser and Ontario regional affairs adviser to Mr. Champagne as the then-



Yanique Williams is Ms. Monsef's director of policy. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

trade minister. She's a former Ontario Liberal staffer, including having been a special assistant for policy and executive assistant to the principal secretary in then-Ontario premier **Kathleen Wynne's** office.

Kendra Wilcox is working under Ms. Williams as a policy adviser. She was previously a special assistant for Atlantic regional affairs to then-rural economic development minister **Bernadette Jordan**, and an assistant to Ms. Jordan as the Liberal MP for South Shore-St. Margarets, N.S., before that.

Laurence Harvey is now a policy and Quebec regional affairs adviser in the office. A former special assistant for policy in Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** office from 2017 to 2018, she went on to work as a project officer with the Canadian Partnership for Women and Children's Health and ran as the Liberal Party's candidate against Conservative incumbent **Steven Blaney** in Bellechasse-Les Etchemins-Lévis, Que., last fall. Ultimately, she placed third behind the Bloc Québécois' candidate and Mr. Blaney, who was re-elected with roughly 50.1 per cent of the vote.



Laurence Harvey has joined Ms. Monsef's team as a policy and Quebec regional adviser. *Photograph courtesy of LinkedIn*

Skye Wolff has been promoted and is now Ms. Monsef's Ontario regional affairs adviser. She first joined the minister's team in May 2017 as executive assistant to the chief of staff.

Harry Burton, a former assistant to Ms. Monsef as the Liberal MP for Peterborough-Kawartha, Ont., has joined her ministerial office as a special assistant for operations and Atlantic regional affairs adviser. He's also a former assistant to then-Liberal MP **Judy Foote**.

Joanna Lam is the minister's regional affairs adviser for Western Canada and the Territories. Ms. Lam is a former deputy field organizer for the federal party in B.C., and has previously interned in the ministers' regional office in Vancouver, the Liberal research bureau on the Hill, and for B.C. Liberal MP **Terry Beech**.

Heather Porter has joined Ms. Monsef's team as the minister's executive assistant and scheduler. She'd previously been tackling scheduling for then-seniors minister **Filomena Tassi** and her chief of staff (then **Jude Welch**, who is now chief of staff to Ms. Tassi as labour minister) since January 2017.

Finally, **Monica Granados** is assistant to Ms. Monsef's parliamentary secretary, Liberal MP **Gudie Hutchings**.

As previously reported, **Leslie O'Leary** is chief of staff to Ms. Monsef.

Meanwhile, in other staffing news, **Norair Serengulian** is now part of Mr. Rodriguez's team as Mr. Trudeau's Quebec Lieutenant.

Mr. Serengulian, who's spent the last almost three years as director of regional affairs in the ministers' regional office in Montreal, is director of relations with communities to Mr. Rodriguez, and continues to work from Montreal.

As previously reported, Mr. Rodriguez's staff team as Quebec Lieutenant is spread between Ottawa, Montreal, and Québec City. Led by chief of staff **Geneviève Hinse**, the team also currently includes director of regional affairs **Paul-Christian Nolin** and senior advisers for regional affairs **Éric Beaulieu** and Mr. Ayoub.

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News Coronavirus

‘Together we will beat this’: MPs urge care and calm for those most at-risk with COVID-19

‘We go day by day, hour by hour, maybe minute by minute and see how things are and what the health experts are advising,’ says Liberal MP Salma Zahid.

Continued from page 1

ally at a high risk anymore, they could relate to the unique anxiety a smaller portion of the population is facing—the elderly, those with a history of heart or lung disease, or cancer patients like they once were—as the respiratory virus has become a global pandemic and Canada ramps up its response every day.

“Anything can happen any time,” said Liberal MP Salma Zahid (Scarborough Centre, Ont.) about what she’s learned from a Stage 4 cancer diagnosis in 2018. Though she was “perfectly fine” at the end of her treatment for non-Hodgkin lymphoma, at the time it was a big shock. “I think that brings me to accept that, okay, there can be anything in life, so be ready for anything.”

Every three months she has visits with her oncologist and the most recent one a few weeks back reported her blood work was good—“touch wood,” she said with a laugh—and should keep going about her day.

In early 2018, during her months of treatment, her white blood cell count was low and she takes a straight-forward approach to those who may be in that place right now.

“I believe in science and evidence and what [the health experts] are recommending,” said Ms. Zahid in an interview at her Ottawa office March 12 after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) announced he would self isolate following his wife’s return to Canada from England with flu-like symptoms, which would later be confirmed as COVID-19. “We have to be prepared and be optimistic and positive.”

Canada has more than 420 confirmed cases of the virus, and globally more than 173,000 people have contracted COVID-19 in 152 countries or territories, with more than 7,000 deaths and 80,000 recoveries.

While most infected experience mild symptoms and recover, the World Health Organization noted people over the age of 60, and with underlying conditions such as hypertension, diabetes, cardiovascular disease, chronic respiratory disease, and cancer will have the highest risk of contracting “severe disease,” according to a Feb. 20 report. The mortality rates—though still evolving given early data and as countries respond differently to the disease—are between three and four per cent, the WHO said in a March 6 update. That risk appears to increase with age, and four of the five Canadian deaths have



Seniors Minister Deb Schulte says many seniors, who are among the most vulnerable to COVID-19, may be feeling anxiety and all Canadians need to do their part and listen to health experts. *The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade*

been people living in the same B.C. nursing home.

Seniors Minister Deb Schulte (King-Vaughan, Ont.) is responsible for the segment of the population most vulnerable to serious complications connected to COVID-19. That can bring added anxiety, said Ms. Schulte by email March 17.

“We need to be upfront about the added stress to our mental health so that we can address it,” said Ms. Schulte, who reinforced that Canadians are “lucky to have one of the best health-care systems in the world” in a situation where all levels of government are working closely together.



Liberal MP Salma Zahid says her choices are guided by science, health experts, and a positive outlook. *The Hill Times photograph by Samantha Wright Allen*

“There is no other country I would rather be in during this global pandemic. I urge all Canadians to do their part: listen to the advice of public health officials, practice social distancing, proper hygiene and look after each other. Together we will beat this.”

Some provinces are giving special warnings to those most vulnerable, like in Quebec where Premier François Legault over the weekend warned seniors over the age of 70 to stay at home. If all Parliamentarians lived in la belle province, that would include at least 28 Senators and 19 MPs, who are 70 years or older.

Ms. Schulte is likely able to relate with the anxiety she said some seniors are feeling. In April 2019, she was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin lymphoma and finished six rounds of chemotherapy in the midst of the election

campaign. Though she is in remission, she said her doctor said that she’s not at a heightened risk for illness.

MPs are ‘super-spreaders,’ Kent says

From his Thornhill, Ont., constituency office on March 17, Conservative MP Peter Kent was on rotation as staff started a new self-isolation routine. Residents were encouraged to call in, but someone would be present, on shortened shifts, to address walk-ins.

Since his throat cancer diagnosis in late 2013, he said his wife has been his “rock,” getting him through and there have been lessons learned from his recovery that they maintain to this day about keeping a good health and diet.

“We’ve been sensitive, we’ve been prudent and since my brush with mortality, I’ve been very careful [taking] proper practices in terms of washing hands after public engagements.”

Still, he said even with such precautions Parliamentarians are “super-spreaders” and it’s good Parliament has been suspended, though he’s “somewhat concerned” at the length of time away and he’d like House leaders revisit the decision.

“I believe peace, order, and good government requires government taking the right

decisions and opposition in place asking the questions and ensuring accountability and decisions taken are the right decisions,” he said.

Mr. Kent said he worries about those with vulnerabilities, like the many seniors in nursing homes in his riding, in isolation for too long.

The longer that happens, the more Canadians “have to think of ensuring they have adequate support in terms of their food and essentials and also maintaining spirits,” he said.

However low the Canadian number of coronavirus cases might be compared other countries, it’s important to remember “the potential for an explosion is still there,” so “we may have to be following these severe precautions for some time.”

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A timeline of Canadian COVID-19 developments

Jan. 25, 2020

- Canada records first “presumptive positive” case in Ontario, a man in his 50s who fell ill after returning from the Chinese city of Wuhan, where the outbreak started.

Jan. 28, 2020

- B.C. records its first case of the virus, and within a week, several more are confirmed, but all who had been connected to people who had travelled to or visited from the affected region in China.

Feb. 6, 2020

- Ottawa begins repatriating what will eventually be hundreds of residents, chartering two planes to China and airlifting others from Japan on board the Diamond Princess cruise ship. The Diamond Princess had been quarantined off the coast of Japan since Feb. 3 with about 3,700 passengers on board. It wasn’t until early March when Canada’s public health officer started warning Canadians to “think twice” about cruise travel.

March 4, 2020

- Bank of Canada cuts interest rates by 50 basis points to 1.25 per cent amid coronavirus concerns, following in the U.S. Federal Reserve’s footsteps, in an effort to soften the economic impact.
- Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland is named chair of a new cabinet committee tasked with managing the federal response to the outbreak, convened to “complement” the work of the Incident Response Group that typically meets during a crisis.

March 8, 2020

- First COVID-19 death recorded when a B.C. resident in a nursing home died. Officials said the man was in his 80s and had other underlying health issues.

March 11, 2020

- World Health Organization declares COVID-19 a pandemic.
- The federal government announced a \$1-billion fund aimed at mitigating the spread of the coronavirus, including \$500-million in support to provinces and territories, an additional \$275-million in funding for research, and waiving one-week waiting period for employees who need to claim Employment Insurance sickness benefits on account of being quarantined or having to self-isolate.

March 12, 2020

- The prime minister’s wife, Sophie Grégoire Trudeau, who returned from a trip to the United Kingdom, was tested after having flu-like symptoms, and by evening, the PMO reported she had tested positive.
- Justin Trudeau started 14-day self-isolation, but with no symptoms, officials said it meant he would not be tested. The in-person First Ministers’ Meeting, planned for the same day, was cancelled, with Mr. Trudeau instead speaking with premiers over the phone.
- The impact of the outbreak, combined with diving oil prices, helped push the Canadian stock market to its worst one-day plunge in eight decades.

March 13, 2020

- Parliament agrees to suspend for five weeks until at least April 20 after unanimous agreement among all parties.
- Senate is recalled to sit on Friday (after it adjourned the day before) to finish business, most notably to pass the new NAFTA.
- Canada upgrades advice that international travellers should self-quarantine, but over the weekend, some passengers coming from abroad said they weren’t properly screened, prompting some provinces—like Quebec, Alberta, and Nova Scotia—and Montreal city officials to send their own personnel to make sure the federal job was being done.
- Treasury Board Secretariat issues directive to federal public servants permitting them to work from home during the coronavirus pandemic, per their managers’ discretion.

March 15, 2020

- Emergency cabinet meeting held in Ottawa where ministers said new measures were coming, but rebuffed reporters’ questions about why the government was waiting, and why there was insufficient screening at several airports.
- Canada’s public health officer Dr. Theresa Tam warns the window to flatten the curve is closing.

March 16, 2020

- Mr. Trudeau announces major new measures, including banning entry to most foreign nationals, except for U.S. citizens. Anyone with symptoms, regardless of citizenship, will also be denied boarding of flights to Canada.
- Canadian death toll rises to four, and all are connected to the B.C. nursing home where the first Canadian victim died.
- Conservative Party says leadership race and rules will go forward, but it would give leadership candidates online tools to support efforts to canvas members from a safe social distance, including making easier to gather online signatures, but declined calls from some to push off the March 25 deadline.

March 17, 2020

- Mr. Trudeau announced Parliament will be recalled for an emergency session to pass legislation and that the government would announce a major economic aid package on March 18 to help workers.
- A fifth Canadian person, a 77-year-old man, dies with COVID-19 detected post-mortem, the first in Ontario.

March 18, 2020

- The new border measures come into effect, with only four airports in Toronto, Montreal, Vancouver, and Calgary accepting international flights.

The Hill Times



CIVIL CIRCLES

by Mike Lapointe

Situation 'changing hourly' as feds, unions, public service contend with COVID-19 work-from-home confusion

'The government of Canada will be as flexible as possible and will not only allow, but encourage teleworking whenever and wherever possible,' says Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos.

Continued from page 1

As with all Canadians now contending with the coronavirus pandemic, more than 300,000 federal workers were anxiously awaiting messaging from the government as to whether or not they should come in to work or not as the work-week approached.

According to the government's press release on March 16, department managers were to consider telework for all employees, at all work sites, while ensuring continued critical government operations and services to Canadians. "The government of Canada is doing everything it can to protect the health and safety of all Canadians as the country responds to the COVID-19

Pandemic, and that includes its own workforce," according to the statement. "Yesterday, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) provided additional guidance to departments and agencies with the expectation that managers will consider telework for all their employees, at all

work sites, while ensuring continued critical government operations and services to Canadians."

"The government will continue to support federal employees from coast to coast to coast, who are now working around the clock—many of them on the front line—to deliver programs and services and provide guidance based on sound public policy and science."

This message, which went out following the initial announcement on March 13, when the Treasury Board guided "all departments and agencies to be as flexible as possible" in allowing government employees to work from home in the midst of the pandemic—was "not for all employees to work from home," said Karl Sasseeville, director of communications and issues management for Treasury Board President Jean-Yves Duclos (Québec, Que.).

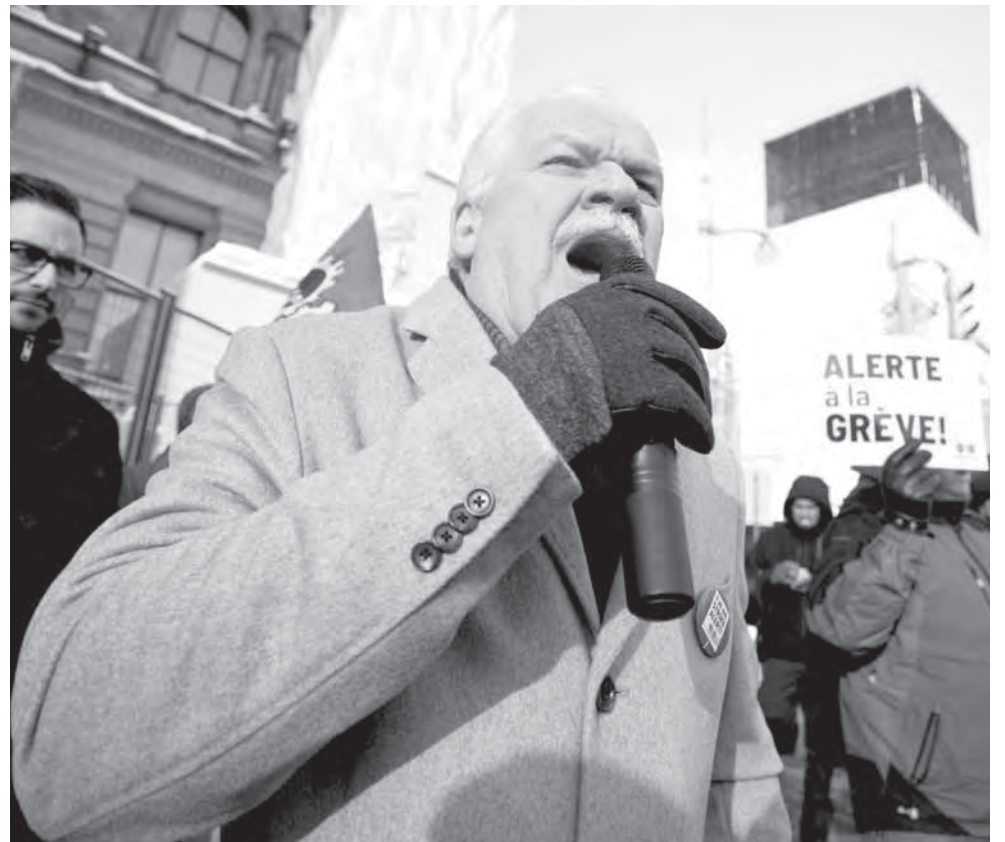
"Each department will be responsible for applying that directive," said Mr. Sasseeville.

"These are challenging times for all Canadians and we're all in this together. In the last few days, the president has spoken with union leaders to assure them that our government will do what it must to guarantee the health and safety of all public servants while ensuring that we continue to deliver critical and essential services to Canadians," said Mr. Sasseeville.

According to Mr. Duclos, guidelines

and directives were sent to all departments and agencies by the office of the chief human resources officer.

"The government of Canada will be as flexible as possible and will not only allow, but encourage teleworking whenever and wherever possible," said Mr. Duclos in a statement provided to *The Hill Times*. "We



Public Service Alliance of Canada national president, Chris Aylward, pictured at a Feb. 28 demonstration in Ottawa, says strike votes are suspended until at least the end of March. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

are constantly re-assessing the situation and striving to balance both our duty to Canadians and the health and safety of all public servants."

According to the national president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada Debi Daviau, the situation is "changing hourly."

"As of late last night, and I mean late, like midnight, organizations were still trying to establish what was going to happen for today's work day," in an interview with *The Hill Times* on Monday morning.

"And from what I understand, most of them are doing the right thing. They have managers calling employees, they're supposed to be passing a standard message," said Ms. Daviau.

"Of course there are always those that freelance and don't say exactly the right thing and that leads to confusion, and there are a couple of departments that as of last night, the last message was business as usual, so maybe things hadn't properly filtered through yet or maybe a little more pressure needs to be applied, but we will be talking about those organizations to the Treasury Board," said Ms. Daviau.

Dany Richard, president of the Association of Canadian Financial Officers, told *The Hill Times* that the situation is "definitely challenging."

"Because these are crazy times, the situation is evolving, not just every day, but every hour, so when you are dealing with organizations with a lot of red tape, like the government, by the time they come up with a policy, it's sometimes already outdated," he said in a March 13 interview. "Our members are wondering, what should I do now? Is it safe to come to work? Can I telework? What if I have symptoms, what do I do? There are so many questions out there."

Mr. Richard said the government is working with his union as much as they can, "simply because it's changing so quickly and it's difficult to keep everyone fully involved."

"But at the end of the day, the government and the unions both want the same thing. We want to guarantee the safety of our members, but also we want to make sure that services to Canadians aren't compromised," said Mr. Richard. "But in order to that, we need to ensure that if I'm going to tell my members, yes, you should report to work, I need to be convinced as a union leader that the government has put every measure in place."

According to Public Service Alliance of Canada national president Chris Aylward,

"the message from Treasury Board on Friday was stay at home if you feel sick, stay at home if you don't feel well, and [Sunday] evening, stay home unless you're deemed critical and your manager will make that determination whether you're deemed critical and you have to work," in an interview with *The Hill Times* Monday afternoon.

"When that all trickles down through 300,000 staff, it's not surprising that some messages were confusing," said Mr. Aylward, who said he was "very happy" with Treasury Board's message that "basically said 'stay home unless you've been deemed critical.'"

Mr. Aylward also said his union has regular calls with the Treasury Board.

"I really think the Treasury Board is doing the best they can with everything that's going on—this thing is changing by the hour," said Mr. Aylward. "I think, within a few days, everything will be consistent, and the messaging will be consistent and everyone will be hearing the same thing."

PSAC suspends cross-country strike votes

On March 13, PSAC announced it would be suspending strike votes until March 30.

"At that time the union will re-evaluate whether to continue the suspension or resume the strike votes," PSAC said in a statement. "We must put the welfare of our members and all Canadians first at this critical time."

These votes include the more than 120,000 PSAC members of the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA), Treasury Board, and Parks Canada bargaining units.

Mr. Aylward had only authorized strike votes for Parks Canada workers two days earlier, on March 11, with Treasury Board bargaining units scheduled to begin their votes on March 16. CRA workers had been engaged in strike votes since Feb. 17.

"It's a wait-and-see kind of thing—in a couple of weeks, we'll re-evaluate as to what's going on and where everything is, and if the advice coming from the public health officials is to avoid mass gatherings, then certainly we will respect that and will continue to postpone those strike votes, because some of those meetings could attract three or four hundred people," he said.

"So we will certainly take the lead and then take direction from the public health officials in that regard," said Mr. Aylward. "The safety of our members and the safety of our staff is certainly paramount in making any decisions around that."

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Debi Daviau, president of the Professional Institute of the Public Service of Canada, says there are those managers 'that freelance and don't say exactly the right thing and that leads to confusion.' *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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DIPLOMATIC CIRCLES

by Samantha Wright Allen

Envoys select top 12 ambassadors of the year at third annual bash

From museum exhibitions to events highlighting culture and cuisine, to strengthening bilateral ties and investment, 12 emissaries were named as their region's Ambassador of the Year at last week's third annual celebration.

Pulled from a pool of more than 130 diplomats stationed in Ottawa, they were recognized for their work promoting public diplomacy. Organizers, which included the Canadian chapter of the International Public Diplomacy Council, said the winning ambassadors were picked through a mix of 1,332 online votes and committee selection after research of each's work during the year.

Held at the University of Ottawa on March 11, about 70 people gathered to celebrate their colleagues while trying to keep a safe distance, bumping elbows and foregoing cheek kisses and handshakes in greeting. That went out the window when the awards were presented as the winners shook hands as they collected their prize, a handmade Inukshuk sculpture that master of ceremonies **Judée Berthil** said was "a symbol of hope and friendship."

Cameroon High Commissioner **Solomon Anu'a Gheyle Azoh-Mbi** spoke as dean of the diplomatic corps, telling the crowd that the awards celebrate efforts to promote public diplomacy directly with people.

Invoking the words of former U.S. secretary of state **Hillary Clinton**, he said the community also tries to "take diplomacy out of capitals, out of government offices, into the media, into the streets of countries."

These countries "bring the world to Canada," but it's "not one-way traffic," he said, praising Global Affairs Canada's program to show off Canadian culture, like the northern tour that takes emissaries to the Arctic and territories. **Stewart Wheeler** was frequently on speakers' lips as they thanked Global Affairs Canada's chief of protocol for his work since he took over the file last January.

Five ambassadors from Africa were recognized: Kenyan High Commissioner **John Lepi Lanyasunya** in Eastern Africa for the second year in a row for his work with the diaspora, including Jamhuri Day events in four Canadian cities and discussions to partner on training with three academic institutions; Tunisian Ambassador **Mohamed Imed Torjemane** in North Africa for "building bridges" in the artificial intelligence sector and helping get 10 Canadian information and communications technology companies investing in his country, and five Tunisian companies investing in Canada; Chad's Ambassador **Mahamat Ali Adoum** in Central Africa for finalizing agreements with schools, like the University of Ottawa, starting an agreement already underway for the promotion and protection of foreign investments; Zambian High Commissioner **Felix Mfula** in South-

ern Africa for his many cultural and trade missions since 2019 to Edmonton, Kingston, Windsor, and Montreal; and Nigerian High Commissioner **Adeyinka Olatokunbo Asekun** in West Africa for high level visits in 2019, including by the country's King, **Adeyeye Ogunwusi**, the Ooni of Ife, Ojaja II in August 2019 to Ontario.

Cuban ambassador **Josefina Vidal**, winner in the Americas category, was praised for her work celebrating a Day of Cuban Culture in late 2019 and for her work with a baseball game between the Cuban national team and the Ottawa Champions in Ottawa earlier that year. For the South America award, Peruvian Ambassador **Roberto Rodriguez** helped bring an exhibition on the pre-Inca cultures and Incan Empire to the Montréal Archaeology and History Museum and, on the other side of the country, the embassy organized a visit of the Peruvian tall ship "Union" to Vancouver, B.C.

Later in the evening with only two names left to announce, a woman interrupted the event, upset that only one woman was among the 12 celebrated that evening. After receiving her award, the Cuban ambassador said she felt it was an unfair criticism, noting three women won last year.

Canada is a leader and "among the first" when it comes to having many women stationed as emissaries, she added, and through her participation with the women's head of mission group, women are often called to participate.

In Eastern Europe, Cyprus High Commissioner **Vasilios Philippou** was tapped for his work with universities and a museum exhibition, and in Western Europe, Italian Ambassador **Claudio Taffuri** was recognized. In the Middle East, Yemen Ambassador **Jamal Al-Sallal** was cited for cultural events at universities across the country and support for Yemen students.

For Asia, South Korean Ambassador **Maeng-ho Shin** claimed the top spot for a speakers series, culture exchanges in the North, and the October 2019 Ottawa Korean Film Festival, which included Academy Award-winning best film, *Parasite*.

And in Southeast Asia, Indonesian Ambassador **Abdul Kadir Jailani**, also his country's Digital Head of Mission Award winner, won for organizing several conferences and Indonesia Festival 2019.

The awards also gave nods to other notable members of the community, including **Sam Garcia**, a popular photographer who documents Ottawa's many diplomatic events and a regular contributor to *The Hill Times*.

The ever-active and sociable former Canadian diplomat **Larry Lederman** was also recognized for his work organizing the monthly Carleton University ambassador speaker series.

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Parliamentary Calendar



Bored while self-isolating? Learn about FOI tips with Dean Beeby on March 20

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 18

House Not Sitting—The House has been suspended until Monday, April 20, due to the COVID-19 virus. As of April 20 it is then scheduled to sit for four straight weeks until May 15. It will take a one-week break and will resume sitting again on May 25 and will sit straight through for the next four consecutive weeks, until it's scheduled to adjourn on June 23. The House adjourns again for three months and will return in the fall on Monday, Sept. 21, for three straight weeks. It will adjourn for one week and will sit again from Oct. 19 until Nov. 6. It will break again for one week and will sit again from Nov. 16 to Dec. 11. And that will be it for 2020.

Senate Not Sitting—The Senate has also been suspended due to the COVID-19 virus. The possible sitting days are April 20, 24, 27, and May 1. The Senate is scheduled to sit April 21-23 and April 28-30. The possible Senate sittings are May 4, 8, 11, 15, 25, and 29. The Senate is scheduled to sit May 5-7 and May 12-May 14. The Senate will break May 18-22. It is scheduled to sit May 26-28. The June possible sitting days are June 1, 5, 8, 12, 15 and 19. The Senate is scheduled to sit June 2-4; June 9-11; June 16-18; and June 22, 23, it breaks June 24 for St. Jean Baptiste Day; and it's scheduled to sit June 25 and June 26. The Senate breaks from June 29 until Sept. 22. The Senate's possible September sitting days are Sept. 21, 25, 28. It's scheduled to sit Sept. 22-24 and Sept. 29-Oct. 1, with a possible sitting day on Friday, Oct. 2. The possible Senate sitting days are Oct. 5, 9, 19, 23, 26, and 30. It's scheduled to sit Oct. 6-8; it takes a break from Oct. 12-16; it will sit Oct. 20-22; and Oct. 27-29. The November possible Senate days are: Nov. 2, 6, 16, 20, 23, 27, 30. It's scheduled to sit Nov. 3-5; it will take a break from Nov. 9-13; it will sit Nov. 17-19; and Nov. 24-26. The possible December Senate sitting days are: Dec. 4, 7, and 11. The Senate is scheduled to sit Dec. 1-3; Dec. 8-10 and it will sit Dec. 14-18.

THURSDAY, MARCH 19

De-escalation With Iran?—The NATO Association of Canada hosts a discussion on "De-escalation with Iran?" featuring Dr. Michael Atallah, senior Middle East analyst at the Privy Council Office with a specialization on the Levant and the Persian Gulf; and Thomas Jeanneau, associate professor at the University of Ottawa's Graduate School of Public and International Affairs. This event will take place at the Clocktower Brew Pub, 575 Bank St., Ottawa, on Thursday, March 19, from 5:30-7:30 p.m. Tickets \$10 and guests must bring a piece of government-issued ID.

FRIDAY, MARCH 20

The Canadian Association of Journalists Presents FOI Friday With Dean Beeby—FOI Friday is back! After a long absence, we're bringing one of the deans of FOI to walk us through the new ATIP system. Bill C-58 has changed the federal access-to-information landscape. What's changed, for better and worse, and how can journalists best cope? Dean Beeby has decades of experience with FOI, publishing four books and breaking hundreds of scoops through ATIP requests for the Canadian Press and CBC. This session will be streamed on Facebook; RSVP to get a notification: www.facebook.com/events/200324907853215/ Questions? Dylan Robertson can be reached at 613.857.9583 or ottawa@caj.ca. Friday, March 20, 12 to 1 p.m., National Press Building (150 Wellington St.), first floor.

TUESDAY, MARCH 24

Scotch and Chocolate Pairing—Jamie Johnson, of The Balvenie, and Erik Hansen, of DesBarres Chocolates, will host a Scotch and chocolate pairing at the Montgomery Scotch Lounge, 1154 Bank St. in Ottawa on March 24 from 7-9:30 p.m. Tickets are \$49 plus tax person. Invitation only.

TUESDAY, MARCH 31

The Globe and Mail's Summit on Drug Shortages—*Globe and Mail* columnist André Picard will be the host and moderator; Dr. Jacalyn Duffin, professor emerita, Hannah Chair of the History of Medicine, Queen's University, will be the keynote speaker; and the panel discussions will include Jennifer Gerdt, executive director Food Allergy Canada; Jeff Mehlretter, director of research Neighbourhood Pharmacies; Terri Drover, senior vice-president, Stakeholder Engagement, Canadian Association of Pharmacy Distribution Management; James Scongack, executive vice-president, corporate affairs and operational services, Bruce Power; Joelle Walker, vice-president, public affairs, Canadian Pharmacists Association; and Durhane Wong-Rieger, president and CEO, Canadian Organization for Rare Disorders. Tuesday, March 31, 8 a.m. to noon, Shaw Centre, 55 Colonel By Dr., Ottawa. Free event. For full agenda, speakers and tickets, visit globeandmailevents.com/DrugShortages.

MONDAY, APRIL 6

The Herblock Prize Award Ceremony & Lecture—Canadian editorial cartoonist Michael de Adder, who draws for *The Hill Times* and *The Chronicle-Herald*, will be presented with this prestigious award. José Andrés will be the lecturer at The Herb Block Foundation's event on Monday, April 6, 7-10 p.m., Coolidge Auditorium, Thomas Jefferson Building, Library of Congress, 10 First St., SE, Washington, D.C. Invitation only.

TUESDAY, APRIL 7

Policy Options Policy Circle: How Does Tax System Complexity Impact Different Segments of Canadian Society?—Moderated by *Policy Options'* editor-in-chief Jennifer Ditchburn, it will be an in-depth, intimate discussion, and will feature experts who have a deep knowledge of the issue, including Prosper Canada's CO Liz Mulholland; Helen Bobiwash, principal accountant; Brendan Pooran, founding lawyer Pooran Law; and Jay Goodis, CEO, Tax Templates. The event will take place on Tuesday, April 7, 9-11 a.m., Rideau Club, 99 Bank St., Lounge Room, 15th floor, Ottawa. Refreshments will be served. No cost, but registration is required.

Can Canada Lead in Sustainable Agriculture?—There will be 10 billion people to feed by 2050. Will we be able to nourish them and at the same time address agriculture's climate change impacts? Join Nutrien's Chuck Magro, in conversation with *The Toronto Star's* Heather Scofield who will discuss the high-tech future of agriculture and Canada's leadership role. April 7, 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m., Adam Room, Chateau Laurier Hotel, 1 Rideau St., Ottawa.

WEDNESDAY, APRIL 15

AI and Human Rights Forum—The Montreal Institute of Genocide and Human Rights Studies, Element AI, the Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Mitacs, and the Canadian Commission for UNESCO will be holding the Forum on April 15 at the De Seve Cinema in Concordia University. Panel discussions will cover such topics as disinformation, online hate, ethics, AI governance, the United Nations and global co-operation. Speakers include representatives from WITNESS, Amnesty International, Stanford, Access Now, and the Office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights. For tickets, please visit <https://www.eventbrite.ca/e/artificial-intelligence-and-human-rights-forum-tickets-88682486705>

FRIDAY, APRIL 17

Conservative Party English-Language Debate—The Conservative Party will host two official leadership debates—one English debate in Toronto, and one French debate in Montreal. The Toronto debate will take place on April 17 at the Metro Toronto Convention Centre, while the Montreal debate will take place on April 23 at the l'Amphithéâtre du Gesù. Both debates will be open for Conservative Party members to attend, and further details around ticketing, the format of the debates, and moderators will be announced later. Both debates will also be streamed live online. Canadians who wish to vote in the Conservative Party leadership election have until April 17 to purchase a membership to be eligible to vote in the Conservative leadership election. For more information, contact the Conservative Party at 1-866-808-8407.

The Parliamentary Calendar is a free events listing. Send in your political, cultural, diplomatic, or governmental event in a paragraph with all the relevant details under the subject line 'Parliamentary Calendar' to news@hilltimes.com by Wednesday at noon before the Monday paper or by Friday at noon for the Wednesday paper. We can't guarantee inclusion of every event, but we will definitely do our best. Events can be updated daily online, too.
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