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Fostering trade is about building relationships, says Ng

By Jeff Labine

Federal cabinet minister Mary Ng says the secret to being a good trade minister is building relationships.

Maintaining them, however, can be tricky.

Case in point: Even though Canada and the U.S. are each other's biggest trading partners, disputes occasionally arise that need work, said Ng, Canada's minister of International Trade, Export Promotion, Small Business and Economic Development, speaking to iPolitics in November.

For example, the month before, Ng sent a letter to American lawmakers, protesting a new tax credit they'd proposed for American-made electric vehicles (EVs). If approved, the protectionist measure would harm the Canadian auto sector and contravene trade agreements, she argued. "It's a trading relationship we continue to have high regard for," Ng told iPolitics. "I have a good

relationship with my counterpart in the U.S., (Trade Representative Katherine Tai), but we must continue to work on it." That includes ensuring "there's recognition of the deeply integrated supply chain (between Canada and the U.S.) and how important it is to our economies."

In 2020, Canada imported nearly \$310 billion worth of goods from the U.S., according to the International Trade Administration, including \$39 billion in machinery, \$38

billion in vehicles, \$22 billion in electrical machinery, \$16 billion in mineral fuels, and \$13 billion worth of plastics.

Canada's total exports to the U.S. were worth \$376.2 billion in 2020, representing nearly 72 per cent of its global exports, according to Statistics Canada.

In June 2021, Canada's top exports in general were: \$9.25 billion in crude petroleum, \$2.97

billion in vehicles, \$2.16 billion in wood, and \$1.22 billion in refined petroleum, according to the economic data site Observatory of Economic Complexity. But Canada needs to strengthen its ties to the U.S., says Brian Masse, the New Democratic Party's critic for Innovation, Science and Industry. "Our relationship with the United States is at one of the lowest levels it's ever been," Masse said, and Ottawa needs to do more than write letters protesting tax credits.

"(The U.S.) knows we're playing from an extremely weak position because we have no auto policy," he said. "There will be no substance to any of the pushback until we get a national auto policy, and we actually follow through with those measures."

Masse said the Liberal government should focus on repairing its relationship with the U.S., which it allowed to deteriorate

while it pursued trade agreements with smaller countries like Liechtenstein and Jordan. It also needs to champion its own industries in order to counter Buy America protectionism, he said. Meanwhile, Ng also spent the past year meeting her counterparts around the world, including those in the Ottawa Group — comprising Canada, the European Union, Japan, and Mexico — to discuss how to improve the vaccine trade and strengthen the World Trade Organization (WTO), an intergovernmental organization that regulates and facilitates trade between countries.

But the Conservatives say the Liberals haven't made trade a priority. "They kind of put it in the back seat all the time, and don't act until it becomes a disaster," said Randy Hoback, the Conservative critic for International Trade and supply-chain resilience.

"I'll use the Canada-U.K. trade agreement (as an example)," Hoback said. "It still hasn't been completed. The U.K. was pulling out of the EU, and we knew that was happening. But instead of being proactive and putting something in place in the interim, (the government) just kind of kicked the can down the road." In order to continue trading with the U.K. after it left the EU in 2020 (also known as Brexit), Canada was forced into making an interim deal with Britain. The Canada-United Kingdom Trade Continuity Agreement came into effect on April 1 of this year. But because the agreement was so last-minute, it wasn't scrutinized enough, Hoback said.

"They shove (these deals) through Parliament and yell, 'Crisis! Crisis! Crisis!' and it doesn't allow us to do the proper due diligence to make sure it's the right thing for Canadians, and that's very frustrating," he added. Hoback also agreed with Masse that merely sending a letter, as Ng did to protest the Americans' EV tax credit, doesn't cut it; the Liberals need a proper plan of their own. "There are thousands of jobs at play, and there's a whole new economy emerging in electric vehicles (in which) we want to play a major role," he said. iPolitics spoke with Ng, Masse, and Hoback in early November.



Letter from the executive publisher



Dear Readers,

A lot has happened since the last edition of the iPolitics holiday magazine, yet it seems some things haven't changed.

A federal election delivered another minority government. We lived through two more waves of the pandemic and the roll out of COVID-19 vaccines. And as the nation's capital lights up for the holiday season, Canada's 44th Parliament is underway.

There was one significant change we saw in the big event on the political calendar. Voter turnout for the federal election was 62.5% – nearly 15% less than 2019 and at near historic lows. iPolitics is on a mission to change that.

In 2021 new equity partners invested in our team to help us innovate and expand. During the campaign we introduced exclusive survey results down to the riding

level. We were the only news organization in Canada with in-house issues polling and election surveys for all levels of government. These, along with new technology and unique visualizations, will deepen our editorial coverage to bring you best-in-class analysis of politics, policy and the business of government.

Whether you engage with us to inform your decisions in business or at the ballot box, or to simply be an informed citizen in a democracy, we believe our enriched offer will help you better understand Canadian politics and public policy. Readers have told us they value these additions, and our success is prefaced on understanding what you need to achieve your success. That's our new normal.

Have a happy and healthy holiday!

Heather Bakken

Executive Publisher, iPolitics

Letter from the editor



Dear Readers,

One year ago, this was the opening of my 2020 holiday-magazine letter: "As I write this, we are riding our second wave of the COVID-19 pandemic." One year on, we're in a fourth wave, and we've settled into our "new normal": having to be doubly vaccinated to enter bars and restaurants — or to board airplanes, trains, and ferries — and, in many cases, having to wear a mask at the office.

In the past year, we've had four provincial and territorial elections — plus one federal one, which yielded results that mirrored almost exactly where the governing Liberals stood pre-writ. The election changed one thing, however: the prospects of two opposition leaders.

After losing her third attempt to win in Toronto-Centre, Annamie Paul resigned as leader of the Greens and handed in her party membership. Conservative Leader Erin O'Toole, meanwhile, kicked out or sidelined caucus members who said his leadership should be reviewed because he changed policy mid-election and failed to increase his party's seats in the House of Commons.

The prime minister has been travelling the globe since June, attending G-7 meetings in England, the G-20 in Italy, COP26 in Scotland, and the North Americans Leaders' Summit in Washington, D.C.

Parliament resumed in November, and the new normal will include hybrid sittings. The government is promising a busy legislative agenda in the year ahead, and we'll be here to cover it for you.

Thank you for your continued support.

Janet E. Silver

Editor, iPolitics

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Experts say Canada must defend itself from the Arctic ambitions of China and Russia

By Janet E. Silver

As global warming melts glaciers in Canada's Arctic and sea levels continue to rise, countries like Russia and China are eyeing the shipping routes that have opened up as a result, and threatening our national security in the process, experts say.

China and Russia view the North as a source of oil, gas, minerals, and seafood. To access and defend those resources, both countries are investing in ports, satellites, ballistic-missile submarines, hypersonic missiles, and icebreakers. They also want to gain control of the Northwest Passage, which is the sea route along the northern coast of North America between the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans.

Unlike Russia, China isn't an Arctic state, but in 2013 it became a member of the Arctic Council — a forum for governments to promote co-operation in the Arctic — and has become more active in the region ever since. To support its shipping routes through Arctic waters, earlier this year, China unveiled more details of its "Polar Silk Road" plan to build infrastructure like ports, marine corridors, satellites, and ice-breaking tankers.

The biggest challenge for Canada and the U.S. is modernizing NORAD to prevent the possible encroachment on our countries' sovereignty, says Troy Bouffard, director of the Center for Arctic Security and Resilience in Fairbanks, Alaska.

NORAD, the North American Aerospace Defense Command, is headquartered in

Colorado and provides air security and an aerospace warning system for Canada and the U.S. "We do lack effective defence systems in the North," Bouffard said. "How do we deal with threats like hypersonic cruise missiles (from Russia)? Decision-makers, working together, have to commit a lot more dollars (to NORAD)."

Russia has been testing and launching hypersonic cruise missiles from warships in its northern waters for years. Tracking these missiles is difficult, because they're manoeuvrable in flight and travel more than five times the speed of sound.

Even though opinion is divided on how much to increase its budget, Bouffard says Canada and the U.S. need to invest in NORAD "right now," calling its underfunding "a very large problem (that will) affect both nations' political systems."

Conservative MP James Bezan says that, under NORAD, Canada has a responsibility for continental security.

Bezan was parliamentary secretary to the minister of Defence from 2013 to 2015, and has been his party's Defence critic for years.

"Currently, the North warning system only exists on the continent of North America," Bezan said. "It doesn't include the Arctic archipelagos — consisting of 94 major islands almost entirely covered by ice —

with the exception of Resolute Bay and Alert (in Nunavut)."

We need more satellites in the area, and we need to update our Air Force bases that have high strategic and tactical importance, he said. Once we buy a new surveillance system, whether for the Super Hornets or the F-35s, hangars and runways will need to be modernized, too. (The government is expected to announce next year which of the two fighter jets will replace its aging fleet of CF-18s.)

Meanwhile, foreign vessels are entering waters near Nunavut, and people in the North feel threatened by their presence, says NDP MP Lori Idlout, who won the riding of Nunavut in the September election. Furthermore, national discussions of security in Canada's North need to include the people of Nunavut, she said.

"We know our lands," she told iPolitics in November. "The best way to make sure that security is appropriate is to make sure it's done with a strong partnership and relationship with the inhabitants of the Arctic."

Ottawa says its Arctic and Northern Policy Framework, published two years ago, commits it to consulting provinces, territories, and Indigenous partners.

It also states that "Canada will enhance the Canadian Armed Forces' presence in the region over the long term by setting out the capability investments that will give the Canadian Armed Forces the tools they need to help local people in times of need, and to operate effectively in the region."

In a statement to iPolitics in November, Defence Minister Anita Anand confirmed Canada's financial commitment: "In Budget 2021, our government announced initial investments of over \$250 million in continental defence, which will lay the groundwork for NORAD modernization. Canada continues to work hand-in-glove with our American allies to protect our North and modernize our continental defence and deterrence capabilities."

But to prevent China and Russia from encroaching further on the North, Canada and the U.S. must spend millions more than what they've already set aside, say Bezan and Bouffard.

"If we don't start making investments and adapting to the changing threat, government has failed to protect Canadians from what could come in the future," Bezan said.



Scientists and politicians must reach across the gap if the new science committee is to succeed

By Aidan Chamandy

When former Science minister Kirsty Duncan lost her seat at the cabinet table after the 2019 election, her ministerial portfolio was treated like the youngest kid on a family road trip.

Science was back in familiar territory, squished in the middle seat between its older and more prominent siblings at the Department of Innovation, Science, and Industry.

The science community wasn't very happy. They lost a cabinet representative who'd done a lot for them.

At the tail end of the 43rd Parliament, Duncan used the only tool available to backbenchers to promote science in government. She introduced a private member's bill to create a science and research committee in the House.

"This really matters, because science has never been more important in our country's history," Duncan said in the House on April 27. Science will end the pandemic and fuel the recovery, she added.

Duncan did not respond to an interview request. Over the past 54 years, science has been attached to various iterations of the industry committee on four occasions. In that same time, the committee produced just 12 reports on science, according to Duncan's speech, which cited the Library of Parliament. Canada is a science laggard because "our Parliament does not have a dedicated mechanism that encourages anyone to focus on science and research," Duncan said in the House.

The motion passed with all-party support. Whenever committees get set up in the new Parliament, Canada will have its first science-specific committee in decades. The only other time one existed was between 1984 and 1988. Nerds, rejoice!

One of those nerds is Paul Dufour. He worked for Arthur Carty while the latter was Canada's chief science adviser from 2004 to 2008.

For this committee to be successful, scientists and politicians have to understand one another better, he said.

Too often, scientists don't appreciate how and why political decisions are made, and politicians don't understand how and why scientists come to their own conclusions, Dufour said.

The scientific community "should spend time understanding how Parliament works, how public policy is done, and how decisions are made," but also, politicians "sometimes don't know what to ask, or how to ask the right questions."

The roots of that separation were planted long ago, according to Rachel Maxwell, head of Evidence for Democracy, a non-profit that advocates for a larger role for science in government.

"The social contract that existed between science and government following the Second World War was that science was done at arm's length, and was given space to be very independent," she said.

"As a result, scientists and the science community have been a bit tone-deaf to the heavy politics that inevitably exist in Ottawa and in our Parliament. I'm hopeful this committee offers a useful channel (by) bringing the science and policy worlds closer together."

NDP MP Richard Cannings knows about that fissure, having traversed it himself.

Cannings was an ecologist at the University of British Columbia before entering politics in 2015. He'll be the NDP representative whenever the committee first meets.

"I've learned what most good politicians know, (which) is that people are persuaded and vote (according to) their feelings, rather than the facts you might present to them," he said.

"It's a difficult process for scientists. It's very frustrating sometimes, when you point out

to people, 'Here are the facts. We should be doing this,' and they still don't do that."

On the other hand, "politicians don't understand that science is a method," he said. "It's a way of looking at the world. It's a way of finding out things."

But the science community is better placed in 2021 to bridge the gap between politicians and scientists than it's been in the past, Maxwell said.

"Within the last decade, things like science communication — and this eagerness from the up-and-coming generation of researchers to contribute to policy and be more engaged" — bode well for the committee's work.

The committee is also in a good position to grapple with some key issues related to the pandemic, and to keep science front and centre in the minds of parliamentarians and the public, she said.

With its own House committee, science just might get out from the middle seat.



Have the last two years become agriculture's 'new normal'?

By Kelsey Johnson

The years 2020 and 2021 have been anything but straightforward for Canada's \$139-billion agriculture and agri-food sector, after the global COVID-19 pandemic shocked the world's economy and disrupted its supply chains.

Panic-buying emptied grocery-store shelves. Shipping containers full of goods were stranded on trains and at ports due to transportation bottlenecks. Because of labour shortages, some crops rotted in the fields, while processing lines at manufacturing plants were also short workers.

This past summer, a devastating drought scorched fields and decimated crops across large areas of North America, including the Canadian Prairies, while wildfires threatened ranchers in British Columbia. More recently, floods killed thousands of livestock, also in B.C., while farmers scrambled to rescue their surviving animals by boat.

Some of these events might be temporary blips. Others seem systemic, such as the transport bottlenecks and labour shortages, not to mention climate change. Which raises the question: Have the past two years become "the new normal" for the agriculture sector?

"I sure hope not," said Bob Lowe, an Alberta rancher who's also president of the Canadian Cattlemen's Association. "We've been whacked pretty hard."

The beef industry, which was deemed an essential service during the pandemic, has also had its challenges. In April 2020, the Cargill plant in High River, Alta. — one of the country's largest meat-processing operations — was forced to close temporarily after COVID swept through it, infecting 350 of the plant's 2,200 workers. Two of them died.

The shutdown caused a backlog of cattle waiting to be slaughtered. "When you've got one plant that processes in the neighbourhood of 45 per cent of the cattle in Canada, and they shut down, that hurts," Lowe said.

The federal government would eventually create the cattle set-aside program to help cover the higher costs of feeding those market-ready cows. But then Mother Nature threw farmers another curve ball: a massive drought.

Extremely dry conditions across much of Western Canada and parts of Ontario sent feed prices soaring. British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba account for roughly 85 per cent of the country's beef cattle, nearly half of them in Alberta alone. Ranchers struggled to keep their herds fed and intact.

It's believed the 2021 drought was among the driest on record. And according to an assessment by Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada in July, it affected 93 per cent of the agricultural land in Western Canada.

"No doubt, the drought affected producers worse than COVID," Lowe said.

In August, Ottawa promised \$500 million in AgriRecovery relief to drought-stricken farmers, while the governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and B.C. pitched in \$342 million combined. (Sixty per cent of AgriRecovery support is from Ottawa, while the provinces cover the rest.)

But even three months later, on Nov. 9, the Canadian Drought Monitor showed extremely dry conditions continuing across large swaths of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba, as well as parts of B.C. and Ontario.

The effects of climate change on agriculture aren't going away, said Canadian Federation

of Agriculture President Mary Robinson from her home on Prince Edward Island.

Robinson is a sixth-generation soybean, hay, and barley farmer.

"That might be our new norm: that there's nothing normal about climate anymore," she said. "The climate issue is very real, and it's very much on our doorstep. We've got to respond, but we've got to respond together."

Canada's agriculture ministers agree. In a joint statement after their most recent meeting, they said tackling climate change must be central to Canada's plans.

"We all want to ensure that our agriculture is sustainable, and that our farmers and agri-food entrepreneurs succeed," said federal Agriculture and Agri-Food Minister Marie-Claude Bibeau after the meeting.

The current Canadian Agricultural Partnership, a five-year funding framework between the federal government and the provinces and territories, expires in March 2023, and agriculture ministers are currently negotiating a new one.

The sector faces many challenges, Robinson says, from complex geopolitical ones — like the need to undo former U.S. president Donald Trump's crippling of the World Trade Organization's dispute-resolution function — to domestic matters, such as improving agriculture research, increasing access to broadband internet, and boosting supports for farmers' mental health.

Robinson says it can sometimes feel like being on a treadmill, where the speed keeps getting cranked up and you're afraid of falling off.

"We (farmers) are at the whim of so many things."

Decolonization should be at forefront of government's relations with Indigenous peoples

By Janet E. Silver

From the recommendations in the Truth and Reconciliation report, to the request for funds to search for unmarked graves at former residential schools, to the “calls for justice” in the 2019 report on Missing Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, many Indigenous leaders say they're frustrated and puzzled by the federal government's slow response.

After six years spent investigating the sad legacy of Canada's residential-school system, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), chaired by Murray Sinclair, released its final report in 2015. And yet, nearly seven years later, few of its 94 calls to action have been fully implemented.

The schools were operated mostly by the Catholic Church, but administered and funded by the federal government. From the 17th century until the late 1990s, they were part of assimilation efforts to destroy Indigenous cultures and identities, and, in the process, children were often neglected, physically abused — including sexually — and many died.

In November, Sinclair was appointed facilitator of talks between the federal government and Indigenous groups to resolve another outstanding matter on which the two sides disagree: a deal for Indigenous child-welfare compensation.

After the Federal Court ruled that the government had to pay \$40,000 each to thousands of First Nations children who were forcibly removed from their homes and taken to residential schools, the government put its appeal of that ruling on hold in October to allow it to reach an out-of-court agreement by year's end.

One TRC call to action that has been fully implemented is making Sept. 30 a National Day for Truth and Reconciliation, a holiday to honour those who survived the residential-school system and those who didn't.

But controversy clouded this first federal holiday, when Prime Minister Justin Trudeau spent it vacationing in Tofino, B.C., rather than attending reconciliation events to which he'd been invited. He later apologized.

This followed Ottawa's response in June to the 231 “calls for justice” in the 2019 report on Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG), including

provision of shelters for Indigenous women and girls facing abuse, and of affordable housing and transit. The government's response, two years after the report was published, was criticized as being too broad and not providing a timeline for action.

“It really wasn't an implementation plan for our calls to justice,” said Marion Buller, the chief commissioner of the National Inquiry into MMIWG, speaking to iPolitics in November.

Buller, a judge in B.C. and a member of the Mistawasis (Cree) First Nation of Saskatchewan, said it's important that all cabinet ministers read the final report, then get to work implementing the recommendations and calls for action made by both the TRC and the MMIWG inquiry.

“They have to start working on mapping the human and Indigenous violations that are occurring in Canada,” she said. “We have to get Indigenous kids out of foster care,” and move forward with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which received royal assent in June. Finally, Buller said, governments need to “decolonize.”

“(Decolonization is) acknowledging Indigenous people, communities, and nations as equal partners at all decision-making tables, as well as acknowledging and pushing self-determination and self-

governance,” she said.

The government talks about reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples, yet many Indigenous leaders, including Buller, say they don't know what it really means.

“(Reconciliation) is a word we're throwing around, and it's being used in so many different contexts,” she said. “To me, reconciliation is more than apologies. It's more than recycling existing government funding to time-limited projects; it's actually doing the hard work and decolonizing.”

Marc Miller became Canada's new Crown-Indigenous Relations minister in October. Shortly after the cabinet swearing-in ceremony, he told reporters: “The relationship (with Indigenous Peoples) has been broken because of land theft, and it's time to give land back.” He promised to restore trust and advance recognition of Aboriginal and treaty rights.

Buller says she's “guardedly optimistic” 2022 will bring progress for Indigenous Peoples, especially since the demand for change isn't coming only from Indigenous leaders and the grassroots; it's also coming from non-Indigenous allies who aren't happy with the way things are.

“This is not the Canada I signed on for,” Buller said. “Things need to change, (and this) gives me hope.”



Photo courtesy: Heather Bakken

North Atlantic right whales are on the brink of extinction – their protection must continue

By Holly Lake

As far as scientists know, no North Atlantic right whales have died in Canadian waters in the last two years. But ocean advocates say it's a sign to continue protecting them, not to ease up.

"The danger isn't gone; there's still a problem," said Kim Elmslie, campaign director for Oceana Canada. "We can't let up on the measures after two fairly good years. We have to look at the overall numbers and change the trend."

The population of this critically endangered species has been shrinking for some time. Historically, it reached 21,000 before it was decimated by whaling, which ceased in 1935. Its numbers have recovered somewhat, but they're nowhere near what they used to be. They've been falling steadily since 2010, when climate change warmed the Gulf of Maine and the water along the Scotian Shelf, creating an environment that was less favourable for foraging. In October, the North Atlantic Right Whale Consortium announced that only 336 individuals remained — an eight per cent decrease from 2019, and the lowest estimate in nearly 20 years.

Right whales inhabit the busy waters along North America's Atlantic coast. They winter and give birth in Florida and Georgia, then travel north to Canadian waters, where they feed from spring to fall. They face considerable threats from pollution and ocean noise, but it's getting hit by ships and tangled in fishing gear that's driven them to the brink of extinction.

Studies have shown that between 2003 and 2018, 90 per cent of right whales died from ship strikes or entanglements, in cases where a cause of death was determined. Climate change is compounding those risks. The fast-warming waters of the Gulf of Maine have forced the tiny plankton they feed on into cooler northern waters. The whales have followed, putting them on a collision course with fishing gear and ships in the busy Gulf of St. Lawrence.

This proved catastrophic in the summer of 2017, when 17 right whales died in Canadian waters — almost four per cent of the entire population at the time. In response, the federal government began bringing in protective measures, adapting

them every year to the whales' movements and activities.

The measures include: regular aircraft surveillance and underwater gliders with acoustic monitoring to detect the presence of right whales; areas that are temporarily and seasonally closed to fishing; mandatory and voluntary ship slowdowns; requiring that fishing gear be marked and that it be reported when lost. The start of the spring crab fishery was also moved up, so as not to coincide with most whales' arrival in the area.

This year, Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) closed 40,000 sq. km after 120 individuals were detected in the Gulf of St. Lawrence.

The department's view is that the measures work best in combination and in close collaboration with the Americans, given that the whales inhabit Canadian and U.S. waters, says Adam Burns, the DFO's director general of fisheries-resource management.

Thanks to some promising research and pilot projects, progress is being made. Work is ongoing with fishers to test ropeless gear, and, this past summer, the crab that were caught with it made it to market. By the end of next year, there will also be requirements to use weaker rope and breaking points to help whales self-release if they get entangled. Part of that effort is ensuring the measures don't inadvertently create more ghost gear, which is equally dangerous: lost, discarded, or abandoned marine debris. A fund has also been set to help fishers make the costly transition to ropeless gear.

While several whale-disentanglement teams exist on the East Coast, the goal is to prevent entanglements before they happen, given the stress it causes the whale and the additional energy it has to exert while dragging the gear.

"An entanglement, even one it recovers from quickly, has an impact on the whale, particularly its reproduction," Burns said. The concern is that they reproduce slowly (just one calf every four years), they don't start reproducing until they're teenagers, and now, fewer than 100 breeding females remain.

In the 2000s, the population averaged 24 calves a year, but calving rates have been falling ever since. And while the 10 born in 2020 amounted to a mini-baby boom, only seven

were born in 2019, and none at all in 2018.

For a species already stressed by noise and greater travel distances, Burns says the distress of entanglement resets that four-year reproductive clock.

"Any entanglement is a bad entanglement. That's why it's not enough to implement safe gear," he said.

Research shows 86 per cent of right whales have been tangled in fishing gear at least once. This year, several entanglements of right whales in Canadian waters were reported, so the work continues. Before the end of the year, the North Atlantic Right Whale Committee, made up of scientists, industry representatives, and NGOs, will meet to discuss what's worked and what tweaks must be made for the upcoming season.

Elmslie said Oceana Canada is hoping for: a real push for ropeless gear; a mandatory slowing down of ships in the Cabot Strait; better tracking of gear; and more transparent tracking of vessels.

Given how far things have come since 2017 — including a lot of goodwill from industry players trying to make a difference — she says it would be easy to assume the problem has been solved.

"But we can't take our foot off the gas. We have to think of these measures as business as usual, now. It has to be this way for the foreseeable future, until we see a change in these numbers." At the DFO, Burns agrees.

"We view the last two years as evidence that the work we've done is paying dividends," he said. "We're achieving the level of protection we want to see."

While he doesn't want to prejudge the outcome of the committee's work, the "really positive results" to date mean there's no need to reinvent the wheel. The department plans to have another strong set of measures in place when the right whales return to Canadian waters next spring.

"There is absolutely no intention to reduce efforts," Burns said. "We remain very concerned about them, and their recovery is certainly a priority for us."

Holly Lake co-authored Oceana Canada's 2019 report on right whales, *The Last 400*.

With Annamie Paul gone, who will lead the Green party in the next election?

By Jack Hauen



Photo courtesy : (Chris Young / The Canadian Press)

The battle for the soul of the Green Party of Canada begins anew. With Annamie Paul officially out as leader, and infighting leading to the Greens' worst showing in a federal election in 21 years, how can the party heal? And who will lead the way?

Whoever takes over will have the unique chance to rebuild a recognizable, mainstream political party from close to scratch. But it won't be easy, given the party is in dire financial straits and is known to voters as something like a tire fire.

Paul's rise and fall are well-known. The first Black person and the first Jewish woman to lead a major political party in Canada was driven out of politics after she made a down-the-middle statement on an Israel-Palestine conflict, and her adviser alleged that some Greens were anti-Semitic — which then snowballed into a heated debate about what the party stood for.

After she came in a close second in a 2019 byelection in Toronto Centre, 2021 was supposed to be a show of force — that the Greens weren't limited to Vancouver Island. It was instead an embarrassment: Paul finished fourth in the same riding.

A key figure in the schism was Noah Zatzman, Paul's former senior adviser, who poured gasoline on the fire by, in an infamous Facebook post, accusing Green MPs of anti-Semitism. Eventually, Paul was forced to clarify that she didn't think any of her MPs were anti-Semites.

Although Zatzman, like Paul, has left the party, he had some advice for the Greens: Don't "Corbynize," he said, referring to former U.K. Labour leader Jeremy Corbyn, who took his party so far left, it could no longer be called mainstream.

The Greens crashed and burned in 2021 because of "sabotage internally," said Zatzman, whose political home is with the Liberals; he once advised former Ontario premier Kathleen Wynne. He's now at Aurora Strategy Group, where he hopes to work on provincial affairs again.

While Paul didn't have a chance to sell her vision to Canadians, the party should try again, but with Ontario Green Leader Mike Schreiner as its role model, Zatzman said.

Known as an affable and progressive voice at Queen's Park who argues strongly for climate-change action, Schreiner was a major supporter of Paul's. As a provincial politician, however, he hasn't had to wade far into foreign-policy waters.

Both Schreiner and British Columbia Green Leader Sonia Furstenuau are "laser-focused on the issues that their voters and folks in their provinces ... care about," Zatzman said.

The federal Green party, meanwhile, "needed to prove, and still needs to prove, that it's not just Elizabeth (May's) little white-people social club from B.C.," he said. "And Annamie, most Canadians felt, gave them the opportunity to expand beyond that, and they blew it."

May's office declined to make her available for an interview.

Nor is Paul doing interviews right now, according to her former executive assistant, Victoria Galea, who's also left the party.

Another key player in the Paul saga was Dimitri Lascaris, a lawyer and "eco-socialist." Buoyed by support from disaffected leftists who yearned for a more authentic left-wing alternative to the Liberals and NDP, he finished second after Paul in the leadership race.

Lascaris said he's "seriously considering" running again, but can't commit until he knows more about the Greens' finances. Paul and the party have been negotiating how to split the legal costs they incurred fighting each other, and Lascaris said he'll need to know how seriously that battle has hurt the party's bottom line.

"I'm really not at liberty to talk about them, but I've heard rumours" that Paul is

negotiating other matters with the party that could affect it, he added.

Lascaris said he'll likely make his decision within a month, and definitely by year's end, but the election of a solid interim leader to start the reunification process could give him the push he needs, he said.

The first of two names that have circulated so far is Paul Manly. A former Vancouver Island MP who lost his seat in this past election, he hasn't confirmed his interest yet. The second is Amita Kuttner, who also ran as an eco-socialist and has expressed an interest in becoming leader.

Both would be great choices, Lascaris said, but Zatzman said Manly, another outspoken critic of Israel, would be a "travesty."

Neither Manly nor Kuttner responded to interview requests.

Despite needing a leader to begin the healing, the Greens' internal division has been overstated, Lascaris said. Everyone agrees that the climate crisis is severe, of course, but it's not just that. Most party members support bold, left-wing policies: Two-thirds are in favour of democratizing the economy, and three-quarters believe in capping the wealth of Canadians, he said.

To win votes, an unapologetically left platform is the most sensible path forward, Lascaris said, noting that polls have shown that young Canadians, especially, are increasingly skeptical of capitalism and open to alternatives.

But before setting policy, the new leader must "set a tone of respectful dialogue," Lascaris said.

"We used to be, I thought, very good at having respectful, open-minded discourse (about contentious issues), but, within the last year, the level of toxicity within the party has become extraordinary," he said.

Mike Morrice would just like to do his job.

Elected this year as the Greens' newest MP, he said he's not interested in leading the party; he just wants to make good on the promises he made to his constituents in the southwestern Ontario riding of Kitchener Centre.

Morrice chose his words carefully, declining to opine on possible leaders, including Lascaris. That's a conversation for Green members to have when the time is right, he said. But he clearly doesn't want a repeat of last time.

"This is a time when we need unity across the party, to refocus on the values and on policy priorities," he said.

Speaking about politics in general, Morrice said, "We're all tired of the name-calling and the mudslinging. We want to refocus on folks who are representatives for their communities first, and party spokespeople second."

Nor does he think the Greens need to carve out a more distinct identity; their position on climate change is already different from the Liberals' and the NDP's, Schreiner said. And they should also view other MPs as "potential collaborators," rather than enemies.

"This focus on working respectfully across party lines, and focusing on the priorities as opposed to scoring political points, is important," Morrice said. "It resonated for a lot of people in my community."

Evidently so: The last non-Liberal or Conservative to win in Kitchener Centre, or the two ridings that amalgamated to become it in 1997, was the NDP's Max Saltsman in 1974.

Whether or not this spells the end of Paul's political career, she'll have options.

Schreiner has said he's open to Paul running for his party in the 2022 provincial election, but his office declined to say whether he's managed to convince her, and didn't make him available for an interview.

"I think Annamie Paul, in my conversations with her, needs some time to heal and to be with her family right now," Schreiner told TVO in October. "But I'm certainly open to those conversations, and we're actively recruiting candidates across the province, including in Toronto Centre."

Paul's final statement implies she won't return to politics, at least for now.

"On Sept. 27, I began the process of stepping down as Green Party of Canada leader," she tweeted on Nov. 10. "Today I sent formal notice of my resignation to the (party). I will also be ending my membership in the (party). It was an honour to work for the people of Canada and I look forward to serving in new ways."

Zatzman summed things up with uncharacteristic understatement: "The Green Party of Canada has a lot of questions to answer."



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Q&A with Australia's chargé d'affaires on what's next for her country's long-standing ties with Canada

By Janet E. Silver



Photo courtesy Australian High Commission to Canada

Australian chargé d'affaires Katherine Ruiz-Avila arrived in Ottawa in January 2020 as the deputy high commissioner to Australia. In November, iPolitics sent her a list of questions about trade, security challenges, and her country's relations with Canada. Some answers have been edited for brevity and clarity. iPolitics: How would you describe Australia's relationship with Canada?

Ruiz-Avila: Our bilateral relationship is long-standing, strong, extremely friendly, and highly productive. Trade relations date back over 100 years, and formal diplomatic links were established in 1939. Our shared history and commonalities make representing Australia here in Canada a daily pleasure, as well as a privilege.

The challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted our close ties. Even though international travel largely stopped beginning in March 2020, the tempo of official exchanges only increased as we shared information, ideas, and lessons. Our relationship covers trade and investment, defence, security, academic exchanges, shared consular arrangements, and extensive governmental connections.

Canada's defence relationship with Australia is its largest in the Asia-Pacific. Many Australians also make their home in Canada, and vice versa. iPolitics: What key things do we have in common?

Ruiz-Avila: We both share proud Indigenous traditions, federal political systems, and robust democratic institutions. We also share values: our belief in freedom and openness, free speech, human rights, and equality irrespective of race, religion, and gender. In February this year, Australia was proud to endorse the Canada-led Declaration Against Arbitrary Detention in State-to-State Relations.

To address the urgent global challenge of climate change, both countries are committed to developing clean energy solutions to drive down emissions.

We continue to support each other in times of need. During Australia's Black Summer of 2020, Canada deployed emergency-service personnel to help fight hundreds of bushfires. In July 2021, Australia deployed emergency-service personnel to Canada, as you faced one of the worst forest-fire seasons on record. Both countries have a longstanding commitment to preserving the liberal international order that has underpinned decades of stability, prosperity, and poverty alleviation. This includes our recent work together in the Ottawa Group and our membership of the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP).

iPolitics: Both our countries went into lockdown in an effort to contain COVID. What does a return to normal look like in Australia?

Ruiz-Avila: Australia has one of the lowest COVID fatality rates in the world, and, like Canada, is approaching one of the highest vaccination rates in the world. Australia continues to successfully plot a path out of the pandemic, gradually reopening as vaccination rates reach target levels. The resumption of quarantine-free travel in November between Australia and our neighbours, including New Zealand and Singapore, is a key milestone.

In response to the greatest economic shock since the Great Depression, the federal government put in place an unprecedented AUD\$291 billion (about C\$267 billion) in economic support measures. Our economy is coming back strongly, with almost one million jobs added since the peak of the crisis. Looking ahead, our recovery plan focuses on restoring our economy, supporting local communities and our region, and building infrastructure to create jobs.

iPolitics: Switching to security, a deal known as AUKUS was reached in September for the U.K. and U.S. to help Australia acquire nuclear submarines to strengthen

stability in the Indo-Pacific region. What are Australia's security concerns in the region, and how will the deal help to mitigate them?

Ruiz-Avila: The Indo-Pacific is now the centre of strategic competition. As our Foreign minister, Sen. Marise Payne, has said, Australia must compete to preserve and shape the international order that has underpinned decades of prosperity and economic stability in our region. The

minister has also said that Australia has both the influence and agency to do so as a significant regional power.

AUKUS will complement our collective efforts to meet the challenges posed by our strategic circumstances, and ensure the Indo-Pacific remains stable, secure, prosperous, and free from coercion. Beyond the submarine component, AUKUS will enhance joint capability and interoperability in other areas, with an initial focus on cyber capabilities, artificial intelligence, quantum technologies, and additional undersea capabilities. I would emphasize to a Canadian audience that AUKUS will complement, rather than supplant, Australia's existing partnerships, including in Five Eyes, ASEAN, the Pacific Islands Forum, and the Quad.

iPolitics: What can Canada and the rest of the world do to allay their security concerns about China, particularly as borders begin to reopen?

Ruiz-Avila: For Australia, COVID has reinforced the reality that our security and prosperity is closely tied to that of our Indo-Pacific neighbours. This is our neighbourhood, and we have a direct stake in its peace, security, and stability.

This has meant deepening our regional engagement, getting vaccines to our region, and redirecting our development assistance to economic recovery and health security. We've doubled down on our investment in regional architecture and in relationships at all levels of government. In late October, we agreed with ASEAN leaders to elevate relations to a Comprehensive Strategic Partnership. Australia is an enthusiastic advocate to our partners of the value of strengthening their own engagement in the Indo-Pacific region. We welcome the Canadian government's increased attention to a region that is home to many of Canada's key trading routes, and from where many of its diaspora communities derive. The rising intensity of competition in the Indo-Pacific region means working together with our friends and partners to navigate risks and seize opportunities. It is in both our interests to do everything we can to support an open, sovereign, inclusive, and resilient Indo-Pacific.

Katherine Ruiz-Avila was previously posted in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea, and Port Vila, Vanuatu, and on short-term missions in Southwest and Southeast Asia. She's had foreign policy, corporate, and development roles in Australia's

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

A conversation with British High Commissioner Susannah Goshko

By Janet E. Silver

Susannah Goshko, a diplomat with two previous postings to Washington, D.C., became British high commissioner to Canada in September at the height of the pandemic's fourth wave, and when Canadians were preparing to go to the polls.

iPolitics spoke with her in November about Canada's relationship with the U.K. and what the latter hopes to gain from it. Here is that conversation, edited for brevity and clarity.

iPolitics: As we begin to turn the corner on the pandemic, what does the new normal mean for you?

Goshko: I think it's about recognizing we've been through a very difficult year and a half, but also recognizing we can take good things out of what we've learned, such as the importance of family: really investing in, and making sure we have time for, our family, because that's what kept us all going during the pandemic.

We also learned we don't need to do everything face to face; that we can do a huge amount through hybrid working. That's given us new opportunities, particularly for us as diplomats: How can we interact to work on foreign-policy issues? Can I get experts from London to speak to people here in Canada directly? Part of the new normal is finding the silver linings, including what we've learned about ourselves.

iPolitics: What would you say are the biggest challenges to trade between our nations?

Goshko: We have a trade-continuity agreement in place, which effectively rolls over the provisions of CETA (the Comprehensive and Economic Trade Agreement) to give us time to negotiate a (formal trade) agreement. I can't give you too much detail now of its contents, because both sides are currently writing their mandates for that negotiation.

The U.K. and Canada have so much in common, but there are areas that aren't traditionally covered by free-trade agreements, such as digital (online business transactions and data flow to enable global competition). Or we can make this the greenest free-trade agreement ever. The opportunities are enormous, and I'm very excited by them.

iPolitics: Brexit came into effect earlier this year and negotiations are ongoing. Do you think it's affected the U.K.'s relationship with Canada or the United States?

Goshko: During negotiations, the government asked itself: "What does our foreign policy look like going forward? Who are we? What is global Britain?"

We've been talking about a global Britain for a while, but the prime minister (Boris Johnson) thought it was important to articulate what that meant, so, in March, we published the Integrated Review. Led by the prime minister, it looks at our defence, diplomacy, and security-development priorities between now and 2030, and attempts to flesh out where we see our place in the world.

It's got some really exciting things in there for the Canada-U.K. relationship, too. For example, it sets the aspiration that, by 2030, the U.K. will be a science superpower, (thereby boosting co-operation with Canada in areas such as climate change, artificial intelligence, and data privacy through the U.K. Science and Innovation Network in Canada). And, as diplomats, we're all being asked to really think about science and innovation, which is a big change from where we were a few years ago, when diplomats were focused mainly on foreign policy.

I think science and innovation is a good example of where there's lots of organic, interesting co-operation happening between the U.K. and Canada. But the question for us is: How can we turbocharge that now? And how can I, as the high commissioner, help to support collaboration in science and innovation?

iPolitics: Switching to defence, do you see opportunities for Canada and the U.K. to work together, such as in the Arctic, where China, in particular, presents security challenges?

Goshko: We collaborate strongly with Canada on defence. We're working together on NATO's eastern flank (from the Arctic to the Caucasus, including the Black Sea) as part of the enhanced full partnership (which, in addition to NATO members, includes Australia, Finland, Georgia, Jordan, Sweden, and Ukraine), and we're working together on warships by increasing our forward presence in the eastern part of the alliance.

To me, defence feels like a strong aspect of the relationship. And Five Eyes (the intelligence alliance of Canada, the U.K., New Zealand, Australia, and the U.S.) is obviously critical for us, and we're both members of that.

We're keen to do more in the Arctic, and a number of people working in British politics and defence have said they think this is a good area for co-operation with Canada. So certainly, I'll be thinking about that over the next few years.

iPolitics: You just mentioned Five Eyes, but in light of AUKUS, the recent security pact Australia signed with the U.S. and the U.K. to help it acquire nuclear-powered submarines to push back against China, isn't it really Three Eyes?

Goshko: The Five Eyes relationship remains absolutely critical for us. In fact, my ministers see it as a really valuable grouping, and are asking, "How can we use it more?"

And you mentioned AUKUS. I would simply say there's no competition between the two (Australia and the U.S.). We're not doing one at the expense of the other in any way. In fact, I'd argue we shouldn't see this as some sort of zero-sum contest. Stability in the Indo-Pacific region is in everyone's interest, and the more we all do to bring that about, the better.

iPolitics: Finally, you arrived in Canada at the height of the pandemic's fourth wave and when the country was heading into a federal election. In October, there was a cabinet shuffle. How have you gotten your message across to the Canadian government during all these internal politics? And what key message to Canada is the U.K. communicating?

Goshko: It's not just about making my message heard with the Canadian government; it's also about connecting with the Canadian people. So, for example, I need to make the case why a free-trade agreement is in the interest of provincial governments, farmers' associations, etc. So I'm trying to see as much of the country as possible.

But if I had a message for the Canadian government, I'd communicate three priorities, the first being stronger economic and commercial links. It's in all our interests to do that. Post-pandemic public finances

have taken an enormous hit, but it's critical that we recover in a way that's sustainable and green and that sets us on a path to recovery. We need to think about new fuels and new ways of working.

The second priority is climate change. I've been talking to everybody here about it, because we're hosting the COP26 climate summit at the moment, but also because it's one of the great challenges of our lifetime. And it's another possible common cause with Canada, which has made amazing strides by committing to financing and emissions reductions. The U.K. and Canada can both show global leadership in solving this existential threat.

The third priority for me is science and innovation, because the U.K. and Canada have such similar values and we see the world in a similar way. I genuinely believe

that the natural collaboration of our two countries can unlock the first two priorities.

Given these huge opportunities, I can't wait to have as many conversations as possible to make our relationship as strong as possible.

iPolitics: Thank you for your time.

Goshko: Thank-you.



Ireland, Canada: Our complex past points to a bright future

H.E. Dr. Eamonn McKee Ambassador of Ireland to Canada

All diplomats work within a bilateral environment defined by politics. Those political narratives tend to have a long narrative arc. What is fascinating about the Irish-Canadian relationship is that we are living through a shift in that narrative. That shift points to a bright future.

Since it is my job to promote good relations, your response might be 'well he would say that, wouldn't he.' However, I have a strong case and can point to three specific events that shifted our narrative, namely 1867, 1916 and 2011.

No prizes for any Canadian who knows the significance of 1867. It was the year of Confederation, when Canada became a nation with its own parliament. Albeit under the English crown, Canada was led to this point by the founding fathers, chief among them Irishman Thomas D'Arcy McGee, a passionate advocate of Canadian nationalism.

D'Arcy McGee was a highly formative influence in the ethos of the new state, with its emphasis on embracing diverse identities, minority rights, and the devolution of democracy. He vehemently opposed the use of force in politics, as espoused by the Fenians, the secret Irish organization that believed only force would get the English out of Ireland, and who conspired to have the U.S. conquer Canada.

Steeped in the history of his homeland and keeping a gimlet eye on Ireland's politics, D'Arcy McGee's approach to Canada was shaped by British colonial rule in Ireland. It was clear by the 1860s just how disastrous that was. London had abolished Ireland's parliament in 1800 and then proceeded to rule it directly without paying it any attention. Economic development went in reverse, poverty levels became the worst in Western Europe, Dublin city decayed, and agriculture became so primitive that the population suffered a catastrophic famine. From a population of over eight million, Ireland was well on its way to halving it

through death and emigration.

Irish Catholics in Canada, D'Arcy McGee among them, believed that only home rule could arrest Ireland's decline and only home rule under the English crown could provide the kind of political forum to bring Irish nationalists and unionists together. Irish Catholics in Canada and Irish nationalists in Ireland, led by the Irish Parliamentary Party, were united in this belief. The opinion of the majority in Ireland too was that home rule under the crown was the future.

By the 1880s, the British Prime Minister, William Gladstone agreed with them but he repeatedly failed to deliver it. It was only in 1912 that home rule for Ireland was enacted, with a two-year moratorium. When the Great War erupted in 1914, it was shelved again. Irish Catholics in Canada joined the Canadian Expeditionary Force as good citizens fighting for king, country and home rule in Ireland. Encouraged by their leader, John Redmond, the majority of Irish nationalists back home joined the British Army. To fight for the freedom of little Belgium was to fight for the freedom of Ireland. Redmond toured Canada in 1914 to widespread acclaim as the man who would make Ireland in Canada's image.

A terrible beauty was born, wrote W.B. Yeats about the Easter Rising in Dublin in 1916. Never has a revolutionary moment been so economically summarized. The Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Fenians, staged a lighting strike that took over the city and held it for a week. It was the first time since 1170 that Dublin was in Irish hands. The execution of the leaders under British martial law incensed the country. Irish Canadian veterans returned to Canada as heroes. Irish veterans returned to Ireland and found their sacrifice had no place in a country transformed. Redmond's party was wiped out electorally. The fight was on - literally the War of Independence between 1919 and 1921 - not for home rule but full

independence as a republic.

With its sovereignty vested in the English crown, its Anglophone ethos predominant and comfortable with regnal pomp and ceremony, Canada presented something of a conundrum for us back in Ireland. It was the future we never had. Our tensions with Britain escalated with the outbreak of the Troubles in Northern Ireland in 1969. For thirty years, the conflict dominated Anglo-Irish relations.

The peace process from the 1990s onwards began to build a different future. Canadians played key roles in this, notably Justice Hoyt serving on the Bloody Sunday Inquiry, Justice Cory investigating allegations of collusion between the state and paramilitaries, and General John de Chastelain playing a leading role in the decommissioning of paramilitary weapons. Unlike those from the US, like Senator Mitchell who chaired the Good Friday Agreement talks, they came as individuals not as emissaries from their governments.

Ireland's long and tortured relationship with the English crown since Henry II claimed Ireland as his lordship in 1171 came to an amicable end with the visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland in March 2011. Her deft approach and sensitivity, and her awareness of symbolic import were matched by President of Ireland, Mary McAleese. Old wounds were healed, a new comfort entered our relationship with the crown, demonstrably so with the official visit of the current President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins, to Britain in 2014.

This new narrative has infused the relationship between Ireland and Canada with energy and promise. The context had evolved too into a propitious one. Both countries embrace diversity and share the same values: support for human rights, UN peacekeeping, and the international rule of law. Both believe that free trade is best for everyone, that talent is the key to the future,

that human values not power politics must set the agenda.

Both countries are on journeys of reconciliation, approaching the problems of today that have their roots in the past. For Canada, it centers on relations with the First Nations, now led by Canada's first Indigenous Governor General. For us in Ireland, it centers on our relations with the Unionist community and our future together. There are resonances for us both in these explorations.

The change in pace in bilateral arrangements was boosted too by Irish emigrants coming to Canada during the Global Financial Crisis, infusing deeply rooted Irish communities with new energy. That they chose Canada said something too about their view of the future. In the three years before the pandemic, we had over twenty high-level visits from the Irish Government to Canada. The Ireland Canada

Parliamentary Group is growing in strength and purpose. The Canada-European Union Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement has established a new platform with vast potential.

The shortest route across the great North Atlantic Ocean is between southwest Ireland and Newfoundland. According to legend, St Brendan the Navigator sailed this route in the sixth century. It has been crossed many times since then, by ship and then by electric cable in 1858 between Valentia Island in County Kerry and Heart's Content Newfoundland, arguably the start of today's globalization. Today it takes a mere five hours to fly across.

From hesitancy to embrace, we have come back the future. We might know a lot more now than St. Brendan but there is a great sense of the adventure in this new exploration of Irish-Canadian connections.



Taiwan should not be sidelined

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

As the worst of the pandemic wanes in Canada and elsewhere, many travellers are once again taking to the skies to visit friends and family, conduct business, or travel for leisure. The specialized UN agency that sets common norms and standards for all manner of air travel and trade — the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) — recently held a high-level conference, declaring a common vision for aviation that fosters a resilient and sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

As the declaration reads, it is the “ICAO’s top and immediate priority” to enhance inter-state co-operation. This co-operation will help “enable the safe and efficient recovery of civil aviation, while managing risks to public health.” Moreover, the statement recognizes the importance of “leaving no one behind, (and) uniting together to rebuild the aviation sector from the COVID-19 pandemic as soon as possible.”

This statement may read to many as obvious; clearly, global standards and norms require co-operation between states, and the project of revitalizing the aviation sector is complex and multifaceted. The effort will only succeed if all countries are paddling in the same direction.

It’s therefore troubling that the ICAO effectively sidelines a country that provides services to more than 70 million passengers annually, is a major global trade and transportation hub, and is a committed and effective partner in combating both COVID and global warming. I’m speaking, of course, of Taiwan, which is excluded from ICAO meetings and functions, such as this recent high-level conference, due to political pressure from China.

The problems associated with this exclusion are myriad. First, it has the potential to create a dangerous gap in norms and standards, such as was observed early in the pandemic. In early 2020, Taiwan

was more proactive than the ICAO’s recommendations, and attempted to communicate to the organization the threat posed by an emerging virus in Wuhan, long before the international community more broadly was roused to action and concern.

It’s impossible to know whether the pandemic globally may have turned out differently, had the ICAO heeded Taiwanese warnings. But in any case, these gaps in the international system come with real costs and consequences, and Taiwan’s exclusion provides no discernable benefit.

Next, excluding Taiwan from bodies like the ICAO limits the efficiency of standards and norms that ICAO member states are attempting to enact. This is clearly the case, when it comes to the ambitious emissions targets and fuel standards announced at the recent COP26 summit in Glasgow, as well as the aspirations of the ICAO itself to introduce greater sustainability to international aviation. With aviation contributing three per cent to global emissions, and with progress on this front remaining sluggish, it’s a moral and practical affront to exclude Taiwan from participating openly in global efforts to set more sustainable standards and practices in aviation.

The ICAO itself was founded on the basis that friendly and co-operative relations in international civil aviation play a functionalist role in developing the ties and shared understandings that underpin peace, security, safety, and friendly relations globally. So not only is excluding Taiwan impractical, it also clashes with the very values upon which the ICAO and other international bodies are premised.

BEGIN OPTIONAL TRIM

Put simply, the status quo is unsustainable and unacceptable.

Despite being excluded, Taiwan maintains the high global standards for aviation safety,

and is doing its part in combating climate change. Yet these efforts would be vastly improved if the Taiwanese government — the sole and democratic representative of more than 23.5 million Taiwanese people, and the sole governing authority of the Taipei Flight Information Region (Taipei FIR) — were openly allowed to participate in international and regional fora alongside all other countries.

END OPTIONAL TRIM

It’s been heartening to see greater international support for, and recognition of, the fact that leaving Taiwan on the sidelines is to our collective detriment. We are especially grateful for the multi-partisan support of this cause by parliamentarians, and the clear and consistent declarations from Ottawa that Taiwan’s participation in the ICAO is in the global interest. Canada plays an outsized role in the ICAO, as the body is based in Montreal, and so the support of the Canadian government in this respect is invaluable.

The new year will soon be upon us, with 2022 marking the 75th anniversary of the ICAO. It’s our sincere hope that Canada continues its support for Taiwan’s meaningful inclusion in both the ICAO and the international system more broadly. It is to all our benefit that the international community work in lockstep toward shared goals; doing so means ensuring all countries can openly contribute to, and benefit from, global bodies like the ICAO.



COP26 might not have solved the climate crisis, but Norway and Canada have a lot to gain from fighting climate change together

By Norwegian Ambassador H.E. Jon Elvedal Fredriksen

With the COP26 climate summit over, we could probably say we've arrived at a moment of truth for humanity. What did we achieve, and what's next for countries like Norway and Canada? We're both rich, industrialized countries with a history of high emissions, and both our governments are fully committed to act on the necessity to change. In democracies like ours, one might differ on how to fix the climate problem, but surely there can no longer be an "if" in this question.

What's most important, COP26 did bring us an agreement, a benchmark for future accountability of governments and business. Five years after the Paris Agreement, the 1.5 C target is alive, although "with a weak pulse," as COP26 chairman Alok Sharma has said. Still, had there been no agreement, accountability targets could easily fragment. So, for all the compromise, editing, and less than ideal last-minute changes, we did get an updated set of commitments. For instance, the remainder of the Paris rulebook was adopted, including rules for international co-operation and trade to lower emissions.

As COP26 got underway, the single-biggest issue was probably climate financing. Norway came to Glasgow with a promise to double its financing by 2026 and triple its support of climate adaptation. Norway spends one per cent of its GDP on global development. In the future, we plan to align climate and development policies. We'll do more to support global food security and renewable energy, as well. At a time when close to one billion people still have no access to

electricity, a new fund to mobilize investment in renewable energy will be set up by the Norwegian development fund NORFUND.

Along the same lines, Norway entered into an agreement with the World Bank's Multilateral Investment Agency to provide guarantees related to foreign direct investments in renewable energy in developing countries. We'll also continue to co-operate with Canada on the boards of the Green Climate Fund and the Global Environment Facility.

It remains critical to stop deforestation. In Glasgow, 100 countries agreed to stop the practice by 2030, and Norway is among 12 donors to put US\$12 billion on the table to protect rainforests from 2021 to 2025. It might not be enough, but it will make a difference.

The ocean remains vital to solving the climate crisis and meeting the Paris goals. We must develop a global framework for responsible ocean management and enhance ocean resilience, while also creating sustainable jobs, supporting food security, and reducing economic inequality.

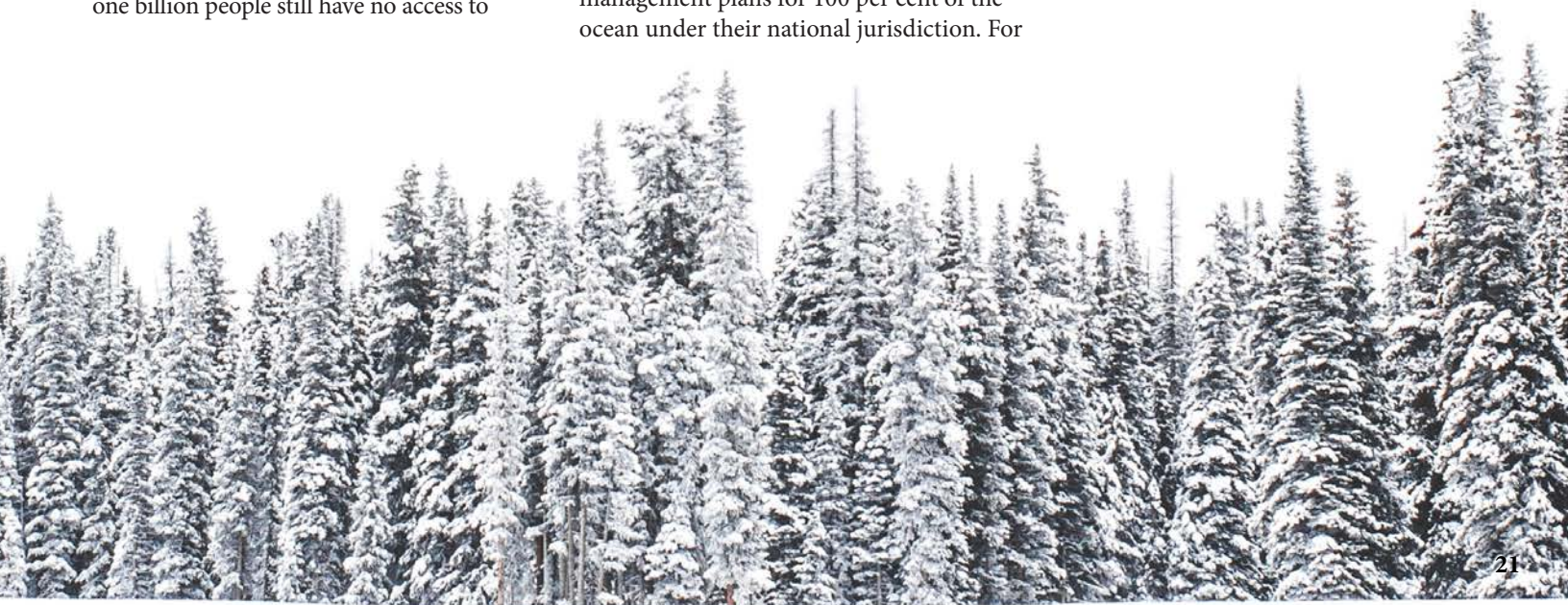
To this end, Norway took the initiative to establish the High Level Panel for a Sustainable Ocean Economy, on which both Norway's and Canada's prime ministers sit with 13 other heads of state. It was welcome news that the United States has now joined the panel and our blue/green efforts. During COP26, the panel met to suggest six points for ocean-based climate action. All members, including Norway and Canada, have agreed to develop sustainable management plans for 100 per cent of the ocean under their national jurisdiction. For

Norway, green shipping technology will be vital for coastal development and export, and so will offshore wind.

So, what about the elephant in the room? Many of the biggest donors and "highest bidders" at COP26 are also oil-producing countries — like Norway. Why don't we just stop, you might ask? First, no government will send its economy plummeting overnight, nor should it, I believe. More realistically, we can set up a plan and the correct incentives for the inevitable exit from fossil fuels.

We must ensure that the technology and regulatory framework that turned the Norwegian shelf into one of the best regulated and least polluting in the world will drive a fast development of renewables offshore and onshore. The government has promised to increase hydro-power output, and has set itself a goal of cutting emissions from the shelf by 50 per cent by 2030, and emitting zero carbon by 2050, a goal shared by Canada. Furthermore, a value chain for carbon capture and storage should be created, as it will be key to transitioning to a zero-emissions economy.

There's a saying about not letting the perfect be the enemy of the good. Personally, I think Glasgow was a lot about that. COP26 didn't solve the climate crisis — no conference will — but we sharpened the tools. Now, as we get to work, Canada and Norway have a lot to gain from picking up those tools and working together.





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A toast to bilateral bubbly

By Maryscott Greenwood

We could all use a little holiday cheer, after what's been a rather grim two years. When it comes to Canada-U.S. relations, recent developments are worth celebrating.

Our land border is now fully open in both directions. Americans and Canadians can now visit family across the border. Warm winter sunshine is beaming over parapets that have been locked for a long time. Diplomatic relations between Washington and Ottawa have ramped up considerably in recent weeks. We're moving into a vaccinated future in which COVID-19 will join a list of other challenging but controlled illnesses.

It's encouraging. This holiday season is more optimistic than last year's.

As I write, U.S. Ambassador David Cohen is packing his possessions and heading from D.C. to Ottawa. By the time you read this, he'll be settling into some of the most beautiful government housing anywhere, and taking up his office at a vital U.S. posting abroad.

In fact, Cohen will be the first presidentially appointed American ambassador to Ottawa in nearly two-and-a-half rather eventful years. Thank goodness. Ask anyone who has "acting" in front of their title, and they'll tell you it's good to drop it.

Canadians will soon learn, as I have recently, how extraordinarily engaged Cohen is in bilateral concerns, and how strategically he views the relationship — not to mention the fact that he's a delightful interlocutor for our country. He's humble and thoughtful in his approach, and familiar with some pretty complex files. The Canada-U.S. relationship thrives when all the key players are laced up and skating on the ice. We have that again now.

It's also pretty clear that Canada's diplomatic pause in Washington, for want of a better term, is over.

When Innovation, Science and Industry Minister François-Phillipe Champagne was in Washington just a few weeks ago to meet with members of Congress and with his counterpart, Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, he and I took some time for a coffee. Critical minerals and rare earths are high on everyone's agenda right now, and the minister wanted to know what it would take to attract private investment north of the border.

Champagne is well-positioned to advance the matter: He worked abroad for years in senior positions at two industrial multinationals before entering politics in 2015. And his cabinet colleague, Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault, enjoys unprecedented

credibility with environmentalists, given his background as an activist with Greenpeace and Equiterre.

My advice to Champagne was that we might now have a situation in Canada whereby industry, investors, and the environmental movement can seriously discuss allowing new mineral extraction and processing. Rare earths and critical minerals are crucial to the green economy; they're required for solar panels, electric vehicles, and other elements of the transition to a lower-carbon future. If environmentalists buy into an expansion of facilities to produce and process these minerals in Canada, the government will have an easier time putting a permit system and appropriate regulations in place. (Quick tip of the hat here to the former Canadian ambassador to the U.S., David MacNaughton, who stickhandled the original bilateral agreement on critical minerals.)

Add the growing hunger of the American market for critical minerals and rare earths, and you create a perfect opportunity for new private-sector investment. That sort of gathering synergy would also have the happy consequence of challenging China's effective monopoly in the field, as it now controls more than 80 per cent of all processing of rare earths and critical minerals.

But back to Canada's eruption of diplomacy in Washington this fall. Shortly after Champagne's trip, the North American Leaders' Summit was announced. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau swept into D.C., bringing with him International Trade

Minister Mary Ng, Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino, and Trudeau's new chief diplomat, Global Affairs Minister Mélanie Joly. They visited the White House and key members of Congress, which is smart diplomacy during a period of new trade disputes. Presidents don't have the tools to manage trade barriers (or many other matters) alone; they have to rely on Congress to create lasting policy according to our Constitutional system.

As luck would have it, the annual State of the Relationship Gala (the Canadian American Business Council's signature event) was taking place on the eve of the leaders' summit, and the prime minister and ministers were kind enough to attend. Trudeau talked about working with U.S. authorities to keep essential trade flowing during the pandemic, and how it's natural during crises to shrink into a protectionist crouch — to "hunker down" — but that leaning on close allies and partners is the most sensible course.

"Bestest of friends" was his distillation of the State of the Relationship. It got applause. But really, being together again in the same room — at the gala, the bilaterals, and the summit — was a tonic. It was wonderful that diplomats from both countries were also celebrating with special guests while tuning in live for the prime minister's remarks.

A slew of state and federal politicians from both countries chipped in by video. Democratic Rep. Debbie Dingell of Michigan said that, when she was growing up, she didn't realize Canada and the States were different countries. Republican Rep. Kevin Brady, from Texas, noted that America's trading relationship with Canada has been its economic lodestar since the founding of the republic. Testifying to a shining trade and security partnership — and the absolute necessity of returning to business as usual — were leaders like my good friends Sen. Jeanne Shaheen of New Hampshire, Sen. Jon Tester of Montana, Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan, and Alberta Premier Jason Kenney.


And a few days later, some of the same figures gathered in Halifax at the prestigious annual security forum. Once again, we convened a group of senior policymakers from the U.S. and Canada to continue discussing — this time, over lunch at Shuck Seafood + Raw Bar on the waterfront — how we can solve problems together and advance our mutual interests.

Just in time for the holidays, it feels like we're back. It feels like the most important trade and diplomatic relationship on Earth has found its groove again. Next year will be better in so many respects, as long as we keep up the pace of the past few months.

As expected, fresh irritants are appearing. It's what we in the Canada-U.S. trade business call "ordinary life." But we're standing up, dusting ourselves off, shaking hands, and getting on with the business of getting on.

Already, I've been able to break bread with people in Banff, Montebello, Halifax, Big Sky, and Sioux City. We used the lockdown time wisely. But how wonderful it is to be back on the ice, with the full team, laced up and playing hard. At last.

Maryscott Greenwood is the CEO of the Canadian American Business Council and a partner at Crestview Strategy U.S. She's based in Washington D.C., and is happy to return to her previous moniker of Canada-U.S. commuter.



Charting a course for Canada's success

By Rosemary Thompson

In early August, as many of us were experiencing a bit of freedom from pandemic restrictions, a bold and ambitious grassroots organization started to form. The Coalition for a Better Future had the lofty goal of bringing the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors together to work on a plan to strengthen Canada's economy as we emerge from the pandemic. Co-chaired by the extraordinary Anne McLellan and Lisa Raitt, in a few short days, more than 100 organizations across the country agreed to join.

I met McLellan and Raitt when they were federal cabinet ministers and I was a parliamentary correspondent for CTV National News. I remembered them as extremely intelligent, pragmatic, partisan in a collegial way, inspiring, and brave.

Both had served at the right hands of their leaders — Raitt as deputy leader of the Conservative Opposition, and McLellan as the Liberal deputy prime minister — and both were recently described as “two prime ministers that got away.” With busy lives in the private sector, what prompted them to join forces and lead this new coalition?

“It's about the importance of economic growth to our shared, sustainable, inclusive prosperity,” McLellan said in a recent interview. “That's what we all want for our families.”

Added Raitt: “I go home, and I talk to my kids and their friends, and they all think that Canada is great — that we're a really wealthy country and we're always going to be a wealthy country — and I think that's a big disconnect, because we face major challenges.”

They believe we haven't been paying enough attention in recent years to economic headwinds, which is why they're assembling people to help find solutions to three key problems: inequality, climate change, and the struggling economy.

It was important for Raitt to work across party lines with McLellan. “Anne was key for me, because it was her government in the 1990s that wrestled with the deficit and debt,” Raitt said.

“What I remember about the 1990s is that everybody was talking about it. How did that (become dinner-table) conversation? It's such a big economic concept, but we were all on the same page, trying to do the same thing. I'd like to see that for economic growth.” I remember the 1990s, too. As a young correspondent living in

Montreal, the country was troubled both politically and economically, especially in the months leading up to the 1995 sovereignty referendum.

Because of its high debt and deficit, the Wall Street Journal labelled Canada “an honorary member of the Third World.” But then-prime minister Jean Chrétien and Finance minister Paul Martin undertook an unprecedented review of spending, and balanced the budget in only a few years. They put the Canadian economy on a stable footing and restored Canada's economic reputation internationally.

The challenges are different now. There will be economic repercussions from the COVID-19 pandemic. We're in the midst of a critical energy transition to meet our climate-change commitments. We're engaged in the important work of Indigenous reconciliation. We're navigating a digital revolution that brings both challenges and opportunities.

The issues are complex and require many bright and diverse minds to look for solutions. As Carolyn Wilkins said at the coalition's recent summit, “To achieve growth, we need to recognize the power of the public and the private sectors to work together to shape the economy for the common good.” That's why the Coalition for a Better Future was formed: to bring organizations from civil society and the private sector together to help all levels of government chart a course for Canada's economic success for generations to come.

With the help of a volunteer advisory council, the support of the Business Council of Canada, and the input of some brilliant people in public policy, the coalition has created a scorecard of metrics. It will use these internationally recognized indicators to measure Canada's progress toward goals that unite coalition members: economic growth, equality, and climate-change mitigation.

It's a bold experiment to broaden the discussion and invite more voices to the table. As Canadians, we all have ideas to offer, as we make a long-term economic plan to ensure this country remains among the best in the world for our children and grandchildren.

Canadians deserve nothing less.

Rosemary Thompson is executive director of the Coalition for a Better Future.

2022: The unwinding of our economic paradoxes

By Mark Agnew

As we head into the holidays and slowly make our way toward another new year, we find ourselves at a time of restless transition. If 2021 was about vaccination rates and reopening our beleaguered economy, 2022 is shaping up to be about addressing everything else that happened — or didn't happen — while we focused on COVID-19. Sometimes it feels like we're coming to the other side of the pandemic's peak, filling us with hope and a renewed energy. At the same time, the difficult realities of a post-pandemic economy and an unsettled business climate loom large. Despite everything we've gone through, the hard part is still ahead. A lot has been happening in the background of COVID-19. Climate change and increasing pressures from environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria have been a drag on growth, as have shifting diplomatic and international-trade landscapes and global supply-chain problems. Within our economy are massive challenges, and what we do today will leave a lasting mark on our economic recovery from the pandemic for years to come.

Canadians, and the businesses that employ them, are struggling to adjust to longer-term disruptions of supply chains, which will take years to sort out. This is happening just as businesses and consumers start to find their economic feet. In 2022, we could see a paradox of businesses finally reopening fully, but not having enough goods to sell. We also have a paradox in our job market: Many people are looking for work while many employers can't find talent. A lot of self-congratulatory attention has been paid recently to the milestone of recouping all the jobs lost since the start of the pandemic. Yet, comparatively little has been said of the 900,000 current job vacancies that cast an ominous shadow over our long-term recovery, which will be much more difficult to resolve. Talent is needed in so many sectors, at different points on the value chain, and in every part of the country — and there's no silver-bullet-fix at hand.

In the absence of political leadership, we need something pragmatic yet ambitious to unite behind. There's one clear solution to the problems we face: sustainable and inclusive economic growth on a scale that allows us to pay for our social goals and afford our climate ambitions.

The GDP's current anemic growth of two per cent will cause us to fall further and further behind our G7 counterparts. The time has come to get laser-focused on sustainable growth. Because we can't borrow our way to prosperity, sustainable growth will drive us forward, focus our efforts, and benefit all our social and climate goals. To that end, this Parliament must set three priorities. First is supply-chain resilience. Companies are facing shipping bottlenecks and a shortage of inputs and labour, while the costs of doing business increase. Even in a knowledge-based economy, we can't function without reliable access to products that go into making the goods consumers expect, or that manufacturers need to operate in a cost-competitive manner.

Second is tax and fiscal policy. With a fragile recovery, now is not the time to impose uncompetitive taxes on businesses. In fact, with an outdated tax system that hasn't been reviewed comprehensively since before we put someone on the moon, we need to step back and evaluate the competitiveness of the system as a whole.

Third is the digital economy. Canadian businesses are at increased risk of ransomware attacks, and the government needs to invest more in cybersecurity to protect our infrastructure. Updated privacy legislation must also be tabled again in Parliament to ensure that, in a world where

data is the new gold, our companies are at the leading edge. The Canadian Chamber of Commerce believes our role is to tirelessly focus the attention of our policymakers on economic fundamentals and growth. This won't be easy, considering our political cycles don't inherently reward long-term economic planning. Canadians will know the economy is growing when Main Streets everywhere light up with "Open for Business" signs. In a time of paradoxes, that's a worthwhile goal all of us can agree on.

Mark Agnew is senior vice-president of policy and advocacy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce.





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Troubled leadership and grumbling membership: Jason Kenney's new normal is the same old normal

By Graham Thomson

Alberta's "new normal" was supposed to start on July 1, 2021.

At least that's what Premier Jason Kenney was hoping for, when he lifted almost all pandemic restrictions, declared the province "open for good," and promised Albertans the "best summer ever."

Except COVID-19 had other plans. So, too, it turned out, did angry voters, disgruntled government MLAs, displeased United Conservative Party (UCP) members, and even the climate.

Kenney's "best summer ever" became Alberta's worst fall ever, as a fourth wave of the pandemic ravaged the province's health-care system, killing hundreds of Albertans and forcing Kenney to call in the Canadian military to help.

Kenney's approval rating dropped to 22 per cent, cementing his status as the most unpopular premier in the country. In September's federal election, the Liberals won two seats in Alberta, as did the NDP, in part because Kenney's unpopularity ran so deep provincially that it affected the vote federally.

In Alberta's October municipal elections, not only did Kenney's civic allies lose ground, but Edmonton voters elected Armajeet Sohi, a former minister in Prime Minister Trudeau's cabinet, while Calgary voters elected their first female mayor, Jyoti Gondek, who quickly pushed city council to declare a climate emergency.

There's a "new normal" in Alberta, but it goes far beyond Kenney's cynical and ill-judged hope for the "best summer ever."

Albertans, as represented by Sohi and Gondek, are more progressive, more environmentally conscious, more willing to embrace change — and less willing to follow the simplistically antagonistic rhetoric and actions of Kenney, who failed Alberta during the pandemic.

Kenney's in trouble with the public and with members of his own party. He's said he welcomes a planned review of his leadership by party members in 2022, but 22 of the UCP's 87 constituency associations sent a letter to party headquarters in November demanding the review not only be conducted as quickly as possible, but that every party member be allowed to vote, not just those with the time and money to attend an in-person general meeting. Furthermore, considering the controversy surrounding the bitter UCP-leadership race that Kenney won in 2017, they want the review to be audited by an independent agency to avoid cheating.

At the UCP's annual general meeting in November, Kenney acknowledged unrest in the party, but only to a point.

"We have made mistakes in the process, and, as premier, I must take responsibility for

that," said Kenney of his jumbled response to COVID. "I know that many of you are angry with me and our government for having introduced public health restrictions at various times throughout COVID. I get it, I really do. I hear you, and I do so respectfully. It's no secret that these views have been strongly expressed in our caucus."

Kenney did not acknowledge complaints that he's an autocratic leader who not only gaslights the public, but ignores advice from his own caucus, and has made a mockery of his one-time "grassroots guarantee" to party members.

You might also have noticed that Kenney's apology wasn't aimed at the majority of Albertans, who, according to various opinion polls, supported more safety measures; he was speaking to the minority who wanted few, if any, restrictions.

This is Kenney once again deferring to the right-wing faction of his party, which, among other things, rankles at pandemic regulations, loathes anything to do with the Trudeau government, and questions the reality of man-made climate change.

With almost every important issue facing Albertans, Kenney has made himself a hostage to a conservative base and his own political rhetoric.

In July, he promised never to invoke a vaccine passport. Then, strong-armed by reality, he reluctantly introduced one in September, but petulantly called it a "restrictions-exemption program," which managed to anger Albertans on both sides of the issue.

In April, when Trudeau announced a subsidized \$10-a-day daycare program for any province that wanted to sign on, Kenney dismissed it out of hand as "a kind of cookie-cutter, nine-to-five, urban, government- and union-run institutional daycare" option.

It was a simplistic, knee-jerk, anti-Trudeau reaction that might have pleased his conservative base, but it pitted him against a program that was wildly popular with working parents, particularly in the cities. As province after province joined the program, Kenney constantly dragged his feet. He finally and reluctantly signed on to it in November, when he was forced to appear as an awkward prop at a joint federal-provincial news conference headlined by Trudeau.

Even though the Alberta government is taking steps to reduce the province's massive greenhouse-gas emissions, Kenney plays to his more conservative base when referring to climate change: He dismissed the meeting of global leaders at COP26 in Scotland last fall as a "gabfest," and refused to send an official Alberta delegation.

He continues to rail against the federal carbon tax on consumers, even as his own government applies its own carbon tax on large industrial emitters.

The province is partnering with Ottawa to reduce emissions by promoting blue-hydrogen projects and carbon-capture technologies, yet Kenney allows backbenchers to make members' statements in the legislature that question the reality of climate change.

In July, as drought wilted Alberta crops and Ottawa promised aid for farmers "experiencing the impacts of extreme weather caused by climate change," the Alberta government couldn't even bring itself to acknowledge climate change, preferring to blame the plight on less-ominous-sounding "dry conditions."

It would seem Kenney is happy to be viewed as a climate-change laggard, if it pleases a right-wing faction that's so crucial to his future.

Politically, he's being held hostage by an angry conservative base that's often out of step with the majority of Albertans — but it's Kenney who tied himself up and tossed himself into their basement.

In return for their political support, he's promised them a return to simpler times with no carbon taxes, more energy pipelines, plenty of jobs, less government interference, and more personal freedoms.

He's failed or struggled with every one of those promises.

The good news for Kenney is that the Alberta economy is on the rebound, thanks to higher energy prices, progress fighting the pandemic, and promised investments from corporations.

The bad news is that Kenney continues to promise Albertans a "new normal" that looks remarkably old — one where oil and gas are the growth fuels of the future, where yelling at Ottawa is a winning strategy, and where threatening to form an Alberta provincial police force and an Alberta pension plan is viewed as brilliant, not petulant.

Alberta is a province that's changing, even as Kenney and more than a few UCP members rail against that change. Consequently, and unfortunately, the new normal for Alberta is a political scene that's chaotic, divisive, and preoccupied with Kenney's uncertain future as leader of the UCP.

The premiers' wish lists for 2022

By Sneh Duggal

While the jolly man in red is making his list and checking it twice, Canadian premiers have their own wish lists for Ottawa's man in red, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau.

Topping several of them is a boost in funding for health care, the cost of which has skyrocketed due to the pandemic.

iPolitics asked the premiers of the 13 provinces and territories what three things they'd like from Ottawa next year. Here's what the eight who responded said.



Ontario Premier Doug Ford
Photo Credit: (Tijana Martin / The Canadian Press)

Ontario

Progressive Conservative Premier Doug Ford's No. 1 wish is for a bigger Canada Health Transfer, the program that helps provinces and territories pay for the health care they provide. His office said Ottawa's share of health funding has fallen to an average of 22 per cent of provincial costs, and the shortfall is in the "billions of dollars, (which) could be used to improve health-care services."

Second, the province has 316,000 vacant jobs, and Ford wants the feds to make life more affordable and to let in more economic immigrants.

"Whether it's filling up at the pump, buying groceries, or purchasing a home, the cost of living continues to go up, and people are looking to their governments to (increase) affordability," Ford's office said.

Last, the premier wants to continue working with Ottawa to build infrastructure, including for transit.



Quebec Premier François Legault
Photo Credit: (Émilie Nadeau)

Quebec

Premier François Legault's first wish is also for a fatter health transfer.

"The health systems of all provinces are currently very fragile," a spokesperson for the premier said. "We're calling for an increase in transfers from 22 to 35 per cent, followed

by indexation of six per cent per year." The transfers should also come "without conditions."

Second, Legault wants "full control over immigration" that occurs under the family-reunification program, and which accounts for one quarter of all immigrants to Quebec.

And third, Ottawa "must promise not to launch, nor fund, a legal challenge against" Bill 21, which bans the wearing of religious symbols by authority figures, including police officers and teachers.

Whatever the issue, it boils down to Quebec wanting more autonomy from Ottawa, the spokesperson said.



NWT Premier Caroline Cochrane
Photo Credit: (Angela Gzowski Photography)

The Northwest Territories

Closing the "very significant gaps" between Canada's North and South is Premier Caroline Cochrane's top priority.

"The very high cost of living, housing, and energy mean living in the North is not affordable, and NWT residents suffer from higher rates of hunger and food insecurity," she said. They also have "fewer child-care options, (and more) homelessness and inadequate housing."

"We often talk about building back better after a disaster," Cochrane said. "In Canada's North, we need to build much of our infrastructure for the first time — and do it so it can withstand the impacts of accelerating climate change."

This leads to her second wish-list item: money to adapt to climate change in the territory, which Cochrane called "an investment in the future of the Arctic and the entire planet."

Third, Cochrane is looking for investments to help the NWT recover socially and economically from the pandemic, including in the mining sector.



Yukon Premier Sandy Silver
Photo Credit: (Yukon Liberal Caucus)

The Yukon

Liberal Premier Sandy Silver’s “focus (is) on the path of reconciliation,” a spokesperson said. To that end, she’d like more access to health services, including for mental health.

Second, money is needed to mitigate and adapt to climate change, such as for energy retrofits that cut emissions.

And third, her government wants Ottawa to invest in infrastructure that “advances the green economy, such as clean-energy solutions in the territory.”



Manitoba Premier Heather Stefanson
Photo Credit: (John Woods / The Canadian Press)

Manitoba

Progressive Conservative Premier Heather Stefanson said she told Trudeau her top priorities soon after she took office on Nov. 2.

First, she wants Ottawa to support reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in the province.

Second, she needs bigger health-transfer payments to “support vital ongoing pandemic-recovery efforts, address significant surgical backlogs, and improve the sustainability of the system.”

And third, she wants changes to federal immigration policy that will help fill labour shortages in Manitoba and boost its economic recovery.

And if there’s room on the list, she’d also like Ottawa to invest with Manitoba in “essential and green infrastructure projects.”



Nova Scotia Premier Tim Houston
Photo Credit: (Government of Nova Scotia)

Nova Scotia

Progressive Conservative Premier Tim Houston, who was elected this summer, said health care, particularly mental-health care, is No. 1 on his list.

“It is our intention to make Nova Scotia the first province with truly universal access to mental health care,” said Houston, and federal funds would help “expedite this.” The province also wants Ottawa to help pay for a national “9-8-8 emergency mental-health line.”

Second, with the province’s population approaching one million, Houston said he wants it to be two million by 2060 by bringing in 25,000 people a year.

“To do this, we need support from the federal government to: reduce processing times for applicants seeking permanent residency; increase our immigration allocation numbers; and (offer more training to meet) our labour-market needs,” Houston said.

Citing the recent passage of his government’s environmental legislation, Houston said his third request is that Ottawa help it “complete the Atlantic Loop and partner on more clean-energy projects.”



N.L. Premier Andrew Furey
Photo Credit: (Government of N.L.)

Newfoundland and Labrador

Health care is also at the top of Liberal Premier Andrew Furey’s list. Because its population is the oldest in Canada and has the highest mortality from cancer, respiratory disease, diabetes, and heart

disease and stroke, his province spends “the most per capita on health care, with some of the poorest outcomes.”

“A strong federal partner is critical to improving health outcomes for Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, and ensuring long-term change,” he said.

Climate change is next, and Furey says technological investments are key to “driving clean and inclusive economic growth, and supporting the global energy transition.”

Changes to immigration policy is third on the list, since the province needs skilled workers, yet faces a “consistent population decline,” Furey said, noting the harm it does to the economy.

“Working collaboratively with the government of Canada is key to (our) continued efforts to welcome more and more newcomers to live and work in the province,” he said.



Nunavut Premier P.J. Akeegok
Photo Credit: (Government of Nunavut)

Nunavut

P.J. Akeegok, who became Nunavut’s new premier on Nov. 17, said the territory has “many pressing needs, and requires urgent investment to be on par with the rest of Canada.”

He said Nunavummiut (Inuit from Nunavut) want three things that are “immediately necessary,” and which his newly formed government will advocate for in Ottawa: elder care, mental-health care, and housing.

Ontario Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy promises he hasn't forgotten to be fiscally conservative

By Charlie Pinkerton



Photo Credit: (Ontario Finance Minister's office)

When Michael Wilson became Canada's Finance minister, he inherited a string of government deficits he called the "silent menace."

Wilson was appointed to the job in 1984, after years of record spending by the Pierre Trudeau government.

Before he was reassigned six-and-a-half years later — the longest a Progressive Conservative has held the cabinet post — Wilson managed to set a new course for federal spending.

After representing the Toronto-area riding of Etobicoke Centre for 14 years, he decided not to run for re-election in 1993, returning instead to his career on Bay Street. He died in 2019 at the age of 81.

After his parents moved to Etobicoke, Ontario's current Finance minister, Peter Bethlenfalvy, met Wilson when the latter was still in Parliament. After Bethlenfalvy started volunteering for him, he began to imagine a similar career path for himself.

"He's my role model: to be in the private sector, but also to give back," Bethlenfalvy told iPolitics in November.

Before entering politics, Bethlenfalvy developed his business acumen on both Bay and Wall streets, where he held senior executive positions with such global heavyweights as Manulife Financial, DBRS Ltd., and TD Securities.

The 2018 provincial election was

Bethlenfalvy's first go at public office. In running for Doug Ford's PCs, he said his intention wasn't to become Finance minister.

Nevertheless, it took the rookie MPP less than three years to ascend to what's considered the second-most important job in cabinet, behind only the premier.

Like Wilson, Bethlenfalvy found himself steering the government's finances at an unenviable moment, even though they were appointed at different points in their respective governments' life cycles: Wilson was then-rookie prime minister Brian Mulroney's first appointee, while Bethlenfalvy was Ford's third in as many years.

Neither of Bethlenfalvy's two immediate predecessors — Vic Fedeli and Rod Phillips — lasted long enough to table a second budget. Fedeli was the fall guy for unpopular and veiled spending cuts, while Phillips's mid-pandemic trip to the Caribbean island of St. Barts cost him his post.

Bethlenfalvy is coming up on one year on the job, having taken over from Phillips on New Year's Eve last year. Just two months before, Phillips had tabled that year's budget after it was delayed in the spring, which is when the government usually produces its spending forecast.

The 2020 budget projected a deficit that fiscal year of \$38.5 billion. It ended up being less than half — \$16.4 billion — thanks to tax revenues that were unusually high during a crisis, as well as \$8.5 billion in

pandemic aid from Ottawa and lower-than-expected government expenditures. Critics weren't happy with the latter two.

Nevertheless, Bethlenfalvy would have been uncomfortable inheriting that bottom line. Much like Ford, who reminded everyone this November he believes "the worst place you can hand your money over is to the government," Bethlenfalvy considers fiscal prudence part of his political DNA.

"It would be very easy to kick the ball down the (road) and make future generations pay for all of this," he said. "So we have to be responsible financially."

Before being appointed Finance minister, Bethlenfalvy oversaw the province's bureaucracy. As president of Ontario's Treasury Board from June 2018 to June 2021, he was responsible for trimming excess public-service spending. (He was head of Finance and the Treasury Board for six months, before the latter was assigned to MPP Prabmeet Sarkaria.)

While at the Treasury Board, Bethlenfalvy: passed Bill 124, the controversial legislation to limit wage increases for public-sector workers; initiated the move to a centralized procurement agency, Supply Ontario, to save on procurement costs; spearheaded a "line-by-line" independent audit of the government's finances; and kickstarted an effort by the government to digitize its services to make them cheaper.

Because they both had business careers before going into politics, Bethlenfalvy says he and Ford "agree on most things." They're also "very much on the same wavelength" when it comes to the importance of innovation and keeping promises.

But what he "brought to the table" as Finance minister was a focus on modernizing and digitizing government operations and services, as he'd done at the Treasury Board, he said.

It's not surprising that Bethlenfalvy's first budget, tabled on March 24 of this year, dealt mainly with pandemic costs. But there was a short section dedicated to digitizing government, including \$500 million for the Ontario Onwards Acceleration Fund,

which is meant to make Ontario “the most digitally advanced jurisdiction in the world.” The fund has already been used to: create an online system to manage court cases; make it easier for doctors to make online health-expense claims; and accelerate the transition to digitized government licences and certifications.

The government is counting on the pandemic being largely over by the time Bethlenfalvy prepares his next budget this spring, which should give him more flexibility. But because he’ll likely be releasing it shortly before his party comes up for re-election, he’ll still have to make the political calculations required of any pre-election budget.

This fall’s economic outlook and fiscal review — also known as the fall economic statement or mini-budget — shows the government might be spared a record deficit, again thanks to higher tax revenues. The \$21.5-billion deficit it projects would still be the province’s worst-ever unadjusted shortfall, but it’s \$11.6 billion less than what Bethlenfalvy’s spring budget projected.

Like the 2019 fall economic statement (the last to be released on schedule, before pandemic disruptions), this year’s mini-budget was reasonably cautious. The biggest chunks of new cash are for provincial infrastructure like highways and bridges — including the controversial Highway 413 and

Bradford Bypass projects around Toronto. According to the fall economic statement, the province is counting on these multi-year, billion-dollar projects to drive its economic recovery. Funding for health care, including the province’s troubled system of long-term care, was the mini-budget’s final pillar.

When asked what kind of spending future budgets will prioritize, Bethlenfalvy avoided specifics, saying only that “being fiscally responsible is definitely (still) one of my priorities, and one of our government’s priorities.”

In the best-case scenario, Ontario returns to black in 2026-27, according to his last budget. But in a more recent analysis, the province’s independent Financial Accountability Office said the books won’t balance until 2029-30 at the earliest.

“Right now, we have an incredible amount of uncertainty,” Bethlenfalvy said of those projections. “No one really knows what’s around the corner.”

What should be expected is a continued push to innovate government operations and to make government services more efficient, Bethlenfalvy said.

The PCs have resisted raising taxes to pay for the debt incurred during the pandemic, and for more than 10 years of deficits that preceded it. But they’ve also failed to keep two promises: to cut the provincial gas tax

by 10 cents a litre, and to lower income taxes for middle-income earners by 20 per cent.

Ford said this fall that a 5.7 cent/litre gas tax cut would come before next spring’s budget, but Bethlenfalvy wouldn’t say if the income-tax cut was still on the table.

“I know you won’t like this, but stay tuned,” he said when pushed for an answer.

As Canada’s Finance minister, Bethlenfalvy’s role model, Michael Wilson, never balanced the federal books.

But he came close by restoring Ottawa to an operating surplus: Had he not inherited more than \$200 billion in high-interest debt, his government would have eventually gone into black. He got there partly by cutting loose budget-sucking Crown agencies and making targeted tax reforms.

Before going on to negotiate NAFTA as minister of International Trade, Wilson’s main legacy as Finance minister was introducing the federal goods and services tax (GST). While controversial at the time of its creation, the GST became a critical revenue generator for the surpluses of the Chrétien and Martin governments to come.

Wilson, of course, faced the “silent menace” of deficits — but never the “invisible enemy” of a pandemic.

‘National cohesion’ will be François Legault’s ballot question in 2022

By Kevin Dougherty

The next Quebec election is on Oct. 3, 2022, and Premier François Legault, who now calls himself “prime minister of the Quebec nation,” has said national cohesion will be the theme of his campaign. When iPolitics requested an interview with him, his press secretary replied, “We will pass, this time.”

But in the following days, Legault gave two TV and two radio interviews to French-language media. They had a definite electoral flavour, aimed as they were at Quebec voters. “Nationalism ensures cohesion,” Legault told the TVA network’s Pierre Bruneau in a folksy interview in Legault’s riding of L’Assomption, which was once held by former premier Jacques Parizeau. “That cohesion helped us during the pandemic,” Legault said, setting the tone of the campaign to come. “It helped in getting people vaccinated, in buying Quebec products, and (it helped) our businesses.

Therefore, this solidarity, with national cohesion, is important and crucial.” National cohesion is also the goal of a proposed course to be taught in the province’s primary and secondary schools called Culture and Quebec Citizenship. It would replace Ethics and Religious Culture, which in turn replaced religion courses in Quebec’s Catholic and Protestant schools when the latter became secular French and English schools. As its name suggests, Ethics and Religious Culture teaches ethics and critical thinking while giving an overview of world religions and cultures. It was introduced in 2008, when some Quebec nationalists resented the fact that religious differences were being accepted in Quebec, especially religious symbols and garments worn by practising Muslims and Jews.^Z The course “was not wanted by many Quebecers,”

Legault told Quebec’s private COGECO radio network. Interviewer Paul Arcand suggested that the purpose of the new course was “to turn Quebecers into supporters of the CAQ (Coalition Avenir Québec),” Legault’s ruling party. It presents “a certain vision of nationalism,” Arcand said.

The new course keeps the ethics component, but Quebec culture would replace the survey of the world’s religions. It would explain the workings of democratic institutions, the equality of the sexes, and would include

sex education. It would also teach that cyberbullying, as well as sexual and conjugal violence, are not to be tolerated. “What we want to do is to focus more on culture, our history, on what it is to be a good citizen,” Legault said, denying the course would be partisan. (Legault’s CAQ party is far ahead in the polls, with one recent survey suggesting it’s on track to win 100 of the 125 seats in the Quebec legislature.) The new course “will talk about secularism, but not about Bill 21 or religious symbols,” the premier said, referring to the controversial secularism law that bans the wearing of religious signs, including the Muslim hijab, by “authority figures” such as teachers and police officers. The bill is being contested in Quebec’s courts. “The same with racism,” Legault said. “Yes, there’s work to be done, but we won’t get into the debate over systemic racism.” Legault rejects the concept of systemic racism, thereby going against the

position of Indigenous Quebecers, who point out that the Viens Commission that studied how First Nations and Inuit are treated by Quebec institutions concluded that “systemic discrimination” does in fact exist. Minority groups in the province also blame systemic racism for discrimination in hiring and housing, as well as racial

profiling by police. Legault’s position is that racism exists in Quebec, but it’s not systemic and he plans to stamp it out. “We should not be ashamed of our history,” he said in the TVA interview. “We have the right to defend our language. We have values such as secularism that we have the right to defend.”

In an interview with the premier, Radio-Canada’s Céline Galipeau asked whether racialized and Indigenous children would recognize themselves in the vision he proposes. “Absolutely,” Legault replied. “We want to bring together the maximum of Quebecers to keep and develop this national cohesion,” he said. “We have a history. Our ancestors have brought us where we are today. Now everyone, including those who came as

immigrants, should embrace that and ensure it continues to evolve. “We have to be able to remember where we came from.”

Given Legault’s popularity and past support of Quebec independence as a Parti Québécois minister, Galipeau asked whether this is his last chance “to achieve independence, to give a state to the Quebec nation.” “I rule that out,” Legault replied, because most Quebecers don’t want it.



Binge-worthy TV for the holidays

By Rachel Emmanuel

Welcome to the new normal, where the hours you once spent dressing, showering, and commuting are now yours to spend (or waste) as you like.

While my friends have been baking bread, knitting hats, and playing instruments, albeit poorly, I'm exactly where you left me one year ago: in bed, watching copious amounts of television.

They say society is more compliant when it's entertained, so if you're locked down and blue-pilled for another Christmas with immediate family, here's what's on TV.

The Peaky Blinders (Netflix)

This historical drama will have you rooting for the eponymous street gang that terrorized the streets of Birmingham, England, in the early 1900s.

Home from the mud-filled trenches of the First World War, the Shelby family is trying to expand its gambling operations beyond its own hard-won borders.

Its efforts are led by brother Tommy — played by the unparalleled Cillian Murphy — who's returned from France with a newfound boldness, and will double-cross anyone who gets in the way of his empire-building.

The gang members battle rivals, but also their own minds, which are shattered and shell-shocked from the war. They also struggle to make sense of women in the new era, who ran things while the boys were away and are now emboldened by the realization of their own strength.

With its predictable violence and unpredictable plot twists, *The Peaky Blinders*' six seasons will entertain you.

Seinfeld (Netflix)

If you want to forget your troubles, look no further than the most famous show about nothing.

Petty, hilarious, and eerily relatable, *Seinfeld* is the rare sitcom that makes you laugh out loud. In one episode, Jerry Seinfeld and company spend hours scouring a parking garage for their car. Another episode consists of them waiting for their table, which the restaurateur had promised would be ready in "10 to 15 minutes."

Or maybe you're more like Jerry's best friend, George Costanza (played by Jason Alexander), who, like a narcissist you probably

know, quits his job in a fit of rage. After trying and failing to get it back, he's eventually forced to move back in with his parents.

Seinfeld will leave you feeling nostalgic for days gone by, as it contrasts the new normal of computer screens and Zoom calls with a time when people ventured out into the world and had real, sometimes bizarre, encounters.

If you're easily offended, give this one a pass. It's probably only a matter of time before cancel culture comes for it.

The Mandalorian (Disney+)

We finally have a Star Wars spinoff that can hold a candle to George Lucas's legacy.

Unlike other recent additions to the Star Wars saga, (sequel trilogy, anyone?) *The Mandalorian* offers original storylines and characters, while still playing by the rules of the established galaxy.

Some episodes are so compelling, they could stand alone as short films. In fact, it's the only show this demanding gen-Zer will wait to watch, as episodes are released weekly.

Sure, Baby Yoda is cute, but the show also captures the despair of living in the Empire's long shadow, and depicts the galaxy's dark side in a way the original films didn't.

Unfortunately, the series' strong female lead, Cara Dune (played by Gina Carano), leaves the show after Season 2, thanks to cancel culture. We really are living in a new normal.

Now's the time to binge-watch the first two seasons, as rumour has it Season 3 comes out next summer.

Succession (HBO)

We all know our parents mess us up, but it seems that the richer they are, the truer it is.

Succession features the cut-throat Roy family, whose members are fighting for control of the family business — a global media and entertainment conglomerate — while uncertainty is created by the ill health of the family patriarch who founded the company.

As a drama that's also a satirical black comedy, *Succession* depicts all the ways money and power can poison a life.

So if you want to know what's next in the Rogers vs. Rogers saga, look no further than HBO's *Succession*. We're just not sure if the show gets its material from Rogers, or it's the other way around.



The more things change...

By Charlie Pinkerton

Months before Ontario's last election, Toronto Maple Leafs fans hoping for a Stanley Cup were gutted by a first-round-playoff exit for the second of what would be five straight seasons.

It was two years after the Ebola epidemic ended, and two years before COVID-19 changed the world.

Kathleen Wynne was premier, and the leader of Ontario's Progressive Conservatives (PCs), Patrick Brown, seemed a shoo-in to succeed her — until, all of a sudden, he wasn't.

Since 2018, the provincial Liberals — who governed Ontario for 15 years — have been without official party status. Doug Ford's chances to lead the PCs to a second term have gone up and down, and the world has been dealt the worst threat to public health in 100 years.

It seems impossible to compare the circumstances of the PCs' bid for re-election this spring to those they capitalized on to win over Ontarians almost four years ago.

But veterans of the 2018 election say it offers valuable lessons nonetheless.

The defining issue

It's no surprise that staff from the last campaign say the pandemic will change the vote this spring entirely.

David Herle, who ran the 2018 campaign for Wynne and her Ontario Liberals, said he thinks COVID will be the "wild card" this time. Specifically, he thinks a defining election question will be: Is COVID gone or not?

Each wave of the pandemic has determined Ford's popularity. Among the many ebbs and flows there was: COVID's first bump; Ford's scraps with Ottawa over vaccines and quarantines; the time he reinstated playground closures and ID checks by police to keep people in their homes — then changed his mind the next day; and, finally, there were the months he spent deferring to health officials.

The government says the last of Ontario's pandemic-era health restrictions will be lifted on March 28, 2022. By setting the date, former campaigners say Ford is counting on the end of the pandemic being predictable and smooth for his re-election. However, with the latest COVID variant Omicron, identified in late November, that may change easing of restrictions in the new year.

"This issue should be done away with by the time the election rolls around (on or before June 2)," said Mitch Davidson, who wrote the PCs' 2018 platform. "And then it's really a question of how long people's memories are."

He also said that the way opposition parties have zeroed in on Ford's management of COVID resembles how Wynne's opponents focused on her handling of the Hydro-price crisis in the years preceding the election that turfed her out.

But if COVID is still around next spring, voters might want to punish the PCs for lifting restrictions too soon.

"If we've had to (go into) another lockdown this winter, or — God forbid — the pandemic takes some other weird twist or turn that prolongs what we'd hoped would be a return to normal, then who knows (how that will affect the election)," said Michele Cadario, a senior adviser to the Liberal party during the 2018 campaign.

Like Davidson, Cadario thinks Ontarians could still judge the premier by the decisions he made during the pandemic, whether or not he's right about it being over by April.

It will be voters' first chance to grade the premier on how he handled the crisis, and whether the future looks bright, she added.

In addition to reordering Ontarians' main concerns, the pandemic has also exaggerated those that were hot-button issues even before COVID — like affordability, health care, and education — by creating workforce shortages, worsening income inequality, exposing deep deficiencies in long-term care, and keeping children out of schools.

The PCs have recognized the shuffling of priorities, and have already introduced policies with the spring election in mind. Among them is a sudden pro-worker push that includes reinstating the Wynne government's planned \$15/hour minimum wage, as well as a renewed emphasis on fixing Ontario's system of nursing care. The moves are complicating matters for their left-leaning opponents, the Liberals and New Democrats.

Michael Diamond, who worked on the PCs' 2018 campaign, predicts that "you won't see a lot of light between (the three main parties) on these major issues, and the pandemic and post-pandemic realities will be the major issue in the campaign," he said. "But I think you'll see different styles, and the premier's style is now well-known," meaning the way Ford has steered the province through the pandemic so far.

Have political appetites changed?

Ford has no problem bucking political tradition. For instance, he defied common practice on the 2018 campaign trail by forgoing a media bus, effectively sequestering himself from reporters.

But much of what Ontarians consider typical in politics might have changed since then. For starters, because COVID has made them less accessible to reporters, politicians and parties have more control over their messaging. The insurrection in the U.S. Capitol produced images previously unimaginable from our closest neighbour and ally. And the rise of the People's Party of Canada engendered some of the same anger on Canadian soil, such as when one of the party's (now former) riding presidents threw gravel at the prime minister.

While veterans of the last campaign don't agree whether the polarized politics seen elsewhere, including during the 2021 federal election, will creep into the upcoming Ontario election, they all say voters should expect the worst.

“Ontario elections are typically pretty bloody,” said Simon Jefferies, who handled media relations in the PCs’ war room, but qualified: “I can’t imagine this one would be any more negative.”

Judging by early ads from the PC and NDP camps, however, the campaign has already turned negative.

Several former campaigners pointed out that attack ads are used because they work. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s turnaround in the fall election has been credited in part to his more pointed attacks of Conservative Leader Erin O’Toole.

But what’s missing this time around is the main target of the 2018 campaign: Kathleen Wynne.

In her stead is new Ontario Liberal Leader Steven Del Duca, whom the PCs have already tried to link with Wynne by denigrating the former Transportation minister as her “right-hand man” before he gets the chance to define himself in the eyes of Ontarians.

However, several campaigners think Del Duca may be spared the worst kind of personal attacks that Wynne endured for a simple reason: He’s a man.

Ashley Csanady, a writer for the 2018 Liberal campaign, recalled how Wynne and NDP Leader Andrea Horwath were bombarded by sexism on the campaign trail. In one incident during the last election, Csanady remembers returning to the Liberals’ campaign bus with Wynne, when two men in a truck drove up beside them and yelled “hateful vitriol” at the leader. The men only left when Wynne’s security detail got between them, Csanady said.

“Hateful undercurrents in our political discourse in Canada and Ontario” aren’t new, she said, but they’ve “already been exacerbated and brought to the surface a little more in 2021.”



Looking into the crystal ball with a new electoral year

By Quito Maggi

As we enter this holiday season (which we hope is more normal than the last), my mind turns to the big elections coming in 2022 — and back to those of 2021. What lessons did we learn from last year's federal election, plus a few provincial ones?

One thing's for sure: We should expect the unexpected.

When 2021 was new, it seemed the “pandemic bump” enjoyed by premiers across the country, and leaders around the world, would continue. The new premier of Newfoundland and Labrador, Andrew Furey, entered the January 2021 election the commanding favourite. He won a slim majority after a COVID outbreak delayed the vote. Despite defeating both opposition leaders in the process, the outcome was far from expected because he failed to win the majority that many anticipated before the election call.

In the fall of 2021, another newly minted Liberal premier, Iain Rankin, called an election in Nova Scotia, and was expected to return with another majority mandate, based solely on his government's solid handling of the pandemic. By the end, however, our polls at Mainstreet Research showed his lead narrowing, and I predicted that the Progressive Conservatives (PCs) would win the popular vote. They did, and the people of Nova Scotia gave Tim Houston a majority mandate.

Therefore, pandemic performance no longer guarantees a majority for governing parties, including the Trudeau Liberals. During the federal election both the Conservatives and the NDP outflanked the Liberals by releasing platforms early, but the Liberals enjoyed a late rally after releasing their own post-COVID plans. In the end, voters returned them to power — but not with the majority they were after. Climate change, affordable housing, and economic concerns returned as the main drivers of electoral fortune. To be fair, gun control helped, too.

These lessons from last year are perhaps not lost on Ontario Premier Doug Ford, who's made a number of big promises

recently, including to build 400,000 electric vehicles in the province by 2030. With the Ontario election in June, we'll get to see the second-biggest electoral contest in the nation. Leading in the polls over longtime NDP Leader Andrea Horwath and Liberal newcomer Steven Del Duca might not mean very much at this point, but where they all stand on the May 24 long weekend of 2022 will be a truer bellwether. Again, the battle will be fought in the 416 and 905 area codes of Toronto, where Justin Trudeau Liberals dominate the political landscape, and Doug Ford PCs more than hold their own.

Next up, on Oct. 3, the most popular politician in Canada seeks re-election. For a number of years, Quebec Premier François Legault has enjoyed the strongest approval ratings of all the premiers, and should cruise to an easy victory. But the 2021 lesson tells us that Legault and his Coalition Avenir Québec government can't sit back on their pandemic laurels; offering Quebecers a plan for the next four years is essential. With the Quebec Liberals and Parti Québécois seen as spent forces, Québec Solidaire might be the only alternative on offer.

On Oct. 24, we turn back to Ontario, where the big question will be: Will he or won't he? I'm talking about Toronto Mayor John Tory who, when he sought office in 2014,

promised to stay in office for only two terms. He hasn't yet announced his intentions.

I'm also talking about Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson, who hasn't had serious opposition since he defeated then-incumbent Larry O'Brien in 2010. These are two of many interesting races to watch, as voters in Ontario municipalities return to the polls.

Last up is Oct. 26 in Manitoba, where popular incumbent Brian Bowman has announced he won't seek a third term as Mayor of Winnipeg. This open race should be one of the more exciting contests of 2022. With no incumbent or pandemic record to fall back on, candidates will have to sell their visions of a post-pandemic Winnipeg.

I don't have a crystal ball to tell me the outcomes, unfortunately. I measure public opinion. I anticipate changes from what the data tell me, and I watch the campaign professionals do what they do best: drive public opinion.

I love it. You love it. Stay tuned for the polls.

Happy holidays, and all the best for the new electoral year.

Quito Maggi is the President & CEO of Mainstreet Research.



From the Government's Election Platform:

Levelling the Playing Field with Digital Giants

In 2021, most Canadians get their news from digital platforms which drives key advertising revenues away from Canadian news organizations and towards platforms owned by social media companies and digital giants.

A re-elected Liberal Government will:

- Introduce legislation, within 100 days, that would require digital platforms that generate revenues from the publication of news content to share a portion of their revenues with Canadian news outlets. This legislation would be based on the Australian model and level the playing field between global platforms and Canadian news outlets. The bill will also allow news publishers to work together to prepare for collective negotiation.

Canada Is Set to Become a Global Leader in Levelling the Playing Field for Local News

In a democracy, nothing is more vital than a healthy, vibrant local news media. But the threats from Big Tech are increasing every day.

The government's 100-day plan will place Canada in the front ranks of global leadership standing up for local news. The commitment is clear. All parties in Parliament support decisive action. Now is the time to act and pass legislation by early 2022.

News Media Canada, representing hundreds of trusted titles in our print and digital media industry, and our news publishing partners across Canada and around the world, call on Canadian parliamentarians to work together to level the digital playing field between local news and Big Tech.



News Media Canada (NMC, Canada) – BC & Yukon Community News Media Association (BCYCNA, Canada) – Alberta Weekly Newspapers Association (AWNA, Canada)
Saskatchewan Weekly Newspapers Association (SWNA, Canada) – Manitoba Community Newspapers Association (MCNA, Canada) – Ontario Community Newspapers Association (OCNA, Canada)
Quebec Community Newspaper Association (QCNA, Canada) – Hebdos Québec (HQ, Canada) – National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada (NEPMCC, Canada)
Inter American Press Association (IAPA) – Iberoamerican Telecommunications Organization (OTI) – International Association of Broadcasting (IAB)

Slowly but surely, we're realizing we must protect our forests and wetlands to fight climate change, says the head of World Wildlife Canada

By Shawn McCarthy

Megan Leslie grew up in the boreal forest — building forts, hunting partridges, and fishing in the deep woods that surround her childhood home in Kirkland Lake, Ont.

In the summer, she'd join her father and grandfather on Georgian Bay, where they'd forage for puffball mushrooms, identify invasive species, and talk about healthy ecosystems.

She brings all those youthful experiences — her daily and deeply curious relationship with nature — to her current role as chief executive officer at World Wildlife Fund Canada, one of the country's largest conservation organizations.

"I've been surrounded by, and appreciative of nature my whole life, and understand that it's not something separate from us," she said, speaking over the phone recently from her Ottawa home.

To confront climate change and the alarming loss of species, we need to fundamentally re-assess our relationship with our natural ecosystem, argues Leslie, who's also a former New Democratic MP.

Leslie took the WWF job after losing her Halifax seat in the Liberal sweep of Atlantic Canada in the 2015 election. She said it was a natural progression from her time in politics, when she served as the NDP's Environment critic, co-chaired the Commons Environment committee, and was known for working across party lines to get results.

WWF Canada's mission is to integrate the conservation and restoration of nature more fully into the fabric of Canadian life, and, in doing so, build more sustainable communities, protect endangered species and critical habitats, and combat climate change and its impacts.

When forests, soils, wetlands, and peatlands are lost, the carbon they store is released into the atmosphere. Together with agricultural practices, the destruction of nature through deforestation, soil degradation, and development is responsible for up to one third of historic global greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions, according to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change.

At the same time, the conservation and regeneration of natural ecosystems can provide critical reservoirs that help reduce flooding after extreme rainstorms and protect communities from the effects of climate change.

At the recent United Nations climate summit in Glasgow, negotiators gave nature's role a new prominence. They reached an agreement that included rules to facilitate the international trade in emission credits generated from nature-based projects. As well, 141 nations, including Canada, issued a joint statement committing them to the conservation, protection, and restoration of forests and other critical ecosystems.

"The tide is turning on (our understanding of) nature and how it can help fight climate change," Leslie said.

At the Glasgow conference, WWF Canada released a first-of-its-kind map of Canada's natural carbon sinks and reservoirs. Scientists from McMaster University's remote-sensing laboratory found a total of 405 billion tonnes of carbon stored in ecosystems across Canada. That's the equivalent of about 30 years of human-caused global GHG emissions at 2019 emission levels.

By knowing where the carbon is stored, we can focus on protecting those lands, Leslie said. Instead of conserving nature

mainly for its recreational and aesthetic value, governments must start doing so to protect critical habitats and carbon sinks.

This fall, WWF Canada launched Regeneration, "a 10-year plan to regenerate Canada." By working with local partners and supporting Indigenous-led stewardship efforts, the goal is to protect 100 million hectares of vital ecosystems and restore one million hectares that have been lost to development.

The Canadian government has embraced nature's role in combating climate change and protecting biodiversity and threatened species: The Liberal government says it will try to protect 30 per cent of the country's land and oceans by 2030, and to find nature-based solutions to climate change, such as protecting forests and wetlands.

But there's widespread skepticism of the effectiveness of such solutions, especially when corporations claim progress by financing projects as carbon offsets while making only modest in-house emissions cuts. Critics also say that because natural carbon sequestration can be lost to a burning forest or when a wetland is drained for development, it's not necessarily a permanent solution.

Rather than treat the conservation and regeneration of nature as an alternative to cutting emissions through energy efficiency and the decarbonization of our energy systems, they should be seen as complementary, Leslie argues.

"I'm not interested in the commodification of nature in that way," she said. "That's how we got into this mess. I'm talking about investing in communities to create a conservation economy in rural, remote, and Indigenous areas. There is an ethical way to do this."



Is the Olympic spirit a casualty of the pandemic?

By Andrew Fleming

As the world adjusts to the “new normal” of living in what seems like perennial pandemic mode, a lot of activities we took for granted will likely fall by the wayside. Shaking hands with strangers, blowing out birthday candles, passing around a joint at a concert — even vacationing on cruise ships — all seem like things that could well disappear, at least as practised by rational people.

Another casualty of the ongoing pandemic might be an interest in hosting the Olympics, or even paying the usual attention to them. It's hard to feel particularly excited about the upcoming 2022 Beijing Winter Games, not least because the postponed — and comically

misnamed — 2020 Tokyo Olympics came to a close just a few months ago. (One could also argue that time has become a meaningless construct in our new normal.)

The International Olympic Committee (IOC) insisted the show must go on, even though the vast majority of Japanese citizens were opposed to holding a massive sporting event in the middle of a plague, especially when only a small percentage of them were fully vaxxed, hospitals were maxed, and the coronavirus was wreaking Godzilla-level havoc on the country's capital. In an opinion poll released a few months before

the opening ceremonies' torch was lit, a whopping 83 per cent of respondents said they disapproved of air-dropping thousands of people from across the world into a crowded environment. To paraphrase a hit song from the '60s, the IOC's response amounted to: “It's our party and you can cry if you want to.”

Tokyo ended up with a tsunami of infections last summer, more than 400 of them directly linked to the Games, according to the IOC's own figures. Approximately 15 per cent of those staying on site weren't even vaccinated, including over 100 athletes from the United States.

The modern Olympic movement represents different things to different people. On the one hand, it's a shining symbol of human achievement and a celebration of what truly unites us as a species. On the other, it's a scandal-plagued money grab run by corporate elites who displace citizens from their homes and often leave host countries with crippling bills.

The planet is now gearing up for its second Olympics and Paralympics of the pandemic era, which, coincidentally, are being held in the very same country that unleashed the coronavirus on the world.

Canadians might also feel conflicted about sending athletes to a nation that has no qualms about kidnapping our citizens on fictitious espionage charges, as China recently did with the Two Michaels, Spavor and Kovrig. This was seen as retaliation for Canada's arrest, at the request of the U.S. Department of Justice, of Huawei chief financial officer Meng Wanzhou on allegations of financial fraud.

It's hard to know the proportion of Chinese citizens looking forward to hosting the Olympics for the second time in 12 years. Presumably, any polls released under President Xi Jinping's watch would show 100 per cent of them support it.

But, here in Canada, there's less zest for staging the marquee event anytime soon. Vancouver held the Winter Games in 2010. Along with the ski town of Whistler, it's mulling a bid for 2030, and it makes a certain sense for cities who've hosted before to do so again, as they already have facilities like speed-skating ovals and bobsled tracks. A group pushing for the 2030 Olympics has already launched a campaign with the slogan “Reignite the passion,” which sounds more like an ad for an erectile-dysfunction pill than a call to rally around the flag.

But many B.C. residents just aren't feeling it, according to a poll conducted in October by Research Co., which revealed that only 43 per cent of them want to welcome the world again, down 17 points from a poll conducted before the pandemic. Even fewer — 38 per cent — thought bidding for the considerably larger Summer Games in 2036 would be a smart thing to do.

“The events of the past couple of years, including the COVID-19 pandemic and the recent experience of Tokyo as a host city, appear to have made British Columbians more skeptical (of) a new Olympic bid,” said pollster Mario Canseco.

Also in the running for 2030 is the Japanese city of Sapporo, which held the Winter Games half a century ago. After what they've been through, we'll see if its citizens still have a yen to host the IOC's self-styled “greatest show on Earth” again.



A return to the cage for Afghan women

By RR



Photo Credit: Marina Shujai

It takes weeks for most baby birds to learn to fly, to leave the nest and soar into the sky, but just seconds to clip their wings and leave them flightless.

In the post-9/11 era, Afghan women struggled and fought for their rights. They gained all sorts of basic freedoms, among them full and equal access to education, jobs, the justice system, the arts, and news media. As ambassadors, ministers, governors, and musicians, they held positions of leadership in all sectors of society.

But since the Taliban seized power in mid-August, all their efforts have vanished. For a brief, beautiful period, they flew like birds in the sky. Then, suddenly, their wings were clipped, and they were confined within the four walls of their homes. Aug. 15, 2021 — the day the Taliban stormed Kabul and completed its conquest — will be remembered as a dark day for Afghan women. It marked the return to the cage.

Malika (not her real name), 15, was on her way to school in the capital when the takeover happened. She'd hoped to finish her school exams in a few days and enter university soon after.

Malika's parents lived in Khost Province, where girls weren't allowed to attend school, so she'd come to Kabul to live with her brother. She missed her parents terribly, but she was sure that, after completing her studies, her achievements would one day make them proud. She dreamt of a career in politics and getting a Fulbright scholarship. She never knew this dream was destined to remain buried inside her forever.

Samira Sadat, 35, a small-business owner and the only breadwinner in her family, was on her way to work that day. Besides running her business — providing job opportunities for Afghan women — Samira worked for the government. The two jobs kept her busy for 12 to 14 hours a day. On

Aug. 15, Samira learned that five women would be bringing money home to their families. She felt satisfied, and dreamt of becoming her country's most successful female entrepreneur. She didn't know her dream would vanish within hours.

Freshta (not her real name), 29, a women's-rights activist and journalist for an online news agency, was on her way to work. She wanted to write an article on how women would lose out in the deal then being negotiated between the Afghan government and the Taliban. She believed that, through her writing, she could fight for women's rights. She dreamt of being honoured with the Courage in Journalism award. She couldn't have guessed she'd lose her dream by the end of the day.

Fatima Ibrahim, 31, an Afghan athlete who'd competed in marathons and other athletic events, had been recently appointed program officer at the non-governmental organization Free to Run, whose mission is to use adventure sports to develop female leaders in regions of conflict.

She was glad to be leading other young athletes. She had a dream that, one day, one of the girls would compete internationally and bring a medal home to Afghanistan. She believed that now was the time for change, and for women to have equal rights with men. Now women could

compete in national and international races — or so she thought. She had no idea that, a few hours later, her dreams and beliefs would come to an abrupt end. Within hours, women training for competitions would instead be hiding under their burqas and locked inside their homes.

Malika, Samira, Freshta, Fatima, and thousands of women like them never knew that, in the blink of an eye, their identities, achievements, and dreams would be snuffed out. They didn't know that, within hours, their basic rights would be restricted. They never knew that Aug. 15,

2021, would put a question mark over their fates — theirs and those of thousands of other females. They'd spent years working to build a new Afghanistan that gives rights to women, just as it does to men. They never knew they'd be shut up at home, or living as refugees in another country.

Aug. 15 was a normal day. The light blue sky was brilliant, the sun climbed high, and birds sang.

But for Afghans, it was unusual. The near-absence of women on the street, the long queues outside banks, and the lack of staff in offices were signs that something was about to happen.

But no one was prepared for a prohibition of all women's rights, after the Taliban swept to power with very little resistance from Afghan government forces. Within hours, the Taliban entered the capital, and, from that moment on, chaos and fear spread among the people. The Taliban took control of police districts and the presidential palace, and scenes of panic and desperation filled the streets.

The dark days have returned, and women were the first to suffer. Most of their freedoms have been restricted. The Taliban has already banned girls from attending secondary school. Women are forbidden from doing their jobs; only some in health and education are back at work. Girls

are banned from appearing on TV and their voices from being heard on the radio. The Taliban has even replaced the Ministry of Women's Affairs with a "guidance" ministry that sets rules for women's behaviour. No access to justice, no access to education, no access to employment — all their basic rights have been weakened or taken away.

After the Taliban took over, the big question became: What fate awaits Afghan women? Women who were yesterday's leaders are now huddled in refugee camps or imprisoned in their homes.

These are the birds who've struggled all their lives, studying despite restrictions from family, moving to the city to get an education, fighting for their rights, protesting for their liberties.

They rose to the highest ranks: They were hired as ministers, ambassadors, and governors, but now they're caged like birds with clipped wings.

But those of us fortunate to get out of the country won't be silenced. We won't accept that Afghan women are faceless and voiceless; we will be their voice. And we need western governments — including Canada's — to maintain pressure on the Taliban government to keep the promises made to women after 9/11. Women should be given their rights — to get an education, to work, to live the lives they dream of.

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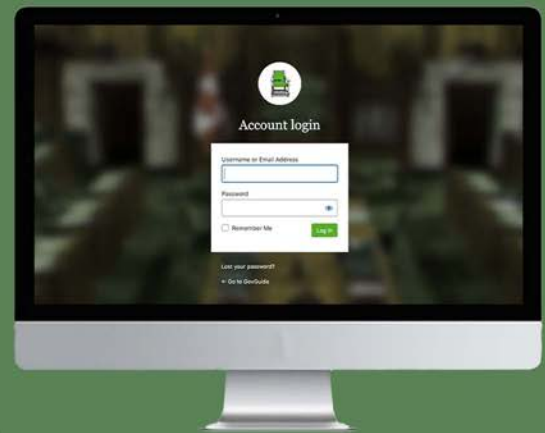
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The iPolitics holiday reading list

By Kady O'Malley

Got a politically obsessed bookworm on your shopping list? Consider these last-minute suggestions, from a former minister's tell-all to a retired astronaut's mystery



Indian in the Cabinet: Speaking Truth to Power By Jody Wilson-Raybould

From HarperCollins Canada: "Wilson-Raybould's experience in Trudeau's cabinet reveals important lessons about how we must continue to

strengthen our political institutions and culture, and the changes we must make to meet challenges such as racial justice and climate change. As her initial optimism about the possibilities of enacting change while in cabinet shifted to struggles over inclusivity, deficiencies of political will, and concerns about adherence to core principles of our democracy, Wilson-Raybould stood on principle and, ultimately, resigned."

For: anyone with a thirst for an even more detailed — and deeply personal — behind-the-scenes account of the high-stakes political showdown, which the former Team Trudeau front-bencher still contends was a concerted effort to pressure her into intervening in the then-ongoing criminal proceedings against Quebec engineering giant SNC Lavalin. Alternatively, it's for anyone who's always ready to be outraged by allegations of corruption and cronyism within federal Liberal circles.

Governing Canada: A Guide to the Tradecraft of Politics By Michael Wernick

From UBC Press: "In this first-ever handbook of its kind, Michael Wernick, a career public servant with decades of experience 'in the room' with Canada's

top politicians, shares candid advice and information that's usually only provided behind closed doors. You'll learn about what goes into picking a cabinet, how to get the most out of the team, and the ways in which a government works to stay on track. You'll also discover how ministers build up their influence and political power, and how easily that career can be derailed."

For: new and returning cabinet ministers looking for an easy-to-read survival guide to life on the front bench; backbench MPs who dream of one day being summoned to Rideau Hall; ambitious civil servants dutifully working their way up the bureaucratic ladder; and anyone who doesn't necessarily fit into any of those categories, but wants to understand exactly what goes down in the corridors of power.



My Stories, My Times: Volume 2 By Jean Chrétien

From Penguin Random House Canada: "With a delightful randomness, (Chrétien) remembers events and personalities that shaped our nation in a multitude of

ways, and offers his views on international current events, including Canada-China relations, Brexit, and interprovincial dealings. (His) stories serve to remind us that there is more to unite than divide us as a country, and that we have institutions we can take enormous pride

in and values we must strive to maintain and keep building upon."

For: lifelong political players (and spectators) longing for a leisurely hit of nostalgia from the last true old-school prime minister — larger than life, twice as natural, and still able to make headlines with an off-the-cuff comment. It's also for the same set that gleefully pre-ordered Wilson-Raybould's book to stick it to the current Liberal leader, and who will head straight to the index of both titles to hunt down the juicy bits, rather than read them straight through.



Off the Record By Peter Mansbridge

From Simon and Schuster Canada: "After years of interviewing others, Peter turns the lens on himself and takes us behind the scenes of his life on the front lines of journalism, as he reflects on the toll of being in the spotlight, the importance of diversity in the newsroom, the role of the media then and now, and the responsibilities we all bear as citizens in an increasingly global world."

For: readers weary of parsing the subtext and reading between the lines of unabashedly — well, political — political memoirs, and hoping to find a more reliable narrative in the recollections of a man they welcomed into their living room every night for decades.



The Apollo Murders By Chris Hadfield

From Penguin Random House Canada: "Full of the fascinating technical detail that fans of The Martian loved, and reminiscent of the thrilling claustrophobia,

twists, and tension of The Hunt for Red October, The Apollo Murders puts you right there in the moment. Experience the fierce G-forces of launch, the frozen loneliness of space, and the fear of holding onto the outside of a spacecraft orbiting the Earth at 17,000 miles per hour, as told by a former commander of the International Space Station who has done all of those things in real life."

For: anyone who's had his or her fill of real-life Canadian political drama, and just wants to curl up with a read-in-one-sitting, locked-room mystery in space.

How music provides harmony in the divided world of politics

By David Hains



Photo Credit: Matthew Usherwood / iPolitics

There's a special resonance to the holiday season in Ottawa, and Andrea McCrady is partly responsible.

"Bells and Christmas are usually in the same sentence, whether it's the poor Salvation Army guy ringing bells to get people to put money in the pot, or bells in church towers," says Parliament Hill's resident carillonneur. Since 2008, McCrady, a physician-turned musician, has been in charge of the carillon and its 53 bells, which form the soundtrack of Ottawa's political landscape. The carillon is an elaborate instrument. Weighing in at 55 tonnes, the one on Parliament Hill has been playing to Ottawans (and visitors) since 1927, and McCrady delights in her role.

"I definitely think of myself as playing for everybody out there," she says, citing William Lyon Mackenzie King's dedication speech, which referred to the instrument as the "voice of a nation."

For that reason, McCrady programs her repertoire carefully. If a tune that's adapted for the carillon has lyrics, they can't be controversial; people might be humming or singing along.

The repertoire also observes important Canadian dates, be they celebratory or sombre. On music legend Gordon Lightfoot's birthday on Nov. 17, for instance, she'll play *The Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald*, *Did She Mention My Name*, or *Canadian Railroad Trilogy*. And on Dec. 6, the National Day of Remembrance and Action on Violence Against Women (also called White Ribbon Day), she might play Beverly McKiver's *Blue Flag Iris* or Sarah McLachlan's *I Will Remember You*, among others.

But other than the sixth, December is a festive month, starting with a day of songs

devoted to Hanukkah, among them klezmer music. On Dec. 2, she plays Canadian carols, including Joni Mitchell's *River*, a traditional Mohawk carol, and carols from French-speaking Canada. Other days have seasonal themes, such as tree-trimming on Dec. 3 (*The Holly and the Ivy*, *Deck the Halls*), holiday wish lists on Dec. 9 (*My*

Favorite Things, *I Want A Hippopotamus for Christmas*) — and, of course, songs with bells in them, on Dec. 7 (*Silver Bells*, *Jingle Bell Rock*).

While McCrady makes sure to take a non-partisan approach to the job, for some politicians, music is always a universal language. And while the bells might be associated with the legislature — whether it's the carillon or notification that a motion is coming to a vote — music of all kinds makes its way into the political world.

Longtime Liberal MP Herb Gray was a very good pianist. So is Public Safety Minister Marco Mendicino, who also trained in classic choral singing at Toronto's St. Michael's Choir School, so he knows his Christmas music. (This reporter attended the same school, and happened to take piano lessons from the mother of Jeremy Broadhurst, Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's current chief of staff.) NDP MP Charlie Angus and former NDP MP Andrew Cash have extensive musical backgrounds, including playing together in the Camus-inspired punk-rock band *L'Étranger* in the '80s.

"Music has a unifying power, sort of bringing harmony where there's discord," said Ontario Education Minister Stephen Lecce. When

he's particularly stressed at work, Lecce can sometimes be caught late at night retiring to the legislature's piano, where, thanks to years of practice and music theory, he can riff a new tune on the spot as a little personal therapy. "It was really a release for me," he said of turning to the piano during tense contract negotiations with teachers, or to unwind at home after a long day.

As it happens, the piano at Queen's Park is near NDP offices. But when Lecce is tickling the ivories, the partisan rancor dissolves. "It's a powerful lesson of how music can be such a unifying force in what can be a very divisive place," he observes, adding that Progressive Conservatives like Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy, Energy Minister Todd Smith, MPP Sam Oosterhoff, and MPP John Yakabuski are also talented musicians.

"I'm sure we could form some good cover bands," he says of the talent at Queen's Park, adding that Journey's rock anthem *Don't Stop Believin'* would be a good choice — though any performance would have to be free, he says, because no one would pay to see such a thing.

And as much as music provides safe territory, where bonding can occur in a partisan world, above all, it helps to keep Lecce grounded.

"A lot of my Christmas experiences were around the piano," he says of the memories the music brings back. "In a weird way, it reminds me of when life was simple: when I was with my family, my parents."



Canadian aerospace profile: Homemade innovation reaches new heights at international competition

By iPolitics



Photo credit: VFS staff, eVTOLnews

Throughout human history, perhaps no dream has been shared more widely than that of flight. The world's greatest minds have pursued it. It inspired Leonardo da Vinci to design his ornithopter, a flying machine that mimicked the flapping motion of a bird's wings. It led Wendell Moore and his Bell Labs team to invent the first "jet pack." It captured the imagination of an entire generation of children who followed the adventures of Superman.

Today, those dreams are closer to reality than ever. Thanks to scientific and technological progress, we now have personal flying devices, including the VTOL: an aircraft that takes off, hovers, and lands vertically, so it doesn't require a runway. (VTOL stands for vertical take-off and landing aircraft.)

While traditional helicopters have always had this capability, most are extremely energy-inefficient, precluding their large-scale operation. Many companies today are focused instead on electric or hybrid-electric designs with VTOL capabilities. Popularly called flying cars, flying motorbikes, or passenger drones, they can accommodate one to five passengers, or the equivalent cargo weight. They're also very energy-efficient, emit low or zero carbon emissions, and are significantly quieter than a helicopter.

The invention of lightweight materials, combined with recent advancements in propulsion, energy, and the latest control and stability systems, have led to a moment of achievable innovation. What can be done today was impossible even a few years ago, and our most audacious dream — the dream of pure human flight — is now within reach.

Pathipan Sivarasa is an aerospace engineer

who has worked on many military aviation projects. He is also part of a group of Canadian aerospace engineers and innovators who are reaching for their dream of developing a flying motorbike that could be used for urban mobility.

Sivarasa says manned missions that undertake several tasks (such as surveillance, reconnaissance, relaying, dropping off payloads or supplies to the troops) could be replaced by large autonomous flying vehicles. "These are not novel ideas," he says, "but there must be cost-effective solutions for users."

The group has embarked on a project to develop such new technology for Canadian military and civil applications, and for the Canadian economy. It built an autonomous flying vehicle that can carry the average weight of a human. Then it shifted to improve the concept for industrial, agricultural, and military applications.

At this juncture, an international competition was announced by GoFly Limited and Boeing Aerospace Corporation. The team took on the challenge. It created Innowings Aerospace Inc. and registered it as a Canadian business entity to qualify for entry.

The team, entering as "Team Challengers", designed and developed a skeletal prototype that takes off and lands vertically, while carrying 100 kg. The team also used data gathered during several tests to characterize and improve flight dynamics and performance. The initial tests and demonstrations of the concept vehicle are being conducted under a special airworthiness certificate issued by the U.S. Federal Aviation Administration in the experimental category. The team is working to obtain a similar certificate from Transport Canada so it can conduct more tests in Canada.

The prototype vehicle is named PKOK. It's a personal flying device that's safe, quiet, futuristic, stylish, ultra-compact, and near-VTOL. It has a 32-km range with one person on board. It's powered by batteries to capitalize on recent advancements in battery technology and is designed to provide an environmentally friendly option in the field of personal transportation.

The team is trying to satisfy other important safety requirements for manned flights. For example, the device must function safely in both cities and rural areas, it must be lightweight and easy to maneuver by anyone, and it should be quiet for the user as well as the surrounding environment.

Despite the many possible applications of such devices, the challenges posed by regulations, certifications, infrastructure development, and air-traffic management must be considered. While daunting, none are insurmountable. Aerospace and related industries have navigated similarly complex challenges before — not least of which was the development and deployment of commercial airplanes. The key could be the close collaboration of regulators and private-sector stakeholders across the extended-mobility ecosystem.

Passenger drones and flying cars appear closer to becoming a reality because of the increasing popularity of small unmanned aerial vehicles or drones, regulations that increasingly support their commercial use, and rapidly developing aerospace and aircraft-design technology.

More than 800 contestants from over 100 countries entered the competition. Thanks to hard work, perseverance and community support, what began as a project in a Brampton, Ont. garage is part of the final fly-off on Feb 29th, 2020 at NASA's Ames Research Center at Moffett Federal Airfield in California's Silicon Valley.

Team Challengers continues to develop the concept and is working hard to meet all the design and performance requirements needed to win the \$1-million prize — and land Canada at the forefront of aerospace innovation.



Photo credit: Team Challengers



Photo credit: Team Challengers



Food Diplomacy

Traditional family recipes
from the diplomatic
community

Waterzooi of chicken in Ghent style by Chef Olivier from the Belgian Embassy



Belgium: Waterzooi is a Belgian speciality from Flanders that dates back to the Middle Ages (13th century). This very rich dish which originates from the picturesque town of Ghent and was one of the favorites of Holy Roman Emperor Charles V. This hearty and full-bodied meal perfectly illustrates the complexity and sophistication of the Belgian beer cuisine.

In Flemish, the word waterzooi literally means "boiling water". This main course highlights wonderful aromatic vegetables and fresh local fish or chicken in a milk stew, yet almost like a soup or a chowder. It can be prepared with different protein sources: fish, seafood, poultry, rabbit and even wild game.

No matter how cold the night is, the flavor and aromas of Waterzooi will warm up your soul and heart.



Recipe for 4 servings

Difficulty : Easy

Preparation: 15 min

Cooking time: 20 min

Cost : inexpensive

Ingredients

- 4 chicken breasts
- 40 cl chicken broth
- 4 small potatoes (baby potatoes or rattes)
- 1 leek, 1 carrot, 1 celery stalk, 1 onion
- 200 gr wild mushrooms (optional)
- 30 cl 35% cooking cream or heavy cream
- 1 teaspoon of cornstarch
- 2 egg yolks
- 10 cl of blond beer or white wine (optional)
- 15g butter
- Salt, pepper, nutmeg (optional)
- 2 sprigs of fresh chervil, parsley leaves and chives

Preparation

1. Peel and chop onion. Wash, peel and julienne the remaining vegetables. Cut the chicken into medium slices, about 1/2-inch thick.
2. In a deep pot, melt the butter and brown the vegetables and mushrooms for 10 minutes. Add the chicken and the potatoes cut into quarters; add enough chicken broth to just cover the vegetables and bring to a boil, uncovered. Season with salt and pepper. Poach the chicken on medium heat for approximately 20 minutes, or until the chicken and potatoes are cooked. Remove the chicken and potatoes, strain the vegetables and keep them aside covered with aluminum foil to keep it warm.
3. Return the broth to the pan, add the beer or white wine.
4. In a bowl, whisk the cream, cornstarch, and egg yolks. Add this mixture to the broth and vegetables while whisking. Add more broth to thin the mixture as desired. Stir constantly until the waterzooi thickens.
5. Add the vegetables and the chicken, then simmer for a few minutes without boiling and stop cooking as soon as the sauce thickens.
6. Arrange in soup plates, distribute the chicken and the julienne of vegetables and sprinkle with chopped parsley, chervil and chives.

Brownies



United Kingdom: This is a recipe for brownies that British High Commissioner Susannah Goshko makes with her daughter. Perfect for a cozy winter's evening!



Ingredients

- 185g unsalted butter
- 185g best dark chocolate
- 85g plain flour
- 40g cocoa powder
- 50g white chocolate
- 50g milk chocolate
- 3 large eggs
- 275g golden caster sugar

Directions

1. Heat the oven to 360
2. Cut 185g unsalted butter into small cubes and tip into a medium bowl. Break 185g dark chocolate into small pieces and drop into the bowl.
3. Cover the bowl loosely with cling film and put in the microwave for 2 minutes on High. Leave the melted mixture to cool to room temperature.
4. Line a shallow 20cm square tin with non-stick baking parchment. Sieve together 85g plain flour and 40g cocoa powder into a mixing bowl.
5. Chop 50g white chocolate and 50g milk chocolate into chunks.
6. Break 3 large eggs into a large bowl and tip in 275g golden caster sugar. With an electric mixer on maximum speed, whisk the eggs

and sugar. They will look thick and creamy, like a milk shake (around 5 mins depending on how powerful your mixer is). The mixture should be pale and about double its original volume.

7. Pour the cooled chocolate mixture over the eggy mousse, then gently fold together using a metal spoon in a figure of 8 mixing motion until the two mixtures become one dark brown one.
8. Resift the cocoa and flour mixture into the mixing bowl, shaking the sieve from side to side, to cover the top evenly.
9. Gently fold in this powder using the same figure of eight action as before. It may look dry and dusty at first but it will end up looking gungy and fudgy. SBe careful not to overdo the mixing.
10. Finally, stir in the white and milk chocolate chunks until they're dotted throughout.
11. Pour the mixture into the prepared tin, scraping every bit out of the bowl with the spatula. Gently ease the mixture into the corners of the tin and paddle the spatula from side to side across the top to level it.
12. Put in the middle shelf of oven for 25 mins. After 25 mins, shake the tin. If the brownie wobbles in the middle, it's not quite done, so bake for another 5 minutes until the top has a shiny, papery crust and the sides are just beginning to come away from the tin.
13. Take out of the oven.
14. Leave the whole thing in the tin until completely cold, then cut into triangles. Store in an air tight container (or even better, eat straight away!)

Brunkager

Denmark: Danish brown cookies, or Brunkager, are traditional and old-fashioned Danish Christmas cookies. They are crispy and taste delicious! They are eaten throughout the month of December. Perfect cookies for a great Christmas “hygge” time.



The brunkager recipe usually includes a special ingredient, potash/potassium carbonate, which can even be a difficult ingredient to find outside the Christmas season in Denmark. However, the potash can be substituted with baking soda.

Recipe for approx. 250 cookies:

Ingredients:

- 250 g butter
- 250 g brown sugar
- 125 g light syrup
- 500 g all-purpose flour
- 3 tsp ground cinnamon
- 2 tsp ground ginger
- 1 tsp ground cloves
- 1 tsp ground allspice
- 100 g whole almonds
- 2 tsp potash (or baking soda)
- 1 tbsp warm water

Instructions:

1. In a sauce pan; heat up the butter, syrup and brown sugar at medium heat – should not boil, only just start to bubble. Set the pot aside.
2. Chop the almonds and add them to the pot mix.
3. In a small bowl; dissolve the potash in the warm water and add into the mix.
4. In a large bowl; mix cinnamon, cloves, ginger, allspice, and all-purpose flour. Add into the big mix only when the batter is no longer too warm.
5. Put the batter onto an oven pan (about 18x18 cm) lined with baking paper. Make sure the batter is in an even layer and cover the pan with a sheet of baking paper.
6. Let the batter cool off completely (4+ hours in the refrigerator or can leave on kitchen counter overnight) by which time it should be a solid dough. Use a sharp knife to cut the dough into 5-6 logs and then into thin slices.
7. Place the cookie slices on an oven tray lined with baking paper.
8. Bake the cookies at 180 C for about 8-12 minutes. Be careful not to let them get too dark.
9. Let the cookies cool off. They can be kept in an air tight box or jar for a while – unless of course they are not eaten before then.

Cured filet of salmon



Norway: Traditional Norwegian Christmas food is as varied as the land itself. Each part of the country has contributed their own specialties and favourites to what is now a shared national culinary Christmas story. Everything from freshly caught cod, to a rack of dried and smoked lamb ribs, or roasted pork belly with crispy skin, complete with pickled red cabbage, there's something for everyone. Smoked salmon has become a staple, not only at Christmas and not only in Norway, but around the world. But its lesser known cousin, Gravlax, is what we will share with you today.

Curing meats and fish has historically been a necessity for Norwegians to make things last through the winter. Gravlax – a cured filet of salmon, gets its name from the method used in the olden days; it was dug down in the ground and left for a while... Today we use salt and sugar to cure it, and flavour it with herbs and alcohol. Then we “dig it down” in the fridge for a day or two... This very simple and quick recipe will give you a taste of that Norwegian Christmas flavour, served on a slice of nice bread, or a crispy cracker. Maybe with some mustard sauce or cream cheese. Enjoy!



Photo Credit: Seafood council of Norway / Visit Norway

It 1.5kg Norwegian salmon fillet, skinned and deboned (serving 8 people)

- 1dl dill, fresh
- 1dl sugar
- 0.5dl salt
- 1dl aquavit, Vodka or other
- pepper

Method

1. Rinse the fish in cold water and pat dry with a paper towel.
2. Remove any pin bones with pliers.
3. Break off and crush the dill stalks.
4. Mix together the spices and coarsely chopped dill.
5. Add the dill stalks.
6. Place the fish skin side down on a plate.
7. Rub in the mixture and drizzle with aquavit.
8. Leave to rest at room temperature for at least 1 hour.
9. Refrigerate for at least 24 hours before serving.
10. Gravlax with aquavit will keep in the refrigerator for approx. 4 days.
11. Thinly slice the Gravlax and serve on bread or crackers with your favourite toppings!

Kutia and Uzvar



Ukraine : On Christmas Eve no Ukrainian family would sit at the table until there is Kutia and uzvar on it. While the recipes of any other dishes are willingly shared by the hostess and constantly improved, the Kutia is prepared strictly as taught by great-grandmothers, trying to recreate the taste familiar from childhood. “In our family Kutia is always made of wheat,” tells Nataliia Bukvych, spouse of Charge d’Affaires of Ukraine Andrii Bukvych.

Soak 1.5-2 cups of grain in warm water for 5-6 hours. Cook over low heat until ready.

Poppy is the important ingredient of Kutia. Steam the poppy seeds with boiling water, grind them carefully. Add chopped nuts, raisins and, of course, honey. All this dry mixture should be filled with uzvar, which you prepare in advance.

Delicious uzvar is a compote made of dried pears, apples, and plums. Pour dried fruits with water, bring to boil, and leave to infuse. The vital

secret is that all the family members are involved in the preparation of the main Christmas Eve dish.

As we get our dish ready, we recall the stories of the grandmothers: when the harvest began, the first handful of wheat was placed in a linen bag and buried behind the holy icons, where it waited for its time and “listened” to the daily prayers, absorbing them. It was from that very grain that Kutia was prepared.

Kutia | Ingredients

- 1.5-2 cups of wheat berries
- 4 1/2 cups of uzvar
- 3/4 cups poppy seed
- 1/2 cup honey
- 1/2 cup raisins
- 2/3 cup chopped walnuts
- 1/8 tsp salt

Uzvar | Ingredients

- 100 g (3,5 oz) dried apples
- 100 g (3,5 oz) dried pears
- 100 g (3,5 oz) prunes
- 60 g (2 oz) raisins
- 3-4 tbsp honey
- 5 l (liter) water

Cooking

Wash thoroughly dried fruits, put them in a pan and pour water above. Bring the water to boil and simmer ingredients for about an hour. Cool uzvar until warm and then stir in honey. Leave the drink for 3-4 hours to let it infuse.

Imbuljuta tal-Qastan



Credit: [Maltese Cuisine](#)



Malta : Imbuljuta tal-Qastan is a traditional Maltese drink served after Midnight Mass on Christmas, as well as on New Year’s Eve. It is a heartwarming chocolate drink with chestnuts that is referred to as Christmas in a bowl.

Ingredients

- 450g dried chestnuts
- 175g sugar
- 50g drinking chocolate
- 50g dark chocolate
- grated rind of 1 orange
- grated rind of 1 tangerine
- mixed spice
- cloves
- water

Method

1. Wash the chestnuts thoroughly. Place them in a large bowl and cover them with water. Leave to soak overnight.
2. Next day remove any loose pieces of skin.
3. Add chestnuts into a deep pot
4. Add suger, drinking chocolate, dark chocolate, orange rind, tangerine rind, mixed spice & cloves
5. Add enough water to cover ingredients
6. bring to a boil
7. Continue cooking at medium heat for about 45 minutes
8. Chestnuts should be tender, if not continue cooking until done making sure to top up with water if mixture starts to dry.
9. Serve hot.

Vassilopitta



Photo Credit: visitgreece.gr

Recipe | Ingredients

- 1 cup of butter
- 1 ½ cup of sugar
- 8 eggs
- 1 glass of milk
- 1 wine glass of blossom water
- 2 tsp of baking powder
- Juice and zest of 1 lemon
- a small quantity of vanilla powder
- 4 cups of flour
- 1 cup of blanched almonds

Prologue from Ambassador Konstantina Athanassiadou



Greece : Alas, a cake made for a king! Vassilis' name day is celebrated on the first day of the year.

Families gather to welcome the New Year and serve this cake, which is unique and linked to the childhood memories of many Greeks. Inside the cake is a hidden coin. The first three slices cut are for Christ, your house, and for the poor; the rest of the pieces are offered to everyone else. Whoever finds the coin will have good luck for the next 365 days of the year.

Enjoy!

Method

1. Toast the almonds in a non-stick pan over medium heat, until light brown. Allow to cool and chop them in a blender until fine. Beat the egg whites until stiff.
2. Beat the butter and the sugar in a separate bowl. Keep beating while you add the egg yolks, milk, blossom water, the baking powder dissolved in the lemon juice, vanilla powder, flour and zest.
3. Add the almonds and use a spatula to blend the egg whites gently into the mixture.
4. Place in a buttered baking dish and bake in a preheated oven at 180°C for one hour.
5. Set aside to cool, and then dust it with caster sugar.

Stuffed Cabbage Leaves (Postni Zelevi Sarmi)



Bulgaria : Cabbage leaves stuffed with combination of rice, onion and carrots and then boiled. They can be served both hot or cold according to consumers' preference.



Ingredients

- 1 pickled cabbage,
- 3 onions, chopped
- 1 carrot
- 1 celery (root)
- 2 cups white rice
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1 teaspoon black pepper
- 1 bunch of parsley, chopped
- 2 tablespoons tomato juice or puree

Preparation

1. Separate cabbage's leaves. Combine the onion, carrot, celery and fry in oil until onion turns golden. Add the rice, parsley, salt and pepper.
2. Use the mixture to fill the leaves, shaping small bundles. The best way to do it is to put some mixture on a big leaf, put a small leaf on top and wrap the big leaf around the small one. Put in a pot, cover with water and boil. The meal could also be baked in oven in a casserole full of water.

PIRÄGI BACON ROLLS

Latvia : Prepare dough without a starter (see above After dough has risen, divide into 30-35g (1.05 - 1.225oz) pieces, roll into round balls and leave on a pastry board for 10-15 minutes to rise. Press each piece flat, place bacon filling in the centre, press together edges of dough above or at the side of filling. Roll with both hands to even out filling, make the shape long with slender ends and bend into a half-moon. Place on a greased baking tray, leave to rise, brush with beaten egg and bake in a hot oven. Brush with melted butter once removed from the oven.



Ingredients

- 450-500g (17.5oz) flour
- 250g (8.75oz) milk or water
- 25g (0.875oz) yeast
- 75g (2.625oz) margarine
- 25g (0.875oz) sugar
- 5g (0.175oz) salt
- egg

Filling:

350g (12.25oz) smoked streaky bacon.
50g (1.75oz)
onion.
ground pepper
Bacon filling:
Cut rind off bacon.
Dice bacon and onion
and sauté (sauté only for a
short period, so that fat does not run
off), add pepper and mix well.



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PLATFORM COMMITMENTS

Prohibit the use of replacement workers, "scabs"



Prioritize anti-scab legislation that will ban the use of replacement workers in labour dispute

10 paid sick days



10 paid sick days

Deliver \$10 a day child care within five years or less



Build a universal \$10/day child care system