

*i*POLITICS 2020

HOLIDAY MAGAZINE



JOURNALISM THAT DOESN'T FOLLOW THE HERD



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VACCINE AUTHORIZATION: BEHIND THE SPRINT TO APPROVE THE PANDEMIC'S REMEDY

By Charlie Pinkerton

Dispersed in home offices throughout the nation's capital are dozens of Health Canada's most qualified civil servants, making up quite possibly the government's most important bureaucratic teams in this phase of the pandemic.

They're epidemiologists, toxicologists, pharmacologists, biochemists, virologists, immunologists, microbiologists, and clinical experts, and they're the gatekeepers for the mass immunization of Canadians against the coronavirus.

Their thankless task — spending days analyzing hundreds of thousands of pages of data — would normally take the department one year for a single product. Given the pressure of the pandemic, they'll complete the 2,000-hour job in a matter of months.

This is how Health Canada is ensuring that whatever gets injected into the arms of Canadians is both safe and helps bring the pandemic to an end.

On Sept. 16, Health Minister Patty Hajdu signed the Interim Order Respecting the Importation, Sale and Advertising of Drugs for Use in Relation to COVID-19, thus creating a special, speedier approval process for coronavirus vaccines.

At the time this was written in mid-November, leading producers Pfizer,

Moderna, and AstraZeneca started special rolling submission processes, which allow them to submit data on their vaccines as the data become available, so as to speed up the authorization.

To prepare for the slew of data headed its way, Health Canada assembled teams of reviewers. Groups of seven to 10 specialists — the most experienced vaccine reviewers at Health Canada — have been given the job of studying each company's data.

These reviews are broken into three phases, each handled by different teams, which themselves are made up of specialists in the type of information they're tasked with evaluating.

The data reviewed in the first phase is pre-clinical information, including the vaccine's effect on animals. Each of Pfizer's, Moderna's, and AstraZeneca's Phase 1 studies had gone smoothly by mid-November.

The second phase involves reviewing each company's clinical-trial data, and Phase 3 looks at each company's manufacturing facilities and capabilities.

Health Canada has also assigned reviewers to collaborate with Canada's international colleagues, including members of the International Coalition of Medicines Regulatory Authorities, with

whom they've been sharing information throughout the pandemic in order to accelerate approvals.

Once the assessments are done, information about each vaccine is compiled. If a review team needs more information than what the companies provided, it reports to one of several managers whose job is to communicate directly with Moderna, Pfizer, and AstraZeneca.

The managers will eventually handle engagement with other companies that apply through the expedited authorization process. Health Canada has been in contact with the other companies whose vaccines Ottawa has agreed to buy: Medicago, Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline, Johnson & Johnson, and Novavax. They're also expected to enter the expedited authorization process.

The purpose of the department's review process is to determine if the vaccines are safe, effective, and of high quality. Health Canada's reviewers do this by verifying the reams of statistics, analyses, and other data the companies provide.

Final-phase clinical-trial data shared by Moderna and Pizer in November indicated that their vaccines not only far surpassed Health Canada's minimum guideline of 50 per cent efficacy, but also the 70 to 75 per cent effectiveness the



department wants the vaccines to meet. In mid-November, Health Canada expected to issue its first authorizations in January, allowing the first vaccines to be delivered to the highest-risk populations in the first quarter of 2021, as Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had suggested.

Once the review teams complete their studies and the department issues its authorization, it will publish two data sets: a decision summary and an in-depth explanation of its decision, accompanied by all the relevant scientific and technical information.

Through a process called "*pre-positioning*," the interim order Hajdu signed also allows Canada to import vaccines before approving them, but Health Canada has said it doesn't expect this will be necessary for the earliest doses.

Even after Health Canada approves a vaccine, it will continue to monitor its rollout to ensure it's safe.

*Details of Health Canada's process of approving COVID-19 vaccines is based on: publicly available information; a technical briefing from Health Canada on Oct. 8; and an interview with Dr. Supriya Sharma, the chief medical adviser for Health Canada. As one of the department's top-ranked civil servants, Sharma performs a mix of duties, including advising Deputy Minister Stephen Lucas. Sharma spoke to iPolitics about the vaccine-approval process on Nov. 18.



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HOW DOUG FORD AND CHRYSTIA FREELAND BECAME CANADA'S POLITICAL ODD COUPLE

By: David Hains



Moments before Ontario Premier Doug Ford was due to make a virtual announcement in early November about long-term-care, he was on the phone.

The premier, who for years was an especially combative and partisan politician, was using the salesman side of his personality to keep in touch with Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, and to check the pulse of the federal government.

Moments later, Ford couldn't wait to tell reporters he'd just spoken with his friend, the deputy prime minister. *"We are all communicating constantly. I mean constantly,"* said the premier with his trademark enthusiasm and hyperbole. *"I literally got off the phone with the deputy prime minister right before I walked in the door."*

On paper, Ford and Freeland appear to be opposites, but they've formed a fruitful, albeit unlikely, relationship.

Freeland graduated from Harvard and became a Rhodes scholar before embarking on a successful journalism career that took her around the world. She's written several books and takes a methodical approach to her work. Ford, in contrast, doesn't have a post-secondary degree. He took over his father's label-making business in the Toronto suburb of Etobicoke, then followed his younger brother into municipal politics. He is plainspoken, acts on instinct informed by populist tendencies, and has never been confused for a policy wonk.

And yet circumstances collided in such a way to make Freeland and Ford the unlikeliest of political odd couples. Current and former staffers in the premier's office spoke of the closeness



of that relationship and filled in some of the details for iPolitics.

The pairing has become more visible during the pandemic; the two often contact each other before their staff know about it, part of an effort to expedite responses to the deadly virus. Every other day or so, the premier will call Freeland on his BlackBerry first thing in the morning to check in and learn the latest. Sometimes he'll try to get her angle on something Ontario needs. But Freeland has also reached out to Ford, for example, to source additional personal protective equipment (PPE) for Quebec. Ford, perhaps relying on skills he honed at his family's mid-sized label company, found what Freeland was asking for.

But the origin of this relationship precedes the pandemic, and is owed in part to U.S. President Donald Trump.

Just days before Ford won his majority mandate, Trump introduced tariffs of 25 per cent on Canadian steel and 10 per cent on aluminum. This created an immediate problem for Ford's newly elected Progressive Conservative government, since steel and aluminum are mainly Ontario exports. Without an adequate response, the province's auto industry would be hit hard by the policy. It would be especially problematic for a politician who'd promised to restore Ontario's manufacturing might.

The relationship between the new premier and the federal Liberals — Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, in particular — had always been fraught. During the 2015 federal campaign, Trudeau said that then-prime minister Stephen Harper should have been *"embarrassed" to campaign alongside Ford and his*

brother Rob. Doug retorted that Trudeau was "incompetent," and called him "hypocritical" for criticizing Rob's drug use, referring to Trudeau admitting to having smoked a joint at a dinner party.

That frosty relationship continued when Ford became premier and he seemed to delight in making Trudeau the butt of applause in public remarks.

"I'm putting the prime minister on notice," he would say. *"We've already taken (former premier) Kathleen Wynne's hands out of your pockets. And Justin Trudeau, you're next."* In their first meeting, Ford's office quickly highlighted differences between the two orders of government, especially when it came to irregular border crossings, funding for refugees, and the carbon backstop. While the meeting was still happening in the premier's office, Ford's team distributed a news release mentioning some of these differences.

Later that fall, there was a more cordial meeting with then-Conservative leader Andrew Scheer. *"There's only one way ... we're going to get rid of the carbon tax, (and that) is by getting rid of Justin Trudeau,"* the premier said in his office, referring to Scheer as *"the next prime minister of Canada."*

But Ford changed tack when it came to renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). Instead of using it to beat up the federal Liberals, he took a unity approach — in part because the federal point person, Freeland, commanded a high degree of respect at Queen's Park.

"She's a very remarkable woman," said one senior staffer in Ford's office.

While Freeland worked on NAFTA with premiers across the country, a disproportionate amount of time was spent on Ontario, given the importance of steel and aluminum. And so, Ford and Freeland formed their surprising friendship. In spite of their different politics and personalities, *"they just click,"* the Ford staffer added.

"The relationship between her and the premier was quite good," said Mitch Davidson, Ford's former executive director for policy, who's now executive director of the StrategyCorp Institute of Public Policy and the Economy.

"There was a lot of forced co-operation there," he said, characterizing the NAFTA negotiations as a problem neither wanted, but needed to get through together.

And so NAFTA formed the template for the pandemic. Ford was again on his BlackBerry — long his smartphone of choice — to Freeland, getting the latest on PPE, rapid testing, and other pandemic concerns.

"To him, the easiest way to fix a problem is to go directly to the source," said Davidson, adding that doing so has been part of the family political brand since Doug's late brother Rob was a city councillor; Rob liked to ask constituents to bypass official processes and let him fix their problems instead. *"That's a good (trait) to have in a pandemic, because there's not a lot of time (to get things done),"* Davidson said.

That constant contact continued, even when Dominic LeBlanc replaced Freeland as Intergovernmental Affairs minister, and Freeland was promoted to Finance minister.

"We communicate on a wide range of things, be it health or the economy," the premier said at an Ontario Chamber of Commerce event in October.

"It is a Team Canada approach," he added, echoing language used by the federal Liberals.

Katherine Cuplinskis, Freeland's spokesperson, said Ottawa has made an effort to keep the lines of communication open during the pandemic.

"Throughout this global pandemic, our approach has been one of close co-operation and collaboration with our provincial and territorial partners," she told iPolitics, not singling out any premier. *"The prime minister and deputy prime minister have been in communication with Canada's premiers every step of*

the way. This has been a true Team Canada effort."

While Ford has heaped praise on Ottawa for its pandemic response, Ottawa hasn't been quite as reciprocal.

Simon Jefferies, a former spokesperson for both Ford and Scheer, said their messaging is determined by the context. There's daylight between the provincial PCs and the federal Conservatives in their pandemic approach; Opposition Leader Erin O'Toole has been more critical of public health measures — including those taken in Ontario — than Ford has. *"The federal and provincial Conservatives are in very different positions, politically,"* said Jefferies, a senior VP for Jenni Byrne + Associates. *As he sees it, because the federal Tories are the official Opposition in a minority government, they must be ready for an election at a moment's notice, and their messaging has to reflect that. In contrast, the PCs in Ontario are in the majority, giving them a lot more latitude to make friends with the Liberals, even if some Conservative partisans starved of red meat don't like it. "Erin O'Toole is doing his job to highlight the failings of the federal government, while Doug Ford is doing his job by collaborating with the federal government,"* Jefferies said.

That means neither their messages nor their political interests are always aligned.

It's not the first time the federal and provincial Conservatives haven't seen eye to eye. While Ford was a happy partisan warrior during his first year in office, he faded from the federal scene as his government plunged in popularity, culminating in a resounding chorus of boos when he took the stage during a celebration of the Toronto Raptors' 2019 NBA championship victory. Scheer and his team were worried Ford would drag them down in Ontario, and dared not utter his name on the campaign trail.

While he often embraces partisan battles, Ford was stuck on the sidelines during the 2019 campaign. After the federal Conservatives were thumped in Ontario that year, Ford took a different approach:

He vowed not to campaign for O'Toole, the new leader, trying instead to bury the hatchet with the federal Liberals, whose strong mandate in Ontario allowed them to form a minority Parliament.

But the politics of the day won't stay in place, either. It will be interesting to see whether the federal Liberals change their messaging as an election draws near, Jefferies said. *"Will they try to blame provincial governments"* for responding inadequately to the pandemic? he wondered. Doing so could cause the eventual fraying of the kumbaya relationship between the federal Liberals and provincial PCs.

It could also deteriorate over specific issues, such as standards for long-term care, Jefferies added, since the federal government has promised to usher in national standards, while Ontario has been on the defensive over the approximately 2,000 deaths from COVID in its nursing homes since March; just over half of all care homes in Ontario have experienced an outbreak.

While the relationship is positive in the midst of a crisis, it could still create long-term complications, Davidson said. For various reasons, the pandemic has caused normal jurisdictional boundaries to be overlooked in the name of expediency. But when the crisis abates, those issues could pop up again, with the usual bickering over funding for infrastructure, health care, transit, and municipalities.

Despite underlying fault lines, no one expects the Ford-Freeland relationship to fall apart. *"They understand what the other one is going through,"* and act like one another's therapists by sharing difficult emotions in a time of crisis, said a source in the premier's office.

Jefferies expects their friendship will even weather a possible change in the political landscape next year. *"Their relationship is kind of one for the history books."*



LETTER FROM THE PUBLISHER

Dear Readers,

Yup – it sucks. It really, really does. iPolitics was in the midst of putting together the 2020 budget edition of the magazine when the world as we knew it changed. There would be no budget. Within weeks the country would be upended. On March 13th Parliament was suspended due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Canada effectively went into lockdown.

What happened after that showed us all what a major crisis can do to move mountains.

Politicians and bureaucrats pivoted to meet the most urgent needs of the nation. Governments resorted to policy on the fly and parliamentarians worked long hard hours to face the emergency head on. Special committees were formed, rules were changed, and timelines moved at warp speed. It forced the precinct out of the proverbial bubble as Canadians formed their own bubbles to stay safe.

COVID has underscored the vital role government institutions play in our day-to-day lives and spurred a renewed interest in public policy.

The iPolitics magazine came out of hiatus for this holiday edition to deliver a bit of comfort and cheer while examining the policies that have defined this crisis.

Many things have changed, but you can always be sure of one thing: if it happens on the Hill – we're on it!

Onwards and upwards,

Heather Bakken

Publisher and Vice President Business Development, iPolitics | QP Briefing

LETTER FROM THE MANAGING EDITOR

Dear Readers,

As I write this, we are riding our second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The prime minister is back working from home at Rideau Cottage – where Canadians began tuning in to his regular pandemic updates in March – and, along with many parts of the country, Ontario is going into another lockdown.

After much debate, the House of Commons adopted a hybrid model to get government funds out the door to help Canadians who lost their jobs and businesses that had to close.

And with all that cash came the WE Charity scandal that forced former Finance minister Bill Morneau to resign, shuffled cabinet, prorogued Parliament, then prompted a throne speech in September as the House resumed for “new-normal” sittings.

The minority government survived a confidence vote. But, as this grim year draws to a close with no budget tabled for 2020-21, the possibility that the government-in-waiting – as Conservative Party Leader Erin O’Toole calls his cabinet – will force another confidence vote hangs over our heads.

Covering a pandemic with staff working from home, as so many are doing across the country, has kept us on our toes. With all the new spending bills, plus legislation on climate change, privacy, and the media, we are still here, covering the politics that drive conversations on the Hill.

Thank-you for your continued support, and I hope you enjoy our 2020 holiday magazine.

Janet E Silver

Managing Editor, iPolitics



I POLITICS IS COUNTING ITS LUCKY STARS



Our 'Star' roommates and new owners (from left to right): Heather Scoffield, Alex Boutilier, Tonda MacCharles, Susan Delacourt, Alex Ballingall, Jordan Bitove, Ryan Adam, Paul Rivett.

Some good stuff happened in 2020.

In January the parliamentary bureau of the Toronto Star moved into the iPolitics office space and brought a pretty cool cast of colleagues. More recently the stars aligned and Torstar was acquired by Nordstar Capital.

Our new parent company is a privately owned family-run business that is a bulwark of reliable, fact-based reporting and is investing in a long-term transformation to ensure a world class future for Canadian journalism.

That's our silver lining!

THE FUTURE OF YOUR LOCAL NEWS IS AT STAKE

This time it's David versus TWO Goliaths

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Governments in other countries are standing up to Google and Facebook.

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* Canadian Media Concentration Research Project, 2020



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HOW A VIRTUAL GATHERING OF POLICYMAKERS TURNED INTO A CELEBRATION OF OUR PERMANENT, UNSHAKEABLE FRIENDSHIP WITH THE U.S.

By Scotty Greenwood



Scotty Greenwood is the CEO of the CABC.

In what can only be described as a grim year, it was, frankly, a bit dicey to forge ahead with hosting the Canadian American Business Council's annual "State of the Relationship" gala.

With an opportunistic virus turning North America into one massive hotspot, upending lives and utterly disrupting the very way we interact as human beings — and with the anger of a fiercely contested U.S. election still flying — would anyone really want to leave partisanship behind for an evening to talk with goodwill about the bonds between our two countries?

Well, we decided to try. Instead of attempting to bring people together to dine and toast and share stories and generally enjoy one another's company in person, as we have done so many times in the past, we figured we'd try to do it all virtually, live-streamed online.

Not knowing what response we'd get, we began reaching out to elected officials and diplomats present and past, asking them to record their thoughts on

video and send them to us.

The result was not just a great pleasure — success is always something to relish — it said something profound, we think, about the depth and unshakeable permanence of the Canada-U.S. friendship.

On the evening of Nov. 18, we brought together what is probably the single largest gathering of U.S. and Canadian policymakers in one place at one time in history.

Nearly 70 members of Congress and Parliament participated. We had business leaders, diplomats, the premiers of Ontario and Quebec, the prime minister of Canada, and the leader of Her Majesty's official Opposition. We even had an astronaut and an orchestra conductor.

Congress can be famously self-absorbed, and it's often a challenge to get members' attention. But we had Democrats and Republicans, old bulls and new talent, leaders from the Congressional Black Caucus, the Hispanic caucus, the blue dogs, moderates, progressives and rock-ribbed conservatives. We had members

of Parliament from across Canada. The breadth of voices was remarkable.

The gala was hosted by longtime CBC journalist Neil Macdonald, whose famous brother Norm sent in some quirky insights on America from somewhere south of the border (we're still not sure where).

We received so many video submissions that we had to cut sometimes long messages down to short clips. They were featured in the gala, and the full versions are posted online.

This is all a good thing. President-elect Joe Biden wants to re-engage with America's closest friends, and there is no country closer than Canada. The first congratulatory call to the incoming president was in fact from Canada's prime minister.

A sampling of what we received:

Sen. Ted Cruz weighed in from Texas, breathing not fire, but warmth toward Canada, where he happens to have been born — Foothills Medical Centre in Calgary, to be precise.

Republican Sen. Chuck Grassley, president pro tempore of the U.S. Senate and third in line to the presidency, told us, with a sly grin, that Canada has yet to apologize for making it necessary to impose those abrupt tariffs on Canadian aluminium.

Former U.S. ambassador David Wilkins deadpanned that his favourite thing about the United States is "how we conduct presidential debates in a respectful, calm, and polite manner without any name-calling, and without any interruptions."

Righto.

To Congresswoman Robin Kelly of Chicago, the relationship is personal: *"Most families have a fond story of visiting Canada or the U. S. on a summer vacation. I know I do. Continuing to foster, promote, and grow this relationship is critical."*

Congresswoman Debbie Dingell reminisced, too

"On the Detroit River, when I was a child, I didn't know there were such things as Customs. I was in Canada as much as I was in America during the day on that boat. ... And now we have finally opened the only International Wildlife Refuge in North America that we share, which sits along the Detroit River."

Congressman Dusty Johnson of South Dakota cited three reasons for his love of Canada.

"(Number one), my grandfather was born and grew up in Saskatchewan before moving down here to South Dakota. Number two, you all take seriously the responsibility that comes with being a leader within the community of nations. And number three, Canada is values-driven. When it comes to democracy, to human rights, to freedom, Canada is willing to stand up."

When he is sworn in on Jan. 20, president-elect Biden will know that former colleagues on both sides of

the U.S. Senate aisle are in strong agreement about a few things, including the importance of America's relationship with Canada.

When Chuck Grassley and a Democrat as prominent as Sen. Amy Klobuchar of Minnesota appear in public agreeing on something, as they did at our gala, you know the subject is a winner.

As president Reagan might have said, a new morning is dawning for Canada and the United States. When we started collecting video tributes, we had no idea we'd receive such a flood of goodwill. All those heartfelt comments will live on YouTube, as the restart of one of the world's greatest friendships gathers momentum in the Biden era ... with a little help from the Canadian American Business Council.



WE ASKED CANADA'S PREMIERS THIS HOLIDAY SEASON TO ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:

Looking ahead to 2021, what issue pertaining to the United States is of greatest concern to your province?

British Columbia
Premier John Horgan



"COVID-19 remains the most important issue for both British Columbia and our southern neighbours for 2021. We must keep the border closed until both Canadians and Americans flatten the curve and get transmissions under control."

Quebec Premier François Legault



"For me, it's very important to see the new president ... fight against this exaggerated protectionism (under Trump)."

New Brunswick
Premier Blaine Higgs



"With this critically important trading relationship, and with many communities along our lengthy border with the United States sharing deep family ties with our southern neighbours, we look forward to a collaborative working relationship. The U.S. is an important ally and our primary and most significant trading partner. We export significant amounts of softwood lumber and other forestry products to the U.S. In 2019, 88 per cent of New Brunswick's exports, totaling \$13.1 billion, went to the U.S. We are pleased the new administration has indicated its respect for independent bodies ensuring fair trade between countries. We are hopeful this means the tariffs on our softwood lumber will be lifted. We look forward to working with the new administration to resolve this issue and to strengthening the close partnership we have always shared."

Newfoundland and Labrador
Premier Andrew Furey



"The province's primary goal for 2021 is maintaining a strong trading relationship with the U.S. We are optimistic that the new Canada-United States-Mexico Agreement (CUSMA) will provide the clarity and certainty required by our businesses to further expand bilateral trade in goods, services, and investment throughout North America. Now, more than ever, our businesses need the confidence to trade freely and openly, especially as our economy recovers from COVID-19."

Northwest Territories
Premier Caroline Cochrane



"An important issue for the Northwest Territories is the impact of climate change on our communities, our environment, and our well-being. Canada's North is warming up three times faster than the global average. We share with our southern neighbour the need to build strong and resilient economies, particularly with the current impacts of the pandemic on our countries. As we plan our economic recovery, this is an opportunity to transition to a strong and healthy economy that allows for environmentally sustainable resource development and investments, and which strategically targets the minerals needed to support the green economy. It is part of the NWT's mandate to reduce its greenhouse-gas emissions by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030. The government of Canada is proposing legislation to reach a goal of net-zero emissions by 2050. I hope that the U.S. will reconsider its decision and sign back onto the International Paris Agreement to join the world leaders working to solve the climate-change crisis. Finding ways to support each other in building back better and developing more resilient and sustainable economies is top of mind for both our countries. I wish them well through this pandemic, and welcome future opportunities to support each other's sustainable economic initiatives."

Nova Scotia Premier Stephen McNeil



"The most important issue with our southern neighbour is getting COVID-19 under control."



Nunavut Premier Joe Savikataaq



"Nunavut has several important priorities with our neighbours for 2021. Given our vast size, we're hopeful all Canadian jurisdictions can greatly decrease the number of COVID-19 cases, as this has such an impact on our territory (for) travel restrictions, supply issues, financial considerations, and everyone's overall mental health. I'm hopeful for good developments and progress for all of us in the coming year."

Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe

"With more than half of our exports



going south, trade with the U.S. is key for Saskatchewan in 2021 and beyond. Saskatchewan will be advocating against any possible protectionist trade policies, including policies like "Buy American," country-of-origin labelling, and other initiatives that could affect our exports or impede our ability to advance our interests in the U.S. Such policies negatively affect our cross-border supply chains, risk both U.S. and Canadian jobs, and lead to higher prices for businesses and consumers on both sides of the border. We will encourage the U.S. to think more broadly about such policies, including "Buy North

American," and the CUSMA will provide a strong framework for those discussions.

Saskatchewan is also a strong supporter of the Keystone XL pipeline, and construction of this essential project must continue. We will keep advocating for it. It's of critical importance for Western Canadian oil producers, providing direct access to Gulf Coast refineries and world markets, and ensuring a more market-based price for our resource. With significant Indigenous equity participation, Keystone XL is good news for jobs and energy security in North America, and with net-zero emissions and fully powered by renewable energy when operations are well underway, it's a win for the environment, as well."

Yukon Premier Sandy Silver



"Alaska is Yukon's western neighbour, and Yukon is Alaska's road connection to the continental U.S. Aside from reducing the spread of COVID-19 and managing our recovery when this pandemic subsides, the most important issue right now is adapting to the impacts of a quickly changing climate in the North. Climate change has affected our shared natural resources and infrastructure. There is a long-standing need to protect the Porcupine caribou habitat in the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge, as well as salmon and other species' habitats, and also respond to the effects of melting permafrost on our shared highway infrastructure, which is a vital ground-transportation route for people and goods travelling to and from Alaska."

Editor's note: We did not receive responses from the premiers of Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island by press time.



ONLY A FAR-REACHING CLIMATE PLAN WILL TRANSFORM THE CANADIAN ECONOMY

By Shawn McCarthy



As hope for the end of the COVID-19 pandemic grows with encouraging news about vaccines, the Liberal government will increasingly turn its attention to recovery, and its promise to make climate change a central focus of the economy's rebuilding.

Last month, Environment Minister Jonathan Wilkinson tabled legislation that will enshrine the government's goal of making Canada a net-zero emitter of greenhouse gases (GHGs) by 2050. However, while setting an ambitious target is one thing, meeting it is quite another.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's government is now at a critical juncture, even as he's hemmed in by Conservative premiers who resist his climate-change agenda.

The Liberals can either continue the slow march with targeted and modest actions, or implement a far-reaching climate plan that will transform the Canadian economy and position it to prosper in a zero-carbon world.

To reach that more ambitious goal, the government will have to kickstart the effort with a stimulus plan that plows tens of billions of dollars into clean-energy programs. But the Trudeau government

will also have to go far beyond the frequently heard calls for public spending on high-profile energy projects.

It will need the entire government to adopt a climate lens, as opposed to its current practice of creating boutique programs in departments such as Agriculture; Natural Resources; or Innovation, Science and Economic Development, while the rest of the bureaucracy carries on with business as usual.

The prime minister is unlikely to get much help from key provinces, as he did in 2016, when federal, provincial and territorial governments hammered out the Pan-Canadian Framework on Clean Growth and Climate Change. However, Ottawa can forge partnerships with municipalities — and with the private sector, which is far more committed to action than it was four years ago.

The enormous impact of capital markets could dwarf the public-sector effort to effect a zero-carbon transformation. To harness it, the government must step up and lead the effort to enshrine the principles of sustainable finance that properly value the risks and opportunities arising from the growing climate crisis and the global response to it.

In responding to the pandemic this year, the federal government delayed much of its climate-change agenda. It focused instead on providing financial support to individuals and businesses, including the oil industry, which was struggling before the pandemic and has been clobbered by the resulting global drop in demand for crude.

In a November report, the Winnipeg-based International Institute for Sustainable Development said Canada, along with other Group of 20 industrialized countries, "*doubled down*" on its fossil-fuel subsidies this year, despite long-standing promises to end them. It rated Canada's record of fossil-fuel subsidies between 2016 and 2019 "*very poor*."

EnergyPolicyTracker.org, which is produced by two European non-government organizations, calculated that, as of Nov. 18, Canada had provided some \$18.6 billion in conditional and unconditional support to the fossil-fuel sector, and only \$14.6 billion to support clean energy. It characterized as "*conditional support*" the \$2.4 billion that Ottawa spent on cleaning up abandoned oil wells and helping industry reduce methane emissions.

Meanwhile, the Liberal government's lobbying of president-elect Joe Biden to approve the Keystone XL pipeline sends a clear message that, despite its public promise of net-zero emissions by 2050, Ottawa remains committed to building fossil-fuel infrastructure whose normal lifespan is around 30 years.

So what would an ambitious, climate-focused recovery plan look like?

For starters, it would be securely anchored in the government's commitment to exceed its existing target under the Paris Agreement to reduce GHGs by 30 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and to reach net-zero emissions by 2050. It must also be rooted in a "*just transition*,"

with education, training, and other support to ensure individual Canadians — oil-industry workers, Indigenous people, and others who are already disadvantaged in the current economy — don't fall further behind.

It would allocate billions of dollars annually over several years on a range of clean-energy programs. The Task Force for a Resilient Recovery — a group largely drawn from think tanks, with some business members — says \$55.4 billion should be spent over five years on clean-energy infrastructure, building retrofits, electric-vehicle infrastructure, nature-based programs, and the production and adoption of clean technology across the economy.

A bold plan would involve the federal government spending its vast procurement budget on incentives for companies to adopt clean-tech solutions to lower their own GHG emissions, and, just as important, to commercialize and drive down the cost of innovative technologies.

As mentioned, it would embrace principles of sustainable finance, and make it clear to corporate directors, and managers of public-sector pension plans, that they have a fiduciary duty — that is, a legal obligation — to ensure their organizations are part of the solution, rather than part of the problem in the climate emergency.

The response to the COVID pandemic around the world demonstrates the power of collective action when governments and the private sector collaborate. Witness the unprecedented speed of vaccine development. It also shows the tragic results that occur when leaders ignore the science and refuse to take tough action in the face of a crisis.

The Liberal government's actions over the next several months will tell whether it has the guts to lead, or will content itself with lofty promises unmatched by bold action.





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Forest Products Association of Canada (FPAC)
Association des produits forestiers du Canada (APFC)

ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2050 MAY BE TOO LATE FOR CANADA'S NORTH

By Janet E Silver

For most of us, the North is an icy expanse dotted with whales, caribou, polar bears, Arctic fox, and Inuit people.

In actual fact, the Canadian Arctic makes up 40 per cent of the country's land mass and is home to 100,000 people, most of them Indigenous.

Its boundary follows the 60th parallel north, before abruptly diving south along the banks of the Hudson Bay, then cutting back onto land to cross northern Quebec and Labrador. It's above the tree line; the subarctic is where the boreal forest begins.

In September 2019, just before the federal election, the Liberals unveiled their 10-year, \$700-million Arctic and Northern Policy Framework.

Among other things, the framework promises to: invest in energy, transportation, communications, and scientific research; *"face the effects of climate change and support healthy ecosystems in the Arctic and North";* and *"advance reconciliation and improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples."*

The most immediate challenge is climate change, and the effect it's having on the Arctic environment and the people whose way of life depends on it.

According to a government report from 2019, *"the Canadian North is warming at about three times the global average rate, which is affecting the land, biodiversity, cultures, and tradition."*

Northern Affairs Minister Daniel Vandal

says an investment of tens of millions of dollars in climate-change initiatives must continue in order to reach net-zero greenhouse-gas emissions by 2050 — a promise Canada made at the UN's Climate Action Summit in 2019.

Net-zero emissions are defined as either zero carbon emissions, or when enough is done to remove carbon from the atmosphere, such as planting trees, to offset the emissions.

"We are doing a lot of scientific research" to decide whether or not to lift a five-year moratorium on new oil and gas development in the North in 2021, Vandal told iPolitics in November.

That same month, Ottawa announced it was spending over \$550,000 on two data-collection projects in Nunavut *"to better understand Canada's coastal environment and how we can protect it."*

Vandal said the Canadian High Arctic Research Station, which cost \$200 million and officially opened in August 2019, is also doing important work. It's been closed for most of this year because of COVID-19.

The warming climate also creates security challenges in the North, since ice melt opens up access routes to foreign nations such as China and Russia. Canada has responded by holding joint military exercises with the U.S., he said.

Natan Obed is president of the Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, a group that represents more than 65,000 Inuit in the Northwest Territories, northern Quebec, northern Labrador, and Nunavut.

They face many challenges, Obed said, among them inferior education, insufficient infrastructure and housing, and substandard medical care. And all of it got worse in the spring with the arrival of COVID-19, when Ottawa was forced to focus its energy on the pandemic.

"Much of the transportation in the North is on sea ice," Obed said, but melting ice makes that transportation unpredictable, if not impossible.

It also *"changes all living things, especially marine mammals and caribou"* — animals that can only survive in the cold North, and that travel vast, ice-covered areas in search of food.

"Many Canadians don't understand how our homeland is in flux."

Obed says the lives of Southerners aren't altered forever by climate change. They may get a few more days at the beach — or, at worst, more severe weather events, flooding and fires. But for the Inuit, climate change affects their daily lives: Along with taking away their mode of transportation, melting ice makes it impossible to fish and hunt for food and clothing.

And by investing in clean technology while at the same time it invests in fossil-fuel development, Canada's approach to climate change is full of contradictions, he added. The South needs to get serious about climate change, and governments must do more.

Andrew Chater is the country lead for Canada at the Polar Research and Policy Initiative, an international think tank based in the U.K, and he shares Obed's pessimism.

"We are not on track to ... get to zero net emissions for 2050, and this is too late for the North (anyway)," he said.

The decrease in ice cover *"will impact polar bears and other specific species to the area, and with that, we will see new invasive species to the area,"* such as blue mussels, bluefin tuna and killer whales.

In addition to climate change, Obed says Ottawa needs to act on its commitment to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Obed says the 51 communities he represents don't enjoy the same standard of health care, housing, food security, and internet connectivity as people in the South, and he says racism is largely to blame.

And because of the North's sparse population, the Inuit don't enjoy the political influence in Ottawa that citizens of more densely populated regions do, Chaters said.

Obed said the government can try for net-zero emissions by 2050, but in the meantime, his people will pay the price, with their culture and way of life forever changed.

A guide to political greeting cards

By Sneh Duggal

Shooting frozen horse droppings into a hockey net, a family portrait with a pet chinchilla, a painting of Rudolph made by a child in palliative care — these are just a few images Canadian politicians have featured on their holiday greeting cards.

Mailing out cards might not be top of mind in a year that's been anything but normal, but it would be wrong to underestimate the spirit-boosting power of finding an actual card in your mailbox, fleeting though the feeling might be.

As work meetings, social interactions, and special occasions have moved over to the virtual world, a paper card from a politician can do more than amplify his or her political brand. It can remind us of simpler times, and that we're getting close to saying good riddance to 2020.

"It's not the year to stop doing it, that's for sure," said Ontario MPP John Fraser, adding that with many Canadians restricting interactions to their "bubbles" this year, it's important to safely "reach out and connect to people."

Steve Paikin, anchor of TVO's current affairs program The Agenda, agreed that paper cards are probably more important this year. And while some are cynical about the reason politicians send out holiday cards, he chooses not to be.

"I'm always grateful when I receive one," he said.

He doesn't expect the tradition of holiday cards (at the provincial level) to change much because of COVID, but he does think the messages inside them will refer to it.

"They may play off it somehow, (but), obviously, you have to be careful (with) that, because it's a very serious subject, and a lot of people have died, and you don't want to make light of anything," said Paikin, adding it wouldn't surprise him if families wore face masks in their photos, maybe ones with political or sports logos.

"Oftentimes, the picture on the card reflects something particular to that moment in time," he said.

Politicians who usually send amusing cards could be in a tough spot, he added. "Given how much serious news there is in the rest of our lives, we might need a good little chuckle (from) a holiday card with a sense of humour, but, of course, it all depends on how you do it."

Ontario Infrastructure Minister Laurie Scott is known for her quirky cards, which, for the past few years, have featured a pony and dog she calls "characters extraordinaire."



"It really is to give people at the end of the year a bit of a chuckle," said Scott.

One favourite featured Scott shooting frozen horse droppings into a net.



This year, her card will reflect the pandemic, she said.

It's also a good idea to make a card useful, said Alex Marland, who teaches political science at Newfoundland's Memorial University.

For example, a calendar on the back makes the recipient more likely to keep the card around.

"I know that sounds really boring, but the reality is, it turns from being just a piece of literature to something that's functional," said the author and editor of books on political communication and branding.

Personalizing the message is another way to stand out.

"I'm doubly grateful when a politician actually writes something that is particular to my circumstances," said Paikin, who receives about 100 cards every December and only keeps those with personal messages. *"I know people who send out literally thousands of Christmas cards, and the notion that they would take another 10 or 15 seconds to write something particular to me, I find very impressive. That's really above and beyond the call of duty."*

Asked how many cards he personalizes, Fraser chuckled: *"Way more than my staff want me to."* He writes short messages in nearly a third of the 3,000

cards he sends each year.

Meanwhile, politicians take different approaches to the image on the card's front. Some turn it into a colouring contest in their ridings, which Marland said is a good way to engage with constituents.

For the past couple of years, Fraser has featured artwork from children at the Roger Neilson House, a pediatric hospice in his riding. Before that, he used paintings by residents in long-term care.



"My theory is, if I'm sending you a Christmas card, you probably know enough about me; you don't need to see a picture of me."

But family photos that offer a glimpse into politicians' personal lives remain the standard.

"I felt that (the cards) were going far and wide, and people were interested in seeing my family," said former Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne.

"So, during the years I was premier, I think every year, we did a family grouping,"



But this year is different. This year, it's just Wynne on the Bruce Trail.

"I felt strongly that, this year, it wasn't right to have some jolly family gathering, because we're not gathering as a family," she said. *"We didn't get together at Thanksgiving, and it's questionable whether we'll be able to get together at Christmas, and I just didn't think it was reflective of the year to do something that was that artificial."*

Sometimes holiday cards make headlines, such as when former prime minister Stephen Harper's 2013 card featured Charlie, the family's pet chinchilla.

For Marland, that card stood out for the wrong reasons. While in office, Harper and his wife actively promoted cat adoption and often shared photos of themselves with their cats, serving to humanize what many considered Harper's stern image.

"The Harper Conservatives were masters at message consistency, but at that particular time, it was a message fail, because if they'd had a kitten on the front, people would have got it," said Marland.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau raised hackles in 2010, when he and his family posed in coats with fur-trimmed hoods while huddled under a fur blanket, drawing the ire of animal-rights activists. But Trudeau responded on brand, tweeting that he was *"glad to support both Canadian products and sustainable fur."*

Ultimately, Wynne said, it comes down to people knowing you're reaching out to them and trying to do *"something a little bit memorable in the picture."*

"You just never know what's going to appeal to people, but I also know that people like to get a greeting card, so I have continued the tradition."

Holiday Gifts

FROM THE LEADERS

Here's what Canada's major party leaders would gift their colleagues this yuletide season:

Editor's note: Neither Prime Minister Justin Trudeau nor Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet responded by press time.



Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole

For Prime Minister and Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau:
a sapling, so he can plant at least one of his two billion trees this year.

For NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh:
an emergency locator transmitter (ELT), so we can find him.

For Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet:
a tartelette portugaise.

For Green Party Leader Annamie Paul:
Elizabeth May's retirement.

NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh

"I would give all party leaders Rupi Kaur's most recent book, home body. The title speaks to the time we're in, and I hope would serve as a reminder to centre everything we do on helping people through these difficult times."



Green Party Leader Annamie Paul

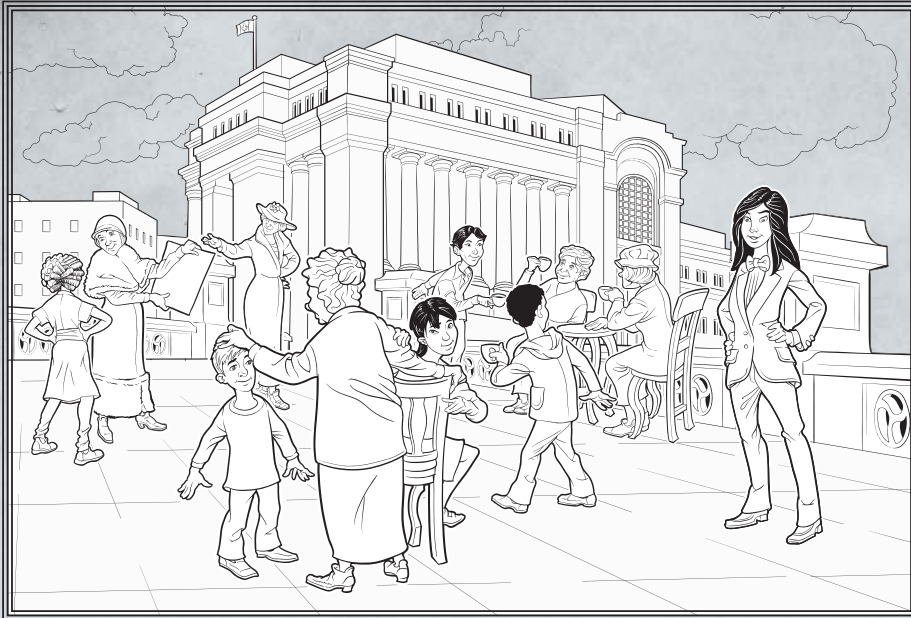
For Prime Minister and Liberal leader Justin Trudeau:
Leading in a Culture of Change by Michael Fullan

For Conservative Party of Canada leader Erin O'Toole:
Cod Collapse: The Rise and Fall of Newfoundland's Saltwater Cowboys by Jenn Thornhill Verma

For NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh:
Canadian Etiquette by Claire Wallace

For Bloc Québécois Leader Yves-François Blanchet:
No Crystal Stair by Mairuth Sarsfield

Deck The SENATE'S HALLS



1. Ottawa's Famous Five monument, depicted here, honours five activists who fought for women's rights a hundred years ago. What did they achieve?

- A They were among the first women in the British Empire to serve as judges, legal counsellors and elected members of a legislature.
- B They made it possible for Canadian women to serve in the Senate.
- C They fought for women's property and divorce rights.
- D All of the above

2. The Famous Five won many important rights for Canadian women but, in legal terms, they proved one simple fact. What is that?

- A That women have the same political and economic rights as men.
- B That women can serve in high office as capably as men.
- C That women are persons.
- D That women are full citizens under the law.

3. Match the five women with their professions before they joined forces in 1927.

- 1 Emily Murphy
- 2 Nellie McClung
- 3 Irene Parlby
- 4 Henrietta Muir Edwards
- 5 Louise McKinney

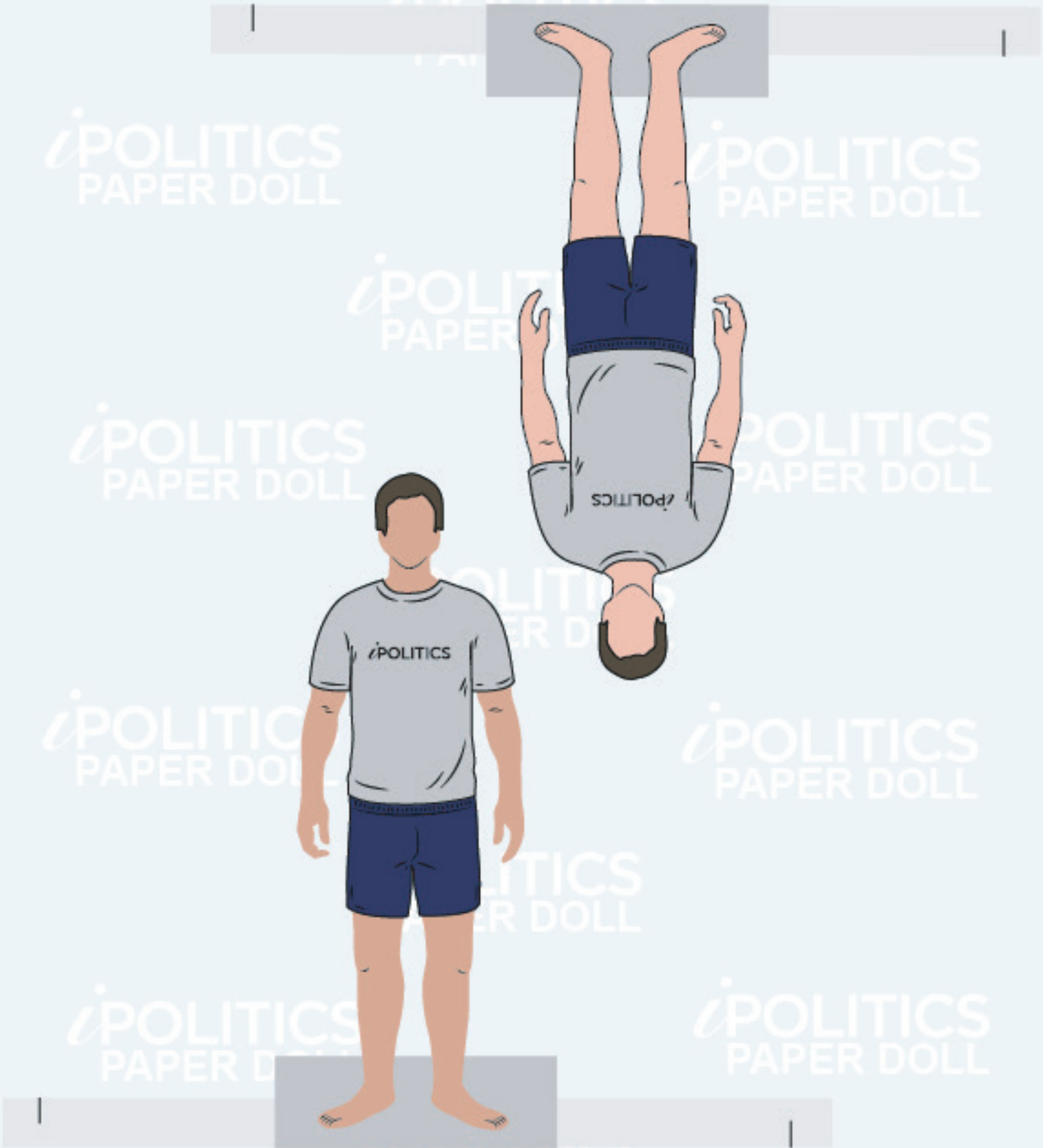
- A Newspaper columnist
- B Temperance advocate
- C Judge
- D Portrait painter
- E Provincial cabinet minister

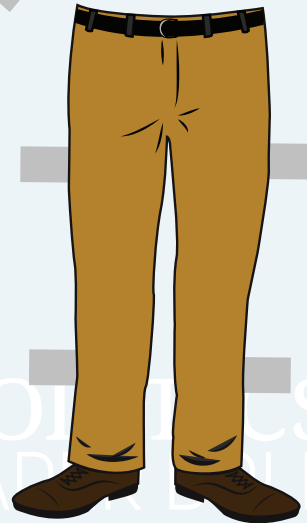
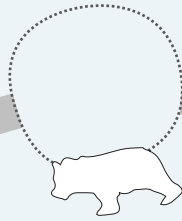
4. Why are the women depicted drinking tea?

- A Because they were all avowed teetotalers.
- B Because suffragettes often used tea parties as a cover for secret meetings.
- C Because they held their first meeting in the tea room of Edmonton's famous Strathcona Hotel.
- D All of the above.

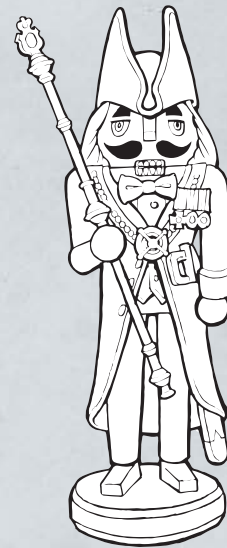
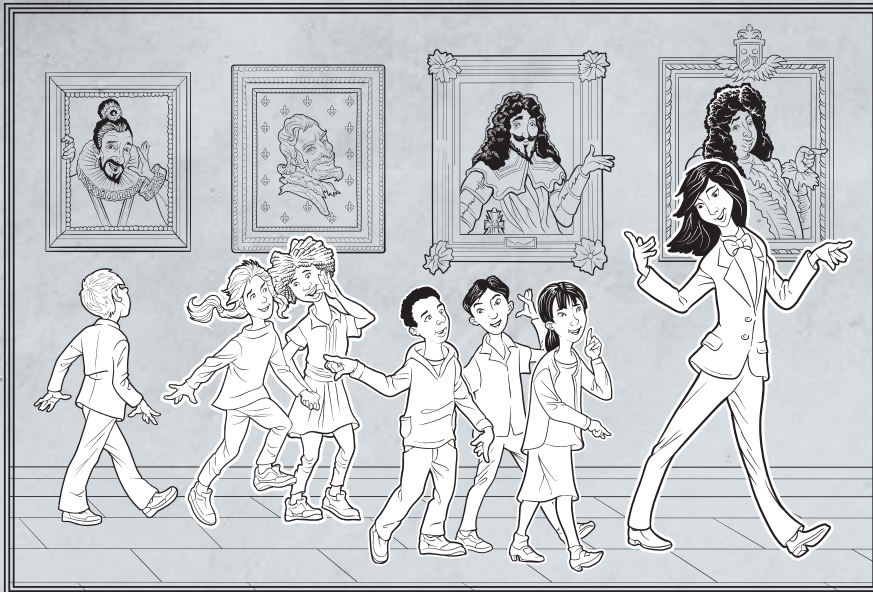
1. D 2. C 3. 1c, 2a, 3e, 4d, 5b 4. B

iPOLITICS PAPER DOLL





Deck The SENATE'S HALLS



1. The four monarchs depicted here governed parts of Canada during a period of French rule that lasted from 1534 to 1763. Who are they?

- A Henri III, Henri IV, Louis XIII, Louis XIV
- B Francis I, Henri II, Francis II, Charles IX
- C Louis XIII, Louis XIV, Louis XV, Louis XVI
- D None of the above

2. What were France's territories in what is now Canada called?

- A Les Territoires de l'Amérique du Nord
- B New France
- C Upper and Lower Canada
- D Lower Canada

3. These portraits used to be in Parliament Hill's Centre Block. Where did they hang?

- A The Senate Chamber
- B The Senate Foyer
- C The Senate Speaker's offices
- D The Salon de la Francophonie

4. This explorer worked for two of the kings depicted here and established the first permanent French settlements in Canada. Who was he?

- A Jean Nicolle
- B Jacques Cartier
- C Samuel de Champlain
- D Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, sieur de La Vérendrye



COMFORT FOOD & JOY

Canadians and loved ones around the globe will have a holiday season like no other this year. Whether you celebrate Christmas, Hanukkah, or Kwanzaa, during a second wave of the global pandemic you are likely to be celebrating your holiday traditions with fewer family members and friends at the table.

We could all use a little comfort and cheer under these circumstances, which is why iPolitics reached out to Ottawa's Diplomatic community for traditional recipes that will tickle your palette and nourish your soul.

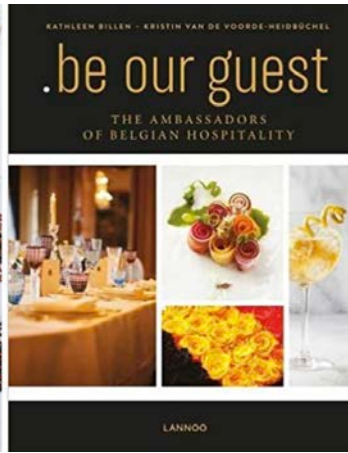
Diplomats responded with aplomb!

Try these recipes out for yourself, or connect online with friends and family to bake them together.

If you find a favourite, please take a picture and post it on social media with [#ComfortFood](#) and tag [@iPoliticsca](#)

Enjoy!

Courtesy of the Embassy of Belgium



Chocolate lollipops

Recipe & prologue by Kathleen Billen, spouse of the Belgian Ambassador Johan Verkammen and co-author of, *.be our guest: The ambassadors of Belgian hospitality*

Nowhere in the world are people as besotted with chocolate as in Belgium. Chocolate is a perfect comfort snack! In any year the average Belgian indulges in 6 kilos of it and of course at Christmas and New Year's, chocolate dishes and 'pralines' will definitely be on the menu. So, let's forget our diet and indulge ourselves with homemade chocolate lollipops which will for sure impress your family and friends.

Ingredients

For about 50 lollipops

500 g dark chocolate 70% but you can also use milk chocolate or even white or pink chocolate, although the result will be less firm

long wooden skewers

Time to be creative!

Flavouring: candied fruit powder, cinnamon, curry powder... whatever tickles your fancy.

Decoration: fleur de sel, pink peppercorns, roasted sesame seeds, small pieces of plain or caramelised nuts, mixed nuts and raisins, candied fruit, mint leaves, freeze-dried berry powder, crumbled hard candy, rose petals...

Arrange the sticks on baking paper or cling wrap that has been sprinkled with your favourite flavouring.

Melt 440 g of the chocolate at a low setting in the microwave. Stir regularly to prevent the chocolate from burning. Add the remaining 60 g of chocolate, which has been chilled in the fridge for at least an hour. Stir until all the pieces have melted and the chocolate is smooth.

Put the chocolate into a plastic piping bag, cut off a fine point at the tip and fix the stick with a large drop of chocolate. Then pipe the desired shapes, for example, different circles one over the other. Always make sure that the circles and the chocolate drop are connected.

Decorate immediately, allowing your imagination to run wild using garnishes of your choice, in any combination. The possibilities are endless. It's up to you!

Allow the lollipops to set in a cool place. Remove very carefully from the paper/wrap and arrange them, standing upright, in a deep bowl filled, for example, with cocoa nibs, pink peppercorns or sesame seeds. You can also stick the lollipops into a large piece of exotic fruit, ice cream or cake.

Courtesy of the Embassy of Italy



Cappelletti in brodo

In the Italian region of Emilia-Romagna, Christmas is not Christmas without the traditional “cappelletti,” the little filled pasta “hats” that at one time were prepared by the whole family on Christmas eve. Often the youngest children would join in, because their little fingers were better at folding the pasta discs into their traditional shape. Cappelletti are typically cooked in a rich chicken broth and ladled into bowls to become the comforting and classic dish: “Cappelletti in brodo.”

This recipe comes from the famed Casa Artusi, a cultural gastronomy centre featuring a cooking school and restaurant that is named after Pellegrino Artusi, the father of Italian cooking and author of the classic cookbook “*Science in the Kitchen and the Art of Eating Well*” published in 1891. Casa Artusi is located in Artusi’s birthplace of Forlimpopoli in Romagna (www.casartusi.it)

For the filling: mix together

180 g ricotta cheese (or half ricotta and half other mild, soft cow’s milk cheese; Artusi calls for Cacio Ravigliolo PAT, an Italian cheese with a PAT: “*Prodotti Alimentari Tradizionali*” denomination).

100 g / one chicken breast, cooked in butter, seasoned with salt and pepper, and very finely chopped. (Or 100 g of pork tenderloin, prepared in the same manner.)

30 g grated Parmigiano Reggiano DOP
(DOP: “*Denomination of Protected Origin*”)

1 whole egg

1 egg yolk

Pinch of nutmeg

Hint of grated lemon zest (optional)

Salt and pepper

Artusi suggests tasting the filling at this point and adjusting according to the cook’s preference.

For the pasta dough: 400 g flour, 4 eggs, Pinch of salt

Prepare the pasta using your favourite method, by hand or in a pasta machine, to obtain thin sheets. Keep the sheets covered with a cloth to prevent them from drying out.

Using a small glass or cookie cutter, cut the pasta into discs approximately 6 cm in diameter;

Put 1/2 tsp filling in the centre, fold circles in half and press firmly to seal. Bend each cappelletto around your finger, pressing one pointed end over the other. If the pasta dries out while you are working, dampen the edges of the disks lightly with a finger dipped in water. Place the shaped cappelletti on a large cookie sheet dusted with flour. Refrigerate uncovered until ready to use.

Bring the broth to a boil, then lower the heat and cook the cappelletti in the simmering broth until tender but firm to the bite.

Serve in shallow bowls, sprinkle with additional Parmigiano Reggiano cheese and enjoy a bowl of Christmas comfort...
buon Natale!

Courtesy of the Embassy of Austria



Linzer Eyes

Linzer Eyes are a famous and traditional Christmas biscuit. They are believed to have originated in the City of Linz, Austria, in the early 1700s.

Linzer Eyes © Tirol Werbung-Janine Hoffmann

Ingredients

110 g | ¼ cup icing sugar
220 g | 1 cup butter
310 g | 2 ¾ cups flour
1 egg
1 tbsp vanilla sugar
Lemon peel
Apricot or red currant jam
Icing sugar for dusting

Step 1:

Cut the cold butter into small pieces and quickly crumble with the flour. Add sugar, egg, vanilla sugar, and grated lemon peel and quickly mix into a smooth dough. Allow to cool or at least half an hour.

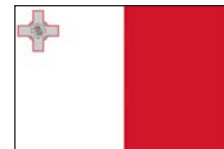
Step 2:

Then roll out the dough about 3 mm thick and cut out the slices with a serrated cutter. Cut holes into half of the slices (use a special cutter or small biscuit cutter). Place the slices on the baking tray and bake in a preheated oven at 200°C / 392°F for about 10 minutes until golden brown.

Step 3:

After baking, coat the bottoms with jam, place the tops, and sprinkle with icing sugar.

Courtesy of the Embassy of the Republic of Malta



Pudina tal-Hobz

This is a traditional Maltese Christmas recipe for Bread Pudding

It is also known as Pudina tal-Milied – which translates to Christmas Pudding

Malta is an independent republic that was formerly a de facto British colony. It is believed the pudina is a variation of the classic British bread pudding. The dessert can be enjoyed lukewarm or well-chilled, and is usually served sliced and paired with coffee.

Ingredients

800 g / 1 ¾ lbs stale Maltese bread
50 g / 2 oz margarine
100 g / 4 oz sugar
3 eggs
50 g / 2 oz chopped mixed peel
Grated rind of an orange
2 tbsp cocoa powder
100 g dark chocolate chopped
A drop of vanilla essence
200 g / 9 oz sultana raisins
A pinch of nutmeg
1 tsp mixed spice
1 tsp baking powder
1 ½ cups of milk
Fruit (optional)

Instructions

Preheat the oven at a temperature 220C/428F/Gas 7.
Grease a 20cm x 20cm square tin and set aside.
Cut the bread into pieces, place in a bowl, cover with milk to soak for an hour.
Mix all of the other ingredients together in a bowl (cocoa, sugar, cinnamon, eggs, orange zest and chopped chocolate) and blend. Stir in the bread and continue until the ingredients are well mixed.
Pour the mixture into the pre-greased baking dish.
Place the bread mixture in the tin and bake in the oven for 30-40 minutes or until the top of the pudina is crisp. Check by inserting a skewer in the centre, if the pudding is cooked, it should come out clean.



MELOMAKARONA

Greek-Cyprus Traditional Christmas Cookies

Ingredients

- 1 ½ cups light olive oil
- ½ cup butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup Cognac or brandy
- 1 cup orange juice
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 oranges (zest / grated)
- 1 cup sugar
- 8 - 9 cups flour
- ½ tsp baking soda
- ½ tsp baking powder
- 1 tsp salt
- ¾ cup walnuts, finely chopped (for the end)

Instructions

- Put the olive oil, butter, Cognac or Brandy and orange juice, cinnamon, cloves, orange peel and sugar in a mixing bowl and beat until they are thoroughly blended.
- Sift about one cup of flour with the baking soda, baking powder and salt and blend into the oil mixture.
- Add enough of the remaining flour, one cup at a time, until you get a rather firm dough (you may need a bit more or less than the amount of flour mentioned in the ingredients list).
- Use your hands to do the mixing, as an electric mixer will be useless after the first two or three cups of flour have been added.
- Roll the dough into cylinders, about two inches long and one inch in diameter, flatten them with your hands, and place them on cookie sheets that have been greased with a little olive oil.
- Bake at 350 degree Fahrenheit for half an hour.
- Remove the cookies from the oven and keep the cookies in a "cool" place, before you pour warm syrup over them (cold cookies & warm syrup).
- Dip the cookies in batches into the warm syrup - keeping the syrup at the lowest possible simmer - and allow to soak in the syrup for 1 to 2 minutes. Remove with a slotted spoon.
- FOR THE SYRUP: Mix the sugar, honey and water, cinnamon stick & cloves and bring to a boil.
- Cook on low heat for four to six minutes and skim off the foam that forms on top.
- *The next day, arrange on a decorative platter, sprinkle each layer evenly with the finely chopped walnuts and serve. Store in an airtight container.

Syrup

- 1 ½ cups sugar
- 1 ½ cups greek thyme honey
- 1 ½ cup water
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 5 pieces of cloves



Original Bratislava Rolls

Bratislava's rolls were first mentioned in 1599 in the book of Pressburg Bakery Guild masters.

Thanks to the Western Slovak Union of Bakers, the European Union has recently granted the traditional guaranteed specialty trademark (TSG) to Bratislava rolls. Since the protection came into force in August 2012, the following characteristics of Bratislava rolls have been protected.

120 min preparation, 12 – 15 min at 200 °C

Ingredients

300 g fine flour
300 g semi-coarse flour
5 g salt
180 g butter
2 egg yolks
40 g yeast
60 g powdered sugar
100 ml lukewarm milk
2 egg yolks for egg wash

Poppy Seed Filling

200 g ground poppy seeds
80 g powdered sugar
lemon peel
1 vanilla sugar
hot as needed water

Nut Filling

100 g ground walnuts
50 g powdered sugar
1 spoon of rum
1 vanilla sugar
hot as needed milk

Instructions

Bratislava rolls were given a trademark and are included among the traditional specialties of the region. The dough must contain 30% fat for the overall weight of the flour (i. e. for 600 g flour you need about 180 g butter). The original rolls must be free of chemicals and handmade, so their shape differs. Allowed flavors include poppy or walnut. Poppy rolls are horseshoe-shaped and walnut roll form the letter C.

40% of the weight of the rolls must be filling. After the dough raises, 2 "rolls" are made and cut into about 25 g pieces. The pieces are turned into balls and left to rise. The dough should be weighed so the pieces are all the same.

Add some milk to the yolks, mix, blend and place where there is an air current for half an hour until they dry out a bit. Then put them into a warm place so the dough rises. By that time, the cracked glaze has formed on the surface.

Shape the fillings into rolls and set them aside. Make small balls from the filling, wrap it in cane sugar and shape it into a horseshoe or a C. The filling must be shapeable and thick. Bake in an oven heated to 200 °C for about 12 min.

Enjoy!

Courtesy of the Embassy of Portugal



Feijoada à Portuguesa



Ingredients

- 1.5 kg ham hocks (smoked)
- 200 g Portuguese chouriço sausage (mild)
- 200 g Carrots cubed
- 100 g Turnips cubed
- 2 small shallots minced
- 6 heads of garlic minced
- 1 - 2 large cans of good quality white beans (well drained and rinsed)
- 1 dl white wine
- Chicken stock (1 l) or pork stock (bones)
- 1 bay leaf
- Flor de Sal qb
- Minced Parsley

Instructions

- Clean ham hocks and cube them (if you buy them smoked they are ready to be chopped)
- Heat to olive oil in a large pot.
- Add the onions, garlic and bay leaf and saute until they're translucent.
- Add a bit of the chicken stock, the ham hocks and chouriço. Let simmer.
- Add carrots and turnip and let it cook for about 15 minutes.
- Add the wine and let it evaporate.
- Add the remainder of the chicken or pork stock and the rest of the ham hocks.
- Stir in the beans and let it cook for an additional 15 minutes.
- Add the parsley for flavour.
- Tip: once the carrots and turnips are tender to the bite, you can turn off the heat and let it sit.
- Prepare white rice and serve Feijoada over the rice.

"Bom apetite!"

Courtesy of the Embassy of the Slovak Republic



ŠTEDRÁK (Christmas Eve Cake)

Štedrák is a traditional festive cake baked in Slovakia for Christmas, New Year's Eve or other special occasions. Štedrák (štedrý = generous) is a layered cake made of leavened dough with several fillings. All ingredients hold a symbolic meaning, such as abundance (poppy seeds), health (walnuts), love and happiness (sugar or honey). Since the cake has its origins in the shepherd's areas of Slovakia, farmer's cheese adds to its delicious taste.

INGREDIENTS

Dough

300 ml of lukewarm milk

1 packet of vanilla sugar (8 grams)

1 cube of fresh yeast (1 ½ tsp dry yeast)

550 grams of all-purpose flour

80 grams of granular sugar

150 grams of softened unsalted butter

pinch of salt (1/4 tsp)

Poppy seed filling

300 grams of ground poppy seeds

120 grams of granular sugar

200 ml of hot milk

lemon zest from ½ lemon

whipped egg whites from 1 egg

Walnut filling

300 grams of ground walnuts

80 grams of icing sugar

150 ml of hot milk

1 packet of vanilla sugar (8 grams)

lemon zest from ½ lemon

whipped egg whites from 1 egg

Farmer's cheese filling

200 grams of soft farmer's cheese

80 grams of icing sugar

1 package of vanilla pudding (43 grams)

2 egg yolks

1 packet vanilla sugar (8 grams)

Jam filling

5 tablespoons of plum jam

1 tsp of ground cinnamon

Additional ingredients

some flour to roll out the dough

melted butter to brush on the freshly baked cake

dried raisins as a garnish

PREPARATION

Dough

Activate yeast by combining lukewarm milk, vanilla sugar and yeast. In a bowl, combine flour, granular sugar, softened butter and a pinch of salt. Pour in the leavened yeast and use a mixer to make a soft dough (until the dough peels cleanly off the walls of mixing bowl). Cover the dough with a cloth and let it rise in a warm place for approximately 30 minutes.

Fillings

Prepare poppy seed and walnut filling by mixing all the ingredients in a bowl (except whipped egg whites). Once the filling has cooled fold in whipped egg whites.

Knead the dough and divide it into 5 parts (4 larger and 1 smaller part used as the trellis). Roll each part of the dough on a floured board to the size of a baking pan (approximately 12x16x3.5 inch). Place the first layer of dough on the bottom of a baking pan lined with parchment paper and spread the poppy seed filling. Place the second layer of dough in the baking pan and spread the jam filling on it. Place the third layer of dough and spread the walnut filling. Put a fourth layer of dough on the walnut filling and spread the farmer's cheese filling. Cut ½ inch strips from the smallest part of the dough and place it on top of the cake in the form of a lattice. Insert one dried raisin into each opening between the latticed dough. Preheat the oven to 350F and bake the cake for approximately 50 - 60 minutes until the top gets nicely browned. Right after removing the cake from the oven, brush the lattice with melted butter. Let it cool, slice into small squares and enjoy!

Courtesy of the Embassy of Luxembourg to the United States



Luxembourgish Jugged Hare, aka "Huesenziwwi"

Prologue from Ambassador Gaston Stronck.

"Huesenziwwi" is a popular dish from Luxembourg, which you find during the game season in Luxembourg (from October until end of December). The dish is characterized by being heavily seasoned with pepper. For special occasions, for instance for Christmas, it may be flambéed with cognac. It is usually enjoyed with a glass of wine made from the grapes of the vineyards of the Moselle, a river forming a natural border between the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, Germany and also partially France."

Serves five. Please set aside two days for advance preparation.

Ingredients

- 750 g of meat
- Red wine stain (see below)
- 60 g lard or oil
- 2-3 cloves of garlic
- 1-2 tablespoons of flour
- Water or broth
- Salt and Pepper
- Parsley to taste
- 1 bay leaf
- 2 - 3 cloves
- 2 tablespoons of tomato puree
- 10-12 small onions
- 125 g of lean bacon
- 200 g fresh mushrooms
- 150 - 200 g croutons

Advance preparation

Cut the meat into cubes and marinate in red wine stain (below) for 2 days.

Preparation

- Brown the meet in melted lard.
- Add the flour and garlic.
- Continue stirring and gradually add broth or water to completely cover the meat and bring to a boil.
- Add salt, pepper, parsley, cloves, onions, bay leaves, tomato puree, and sliced bacon.
- Cook over low heat for 1 ½ to 2 hours.
- Option: add well-cleaned, fresh mushrooms for the last half hour.
- Serve with toasted croutons.

Variation:

Instead of mushrooms, you can add 400-500 g of roasted chestnuts to the sauce. Cook the chestnuts beforehand and add ½ - 1 TBSP raspberry juice or jelly to the sauce.

Red wine stain:

- 1/4 liter of vinegar
- 1/4 liter of water boiled with:
 - 1 piece of celery root
 - 1 piece of parsley root
 - 2 small onions (finely chopped)
 - 1 leek (finely chopped)
 - 1 carrot (finely chopped)
 - One bay leaf
 - 3 cloves
 - 6 juniper berries
 - 6 peppercorns
 - Sprig of thyme.
- Let steep for 10 to 15 minutes, then add ½ liter of red wine.
- Boil again and pour over the meat, which should be turned each day.

Serve with:

- Spaetzle (noodles) and red cabbage.
- Baked half pears filled with cranberries.
- Some chefs like to add sour cream and carrots to the dish.

Embassy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands



Dutch Butter Cake

Ingredients

- 1 cup butter, softened
- 1½ cups white sugar
- 2 eggs, beaten
- 1 tablespoon almond extract
- 2½ cups all-purpose flour
- 2 teaspoons baking powder
- 16 almond halves (Optional)

Directions

- Preheat the oven to 350 degrees F (175 degrees C). Grease two 8 inch round cake pans, or 9 inch pie plates.
- In a large bowl, use an electric mixer to beat butter and sugar until light and fluffy. Add eggs, reserving just enough to brush over the tops, about 1 tablespoon. Stir in the almond extract. Combine the flour and baking powder; stir into the batter by hand using a sturdy spoon. The dough will be stiff.
- Press evenly into the two prepared pans. Press almond halves into the top where each slice would be. Brush the tops with a thin layer of the reserved egg.
- Bake in the preheated oven for about 30 minutes, or until the top is golden brown. Cut into wedges to serve.

Courtesy of the Embassy of Chile



Merengón de vino

Ingredients:

- 1½ cup red wine
- 5 egg whites
- Chopped nuts
- 15 tablespoons of brown sugar
- 1 cinnamon stick

Directions:

- Heat the red wine in a pot with the brown sugar and the cinnamon stick until it becomes a syrup.
- In a large bowl beat the egg whites until stiff peaks form.
- Slowly pour the wine syrup into the egg whites. Continue beating until it is cool.
- Crush or chop the nuts.
- Serve the merengón de vino in wine glasses and sprinkle with the nuts.

Courtesy of the Embassy of Greece



Kourabiedes

This cookie is a symbol of Christmas in Greece. Traditionally, guests are welcomed with melomakarona and kourabiedes over the holiday.

Kourabiedes is a crunchy, buttery biscuit sculpted with almonds and covered in clouds of powdered sugar. As the Greeks say, "...Και του Χρόνου!" (Translation "Next Year, as always in good health"). All of us could use a dose of that for 2021!

Ingredients:

- 300 gr. fresh butter (traditionally sheep or goat milk butter)
- 110 gr. powdered sugar
- 600 gr. flour
- ½ tsp baking powder
- vanilla seed or extract
- 25 gr. rum or brandy
- 125gr. almonds (grandmother's recipe)
- powdered sugar for dusting

Preparation:

Beat the butter with the powdered sugar until pale and creamy (the more you beat it, the crunchier and fluffier your Kourabiedes will be – could take 20 minutes!).

Add flour, baking powder, vanilla seed, rum and beat until combined. Act patiently.

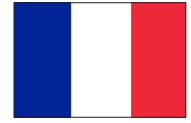
Dry the almonds in the oven at 320°F for 15 minutes and crack them vigorously in large pieces using a towel and a rolling pin.

Add them to the mixture.

Roll tablespoons of the mixture into balls and place them on parchment-paper-layered trays.

Bake in a preheated oven for 20-25 minutes at 160°C until light golden and set aside to cool completely. Roll them into powdered sugar, place them on a plate or a cake stand and dust generously with more powdered sugar.

Courtesy of the Embassy of France



Smoked goose breast in a red wine sauce, candied chestnuts and squash purée

Ingredients for 4 servings:

- 2 smoked goose breasts
- 1 cup brown poultry stock with red wine
- 1 can of whole chestnuts in water
- 1/2 butternut squash
- 1 white onion
- 2 cups white wine
- 60g butter
- Salt and pepper

Goose breast:

- Decorate and mark goose breasts.
- Cook to internal temperature of 42°C.
- Season with salt and pepper, set aside.
- Heat brown poultry stock in red wine.

Chestnuts:

- Sauté chestnuts in butter (10g), add salt and pepper.

Squash purée:

- Peel squash and chop into large cubes.
- Add and melt butter (50g).
- Add white wine, salt and pepper.
- Cook covered for about fifteen minutes and reduce to a purée.

Plate and serve.



Cottage Cheese Cake With Strawberry Topping

Ingredients

Bottom:

- 100g butter
- 0.5dl sugar
- 2dl flour
- 1 egg yolk

Filling:

- 400g cottage cheese
- 250g sour cream
- 2dl sugar
- 1tsp vanilla sugar
- 1 lemon (rind and juice)
- 2dl whip cream
- 20g gelatin powder

Topping:

- 300g frozen strawberries • 1dl sugar
- 0.5dl water
- 3tsp gelatin powder + 2tbsp water

Instructions

1. Preheat oven to 180°C.
2. Combine butter, sugar, flour, and vanilla sugar to a crumbly mass.
3. Add egg yolk and mix until smooth.

4. Line an openable 24cm cake pan with parchment paper and press the dough into the bottom.

5. Bake for 20 minutes.

6. For the cheesecake, mix the gelatin powder and water. Allow it to expand, and then thaw in a hot water bath. In a separate bowl, mix the cottage cheese, sour cream, sugar, vanilla sugar, and lemon rind and juice. Slowly stir the dissolved and cooled gelatin into the rest of the mixture. In a larger bowl, whisk the whipped cream. Mix the cheesecake filling into the whipped cream.

7. Pour the cheesecake mixture into the cake tin, on top of the baked crust. Refrigerate for at least 5 hours or overnight.

8. For the topping, melt the strawberries, mix with sugar and water, and puree evenly. Push the mixture through a sieve. Mix gelatin powder and water. Allow it to expand, and then thaw in a hot water bath. Let cool and combine with the puree.

9. Pour the compote onto the jelly-like cake and refrigerate for at least another 2 hours.



Æbleskiver ['e:plø,ski:wə]

Danish 'æbleskiver' are not 'apple slices' as you would be led to believe with a direct translation. Instead, these traditional Christmas treats have more in common with pancake puffs and doughnuts. They are solid but fluffy and light. They are usually served with jam and powdered sugar and enjoyed with a special Christmas mulled wine called glögg.

Ingredients

- 250 g (2 cups) flour
- 1 tbsp sugar
- 1 1/2 tsp cardamom
- 1 tsp baking soda
- 1/2 tsp salt
- 3 eggs
- 4 dl (1 1/2 cup) buttermilk
- 50 g (1.7 oz) melted butter
- Optional: organic lemon zest

Instructions

- Step 1: mix flour, lemon zest, sugar, cardamom, baking soda and salt in a bowl.
- Step 2: Separate the egg white and yolk in separate bowls. Beat the egg whites stiff.
- Step 3: Add egg yolk and buttermilk to the flour mixture and beat until the dough is smooth.
- Step 4: Mix the melted butter into the dough.
- Step 5: Gently fold the egg whites into the dough and pour into a jug.
- Step 6: Let the Æbleskive pan heat up to a high temperature and put a small piece of butter in each hole.
- Step 7: Fill the holes with 3/4 dough. When the batter starts to get firm you will be able to turn them over without braking, turn them 90 degrees (use a wooden skewer).
- Step 8: When they have a solid surface turn them regularly so they get an even and light-brown crust.
- Step 9: Serve with jam of your choice and powdered sugar.

Note: If you don't have the required pan, it is possible to bake them in muffin tins at 225 C (440 F). Fill the forms with 3/4 dough and bake for 10 minutes, then take them out and turn them and bake for another 10 minutes.

iPolitics tip: Nordic Ware makes an Ebleskiver aluminum cast pan.

Courtesy of the Embassy of Israel



Comfort food for Hanukkah

In Jewish tradition, the festival of Hanukkah and the candles that go with it celebrate the hope and belief that just a small flame of warmth and light that is ignited with love and togetherness can banish dark and evil.

In the story of Hanukkah, tradition has it that a miracle happened when rededicating the ancient Jewish temple in Jerusalem, and that a tiny bit of oil that was only meant to light candles for one day ended up lasting for eight days. To commemorate this miracle, Jewish communities from all over the world have traditional holiday recipes that include foods fried in oil.

Eli Lipshitz is the Head of Public Diplomacy at the Embassy of Israel in Canada. He and his wife Kedma have shared their favorite Hanukkah dessert, which is the traditional Jelly Doughnut, called 'Sufgania' in Hebrew.

There's no need to go without donuts in December because of COVID restrictions. You can make these jelly-filled bubbles of sweetness in the comfort of your own home.

Small batch jelly doughnuts (roughly 20)

Doughnuts

3 cups of flour

25 grams fresh yeast

4 tbsp sugar

1 tsp salt

2 eggs

3 tbsp oil

2 tsp cognac or brandy

1 tsp orange or lemon rind

3/4 to 1 cup water (depends on dough consistency)

Filling and topping

1/2 cup strawberry jam

Powdered sugar

Instructions:

Place flour in a mixer bowl. Add yeast, sugar and gently mix. Add salt.

Make a crater in the center and add eggs, oil, cognac and orange rind.

Mix on a low setting slowly adding water. Knead until it becomes a non-sticky dough.

Cover and let rise in a warm place for about an hour. Dough should double in size.

Roll dough on a floured surface to approx. 1 cm thick. Use the rim of a cup to cut out small circles and knead into a ball. Let rise for 20 min. Each ball should double in size.

Heat oil (suitable for deep-frying) in a pot. Take the dough balls and slide them top side down into the oil. Cover the pot and fry for about a minute. Remove the cover and flip over the doughnut – to get a white line around the middle.

Remove and place on a paper towel covered surface. Use a syringe or icing bag to fill the doughnut with jelly. Sprinkle powdered sugar on top.



Photo: pxfuel

Courtesy of the Embassy of Bulgaria



Koledna Pogacha (Bulgarian Christmas Bread)

The most important holiday dish is the Christmas bread. Bulgarians usually prepare a round loaf in which they put a silver coin. It is commonly believed that the person who finds the coin will be rewarded with good fortune in the coming year.

Before starting the dinner, the oldest man in the family burns incense over the Christmas table and in all of the rooms of the home (incense is believed to chase away evil spirits). Once that's done the elder says a prayer for good health and fertility and breaks the bread into pieces.

Recipe:

1/2 cup very warm milk (about 110 degrees F)

1 heaping tsp quick yeast

1 tbsp sugar

1 tbsp yogurt

2 tbsp melted butter

2 eggs, divided

1/2 tbsp salt

2 2/3 -3 1/3 cups flour

2 tbsp softened butter

Use a stand mixer. In the bowl, mix together the milk, yeast, and sugar and allow the yeast to dissolve and become foamy (when dissolving in milk, it likely won't get quite as foamy as it does in water, but it will still work!)

Add the yogurt, butter, 1 egg, 1 egg white (reserve the yolk for later), salt and 1 cup of water. Mix with the paddle attachment until smooth. Switch to the dough hook and continue adding the flour until the dough forms a smooth ball.

Remove the dough, cover, and set aside to rest for about 20 minutes. Divide the dough into 3 equal parts.

Roll each portion into a thin circle, approximately 8-9 inches (20-23 cm) in diameter. Spread butter onto 2 of the dough rounds and stack with the non-buttered piece on top.

Use a pizza cutter to carefully cut the dough stack into 16 equal wedges. Starting at the end opposite the point, roll each piece into a crescent shaped roll. Place the rolls around the edge of a 10-inch cake pan. Stack remaining rolls on end to fill in the center.

Loosely cover and set aside for 30 minutes to rise.

Preheat the oven to 375 degrees Fahrenheit.

Take the remaining egg yolk and mix it with a tablespoon of milk. Brush the egg mixture over the rolls and bake in the preheated oven for 30-40 minutes or until it's deep golden brown.

British High Commission



Photo: recipecommunity.com.au

Glam Mac and Cheese

This recipe is the favourite comfort food of the British High Commissioner, Susan le Jeune d'Allegeershecque.

It is from Lorraine Pascale's *Baking Made Easy*.

Ingredients:

- 340g macaroni
- Salt and freshly ground black pepper
- 80g pancetta, diced
- Fresh thyme leaves, small handful
- 3 spring onions, trimmed and finely sliced
- 100g breadcrumbs
- Fresh parsley, small handful, chopped

Cheese sauce:

- 40 g butter
- 40 g plain flour
- Ground nutmeg, pinch
- 1tsp mustard powder,
- 200 ml milk
- 285 ml double (thick) cream
- 200 g dolcelatte or Gorgonzola cheese
- 115 g parmesan cheese

Directions

Preheat the oven to 200 degrees celsius / 400 fahrenheit.

Cook the macaroni in a large pan of boiling salted water. It needs to be cooked to just under what you would normally do, as the pasta will be cooked again in the oven. Drain, return to the pan and set aside.

Fry the pancetta in a medium frying pan over a gentle heat until it just starts to brown and crisp up, then add the thyme leaves and spring onions and cook for a further three minutes. Remove the pan from the heat and add its contents to the pasta.

The Sauce

Put the flour, butter, mustard and nutmeg into a small pan set over a medium heat and cook until the butter has melted. Mix the milk and cream together in a small jug and add a little to the flour and butter in the pan, stirring well. Keep adding the milk mixture, bit by bit, stirring well each time. This will prevent the sauce from going lumpy. The temptation is to put all the milk in at once, only to find you are left with clumps of flour floating on the surface. Should this happen, take the pan off the heat and whisk it like crazy. This normally does the trick to eliminate all the lumps! Make sure you get the spoon into the 'corners' of the pan as stray mounds of flour can lurk there.

Once the sauce has fully come together, turn up the heat and boil for a minute or two. The sauce will thicken considerably. Then remove the pan from the heat. Add two thirds of both the cheeses to the sauce while it is still hot and combine well. There may be lumps of cheese but that doesn't matter. Season to taste with salt and pepper, and add to the pasta mix. Stir everything together and put into a shallow casserole dish (le Creuset is perfect).

Sprinkle the top with the rest of the cheese and the breadcrumbs and bake in the oven for about 20 minutes, or until the cheese starts to bubble and the topping goes crumbly and brown. Sprinkle with chopped parsley and serve while hot.

A green salad goes well, and makes this dish feel a little less naughty.

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2021 WILL BE ALBERTA'S YEAR OF FISCAL RECKONING

By Graham Thomson



If 2020 was the Year of the Pandemic, 2021 promises to be the Year of the Pandemic Hangover — that's if we're lucky and the promised vaccines work.

If all goes well, the world will be recovering from the economic and societal headaches caused by COVID-19.

But nowhere in Canada will the recovery be as painful and prolonged as in Alberta, a province hit in 2020 by the triple whammy of pandemic, recession, and catastrophically low oil prices.

To paraphrase Premier Jason Kenney's repeated warning about tough times ahead for Alberta, 2021 will be the Year of the Fiscal Reckoning.

The provincial government is running a record \$24-billion deficit and its accumulated debt is a few dollars shy of a record \$100 billion. For much of 2020, Alberta's jobless rate was the highest of any province outside of Newfoundland, while, at times, Calgary had the highest unemployment rate of any major city.

A report from ATB Financial forecasts a 3.3 per cent growth in Alberta's GDP in 2021, which sounds good, until you realize the provincial economy took such a massive hit in 2020 that its GDP won't be back up to pre-COVID levels until 2023.

Albertans will likely get their first glimpse into the abyss that is 2021 when the United Conservative government unveils its budget in February. It promises to be all downhill from there, especially for those in the public sector. The Kenney government has targeted public-sector workers as a way to save money by, among other things, demanding wage rollbacks, and, in the case of health-care support workers, announcing 11,000 of their jobs would be cut and the work outsourced to private contractors. Consequently, public-sector unions are threatening provincewide labour action

in 2021 in protest, making it the Year of the Picket.

But public-sector job cuts and wage rollbacks cannot counterbalance a \$24-billion deficit.

For a government that refuses to implement a provincial sales tax or rethink its business-friendly tax regime, 2021 promises to be the Year of the Budget Cuts. Or, as Kenney kept repeating ominously in 2020: *"We will face a great fiscal reckoning in the future."*

More labour unrest, cuts to government services, and downloading onto municipalities will likely further undermine Kenney's popularity rating, which was among the worst of any premier in Canada throughout 2020.

The United Conservative Party had a bad year, too, as an Angus Reid poll in September indicated that support for the UCP government had dropped to 38 per cent, putting it in a tie with the NDP opposition.

But Kenney has time on his side. He has another two years until the next provincial election, and if he's going to make unpopular cuts, the conventional wisdom is it's better to do it now than later.

Kenney also subscribes to the conventional wisdom of Alberta politics that it never hurts to blame the federal government for the province's ills. Through malleable logic, Kenney has managed to accuse Prime Minister Justin Trudeau of plotting to undermine Alberta's oil industry, even as Ottawa continues with the \$12-billion expansion of the Trans Mountain pipeline to pump more oil to the West Coast for shipment overseas.

Relentlessly and unfairly attacking Trudeau is a dubious tactic, when Kenney is depending on him to help convince president-elect Joe Biden to reverse his election promise to scrap the Keystone XL pipeline expansion from Alberta into the U.S.

Kenney has spent \$1.5 billion of Alberta taxpayers' money on the Keystone project, and has promised another \$6 billion in loan guarantees in 2021. It would be an overstatement to say Kenney's fate is intertwined with Keystone's, but if the pipeline sinks, Kenney will have more of a struggle to keep his head above water.

Kenney's anti-Trudeau agenda may peak in late 2021, when the Alberta government holds one or more referendums (in conjunction with October's municipal elections) on issues that could include whether Alberta should have its own provincial police force, its own pension plan, and collect its own personal income taxes.

This is part of Kenney's *"Fair Deal"* (aka *"More Alberta, Less Ottawa"*) strategy, which helped him maintain an us-versus-them narrative that proved remarkably successful in pre-pandemic times by keeping the province on a kind of war footing, with Kenney the wartime leader. Kenney will continue pushing that narrative in 2021, but it might be more of an uphill struggle for him after Alberta depended so much on Ottawa during the pandemic.

Kenney also continues to champion a government-sponsored public inquiry into what he's called a foreign-funded campaign to landlock Alberta oil. After fits and starts and costs overruns, the \$3.5-million inquiry will report on Jan. 31, six months behind schedule.

Perhaps then Albertans will discover if the public inquiry is as much of a joke and a waste of money as Kenney's \$30-million *"war room"* (the Canadian Energy Centre) that has found itself in a series of self-inflicted controversies the past year.

Even if 2021 ends up being the Year of the Federal Election, in Alberta, it promises to be the Year of Continuing Bad News.



A CONVERSATION WITH MAVERICK PARTY LEADER JAY HILL

By Janet E Silver

Longtime Conservative politician Jay Hill, who was government House leader under former prime minister Stephen Harper, is now head of a new western-based party.

Hill was first elected to Parliament in 1993 under the Reform Party banner, and, for the next seven years, represented the B.C. riding of Prince George–Peace River.

Founded in January 2020 as Wexit Canada, it was renamed the Maverick Party in September, not long after Hill voted in the Conservative Party of Canada's leadership contest won by Erin O'Toole. Hill then left the CPC.

iPolitics spoke with Hill in November to learn more about his party and its plans for the future. Here is that conversation, edited for brevity and clarity. (The full interview will be posted to iPolitics' website over the holidays.)

iPolitics: There are rumours of a federal election next spring. What kind of candidates will you be fielding?

Hill: They will be attracted to the philosophy of mavericks who want to break away from the status quo. I think most of them will be former Conservatives, or at least Conservative supporters, although that's not a prerequisite. We'll be running candidates only in Western Canada. I believe we erred when the Reform Party was growing and we opted to be a national party and run candidates across the country. We have identified 49 of the 104 ridings in Western Canada where Conservatives won by such a wide margin that, if we can run a Maverick candidate in some or all of them, there's virtually no chance a Liberal, NDP, or Green candidate will win. So the choice in those ridings will likely be between the Conservative incumbent and a Maverick candidate.

iPolitics: The Conservative stronghold is Alberta, Manitoba, and Saskatchewan, provinces with Maverick candidates in the next election. Are you worried that splitting the vote will allow another party to win?

Hill: Our aim is to do what (NDP Leader) Jagmeet Singh has been doing by default, and that is we would support O'Toole as prime minister, but with MPs we elect in Western Canada. I would also refer you to a lesson in history: In 1988, when I first ran for the Reform Party, the

Progressive Conservative government under Brian Mulroney used the fear of vote-splitting, especially in the final days of the campaign, to drive Conservative-minded voters from the Reform Party back to the PCs. They tried that again in 1993 under Kim Campbell. As you are aware, it didn't work, because it was the most massive defeat in parliamentary history: a ruling majority government reduced to two seats, none of them in Western Canada. So I would warn O'Toole that history does repeat itself, and he should look to 1993 for what's coming at him.

iPolitics: If people in Ontario and the East think the West might support the Maverick Party, are you concerned it will affect how they vote?

Hill: Given some of the things he's said since becoming leader of the CPC, I suspect O'Toole will do everything he can to appeal to voters in central Canada. We're not competing with him in central and Atlantic Canada; he's quite free to develop his policies and go head-to-head with (Prime Minister Justin) Trudeau for those votes. You'll have to ask him how he intends to do that.

iPolitics: What's your pitch to voters? What will set you apart from the CPC?

Hill: We're not running against candidates. We have no axe to grind with O'Toole, or with any of the other leaders' parties or candidates. We are running to replace a system that doesn't treat the West fairly. If you want that, too, elect MPs who will represent only the West.

iPolitics: Is the Maverick Party a separatist party?

Hill: If there's no recognition after 115 years of Alberta and Saskatchewan being in Confederation and being abused and mistreated; if there's no recognition by central Canada that the constitutional amendments and policies we'll be putting forward are necessary to negotiate, then, yes, we will advocate for an independent West.

iPolitics: As an East Coaster, I find that hard to understand.

Hill: What part don't you understand?

iPolitics: COVID, for example. Yes, our numbers are going up, but when you look south of the border, you realize how much worse it could be here. When I hear people say maybe it's time for a province or provinces to leave the country, at the end of the day, how would a Maverick Party fund itself and work through a pandemic when parts of Western Canada are hurting so much financially?

Hill: If we weren't sending billions of dollars down to Atlantic Canada and Quebec, we could easily fund our way through this pandemic, and probably not accumulate the type of debt that Trudeau is accumulating. The math is there: The net contributor for decades has largely been Alberta — and, by extension, the West — and the net beneficiaries have been Atlantic Canada and Quebec.

iPolitics: Do you expect to field candidates in every western riding in the next election?

Hill: Obviously, we are in our infancy. Organizing and choosing a candidate in each constituency will be a grassroots effort, so we have a long way to go. We will do our best to give western Canadian voters an option

iPolitics: You have your work cut out for you.

Hill: It's a huge effort on many fronts for a very small group of people.

iPolitics: Thank you, Jay Hill, for speaking with me.

Hill: My pleasure, Janet.



Jay Hill, former Conservative MP and head of western-based Maverick Party



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Sweet Water

By Linsey Raschkowan

'Water sustains us, flows between us, within us, and replenishes us. Water is the giver of all life, and, without clean water, all life will perish.'

—Assembly of First Nations

"No human being, no animal or plant, can live without its water," says Dawn Martin-Hill, co-founder of the Indigenous Studies program at Hamilton's McMaster University.

Martin-Hill, who also teaches at McMaster, lives on Six Nations of the Grand River Reserve, about 30 km southwest of Hamilton. It's where her mother, who was a part of the '60s Scoop, grew up before fleeing to the U.S. to raise her children. And it's where Martin-Hill, now a grandmother, raised her own children.

Six Nations doesn't have a boil-water advisory, despite the fact that 89 per cent of its residents don't have access to clean water because there's no money to operate their *"state-of-the-art"* water treatment plant, according to Martin-Hill.

And it's not alone. *"If you're living in northern communities, they built the water treatment plant, but don't have people ready to operate them full time,"*

she said. Even if they did, no laws exist to ensure those people are running the plants correctly, she added.

The Chippewas of Nawash Unceded First Nation, an Ojibway band on Ontario's Bruce Peninsula, has been under a boil-water advisory for nearly two years, even though its water-treatment plant is managed by a qualified man from the community. In fact, Fred Dubeau has kept it from shutting down, according to Chief Greg Nadjiwon.

But because the plant is 30 years old, replacement parts are expensive and hard to find. In fact, the plant is often shut down for maintenance, making the water quality unreliable.

"For me to find these parts is extremely difficult, and when I do find them, they're at an astronomical price, because they're antiques," Dubeau said.

Dubeau has 25 years of experience in municipal water treatment. He was working in the field in May 2000 when E. coli contaminated the drinking water in Walkerton, Ont., killing seven people. The tragedy forced Ontario to enact the Clean Water Act to protect its drinking water.

But *"on the federal side, there are only guidelines, and that has to change,"* said Dubeau, adding that breakdowns similar to Walkerton's have happened to several First Nations, *"and nothing gets done."*

Because federal laws apply to First Nations — and there are no federal laws to protect drinking water, only guidelines — they're especially vulnerable to water-borne illnesses.

Gary Vidal, the federal Conservative Indigenous Services critic, said people living on reserves also need training to manage water treatment, but when boil-water advisories are lifted, no federal laws require such education, either.

"They put some money into capital projects, but if no one's trained to operate (the treatment plants), you still end up with long-term drinking-water advisories," he said.

Indigenous Services Minister Marc Miller said his department is working hard to keep Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's promise to end all boil-water advisories on Indigenous territory by March of next year — though it's *"too early to speculate"* how much work is left to do, he said.

"Communities have told us they would like a longer-term commitment (to) operation and maintenance," Miller said. *"These plants are state-of-the-art, and the people who work there are highly trained. It requires a high degree of education in chemistry and math."*

Miller said people living on reserves will be trained, and experts from elsewhere will be hired, depending on need.





Morice Lake Provincial Park | photo: bcparks.ca

At least one reserve, Lac Seul First Nation in northwestern Ontario, recently ended a 17-year boil-water advisory after Ottawa ensured local people were trained to operate the reserve's treatment plant.

Martin-Hill isn't sure she believes Miller's promises, but she has hope in the younger generation.

"Social media opened up other truths and realities to Canadians and (non-Indigenous) kids everywhere, and they're shocked, because they weren't taught Indigenous history in school," she said.

"The information is right there, and they're really, really smart now. (They) start early."

For centuries, the Unist'ot'en people have called Wet'suwet'en territory in British Columbia home. Their way of life is such that they can drink straight from the pristine Morice River (Wedzin Kwah) that flows through their land.

Last year, construction began on the Coastal Gaslink Pipeline, posing a direct threat to the Morice.

"We call it sweet water," said Martin-Hill. "We had that everywhere. We had it here in Ontario."

"You know it when you're drinking it. I'd rather have sweet water over running water."



TONIC FOR LIFE IN A *Bubble*

Normally **Kady O'Malley** conjures up a political book list for the holiday edition of the iPolitics magazine, but this has not been a 'normal' year, so she took a different tack.

As the global pandemic drags on, here are some of the books that federal party leaders are either planning to give or hoping to receive over the holidays this year.



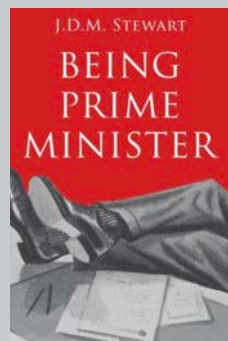
Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole:



Birdsong by Julie Flett (Greystone Books)

"I read this book with my son, as it deals with aging and health — perfect for chats with your kids about COVID times."

From the publisher: *"When a young girl moves from the country to a small town, she feels lonely and out of place. But soon she meets an elderly woman next door, who shares her love of arts and crafts. Can the girl navigate the changing seasons and failing health of her new friend? Acclaimed author and artist Julie Flett's textured images of birds, flowers, art, and landscapes bring vibrancy and warmth to this powerful story, which highlights the fulfilment of intergenerational relationships and shared passions."*

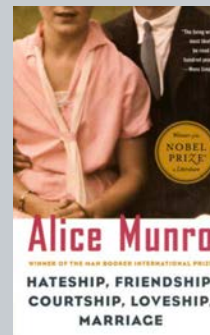


Being Prime Minister by J.D.M. Stewart (Dundurn)

"A delightful political book with a positive perspective"

From the publisher: *"From John A. Macdonald to Justin Trudeau, readers get a glimpse of the prime ministers as they travelled, dealt with invasions of privacy, met with celebrities, and managed the stress of the nation's top job. Humorous and hard-working, vain and vulnerable, Canada's leaders are revealed as they truly were."*

Green Party Leader Annemie Paul:

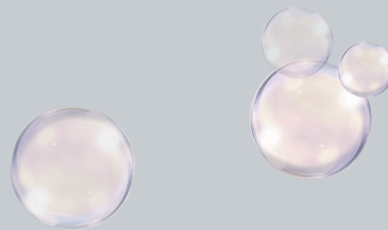
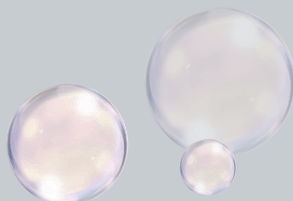


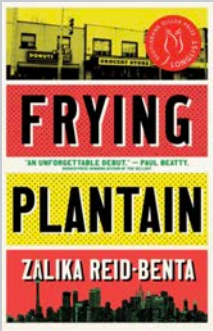
Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage by Alice Munro (Penguin Random House)

From the publisher: *"In her 10th collection... Alice Munro achieves new heights, creating narratives that loop and swerve like memory, and conjuring up characters as thorny and contradictory as people we know ourselves."*

Negotiating Transitional Justice: Firsthand Lessons from Colombia and Beyond by Mark Freeman and Iván Orozco (Cambridge University Press)

From Amazon.ca: *"For decades, the Colombian government fought a bitter insurgency war against FARC guerrilla forces. After protracted negotiations, the two parties reached a peace deal that took account of the rights of victims. As first-hand participants in the talks, and principal advisers to the Colombian government, Mark Freeman and Iván Orozco offer a unique account of the mechanics through which accountability issues were addressed."*

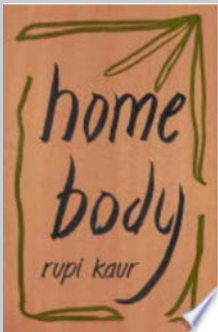




Frying Plantain by Zalika Reid-Benta
(House of Anansi Press)

From the publisher: *"In her brilliantly incisive debut, Zalika Reid-Benta artfully depicts the tensions between mothers and daughters, second-generation Canadians and first-generation cultural expectations, and Black identity and predominately white society."*

New Democrat Leader Jagmeet Singh

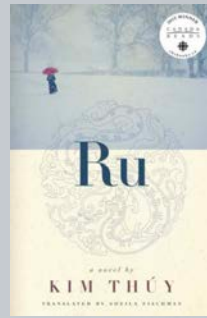


home body by Rupi Kaur
(Simon & Schuster)

"The title of Rupi Kaur's most recent work, home body, really speaks to the moment in time we're in right now. Her writing captures the human struggle, the pain and trauma that all of us carry, as well as the joy and hope. Her writing cuts to the heart, making it swell with both sorrow and happiness. Through a range of emotions, Rupi Kaur connects us all to our shared humanity."

From the publisher: *"A collection of raw, honest conversations with oneself — reminding readers to fill up on love, acceptance, community, family, and to embrace change. illustrated by the author, themes of nature and nurture, light and dark, rest here."*

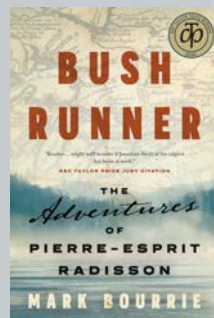
Prime Minister Justin Trudeau



"In this difficult 2020, for many of us, escaping into a good book has never been more necessary, or welcome. So, appropriately, my two Christmas recommendations this year are about escapes: the powerful story of Ru by Kim Thúy, and the unlikely, oft distasteful but always riveting, scrape-to-scrape adventures of Pierre-Esprit Radisson in Bush Runner by Mark Bourrie."

Ru by Kim Thúy, Sheila Fischman
(translator) (Vintage Canada)

From the publisher: *"In vignettes of exquisite clarity, sharp observation and sly wit, we are carried along on an unforgettable journey, from a palatial residence in Saigon to a crowded and muddy Malaysian refugee camp, and onward to a new life in Quebec."*



Bush Runner: The Adventures of Pierre-Esprit Radisson by Mark Bourrie
(Biblioasis)

From the publisher: *"Sourced from Radisson's journals, which are the best first-hand accounts of 17th-century Canada, Bush Runner tells the extraordinary true story of this protean 17th-century figure, a man more trading partner than colonizer, a peddler of goods and not world view — and with it offers a fresh perspective of the world in which he lived."*



WHAT CANADA CAN LEARN FROM A NEW GENERATION OF FEMALE WORLD LEADERS

Diplomats from New Zealand and Denmark say decisive leadership is key

By Iain Sherriff-Scott

New Zealand's top diplomat in Canada says the recent landslide re-election of his country's prime minister, Jacinda Ardern, reflects a trend around the world.

Ardern, who became the world's youngest female head of state in 2017, is one of several female leaders fighting — and winning — their countries' battles against the coronavirus. The female prime ministers of Denmark and Finland have also responded decisively and successfully to the pandemic.

"Our current prime minister has shown, throughout a period of crisis, that you really need to: Relate to people on the ground; connect with the way they've just experienced an event; and provide reassurance that government has their back," Martin Harvey, New Zealand's high commissioner to Canada, told iPolitics.

"Prime Minister Ardern has done this now through (some) quite traumatic experiences: The Christchurch terrorist attacks, of course, and, last year, the volcanic eruption off the northern coast of New Zealand, and now this COVID-19 crisis."

Ardern garnered global acclaim for the way she responded to the shootings at a Christchurch mosque in 2019, in which 51 worshippers died.

And there's general agreement that a big reason for her overwhelming electoral victory this fall was her government's successful containment of the virus.

The fact that New Zealand is an island gives it a natural advantage, of course, but Ardern and her government knew they couldn't be complacent, Harvey said.

Through a "strategy of elimination," New Zealand employed stringent and early restrictions to stamp out community transmission. As Canada, the U.S., and the EU had to tighten their rules in mid-November due to rising case numbers, New Zealand has managed to avoid a second lockdown.

"Generally, people have been able to lead their lives normally, so the kind of (COVID) fatigue that you're seeing in other countries, where there's been

constant community transmission, hasn't been experienced in New Zealand," Harvey said.

The country's ability to keep a lid on community spread earned praise from the World Health Organization in November. The WHO also lauded its modelling capabilities and COVID-19 genome sequencing, two techniques that allow authorities to pinpoint outbreaks to prevent wider lockdowns.

Denmark, which is working to contain a second wave of cases after a tranquil summer, received similar praise for its early control of community transmission last spring. The country is led by Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen, who became the youngest person to hold the title in Denmark when she was elected last year at age 41.

Last spring, Denmark was one of the earliest countries in Europe to shut down its economy when the pandemic was declared. By doing so, it had largely stamped out community spread by summer — a strategy New Zealand also adopted.

Denmark's ambassador to Canada, Hanne Fugl Eskjær, attributes the country's early success to the Danes' high degree of trust in their government and institutions. In an interview with iPolitics, she said it helped that every political party also supported the restrictions.

Of the 41 countries the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development surveyed from 2015 to 2018 for their citizens' trust in government, both Canada and Denmark were in the Top 10, Fugl Eskjær said.

"(Trust) is so important when you have to deal with a crisis that is touching everybody," she said, especially faith in the authorities and experts making recommendations.

"Our prime minister said it very clearly in the beginning: We are having a crisis where we are learning every day."

As Canada works to contain a growing second wave of infections, the government has already followed Denmark's lead.

In the spring, the Liberals planned to subsidize the wages of Canadians working for small and medium-sized businesses by only 10 per cent. But after Prime Minister Justin Trudeau took a look at the Danish subsidy, which covers 75 per cent of such salaries, Trudeau bumped his federal subsidy to 75 per cent, too.

Now, Denmark is dealing with a resurgence of cases, and struggling to get a handle on a widespread outbreak of a new variant of the virus that causes COVID-19 in mink. Officials are worried, because the mutation has already spread to several hundred humans, thus potentially limiting the effectiveness of future vaccines.

As the country culls its mink population, new restrictions have been imposed to fight a second wave of cases. But working to Denmark's advantage is that its national government is responsible for imposing those restrictions, said Fugl Eskjær — unlike Canada, which leaves those decisions up to individual provincial governments.

So far, both Denmark and New Zealand continue to enjoy very low numbers of confirmed COVID cases, and their young prime ministers have provided the kind of leadership that's the exception around the world.

"A system built on transparency, trust, and clear communication," Fugl Eskjær said of her country's pandemic policy. *"I think that was key."*





See it. Be it.

Celebrating women entrepreneurs

Challenging stereotypes and bias

When asked to name entrepreneurs, many will offer up Steve Jobs, Bill Gates or Mark Zuckerberg. Not global media mogul Oprah Winfrey. Or Kylie Jenner, a billionaire at twenty in part thanks to Canada's Shopify. Or superstar Celine Dion whose Feeling Inc. has an estimated value of \$800 million.

Stereotypes that associate entrepreneurship with men and technology create barriers for women and limit Canada's potential for innovation and economic development. Stereotypes shape the design of policies, funding programs, training, and incubators. They affect financing and investment decisions. More importantly, stereotypes limit the aspirations of women because "if you can't see it, you can't be it."

Women entrepreneurs, from across Canada and every sector of the economy, are beating the odds, growing their businesses, exporting globally and having profound social impact. The Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub (WEKH) and its partners are challenging stereotypes with the "See It. Be It." campaign, which will profile 1000 of Canada's million women entrepreneurs.

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PAULINE MAROIS ON BEING 'BASICALLY A FEMINIST' — AND STILL AN INDÉPENDENTISTE

By Kevin Dougherty



Pauline Marois, former Premier of Quebec

In July 2013, Canada's 13 premiers gathered in Niagara-on-the-Lake, Ont., for their semiannual meeting as the Council of the Federation.

Six of them were women: Newfoundland and Labrador's Kathy Dunderdale, Quebec's Pauline Marois, Ontario's Kathleen Wynne, Alberta's Allison Redford, B.C.'s Christy Clark, and Nunavut's Eva Aariak

Seven years later, Caroline Cochrane, premier of the Northwest Territories, is Canada's only female first minister.

In a recent interview with iPolitics, Marois reflected on the assets female politicians bring to the decision-making table.

"(Women's) leadership style is often very frank," she said. "We take things on directly. But I think the change, the acceptance, is not complete for women leaders and women premiers. The 'boys' club' lives on."

Marois capped her political career as Quebec's first female premier, when she led a minority Parti Québécois (PQ)

government from September 2012 to April 2014.

In that time, her government shut down Quebec's only nuclear reactor, ended support for asbestos mining, blocked uranium mining, adopted anti-corruption laws, reformed party financing, set fixed election dates, created new provincial parks, and fostered better relations with Indigenous peoples.

"In 18 months, we did a lot."

Since her first cabinet post in 1981, Marois has negotiated a constitutional amendment to transform Quebec's Catholic and Protestant schools into French and English school boards, and created Quebec's subsidized daycare and parental leave.

Marois got her first taste of politics at the age of 22 in Hull, Que. — now Gatineau, across the Ottawa River from Canada's capital — when a job in social services inspired her to become an advocate for social justice and francophone rights.

Originally from the Quebec City area, Marois moved to Hull with her husband, Claude Blanchet, who made a fortune in real estate with Campeau Corp. She credits his *"unconditional support,"* including care of their children, for her successful career.

Marois' first job in politics was in 1978 as a press attachée to PQ Finance minister Jacques Parizeau.

In her recently published autobiography, *Pauline Marois, au delà du pouvoir* (Pauline Marois, Beyond Power), written in collaboration with author Élyse-Andrée Héroux, she says that at first, she wasn't sure politics was for her.

"I wasn't really cut out to be a press attachée," she said. "I was used to running my own team, having my own agenda. Monsieur Parizeau did not need an adviser. He was all of his own advisers and all of his deputy ministers at the same time."

But Marois was then recruited by Lise Payette, a Quebec TV personality-turned PQ minister, and a leading feminist.

"But I'm not a feminist," she recalled telling Payette. "I refused at first."

Payette replied, laughing, "Don't worry. With me, you will become one."

Marois became Payette's chief of staff, a position with more authority than she had under Parizeau.

"Basically, I am a feminist," she says now. At the time, she considered the term outdated, before realizing it applied to her goal of "equality for men and women."

The Quebec Liberals were favoured to win the 1981 Quebec election. Marois, then eight months pregnant, had no intention of running herself, when René Lévesque, the PQ premier, phoned her.

"Madame Marois, I need women like you," he told her.

The PQ was re-elected with 49 per cent of votes cast. Marois won her seat, replacing Payette as minister for the Status of Women.

The 1985 election was a rout for the PQ, which seemed directionless in its second mandate; record inflation and the rollback of public-sector pay increases had translated into voter dissatisfaction.

Marois lost her seat, but returned to the assembly in 1989 with Parizeau as leader and the PQ in opposition.

When Parizeau formed a PQ government in 1994, Marois was again named minister for the Status of Women, plus Income Security, and, after the referendum loss, Parizeau promoted her to the Finance and Revenue portfolio.

Lucien Bouchard succeeded Parizeau when the latter resigned after the referendum loss, naming Bernard Landry to Finance and shifting Marois to the Education portfolio, plus the new Family portfolio when Quebec's \$5-a-day child care was adopted.

Landry succeeded Bouchard as PQ leader in 2001, and Marois was back as Finance minister and deputy premier until Jean Charest's Liberals won the 2003 election.

She resigned from the assembly in 2006 after losing a bid to succeed Landry.

In her book, Marois quotes Charest's tribute to her when she resigned

"I know no other parliamentarian who has occupied the positions of Finance minister, deputy premier, Education minister, Health minister and president of the Treasury Board," Charest said. "One day, you never know, maybe a man will do the same thing.

"Permit me to say: I doubt it."

She believes the *"across-the-aisle"* spirit of the Quebec assembly distinguishes politics in the province from the partisanship in the House of Commons and the total polarization of U.S. politics: About 90 per cent of bills adopted by the Quebec assembly pass unanimously.

In 2009, when Marois was PQ opposition leader, Charest accepted PQ Justice critic Véronique Hivon's proposal for a law on dying with dignity.

The final bill — bearing the names of co-sponsors Hivon, by then back in opposition, and Liberal Health minister Gaétan Barrette — was passed in 2014.

In getting the daycare legislation passed, Marois collaborated with Liberal Russell Copeman.

"I adored working with that guy," she said. "He would come with proposals. My officials would say, 'What do we do? Are we going to accept this?' I would say, 'Of course!'"

The PQ recently held a leadership vote to choose its third leader since Marois stepped down after her 2014 defeat.

Paul Saint-Pierre Plamondon, an outsider with no seat in the assembly, was elected leader. All four leadership contenders were male.

"I would have wanted women candidates," Marois said. "Véronique (Hivon) was the ideal candidate." But Hivon declined to run for personal reasons.

Marois said she's aware that women in politics have self-doubts.

"It's the lack of self confidence in women, and I have had that all my life," she said, even though she describes herself as a strong woman. "When I was premier, I still had that."

Only 10 PQ members were elected in 2018, and, in addition to the party's unelected, inexperienced leader, many top PQ staffers, including press attachés and a speechwriter for Marois, now work for Premier François Legault and his Coalition Avenir Québec government.

"It hurt a bit," she admits, but, "I can't blame them."

Marois remains hopeful the PQ will rise again

"The Parti Québécois continues to be absolutely necessary, to carry on the sovereignty project," she said.

"I would like Quebec one day to be a country, and I want it to be a country with equality of opportunity — a rich country, but a country that shares that wealth."



CHINA'S EXCLUSION OF TAIWAN FROM THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY IS DETRIMENTAL TO WORLD HEALTH — ESPECIALLY DURING A PANDEMIC

By Winston Wen-yi Chen, representative of the Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada



Winston Wen-yi Chen, Representative Taipei Economic and Cultural Office in Canada

The 73rd meeting of the World Health Assembly (WHA) has ended, marking the latest successful effort by China to weaken global health for its own political purposes. Taiwan, which has been widely lauded for its successful management of COVID-19, was again prevented from participating in the WHA at Beijing's behest.

The WHA is the decision-making body of the World Health Organization (WHO), which includes China, but not Taiwan. The WHA determines the WHO's policies, appoints the director-general, supervises financial policies, and reviews and approves the program budget, among other functions.

By any objective measure, Taiwan's exclusion from the WHA is utterly senseless. As the world struggles against another wave of COVID, the international community has a moral obligation to put political considerations aside and work in lockstep co-operation. We can ill afford to exclude any country, particularly a successful model like Taiwan, from what must be truly global efforts.

Indeed, many countries have recognized that Taiwan's meaningful participation in the WHA is to all parties' benefit. Ambassador Andrew Bremberg, the U.S.

permanent representative to the UN in Geneva, praised Taiwan as a "role model" and argued strongly for its inclusion in the WHA. Similarly, Japan, Australia, New Zealand, France, Germany, the U.K. and others have all called for an end to Beijing's obstructionism and for Taiwan to be included.

We are especially pleased that Canada remains an active voice in this matter. Jordan Reeves, Canada's representative to Taiwan and the executive director of the Canadian trade office in Taipei, has stated that "Canada has consistently supported Taiwan's meaningful participation in international multilateral fora, such as the WHA."

More than 1,700 parliamentarians from around the world have joined this loud chorus, including 644 from 25 European countries and the European Parliament. Many voices in civil societies around the world have joined in, too.

Granting observer status to Taiwan at the WHA is a well-established norm, even for non-state entities like the Vatican, the Palestinian Authority, the Red Cross, and others. As further proof that our exclusion is merely petty politics with no sound basis, Taiwan was invited as an observer between 2009 and 2016. Beijing then coerced the global community into revoking this status when President Tsai Ing-wen was democratically elected.

As Tsai herself has explained, "If the WHO continues to reject Taiwan's participation due to Beijing's interference, the world will lose an opportunity to fight the pandemic together and will throw a spanner into its ideal of 'health for all.'"

For its part, the WHO recognizes in its own charter that excluding countries like Taiwan is detrimental to world health and is a moral aberration. As the WHO's constitution so eloquently states, "The health of all peoples is fundamental to the attainment of peace and security and is dependent upon the fullest co-operation of individuals and States.

"The achievement of any State in the promotion and protection of health is of value to all."

"Unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease, especially communicable disease, is a common danger."

This is not a matter of countries "taking sides." It's merely a question of whether the international community is comfortable with its institutions being held hostage for political purposes, or whether all nations are better served by an open and inclusive world order governed by rules and norms.

These rules and norms of the international community are the basis upon which peace, prosperity, and global co-operation are developed and maintained. They are particularly crucial at this moment of global crisis, which makes it all the more disappointing that Taiwan would be excluded from the WHA.

After COVID-19 is defeated, we as a global community will have to seriously assess how multilateral efforts across the board are being hampered by Taiwan's exclusion. Our economy is similar in size to that of Sweden; indeed, Taiwan is among the Top 25 economies in the world. Among many other priorities, we have much to contribute to: The UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs); efforts to mitigate climate change; global trade; and, of course, global health.

And despite China's obstructions, we remain resolutely determined to help the international community. We are proud to contribute to a safer and more equal, prosperous, sustainable, and healthy world. From this we shall not be deterred.

The end of yet another WHA session marks a missed opportunity to bring Taiwan to the table for the benefit of all nations. We remain committed to open co-operation with all, and we look forward to the day when such global partnerships will be realized for all countries.

WE NEED TO BEND THE CANCER CURVE WITH THE SAME RESOLVE WE BRING TO COVID

By JOHN-PETER BRADFORD



PoliticsLIVE panel discussion with John-Peter Bradford, Hon. Peter Kent MP (PC), Jean Yip MP (Lib), Heather Bakken, Dr. John Hilton. November 17, 2020

Within a year, we will go from discovering the virus that causes COVID-19 to having a highly effective vaccine to prevent it.

What a remarkable achievement! It shows that focused, streamlined efforts can get new therapeutics to Canadians quickly and prevent the spread of a miserable disease. We need to apply the lessons learned from COVID-19 to cancer – Canada's biggest killer.

This year two terrible things will happen. More than 15,000 Canadians will die from COVID-19. Yet, five times that number, an estimated 83,300 Canadians will die from cancer and 225,800 new cases will be diagnosed.

Cancer deaths are not reported in daily press briefings or on TV graphics. They just happen in the background of our busy lives, the drip-drip of a slowly growing pandemic. More than one in two Canadians will get cancer. 90% of cancers occur in people 50 and older. The population is aging, so the number of cancer cases will keep growing significantly. The need for prevention and leading-edge cancer care and treatments is increasing.

Even if you survive, cancer can be devastating. I survived throat cancer, but lost half my neck, don't have much saliva or taste and have reduced feeling on one side of my body. I attended a recent iPolitics LIVE event on head and neck cancer at which Nicholle

Anderson, an NHL Hockey Fights Cancer Ambassador and a survivor, MPs Peter Kent, a survivor, and Jean Yip, whose husband died, shared how they had been affected. They urged widespread vaccination to prevent the most common of these cancers and exhorted people to seek treatment quickly for any suspicious growth they discover. Dr. John Hilton from the Ottawa Hospital's Cancer Centre shared his experience with new immunotherapies and precision medicines that are improving the prognosis for many Canadians.

The fight against cancer is not hopeless – far from it. We can bend the cancer curve, save lives, increase life expectancy, enhance quality of life, and alleviate suffering. To do this, we need up-to-date access to the many remarkable breakthroughs in treatment that are being developed. We also need to eliminate delays and eradicate backlogs because they cause suffering and death. The longer the delay, the more deadly and hopeless the cancer. The system is replete with duplication, inefficiencies and overspending on the wrong stuff. It isn't rocket science to fix these problems quickly. It's a Canadian tragedy that we act like it is.

Our regulatory approval system needs an overhaul. We need to encourage novel clinical trial protocols to ensure that new therapies are tested in ways that are tailored to them. We need aggressive prevention and screening. Caught early, cancer is treatable. Found late, it's a death sentence. The new federal drug pricing regime, which will

take effect soon, must be changed. It will keep leading edge medicines out of Canada... and doom Canadians to second class treatments.

Our response to COVID-19 has taught us how to proceed... urgently, with determination and political will. It will take money to do this. Smart investment and careful restructuring can yield a net gain for the economy and spare many Canadians and their loved ones the painful scourge of cancer.

The challenges of COVID-19 have taught us that we can do great things if we put our minds to it. Let's use what we've learned to work together to defeat cancer.

Dr. John-Peter Bradford, Ph.D. is CEO of LSTN, the Life-Saving Therapies Network, which is dedicated to getting faster access to better treatments for people with lethal diseases, and a former member of the Research Advisory Committee of the Canadian Partnership Against Cancer. A passionate patient advocate, he is a cancer survivor and was a caregiver for his wife who died from cancer.



Nicholle Anderson is a cancer survivor and an NHL Hockey Fights Cancer Ambassador. She is also the wife of former Ottawa Senator goalie Craig Anderson.

IT'S SHOWTIME: HOW TO MAKE YOUR VIDEO MEETINGS AND INTERVIEWS LOOK AND SOUND BETTER

By Janet E Silver

Since last spring, Zoom, Skype, and Webex, to name a few, have been used by senators, MPs in the House of Commons, businesses, and special interest groups to meet, conduct interviews, and appear on TV.

Despite the many "how to" articles on professional Zoom presentation and attire, all of us could look and sound better in our digital meetings.

Here are some basic tips to improve your next appearance.

Internet connection:

Whether you're on a phone, tablet, or computer, the sound and image quality depend on your internet connection.

If possible, wire your device directly to the internet. If you can't, position your device as close to the router box as possible; the farther from the box, the more likely your Wi-Fi connection will break during your meeting or interview.

To free up bandwidth, ask others in your household to turn off their devices during your meeting, and turn off all other programs on your own device, again to improve your connection.

Audio: If no one can hear you, or your voice cuts in and out when you're speaking, you've lost your audience.

A good headset and mic are worth the investment. For about \$90, you can get a headset with a small boom mic that sits just under your mouth and plugs directly into your device to help eliminate any interference.

The advantage is the mic cancels out unwanted background noise while the headphones deliver sound quality far superior to the Apple headset and mic. While the latter work well, keep in mind the mic will pick up background sound, and, if you opt for a wireless system, interference is a distinct possibility.

Finally, make sure all audio in the room is turned off, all doors to your room are closed, and mute your microphone when you're not speaking.

Picture background:

While bookshelves and artwork might seem like the ideal backdrop, they can be very distracting.

Whatever the background, try to keep it at least four feet, preferably more, behind you. In TV terms, this is called "a good depth of field."

If a bookshelf is directly behind you, the other digital participants may start going through your book collection. The same applies to family photos, eye-catching artwork, awards, trophies, and jerseys, especially if they have nothing to do with your meeting or interview.

Also, the view from your window may be beautiful, but if that window's behind you, the back-lighting will make you hard to see.

A good background might consist of low lighting from a nice lamp, with a plant or flowers to the side.

Bare walls, especially light-coloured ones, aren't ideal, because they'll flush out your skin tone. Solid colours are better than patterns.

Avoid electronic backgrounds. While they might appear to work, they can create problems in the middle of your presentation.

Eyeline:

If you're using a smaller device such as a phone, it might be harder to get it high enough to bring the camera to eye level. You might need lots of books, a footstool, or both, to get the necessary height. But it's important to try, since a camera angled from below tends not to be flattering.

Glasses:

Glare from glasses is always tricky. But if your device is at eye level, you're not facing a window, and a bright light isn't shining directly on you, the glare should be minimal.

Lights and windows in the foreground:

Lights and windows bring their own challenges, yet are important to ensure you can be seen. If there's a window in front of you that provides lots of direct light, close the curtains. If the light is indirect, a sheer curtain might help.

As professional camera people know, lamps can really boost a look. If possible, position a lamp or window with indirect light on either side, and slightly in front of, your device.

Once you've reviewed your internet connection, background, foreground, and sound quality, do a quick audio and visual check before your meeting or interview starts. And finally, take a still photo to ensure you're looking your best.

Background



Eyeline



Lights and Windows



Depth of Field



Photos by Paul Nolan

POLITICAL MOVIES TO DISCOVER (OR REDISCOVER) THIS HOLIDAY SEASON

By Rachel Emmanuel

Streaming has become part of the pandemic lexicon. Whether you dress up for a date with Netflix, or slide into a onesie and eat ice-cream out of the container, stay tuned – this page is for you.

If you're a Canadian who hates winter — yes, we do exist, and in large numbers — then at some point this holiday season, you will undoubtedly find yourself flicking on the TV to fill the hours stuck indoors with members of your small pandemic cohort, who are likely riding your nerves by now.

And perhaps all the idle hours have you wondering why you ever chose a career in politics, with its hectic schedules and unexpected controversies.

If the thought has crossed your mind in this especially challenging year, here are four of our favourite political films. We hope they inspire your return to work in 2021.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939)

Whether you're a politician, a journalist, or a political staffer, you'll enjoy watching political aides get the credit they sorely deserve in this political comedy.

The drama begins when a Montana Senator dies, and the "political machine" chooses Jeff Smith, played by James Stewart, to replace him. The newcomer brings a refreshing integrity to D.C.'s political landscape, with its corrupt career politicians and overworked staffers.

It was a time when politicians could knock out reporters for publishing half-truths or for engaging in yellow journalism, with apparent impunity.

The film features a political stunt that's still being used 80 years later: a filibuster so extreme it would put even the WE Charity committees to shame. Mr. Smith Goes to Washington also presents the hard truth that a politician is only as good as his knowledge of the rules of the game — or those of his aide.

The Front Runner (2018)

This drama captures the period when politics became more about a politician's character than his or her policies.

The Front Runner is loosely based on the real-life presidential candidacy

of American Senator Gary Hart in 1988. Played by Hugh Jackman, Hart seems secure in his bid to become the Democratic nominee. But he's a womanizer, and refuses to reveal details of his private life.

In the brutal and very public exposure that follows the revelation of his affair with a much younger woman, Hart and his family are hounded by reporters.

Hart refuses to subject his family to further harassment, and, while insisting the country deserves better from its news media, withdraws from the race.

The film portrays one of the first political casualties of a societal transformation in which American news media, emboldened by their audiences, will stop at nothing to uncover sex scandals for their front pages and TV screens.

V for Vendetta (2006)

V for Vendetta is set in a dystopian England ruled by a totalitarian government that terrorizes its citizens with a made-up virus and other pretend threats.

Sound familiar?

Only, in this world, one man, a product of the oppressive system, makes it his mission to blow up Parliament — an act symbolizing the psychological change he believes the country needs. "V" also hijacks his way onto TV and asks viewers, who are locked in their homes by a state-ordered curfew, who's to blame for the state of the nation.

"You need only look in the mirror," he says, accusing them of complicity, and reminding them the government has more to fear from them than they have to fear from it.

With its action scenes, plot twists, and a killer soundtrack, this political thriller is sure to entertain.

But if the COVID-19 pandemic has turned you into a conspiracy theorist, maybe give this one a pass.

The Death of Stalin (2018)

This political satire plays the death of Russian dictator Joseph Stalin, and the power vacuum that followed, for laughs.

Steve Buscemi is brilliant as Nikita Khrushchev, the scheming jester in Stalin's small pack of confidants.

After a night of drinking with his boss, Khrushchev returns home to his wife, where the two painstakingly record all the jokes he can remember making: which ones Stalin laughed at, and, more important, which he did not.

When Stalin dies, Khrushchev's efforts to grab power for himself are quickly sidelined by his more serious opponent. Khrushchev is given responsibility only for Stalin's funeral, so, while his colleagues take control of the military and the police, he's picking out flower arrangements and curtains.

Tired of being played for a fool, Khrushchev tries one last time to usurp his nemesis. The plan is a success, and, in true communist fashion, requires the death of just 1,500 innocent civilians on route to pay their respects to their dead leader.

The film was banned in both Russia and Kyrgyzstan for allegedly mocking the nations' history and leaders, so it's basically begging to be watched.



HOW TO TALK TO THAT FAMILY MEMBER OVER THE HOLIDAYS

By Charlie Pinkerton

Remember Cousin Eddie — Randy Quaid's lovable buffoon in National Lampoon's Vacation series?

If you've seen the original films, you can't have forgotten him, especially if you made it past the 40-minute mark of 1989's Christmas Vacation, when Eddie and co. pay a surprise visit to the Griswolds' Chicago home.

Maybe it's Quaid's show-stealing, iconic lines like, "*Clark, that's the gift that keeps giving the whole year,*" when his cousin-in-law receives a slap-in-the-face Christmas bonus of a Jelly of the Month Club membership. Or maybe, like Clark, you can't shake from your mind the image of Eddie emptying his RV's toilet into the street sewer. Or perhaps it's because your family has its own Cousin Eddie (and if you can't point him out, it could be you).

But here's the thing, in 2020: As a middle-aged, poorly educated man whose political beliefs can be assumed to reflect those of the actor playing him, Cousin Eddie is the classic anti-masker.

This holiday season, what's the best way to talk to your own family's lovable buffoon — your Cousin Eddie — about COVID-19?

Well, normal Christmas celebrations

seemed far-fetched when this was written in mid-November. Daily cases of COVID-19 had reached record highs across Canada, and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau had begun tempering his earlier optimism that Dec. 25 could be business as usual.

But even if our in-person Christmases are cancelled, we still feel a need to connect with family, even if it's over the phone — or, in true 2020 fashion, virtually over Zoom.

There's an old adage about topics you're supposed to avoid at a family get-together: religion, money, and politics. Pandemics aren't on the list, but is there really anything else to talk about these days? Unfortunately, as all our Cousin Eddies demonstrate, COVID-19 is political.

But broaching controversial topics at the dinner table isn't always a bad thing, says Emma Frances Bloomfield, who teaches communication studies at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas.

"It could be a fruitful (and) productive space for getting these big-picture topics out in the open with the people you care about," she said.

Every expert interviewed for this story agreed that, when talking to family about mask-wearing and other public-safety

guidelines, it's important to start from a place of understanding.

To that end, it's useful to know why your family's Cousin Eddie has decided to join the anti-mask, anti-government-guidelines camp.

Dr. Olivier Drouin studied behavioural science at Harvard University, and continues to research human behaviour while working as a pediatrician in Montreal. He pointed out three things that contribute to an anti-masker's beliefs: misinformation on social media; a desire to belong; and influential Americans' pronouncements against mask-wearing.

Distrust of government, resistance to change, and individualism — the belief that individual autonomy and personal liberties are more important than collective values — could also contribute, said Bloomfield, who researches "*science communication*": how to talk about polarizing topics like climate change. She's also currently researching the anti-vaccination phenomenon.

It's important to be understanding, and to stay civil, both when starting and ending a conversation, experts agree.

"To have a productive conversation



with somebody you care about ... and influence somebody who has ideas contrary to yours, the rule of thumb is to always approach (him or her) with empathy and respect, and some presumption that whatever (his or her) thoughts or feelings are, (he or she has) good reasons for them," said Joshua Coleman, a psychologist based in the San Francisco Bay area and a senior fellow with the Council on Contemporary Families.

Staying calm is also important, as is knowing you probably won't win your case right away.

"It's rare that a single conversation will change anyone's mind on anything," Bloomfield said.

When trying to convince a family member of the importance of following public health guidelines, the experts agree that establishing common ground is effective. For example, you'll both agree you want the pandemic to end, and for life to return to normal as soon as possible.

You can also personalize the issue by, for instance, explaining that you suffer from a condition that makes you more susceptible to COVID-19.

And to avoid coming off as patronizing, you can improve dialogue by asking questions and comparing sources of information.

In researching a book she wrote on talking to climate-change skeptics, Bloomfield said she learned that *"shifting your attitude to engagement was a really productive way to open people up, just to see different perspectives."*

And while you might not succeed in talking your relative into following all the rules, that doesn't mean a chat isn't worth having. An initial conversation could lead to further conversations, or to causing him or her to reflect more on the matter later. It might even encourage others who are listening in to follow the guidelines, she said.

"At least trying and having those conversations, to me, is making some kind of change," Bloomfield said.

It might also help when Easter rolls around, and talk turns to the merits of getting the COVID vaccine.

And remember: at the end of the day, your *"Cousin Eddie"* is family, after all.



THIS WILL BE A CHRISTMAS ON THE HILL LIKE NO OTHER

By L. Ian MacDonald

Welcome to COVID Christmas on the Hill — a one-time-only event, one hopes, in the parliamentary precinct.

In normal years, Parliament Hill and the precinct are the happy heartbeat of the holidays in Canada's capital, literally the lights of the season and all that goes with it.

But not in 2020, the year of the pandemic. There's nothing normal about it. We don't even know what the new normal is, except that it's different. There's a new vocabulary of behavioural caution, with terms like social distancing the watchwords of the day.

And where many Ottawa professionals and consultants used to boast that they sometimes worked from home, they now complain about having to work from home. Like everyone else. Not the same thing at all.

Christmas shopping? It's online or by phone, for home delivery or drive-by pickup. You just had to walk through the Rideau Centre to see that retail was down a reported 90 per cent before the holidays. Even if you could go downtown, why bother? No weddings, no funerals, no grads, and no meetings except on the phone. You don't need new clothes for that. You need Zoom.

Christmas parties? Ho-ho-ho.

Christmas cards from MPs you can put on the fireplace? Forget it. *"MPs aren't sending them to constituents' offices anymore," says one parliamentary official. "They're sending e-cards, because no one's at work."* There might even be a saving of paper and printing costs as a result, and a modest benefit to the environment. To say nothing of an MP's time spent signing all those cards.

MPs are doing other things differently because of the pandemic, to the extent that they're in Ottawa at all. Some have shown up to enable a quorum of 20 members. For the rest, in the second session of the minority House, MPs have approved a hybrid setting of members working virtually from home, even in question period. *"That could be the look*

of the future," says the parliamentary source.

Many holiday seasons from now, they will talk about the pandemic Christmas — as an aberration, one hopes.

But in point of fact, 2020 has also accelerated a gradual pace of change on the Hill going back to 2018, when Centre Block closed for renovations that were scheduled to last a decade but are expected to go on for years beyond that, since it's a public-works project in its own time zone, certain to easily surpass its original \$3-billion budget.

For decades, Centre Block was the home of Christmas on the Hill, with the splendid Hall of Honour hosting sit-down dinners and parties in the Railway and Reading Rooms, normally the location of government and official opposition caucuses on Wednesday mornings. With the green and red chambers of the House and Senate down the hall, holiday visitors could gather by the magnificent Christmas tree at the entrance to the Hall of Honour.

Not to mention the carillon of the Peace Tower playing Christmas carols. The lights on the tower and Centre Block were the home, beginning in 1986, of Christmas Lights Across Canada, with the simultaneous lighting of Parliament and provincial legislatures. A Christmas concert on the Hill became a magical occasion, with kids thrilled by the animated images on Centre Block and their parents swept up in the music of the season.

Christmas on the Hill would usually start in the first week of December and continue into the first week of January — or, in the liturgical calendar, roughly from the Immaculate Conception to Epiphany.

Meant to coincide with the illumination on the Hill was the spectacular lighting throughout the precinct along the imagined route of Confederation Boulevard, not to be found on any map, but consisting of lights all along Mackenzie Avenue, Sussex Drive,

Wellington and Elgin Streets. There are nearly half a million lights along the way.

But with the closing of Centre Block, and the front lawn blocked as a construction storage site, West Block became the new home of the green chamber in 2019 and the parliamentary proceedings that went with it.

The opening-night lighting ceremony was moved several blocks away to Confederation Park. Parliament Hill it ain't, though it is a National Historic Site under the National Capital Commission, alongside the Rideau Canal between the National Arts Centre and Ottawa City Hall. The only government building available for parties in 2019 was the Sir John A. Macdonald Building across from West Block on Wellington Street, the former main branch of the Bank of Montreal and original home of the Bank of Canada at its founding in 1935. With East Block also closed, and the Senate moved down to the former railway station — later to become the government conference centre — there was no place left on the Hill to celebrate the season. And 2020? Nothing, anywhere.

Looking back, 2019 was a good Christmas for hotels and popular restaurants such as the Métropolitain Brasserie on Sussex at the corner of Wellington, just down from Parliament Hill.

That was then. This is now.

"We would normally be booked solid from mid-November to early January," says Sarah Chown, a managing partner of the Met.

The pandemic, with all its restrictions on socializing, has changed all that.

With the first wave in March came the lockdown — the closure — of restaurants and bars in Ontario. It would be three months before they reopened, in very different circumstances, and under very different rules. In late November, they were due to close again.

In the meantime, Parliament wasn't even sitting. And it drives the social as well

as the political agenda of the precinct. For months, there were only two regular sources of information in town: the prime minister's daily briefings from the secluded front doorstep of Rideau Cottage, and the West Block updates of Dr. Theresa Tam, the chief public health officer. Hardly the context of power-lunching in the capital.

While this was, or wasn't, going on, the hospitality industry was furloughing its employees and negotiating with landlords for deferrals on the rent.

And when the lockdown ended, they clearly weren't going to reopen without some bridge financing. Help was indeed on the way, with the likes of interest-free loans for small businesses from the Canada Emergency Business Account (CEBA) and the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy (CERS). As with the \$80-billion Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) for millions losing their jobs, the goal was to pump liquidity into the system. The current deficit may have jumped from \$30 billion to nearly \$350 billion, about 20 per cent of GDP, but that wasn't the financial public-policy issue of the moment. It was all about survival, including banks suspending interest payments on home mortgages for six months.

And as the local service sector gradually reopened at the beginning of summer, small-business leaders were faced with a new challenge: making the best of a bad situation.

From survival in one season to finding a new path to prosperity. Which was before the second wave hit in the fall.

In the case of Chown and her colleagues, they began with a comparative advantage: location, location, location.

They also have space to meet the requirements of social distancing between tables, and for outdoor rather than indoor gatherings.

Their patio is nearly 2,000 square feet of prime space. *"The tent alone is 800 square feet,"* says Chown. Even with

tables a requisite six feet (two metres) apart, they can put a lot of people in that space. And instead of a maître d', the host also acts as a contact tracer, taking guest information for notification in the event of another customer testing positive for COVID.

This turns out to be good for trade. The guests see that the hosts are taking the rules seriously, and doing the right thing. The same goes for the indoor space, with a limit of 50 customers, who are asked to wear masks when leaving their

tables for the washroom, as much for the staff's safety as for their own.

Is this a preview of Christmas seasons to come in the capital?

We sure hope not. Or, as Ebenezer Scrooge famously exclaimed in Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, *"Bah, humbug!"*

L. Ian MacDonald is a former columnist at *iPolitics* and the current editor and publisher of *Policy* magazine.


















Centre Block 2018 | photo: Heather Bakken

iPOLITICS

WORK FROM HOME

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Zoom Meeting ID: [REDACTED]

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Dear Friends:

This is the time of year we normally celebrate the festive season with all of our favourite customers. This year will be a little different. 2020 has been rough for everyone, but your support made it easier.

When we closed in March, our amazing regulars bought gift cards and sent wonderful messages of encouragement. When we opened in June, you lined up to dine with us, and brought new friends with you. When indoor dining closed in October, you bundled up and kept coming.

You've been there for us, and we're here because of you. We are so grateful for your continued support.

**FROM ALL OF US AT METROPOLITAIN,
THANK YOU & HAPPY HOLIDAYS!
SEE YOU IN 2021!**

Sarah, John & the Met Team

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