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Cyber threats to next year's federal election mounting

'Faster than we expected,' agency says

Stuart Thomson

Cyber threats to Canada's federal election in 2019 are coming fast and furious, surprising even the intelligence agency tasked with monitoring and combating the issue, and politicians and political parties are the target, a House of Commons committee heard on Thursday.

The Communications Security Establishment (CSE), Canada's foreign signals intelligence agency, said the threats include "social media botnet amplification" and the use of social media by adversaries to reach their audience. Botnet amplification involves using dummy accounts on social media to amplify a specific message or user.

"There are more threats and in fact, the velocity of these threats is increasing faster than we expected," said André Boucher, the assistant deputy minister of operations at the Canadian Centre for Cyber Security, which is overseen by the CSE.

Last week, Facebook deleted more than 800 political pages that were breaking anti-spamming rules on the platform as governments and tech firms try to get a handle on misinformation campaigns being waged on the web.

The main threat isn't to the systems that run the country's elections, like voting machines and Elections Canada voter lists, but to the politicians themselves. A 2017 report by CSE warned that, because Canadian elections are conducted by paper ballot, political parties and the media are more vulnerable to cyber threats.

"I have every confidence that voter lists will be adequately protected by the measures and technology in place. It's enough, we believe," said Boucher. "I'm fully confident Canadians can trust their electoral systems."

At the hearing, Boucher warned that both state actors and contractors hired by nation states are responsible for the activity the agency is seeing. Although no specific countries were named, former FBI director James Comey warned Canadians to be wary of Russian President Vladimir Putin and "his thugocracy."

The trouble for parties, politicians and voters is that a single weak spot can cause immense damage. For example, John Podesta, the chairman of Hillary Clinton's 2016 presidential campaign, had his personal email account compromised by a hacking group affiliated with Russian intelligence services. That led to a series of embarrassing news stories for the Clinton campaign.

Although the consequences for the Podesta hack were mainly political, a similar kind of attack could leave party voters lists or other personal information vulnerable. In the spring, the committee heard testimony from security expert Chris Vickery about how common it is for hackers to find personal information sitting on an unsecured server, virtually waiting for bad actors to discover it.

Nathaniel Erskine-Smith, the vice-chair of the committee and Liberal MP, asked the representatives from CSE if there should be regulations governing political parties that are holding sensitive personal information to help avoid hacks.

Boucher gave no definitive recommendation either way, but warned that creating these kinds of rules isn't a silver bullet. When there's a standard like that, there's a race to the bottom, said Boucher. With a regulation, people will try to reach the lowest minimum standard and no more.

CSE has briefed the political parties on how to secure their systems and has released general guidelines for strong passwords, mobile security and social media tips on its website.

In an interview after the committee, Erskine-Smith argued that, at the very least, two-factor verification should be mandatory - that's a system where users are required to provide an extra piece of information along with their password, for example, a security code sent via text message.

"I take the point that it might be a race to the bottom. But if no one's at the so-called bottom yet, that's a greater concern," said Erskine-Smith. "We need to make sure people are meeting a minimum threshold to prevent against malicious activity."

Erskine-Smith said he has confidence that all the parties are seized with the issue and working to prevent any breaches.

Part of the trouble with these kinds of breaches is that they are quickly weaponized in an election campaign, leaving little time to separate fact from fiction. Conservative MP Jacques Gourde said he was worried about the limited amount of time CSE, and other agencies, will have to respond to threats during an campaign.

"If it took us two days to respond we wouldn't be doing very well," said Boucher. "We have systems that work at cyber speed. They work as the threats happen."

"It happens in minutes, not hours and days," said Boucher.

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Pharmacare not a voter priority, poll finds

Senior care, wait times among top priorities cited in online survey
Alex Ballingall Toronto Star
Now that marijuana legalization is out of the way, a new poll suggests the Liberal government’s next big drug policy - the possible creation of national pharmacare - is not a top health care priority for Canadian voters.

Between July 27 and Aug. 3, Pollara Strategic Insights surveyed 4,173 adults across the country. The online survey found that, while 84 per cent of respondents support the creation of a "national universal prescription drug coverage program" to ensure all Canadians access to medicine they need, only 5 per cent ranked such a program as their first or second health care priority. Another 9 per cent put "medication/prescriptions" in their top two priorities.

Meanwhile, 21 per cent identified senior care and the aging population in their top two, followed by 18 per cent who prioritized wait times and faster access to health care.

Pollara chief strategist Don Guy, a former Liberal operative at Queen's Park, said the research shows Canadians are not preoccupied with national pharmacare.

It is "not by any stretch of the imagination a top-of-mind priority," he said.

The Pollara survey was funded by the Neighbourhood Pharmacy Association of Canada, a group that represents 6,500 pharmacies across the country. According to Pollara, online samples aren't officially assigned margins of error, but as a "guideline" for this poll, it provides a margin of error of plus-or-minus 1.5 per cent, 19 times out of 20.

Earlier this year, the Liberal government created an advisory committee chaired by former Ontario health minister Eric Hoskins to study and recommend options for the creation of a national pharmacare program by the spring of 2019. Two months later, Parliament's Standing Committee on Health recommended that Canada create a universal single-payer program to cover prescription drugs. But Finance Minister Bill Morneau had already tempered expectations.

The day after announcing the pharmacare committee, Morneau told reporters that the government wants to create a program that "deals with the gaps" in coverage but "doesn't throw out the system that we currently have."

New Democrat MPs seized the statement as evidence the Liberals weren't serious about pharmacare and have called for the creation of a universal, single-payer drug program.

Pollara's survey suggests a minority of Canadians is sold on the idea. Asked to choose between four options for pharmacare, 30 per cent of respondents said they prefer a universal program that covers all Canadians and replaces existing public and private insurance plans.

The remaining 70 per cent chose other options that included: a government plan for drugs not covered by private insurance and for people with no coverage at all (35 per cent); public coverage only for those without existing insurance (20 per cent); and a pharmacare program that focuses only on Canadians facing "extreme circumstances" like the need for expensive drugs to treat rare diseases (15 per cent).

When asked to define the term "universality," 62 per cent of respondents said it means "everyone receives the same kind and quality" of care, while 55 per cent said it means everyone has access to the same health services. Only 25 per cent said it means the government pays for health services, and 23 per cent said it means "no one can buy their way to better or faster health care."

Canada currently has a patchwork of prescription drug programs through private and public insurance coverage. According to the Conference Board of Canada, 95 per cent of Canadians have some form of drug coverage. At the same time, overall drug spending in Canada has skyrocketed from $2.6 billion in 1985 to $33.8 billion last year, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. A study published this year in the Canadian Medical Association Journal found that almost one million Canadians cut back on food and heat spending to afford their medication, while nearly two million people have reported not being able to afford at least one of their prescribed drugs in the past year.

Doug Ford should create a climate plan and not fly across the country to oppose one: Dominic LeBlanc
Fatima Syed
Ontario Premier Doug Ford has turned to the public for help in drafting a new climate plan - news that one Trudeau government minister found surprising in light of his strong opposition to a federal plan to price pollution.

Federal Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dominic LeBlanc said he was "surprised" Thursday during his first trip to Toronto in his new role after listening to question period at Queen's Park, where Ontario Environment Minister Rod Phillips assured the provincial legislature that a Ford-approved climate plan is forthcoming, while also announcing that for a
two-week period between Oct. 18 and Nov. 1, Ontarians can submit their ideas for such a plan via a newly-updated website. In response to NDP Leader Andrea Horwath's question about why Ford's PC government was being so secretive about their climate policies, Phillips said "we are of course going to have a climate plan."

"We were clear in the campaign we would have a climate plan. We were clear when we cancelled the failed climate plan we would have a climate plan. We were clear when we introduced Bill 4 there would be a climate plan," he said, referring to the legislation that killed cap and trade.

"Now Ontarians can give us contributions to that at ontario.ca/climatechange, where we're collecting information on the climate plan."

The contradiction was not lost on LeBlanc.

"They don't seem to have a climate plan," he told reporters outside the legislature on Thursday, adding that the federal government would have more to say about this in the coming weeks.

"I was surprised to see during question period they're acknowledging that they don't have a climate plan, but they certainly have a lot to say about our effective climate plan."

LeBlanc spoke to media after question period, in which Phillips continued to take shots at the federal government's carbon pricing plan on Thursday, this time with LeBlanc in the room.

"Mr. Speaker, with respect to our visitor in the gallery: I'm not sure what they're smoking up in Ottawa, but this is not going to fly with Ontarians," Phillips told the legislature.

He said a report by Ontario's fiscal watchdog released on Tuesday found that the federal scheme, which Phillips called "a Trudeau carbon tax," would cost $648 by 2022.

"This isn't a program that they want. This isn't a tax that they want. This isn't something that the people of Ontario or the people of Canada can afford."

Recent international reports and agreements have shown that the cost of taking action to address climate change is low in comparison with the cost, in the trillions of dollars, of having to adapt to a more violent climate in the future.

In July, the Ford government said all of the programs funded by cap and trade would be cancelled. The watchdog report also said the cancellation would worsen Ontario’s deficit by $3 billion.

But despite the government's announcement, the provincial financial officer's report also revealed that not all programs were canned.

On Thursday, Phillips admitted that, while "an orderly wind down" of all the programs were underway, those pertaining to transit and housing would be continuing until the end of October.

Once they end, "there will be further reporting on the details," Phillips said.

"We will make sure that Ontarians, unlike the previous government, see where the money has gone and they see that cap-and-trade is gone and that a carbon tax doesn't replace it."

'We think polluters should pay,' says LeBlanc

Phillips comments were top of mind when LeBlanc spoke to reporters after question period.

The federal Liberal minister was taken aback when Ford and Alberta United Conservative leader Jason Kenney rallied for the federal opposition Conservative Party at a "Scrap the Carbon Tax Rally" in Calgary last month.

Ford also went to Saskatchewan to meet with Premier Scott Moe on the same topic.

"I don't pretend to understand what Mr. Ford thinks when he flies to Alberta to campaign," LeBlanc said. "He was certainly campaigning with the Conservative leader in Alberta and telling people why pollution should be free. We think there should be a cost to pollution. We think polluters should pay. The conservatives seem to think pollution should be free again."

Ford seems to have "national ambitions," LeBlanc added.

In August, Ford attended the federal Tory policy convention in Halifax, where he told delegates that uniting behind federal Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer would be key to the Tories winning the 2019 federal election.

"You get a four-year job and you're 10 per cent into it and you're already looking to upgrade to go somewhere else, I cant imagine that's very constructive," LeBlanc said.

"If I was worried about a problem with my children's education in a public school in Ontario, or I was on a waiting list in a hospital, I might find it more useful to see the premier here worrying about those issues than see the premier in Alberta."

LeBlanc was in Toronto to meet with Jim Wilson, the Ontario minister of economic development, job creation and trade, about interprovincial trade. The meeting was a "positive discussion," LeBlanc said.

Their conversation did not include any talk of the disagreements over cap and trade or carbon pricing plans, both he and Wilson confirmed.

"We shouldn't be traumatized or destabilized because a liberal federal government does not agree with a provincial conservative government on every issue," LeBlanc said.

"We've said publicly that Mr. Ford and Mr. Scheer want to advocate the policies that we think don't deal with significant issues like climate change or want to quickly resort to the notwithstanding clause, a rather extraordinary measure, which we thought was unwise and said so, then we're prepared to say that publicly."

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Is carbon tax needed to fight climate change?

Experts say regulations coupled with carbon price is best approach

Alex Ballingall Toronto Star

Who needs a carbon tax?
Not Andrew Scheer.

The Conservative leader is a fervent opponent of the Trudeau government's plan to slap a price on greenhouse gas emissions that cause global warming.

But Scheer says his opposition to the tax doesn't preclude action on climate change. He told the Star last week that - sometime before the next federal election - he will propose a climate plan based on "a variety of measures" to reduce emissions without resorting to the dreaded carbon tax.

"I've always believed that meaningful action is required," he said, without providing specifics.

So as Canadians await the details of Scheer's plan to curb emissions, it may be worth asking: does Canada actually need a carbon price to slash its emissions?

Mark Jaccard, a professor of sustainable energy at Simon Fraser University, is unequivocal that it doesn't. He and other experts who spoke to the Star Monday said emissions reductions are possible through the alternate path of government regulation - though most doubted that a plan without a carbon price would be the better option, because pricing carbon is less restrictive to business activity and more economically efficient.

"Any honest economist will tell you that you don't need any emissions pricing," Jaccard said.

"Andrew Scheer is correct." Jaccard pointed to past examples like the elimination of substances that were depleting the ozone layer - that was accomplished through regulatory bans, not a tax on destructive pollution. Ontario also decided to phase out coal-fired power plants between 2004 and 2014, another regulatory move that reduced emissions without a carbon tax, he said.

Like the previous federal Conservative government under Stephen Harper, some provinces are pursuing this regulatory path to emissions reductions. Saskatchewan - which is challenging the federal government's carbon price plan in court - says its slate of climate policies will reduce emissions "more effectively than a carbon tax." These include regulations on coal-fired electricity, performance standards for industrial emitters, and public investments in carbon capture technology that have already been employed at one of the province's hydroelectric dams.

But Jaccard was quick to question Scheer's intentions on emissions reductions, because the Conservative leader appears in no rush to outline exactly how a Conservative government would make them happen.

"It doesn't require saying. I'll get back to you on this," Jaccard said.

For Christopher Ragan, chair of the Ecofiscal Commission in Montreal, sector-by-sector regulations are too "prescriptive and intrusive." Governments would need to develop and enforce different standards for transportation fuel, building codes, industrial processes, vehicle efficiencies and more. This forces all firms in each sector to adhere to potentially expensive new rules to curb emissions, he said.

A carbon price, on the other hand, simply puts a tax on emissions or sets a price for companies to buy greenhouse gas permits. Ragan said this approach ends up being less expensive to the economy as a whole, because entire sectors aren't forced to invest in ways to reduce emissions to line up with new regulations. Individual firms can decide if it's better for them to find ways to reduce emissions, or if it makes more sense to just pay the tax.

"That's the beauty of a carbon price. It's that people facing the carbon price have an incentive to figure it out, and we can trust them to figure it out," Ragan said.

The difference could be costly, too. The Ecofiscal Commission put out a report in 2015 that estimated the benefit of enacting a nationwide carbon price instead of taking a strict regulatory approach could be worth as much as $75 billion to the Canadian economy.

Aaron Henry, director of natural resources and environmental policy at the Canadian Chamber of Commerce, said part of the problem with the regulatory approach is that it's more complicated than a carbon price - especially given Canada's differing regimes of federal and provincial authority in certain sectors.

He also questioned whether other regulations like a tax cut for companies that reduce emissions would lead to economywide incentives that would come from a carbon price.

And while Henry said big emissions reductions could be made by banning combustion engines, for example, doing so too quickly could result in a significant economic shock.

Jaccard, however, said he believes regulations can be crafted so they're flexible. An example is California's long-standing zero-emissions vehicle regulation, which requires manufacturers to sell more of these cars, but does not mandate whether they need to be electric, hybrids or vehicles that use greener biofuels.

This allows the market - and manufacturers themselves - to determine how to fit with the regulations, Jaccard said.

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Federal carbon tax will increase fares, airlines warn

Shawn Mccarthy

Canada's airlines are warning Ottawa's planned carbon tax will increase airfares, reduce flights on marginal domestic routes and drive passengers to nearby American airports.

The airlines' lobby group, the National Airlines Council of Canada, will send letters Friday to federal ministers, warning the levy will cause serious harm to the country's carriers if it is fully imposed on them. It is urging the government to delay implementation of any levy on domestic flights until Ottawa can reach agreement with provinces and territories on a national approach that caps greenhouse-gas emissions but allows carriers to purchase credits to meet their targets.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau plans to introduce a carbon tax on Jan. 1 in those provinces that do not have their own levy or federal tax in provinces where there had been a levy - or one that works on pricing pollution.

"It's a mess; there's no other way to describe it," council president Massimo Bergamini said in an interview. "We're seeing political expediency driving decision-making now at both the federal and provincial levels. And it's compounding the effect on our industry."

The Liberal government is set to release in the coming weeks details of how its carbon tax will apply to individuals and businesses, including how various industries will be treated as they push for special breaks to address competitiveness concerns.

A spokeswoman for Environment Minister Catherine McKenna would not comment on the airlines' concerns, saying only that details of the tax plan will soon be released.

The airlines are exempted from carbon levies for interprovincial flights under all existing provincial plans, including Alberta's carbon tax or Quebec's cap-and-trade system. However, carriers are bracing for the imposition of the federal tax in provinces where there had been a levy - or one was planned - that has been cancelled. That includes Ontario, where Premier Doug Ford ended cap-and-trade, and Manitoba, which cancelled its planned carbon tax. In Alberta, United Conservative Party Leader Jason Kenney has vowed to end that province's carbon tax should he win power in an election scheduled for next spring.

Mr. Ford's decision to cancel cap-and-trade will result in higher carbon levies if Ottawa's plan survives a court challenge by Ontario and Saskatchewan. The federal levy - which kicks in at $20 a tonne in January - will rise to $50 in 2022. Under cap-and-trade, Ontario's carbon price was forecast to be about $23 a tonne in 2022 owing to the availability of cheaper credits from California.

On the average flight within Ontario, the federal carbon tax would add $11.43 for every round-trip ticket when the levy rises to $50 a tonne in 2022, or $45.70 for a family of four, the council said. If the tax is applied to interprovincial flights, it would add $30.48 to a round-trip, non-stop flight between Toronto and Vancouver.

Mr. Bergamini said the tax will not only drive up airfares, but could force airlines to cut service on routes that are already losing money or are only marginally profitable. It would also encourage travellers from cities close to the border to find cheaper U.S. flights. A $50-a-tonne levy on carbon emissions would cost the industry roughly $1-billion in 2022, according to a study done for the council. The airline council represents Air Canada, WestJet, Air Transat and Jazz.

The industry is pushing for a federal system similar to a cap-and-trade approach that would allow companies to purchase credits from other industries that can reduce their GHG emissions more cheaply. The international airline industry recently adopted a global cap-and-trade system that aims to hold emissions at 2020 levels through the purchase of credits.

Fuel represents either the largest or second-largest cost for airlines and Mr. Bergamini said his members have been investing heavily in more fuel-efficient aircraft. Between 2005 and 2016, the industry cut its fuel for each kilometre flown on domestic flights by 15.6 per cent.

But it is not clear airlines deserve any special treatment because of competitiveness concerns, said Dale Beugin, executive director at the Ecofiscal Commission, a think tank that works on pricing pollution.

"I think it is quite likely they will just be able to pass along their costs to consumers," Mr. Beugin said. "So yes, flights might cost more, but I don't see them losing market share to international competitors."
McKenna urged to probe giant cement plant proposal

Carl Meyer

Environmentalists are seeking a federal review of a planned giant cement plant that would raise pollutants, dust, noise and traffic near a village on the Ottawa River.

The Canadian arm of an Italian multinational company soon expects to be producing over a million tonnes of cement every year from a 40-hectare plant halfway between Montreal and Ottawa.

Colacem Canada says its plan for a sprawling, 52-building plant just west of L’Orignal, Ontario will create roughly 200 jobs over two years and bring "significant economic benefits to the local community," with long-term employment for 300 people once completed.

The plant could also produce one megatonne per year of carbon dioxide, which would put it in the top dozen or so (90 companies) that have caused two-thirds of carbon pollution created by human activity, only seven were not fossil fuel energy companies; those seven were cement manufacturers.

Nature Canada, Ontario Nature, Nature Quebec and the VanKleek Hill and District Nature Society are calling on Environment and Climate Change Minister Catherine McKenna to designate the proposed plant for a federal review.

In an Oct. 5 letter to these groups obtained by National Observer, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency (CEAA) said it had acknowledged their concerns and will "provide advice to the minister" on the issue.

"We got a response very quickly back from the agency saying, 'We're looking at it,'" said Stephen Hazell, director of conservation and general counsel for Nature Canada. "The question is, what are you doing - Ontario and Canada - to make sure that this company is minimizing its greenhouse gas emissions and its acid gas emissions?"

Under Canada's current environmental assessment act, the minister may designate a "physical activity" to undergo an environmental review if, in the minister's opinion, the activity will cause "adverse environmental effects" or there is "public concern related to those effects."

That review could take the form of a federal panel, or a joint federal-provincial panel. In this case, it would likely be a three-person panel with Ottawa providing two officials and Queen's Park providing a third, said Hazell.

National Observer asked McKenna's office if the minister has taken note of the request from Nature Canada and the other groups, whether she spoke with local officials about the proposed plant, whether she agreed its high estimated pollution is a significant environmental factor, and whether she would be designating the project for review.

Caroline Thériault, press secretary for the minister, referred all questions to the CEAA. The agency's communications advisor Alison Reilander said it is still "gathering information to support its recommendation to the minister as to whether to designate the project."

The environmental groups also want Ontario Environment Minister Rod Phillips to support a panel review. The minister's office did not return questions about the proposed plant before publication.
Such a project would have almost certainly fallen under the former Wynne government’s cap and trade regime, which the Ford government is moving to cancel. That regime mandated that a facility partake in carbon pricing if it put more than 25,000 tonnes of emissions in the air each year.

It is unclear what Phillips will be doing now to discourage such pollution from large projects, although his government did announce consultations towards a new climate plan.

National Observer also asked Colacem Canada if it agreed with the environmental groups’ estimation of pollution levels at the proposed site, whether it would be taking any measures to minimize pollution and whether it had been in touch with Ottawa on the issue. A representative did not return questions before publication.

Some businesses are moving to seize the opportunity that carbon-producing manufacturing presents. For example, an Ontario startup called Tandem Technical breaks down exhaust gases into compounds that can be assembled into ingredients for products like toothpaste. That firm told National Observer in May that it was seeing demand from cement manufacturers.

Other companies like Halifax-based CarbonCure are taking carbon pollution captured by industrial emitters and injecting it into freshly-mixed concrete.

**Over 100 trucks every day**

Colacem already owns and operates a quarry next to the land it wants to develop into the cement plant. The project site is two kilometres from the Ottawa River and eight kilometres from Alfred Bog that is set to become a provincial park.

 Its immediate neighbours would include a cluster of residents, farms and farmland, soil processing and meat packing facilities, and L’Orignal Christian Academy, according to an independent assessment by professional planner Mark Dorfman last spring.

The plant would be serviced by 110 trucks per day bringing in raw materials like limestone and picking up finished cement for delivery, as well as staff and service going in and out, Dorfman's report showed.

It would also contain a 125-metre chimney for the kiln and draw water from nearby quarry pits.

Late last year, residents in St. Marys, Ont. north of London raised concerns about **smelly emissions** from their local cement plant. Hazell said he's concerned about the potential for the L'Orignal location to release pollutants eastward.

"This (L'Orignal) plant is 70 kilometres upwind from Montreal, so any acid rain that comes from this plant, with prevailing westerly winds, it's going to come right on top of it," he said.

In Quebec, a $1.45 billion cement plant in the Gaspé region was inaugurated last year following intensive controversy. It was estimated that it added to the province’s greenhouse gas emissions on its own by an estimated two per cent, and added six per cent to the industrial sector as a whole.

Colacem has indicated on its website that the L'Orignal location would have "state of the art technology" that includes a "hybrid air filter" for dust control. It has committed to "zero wastewater discharges."

The company cites the finding of its own independent consulting services firm Golder Associates, that the plant's air quality emissions "are not predicted to significantly impact the local air quality."

But the citizens group, Action Champlain, has put up a long list of complaints, including the large dispersal area of the chimney, the day-and-night operation of heavy machinery, truck traffic on the local highway and more quarry activity.

Hazell said he is pushing for a federal review to "get some authenticated numbers from the company as to what the emissions are going to be."

**OTTAWA BANNIT L’AMIANTE AVANT... D’Y INVESTIR**

Vingt-quatre heures après avoir annoncé le bannissement de l'amiante, Ottawa annoncera demain l'octroi de fonds publics à une entreprise qui souhaite exploiter les résidus des mines d'amiante, contre l'avis de la santé publique.

**LE GOUVERNEMENT FÉDÉRAL FINANÇERA UN EXPLOITANT DES RÉSIDUS MINIERS MALGRÉ L’INQUIÉTUDE DES MÉDECINS**

Dans un bref communiqué émis, le ministère de l'Innovation a invité les médias à se présenter aujourd'hui à l'usine d'Alliance Magnésium, à Danville, près d’Asbestos.

La ministre du Développement international, Marie-Claude Bibeau, qui fera l'annonce au nom de son collègue de l'Innovation, révèlera «l'octroi de fonds pour un projet de technologies propres avantageux pour l'environnement et pour les emplois de la classe moyenne ».

**100 MILLIONS DE TONNES**

Les fonds iront à Alliance Magnésium, a confirmé au Journal Justine Lesage, l'attachée de presse de la ministre.

Cette entreprise a racheté en décembre 2017 la polluante usine Magnola et son dépôt de 100 millions de tonnes de résidus miniers, qui contient jusqu'à 40 % de fibres d'amiante, dans le but d'en tirer du magnésium.

L'annonce fédérale met en colère la Dre Louise Soulière, de l'Association pour la santé publique du Québec. «Encore une fois, le lobby a gagné », gronde-t-elle.

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Ottawa sees more revenue from personal income tax

Forthcoming report cites 'economic growth' and changes to levies affecting high earners as factors behind the $9.9-billion increase

Bill Curry

Personal income tax revenue shot up by nearly $10-billion last year according to a federal government report that attributes the gain to a strengthening economy and the ripple effect of tax changes aimed at raising more money from high-income earners.

Finance Canada will release its annual financial report on Friday, which will provide the final statistics for the fiscal year that ended on March 31.

It will show that personal income tax revenue increased by $9.9-billion, or 6.9 per cent, in 2017-18, according to a federal official, who provided The Globe and Mail with a section of the report but was not authorized to comment publicly.

The report will state that this increase in revenue is due to "economic growth and the unwinding of the impact of tax planning" that saw high-income individuals declare income in the 2015 tax year rather than 2016 in order to avoid the new top tax rate of 33 per cent on income above $200,000.

The department says that tax planning led to a short-term drop in tax revenue from high-income earners in 2016, and the figures suggest there was a rebound in 2017.

The Globe did not receive a copy of the full report, which will include other information such as the final deficit figure for 2017-18.

During the 2015 federal election, the Liberal Party campaigned on a pledge to run short-term deficits and return to balance before the next election, which is scheduled for October, 2019. However the government's most recent budget said deficits will continue beyond that date and no timeline has been announced for when the books will be balanced.

The Finance Canada data provide the most up-to-date information as to how several significant tax changes may be affecting federal government revenue.

The Liberals also campaigned on a central pledge of raising taxes on the top 1 per cent of incomes in order to pay for a tax break for middle-income earners.

Those tax-bracket changes took effect on Jan. 1, 2016. In 2017, Finance Minister Bill Morneau announced a series of widely criticized changes to small business tax rules that are primarily aimed at high-income earners.

One of those changes included new restrictions on the the splitting of business income with family members through dividends. Those measures took effect on Jan. 1, 2018.

Another change affecting high-income earners will kick in on Jan. 1, 2019. That change will phase out access to the small-business tax rate - which is lower than the corporate tax rate - for businesses that earn more than $50,000 in passive investment income in a year.

Accountant Kim Moody, a vocal critic of Mr. Morneau's small-business tax changes, said he suspects that after making adjustments for the 2016 tax rate changes, small-business owners with high incomes have been making further tax planning moves in response to the new changes that affect them.

Mr. Moody said the new tax on split income might have encouraged some families to declare more income in 2017 to prepare for the new rules. He also questioned whether some of the new revenue could be the result of high-income earners leaving the country, which triggers a form of exit tax.

Mr. Moody also noted that the figures cover only the first three months of 2018. He predicted that there will be continuing
uncertainty over the impact of small business changes as the Canada Revenue Agency responds to how businesses filed their 2017 taxes.

The Liberal Party's 2015 platform promised that a new tax bracket on income of more than $200,000 would offset a middle-income tax break perfectly, with the tax hike raising about $3-billion a year and the tax cut lowering federal revenues by about the same amount.

However weeks after forming government, Mr. Morneau and the Finance Department provided new estimates showing the two measures would come at a small net loss for the government.

In August, The Globe reported that CRA records showed that high-income earners actually paid $4.6-billion less in federal taxes in 2016, the first tax year under the new tax brackets imposed by the Liberals.

Mr. Morneau's office told The Globe at the time that the 2016 figures were likely a one-time event influenced by the fact that high-income earners opted to declare some income in late 2015 rather than 2016 to avoid the new higher tax rate on income of more than $200,000.

The CRA figures are for the 2016 calendar year, whereas the new Finance Canada numbers cover the fiscal year that ended on March 31. The CRA figures are more detailed than the Finance Canada figures.

Making a direct appeal to the minister is an unusual step for the committee to take, but with Morneau now preparing the annual fall economic update (expected to be delivered within a month), time is of the essence.

"We're certainly not focusing a year out," Easter said when asked if increasing the maximum deduction isn't the kind of measure that typically would be saved for an election year budget. "We're looking at what we need to do now to encourage productivity and competitiveness of Canadian industry."

The Department of Finance is grappling with the issue already, weighing options and trying to answer some key questions. How much should the write-off be worth? How much would increasing the write-off cost the federal government? Should it apply across the board, or only to specific types of investment? Business groups, including the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, already have called on Morneau to act. The minister also has spent months consulting business leaders on the issue of Canadian competitiveness.

Still, there are reasons to think that Morneau can afford to proceed cautiously. Economic growth in Canada's second quarter rose to 2.9 per cent from 1.9 per cent in the previous quarter. Exports are up. Unemployment is down. And Morneau has consistently downplayed the need to respond to Trump's corporate tax cuts with his own.

Conservatives have their own set of numbers, taken from industry groups, which point to declining investment in Canada as Canadian companies increase their investment in the U.S.

"Why are the Liberals giving so much help to Donald Trump?" asked MP Gerard Deltell during question period a few weeks back.

The Liberals' position is that investment is going up here as well - by eight per cent over the last six quarters. It's one of the reasons Morneau downplays the importance of matching Trump's corporate tax cuts.

And when compared to the Americans' $1 trillion federal deficit projection in a year of strong economic growth (fuelled in part by the tax cuts), Canada's deficit financing - particularly when viewed as a percentage of the overall economy - looks modest.

But that's not the only source of pressure the finance minister is feeling in the lead-up to the fall update. Liberal MPs are looking for clarity on the government's plan to impose a national price on carbon in those provinces refusing to act on their own. Others want to see a signal that the deficit for 2018 is on a downward track from the $19.4 billion forecast last spring.

A number of Liberal MPs say caucus is still being consulted on the rollout of the carbon price, which includes the promise that families in the non-participating provinces - Saskatchewan, Ontario, Manitoba and possibly New Brunswick - will receive a rebate cheque directly from the federal government.

 MPs committee calling on Morneau to boost deduction for capital investments

Chris Hall

Wayne Easter answered the phone in the middle of a quick lunch. The chair of the Commons finance committee was in Winnipeg yesterday with other committee members, listening to submissions on what should be in the next federal budget. Wherever they stop, Easter said, the message heard by committee members is pretty much the same: Canada needs to do something quickly to encourage more corporate investment in this country after President Donald Trump slashed corporate taxes in the U.S., and allowed companies to write off 100 per cent of their capital investments.

"The rapid depreciation the U.S. allows for new technologies is drawing capital away," the Liberal MP said. "We have heard that absolutely everywhere."

The tone of these calls is urgent enough that the committee is planning to send a letter to Finance Minister Bill Morneau calling on him to increase the existing 50 per cent deduction for capital investments before the end of the year.
Morneau also is grappling with the impact of the continuing U.S. tariffs on steel and aluminum. While many companies on both sides of the border stockpiled metals, those supplies are running out and the added cost will start cutting into the bottom line soon.

Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland, who led the trade talks with the U.S. and Mexico, acknowledges those tariffs - and the retaliatory duties imposed by Canada on a broad range of U.S.-made products totalling $16.7 billion - are bad for the economies of both countries.

"I think what makes the most sense for both countries is to lift the tariffs on both sides and we're ready to do it as soon as the U.S. is ready," she said.

There's some support for a quick resolution to the tariff standoff from an unlikely source south of the border. Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell - a Republican - suggested Trump's trade disputes are threatening to undercut economic growth.

"The tariffs are beginning to have an impact in a negative ways so I hope that we make some progress quickly on some of these other fronts, in particular with China," he said in an interview with the Reuters news agency on Wednesday.

With a provisional North American trade deal now in place, trade uncertainty may be less of a factor as Morneau prepares his fall fiscal update. But the ability of Canadian businesses to compete with their American rivals is still something he has to worry about.

Easter said the questions that need answering are simple, even if the answers are anything but.

"How do we attract and hold investment in Canada? That's the question. What is the cost of doing that versus the cost of doing nothing?"

Canadians will find out the answer in just a few weeks.

The pressure is on for Senate to pass a massive Asia-Pacific trade deal quickly

John Paul Tasker

The push is on for Parliament to quickly ratify the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans-Pacific Partnership (CPTPP) trade agreement so that Canada can reap the benefits that come from being an early adopter of the deal - and there's a race on now to beat other countries to the punch.

The agreement comes into force 60 days after six of 11 signatories have ratified it through enabling legislation. So far, four countries have formally put pen to paper on the deal: Australia, Mexico, Japan and Singapore. Two other countries are in the advanced stages of debate: Vietnam and New Zealand.

Canada's CPTPP legislation, Bill C-79, passed the House of Commons on Tuesday and it is just now starting its journey through the Senate. A number of industry groups representing significant segments of the Canadian economy, including cattle ranchers and the meat and pork councils, are urging a speedy passage so Canada can get a leg-up on other CPTPP partners.

Observers say they believe being among the first six countries to adopt the deal could be economically significant as it would give Canada "first-mover advantage," allowing it to establish itself in important supply chains early on.

'There is huge benefit to us joining the agreement. This isn't theoretical. It's taking market share out of the pockets of the Americans. It simply doesn't get any better for us on the trade front.' - Carlo Dade

In a letter sent to senators and subsequently shared with CBC News, a group of farm interests is now asking the Senate to forego its usual parliamentary processes to ensure "expeditious ratification" so the deal can come into force by December 31, 2018 - so there can be tariff relief both this year and next.

"To meet this ambitious objective, we recommend minimal to no further witness testimony at the committee stage," says the letter, jointly written by the Canadian Cattlemen's Association, the Canadian Meat Council, the Canadian Pork Council and National Cattle Feeders' Association.

"If we miss this timeline by even one day, then the tariff reduction schedule on our exported beef and pork is pushed back a full year. This represents money in the pockets of Canadian farmers that we cannot afford to lose."

495 million consumers

The benefits of the CPTPP are said to be substantial as it will give Canadian companies more tariff-free access to the world's largest trading bloc, representing some 495 million consumers. The deal will eliminate up to 95 per cent of tariff lines among the parties.

The chief economist at Global Affairs Canada has said the CPTPP will generate long-term economic gains for Canada in excess of $4.2 billion.

International Trade Diversification Minister Jim Carr said Thursday senators should pass the bill before the end of November so Canada can start cashing in.

"It would be very helpful, senators, for Canada to be part of this initial group [of six], and we know that the date is fast approaching," the minister said Thursday to the Senate's trade committee. "Early November is a target we shouldn't miss."

Independent Ontario Sen. Sabi Marwah, the bill's sponsor in the Red Chamber, also has been busy making the government's case to his Senate colleagues that the agreement should be ratified "as soon as possible."
"If other countries are able to gain first-mover advantage before Canada, then Canadian exporters will have a more difficult time gaining market share," Marwah said in a recent speech. Marwah wasn't available for an interview with CBC News.

Carlo Dade is the director of trade at the Canada West Foundation and has written extensively about this agreement and its past iterations. He said Canada should act now to take advantage of the U.S. "shooting itself in the foot" by walking away from a deal they had helped draft.

U.S. President Donald Trump said he wouldn't sign the Obama-brokered TPP. The other TPP countries subsequently pressed ahead without him, reaching an agreement-in-principle on a moderately revised deal earlier this year.

"The rush is because there is huge benefit to us joining the agreement. The dollar and cents stuff is significant. This isn't theoretical. It's taking market share out of the pockets of the Americans. It simply doesn't get any better for us on the trade front," Dade said in an interview with CBC News. "We want to start clocking benefits."

A concrete example of this first-mover advantage can be found with Canadian beef and pork exports to Japan, Dade said. If Canada is part of the agreement when it first comes into force, he said, beef and pork exporters will have "the first crack" at using their preferential market access to displace U.S. exports - which will be more expensive because they'll face a higher tariff.

While Canadian beef producers exporting to Japan can expect a reduction in tariffs, U.S. beef exporters will still be subject to 38.5 per cent tariffs. More than 30 per cent of Japan's beef imports come from the U.S., while Canada supplies just 2 per cent.

With CPTPP, there's a lot of room for Canada to take sales away from the U.S.

"It's a limited-time offer. The Americans are eventually going to get their act together. So our delay is eating into the money we have on the table," Dade said.

Other tangible benefits that will be felt right away include relaxed visa restrictions on Canadian businesspeople travelling to the region for work, Dade said.

And while cattle farmers are eager to secure Bill C-79's passage, other groups - like Canada's dairy farmers and some interests in the auto sector - are urging senators to take the time they need to adequately study the legislation before committing Canada.

Importantly, dairy farmers want senators to probe the government about financial supports for their sector, which was forced to concede quota to allow for more foreign imports. They also want assurances that the government will guard against "double-dipping" of dairy quota if the U.S., which received some access in the USMCA, later joins on to the CPTPP.

Dade these are not adequate reasons to delay.

"We're not going to change the agreement. We're not going to add new things, and we're certainly not going to find anything new," he said.

Dade said he's crunched the numbers and there have been dozens of committee meetings (64, in fact), with hundreds (503) of stakeholders testifying on CPTPP since the deal was first floated by the former Conservative government in 2012.

"How much more do we really need to hear? We've debated the agreement endlessly," he said.

The Conservative leader in the Senate, Larry Smith, said he supports a speedy passage of the bill.

"We have a sense of urgency, we need to act expeditiously. It is not about acting impulsively. It's about acting and get this done. This is important. We want to know now that we are going to beat the other three or four who are trying to get in in front of us," Smith said.

Liberal P.E.I. Sen. Percy Downe, meanwhile, bristled at the suggestion that the Senate should hurry up and pass a bill they've only had before them for a couple of days.

"I appreciate the urgency and it may very well be that we pass it quickly, that our answers are secure. We should make sure we know what we are passing and take our time to do the job," he said.

Les ministres Carr et Morneau iront en Chine pour "approfondir nos relations"

OTTAWA _ Deux ministres fédéraux chevronnés iront à Pékin le mois prochain pour coprésider une conférence de haut niveau sur les entreprises, mais aussi pour promouvoir les intérêts commerciaux du Canada avec la Chine.

Le ministre du Commerce international, Jim Carr, et son collègue des Finances, Bill Morneau, séjourneront dans la capitale chinoise pendant deux jours, à compter du 11 novembre.

M. Carr a soutenu, jeudi, que rien dans l'accord de libre-échange récemment négocié avec les États-Unis et le Mexique n'empêche le Canada de promouvoir ainsi ses intérêts commerciaux avec la Chine.

Le ministre a été interrogé durant son témoignage devant le comité sénatorial des affaires commerciales au sujet d'une clause controversée du nouvel Accord États-Unis_Mexique_Canada (AEUMC).
Cette clause permet à l'un des partenaires de se retirer de l'accord, moyennant un préavis de six mois, s'il n'accepte pas qu'un des autres signataires entame des négociations de libre-échange avec un pays qui n'a pas d'économie de marché, pays considéré par plusieurs comme étant la Chine même si cette dernière n'est pas explicitement nommée.

M. Carr a précisé que le Canada et la Chine ne se lanceraient pas dans des négociations de libre-échange formelles et que, pour l'instant, Ottawa n'avait donc rien à déclarer aux États-Unis.

"Nous nous efforcerons d'approfondir et d'élargir nos relations commerciales avec la Chine, secteur par secteur, a-t-il dit. Si, à un moment donné, nous devions discuter d'un accord de libre-échange global (avec la Chine), nous en aviserions nos partenaires nord-américains, comme nous sommes tenus de le faire. Et si nos partenaires n'étaient pas d'accord, ils auraient la possibilité de sortir de l'accord.

"Mais cela ne nous empêche pas (pour l'instant) de continuer à approfondir nos liens avec la Chine ou avec toute autre nation du monde", a soutenu M. Carr.

Le ministre du Commerce international a souligné que l'actuel Accord de libre-échange nord-américain (ALÉNA), tout comme que le nouvel AEUMC récemment négocié, comportait une clause de résiliation générale permettant aux parties de le quitter, pour quelque motif que ce soit, moyennant un préavis de six mois.

L'ambassade de Chine à Ottawa a vivement critiqué la nouvelle clause, affirmant qu'elle visait les partenaires commerciaux potentiels de Pékin, et décrivait injustement la Chine comme un pays qui n'a pas d'économie de marché.

Des experts et des analystes appuient l'approche prudente préconisée par M. Carr, car elle offre au Canada la possibilité de discuter avec la Chine sans irriter ouvertement les États-Unis.

La Maison-Blanche est depuis quelques mois au cœur d'une guerre commerciale avec la Chine, qui a entraîné l'imposition par l'administration de Donald Trump de centaines de milliards de dollars de droits de douane sur les produits chinois et des représailles immédiates de Pékin.

**Canada not sending anyone to Saudi business summit and never intended to source**

OTTAWA _ The federal government has no intention of sending anyone to a major investment conference in Saudi Arabia next week at a time when Riyadh is the target of global outrage _ and one source insists Ottawa never had plans to dispatch a delegation.

Cabinet ministers, federal officials and embassy staff will skip the Future Investment Initiative in Riyadh, which is sometimes referred to as "Davos in the Desert," a senior government insider said Thursday.

Last year, then-natural resources minister Jim Carr attended the inaugural edition of the summit.

This year's event comes as Saudi Arabia faces intense global pressure following the disappearance and apparent death of Jamal Khashoggi, a Saudi citizen and U.S. resident who has written critically of the Saudi regime.

In recent days, key international figures have announced they've cancelled plans to attend the Saudi summit. They include top business executives, U.S. Treasury Secretary Steven Mnuchin, European cabinet ministers, International Monetary Fund head Christine Lagarde and World Bank President Jim Yong Kim.

On the bilateral front, Canada's relationship with Saudi Arabia has deteriorated significantly since the summer.

In August, Riyadh suspended diplomatic ties with Canada and expelled the Canadian ambassador after Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland criticized the regime on Twitter for its arrest of social activists.

The Canadian official, speaking on condition of anonymity Thursday, declined to draw a direct link to recent events when asked why Canadians were skipping the summit _ they said Canada is just not going.

On Thursday in the House of Commons, Freeland called Khashoggi's disappearance deeply troubling as she was pressed by opposition MPs to explain why the government is honouring a multibillion-dollar arms contract with a Saudi regime accused of human rights violations and war crimes.

"Canada has said this with a very strong voice. That's the message I transmitted to Saudi Arabia's foreign affairs minister," Freeland said in reference to the Khashoggi case.

"I've also discussed this subject with my counterparts in Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States. We join our partners in calling for a thorough investigation and accountability for this act."
And a representative of Mexican president-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador threatened not to close the trade pact without a deal on tariffs.

Meanwhile, the United States on Thursday requested that a World Trade Organization dispute-resolution panel get involved in the international retaliation over U.S. tariffs, an American official familiar with the matter told Reuters.

Canada, Mexico and China had also planned to ask for a WTO panel examining those tariffs, according to another government source familiar with the matter.

Ms. Freeland's spokesman, Adam Austen, described the U.S. tariffs as "unjust and illegal," but did not rule out Canada agreeing to quotas to get them lifted. "The best outcome for both countries would be for the U.S. to rescind their tariffs," he wrote in an email.

Mr. Lighthizer did not respond to requests for comment. Mr. Trump hit Canada and Mexico with metals tariffs in June, in what he said was a bid to gain leverage in renegotiations of the North American free-trade agreement. Both Canada and Mexico hit back with tariffs of their own.

In August and September, the countries finished talks on NAFTA - renamed the United StatesMexico-Canada Agreement - but Mr. Trump left the tariffs in place.

One of the Canadian government sources said that, ahead of reaching the USMCA deal on Sept. 30, the Trump administration insisted on a hard quota that would have cut into Canada's metals exports to the United States - similar to a deal South Korea agreed to in the spring to slash exports by nearly onethird.

Canada was only willing to cut a tariff deal that set quotas far above current exports, the source said. The gap between the two positions was so large that Ottawa decided it was better to set the issue aside and focus on completing the USMCA first.

Daniel Ujczo, an Ohio-based trade lawyer who works with companies in the auto and steel industries, said Mr. Trump deliberately chose not to conclude a tariffs deal at the same time as the USMCA in order to keep some leverage over the other two countries to close the deal in November.

"The idea was to keep the tariffs in place to make sure the parties sign the deal, to make sure there wouldn't be any buyers' remorse," said Mr. Ujczo, of Dickinson Wright.

Keeping the tariffs on longer also makes the United States seem tougher in its trade dealings with other countries, Mr. Ujczo said, and raises some money for the American treasury.

One U.S. industry source said the White House wanted some distance between the USMCA and the lifting of tariffs to keep up the pretext that the tariffs were put in place for national-security reasons rather than purely to gain negotiating leverage.

Making it obvious the tariffs were not actually related to security, as the White House maintained, would make it easier for other countries to challenge them at the WTO.

In response to another question on Saudi Arabia, she said: "Canada's position on human rights in general, very much including in Saudi Arabia, is clear and firm."

U.S. President Donald Trump has said that, during their recent conversation, the Saudi king firmly denied allegations that he or his crown prince had any knowledge of or role in the disappearance of Khashoggi, who was last seen entering the Saudi consulate in Istanbul.

with files from The Associated Press

**Canada, U.S. in talks to end steel, aluminum tariffs**

U.S. pressing Canada to agree to quotas instead, sources say, as countries aim to resolve trade war before formal signing of USMCA next month

Adrian Morrow, Eric Atkins

Canada and the United States are trying to negotiate an end to U.S. President Donald Trump's tariffs on steel and aluminum, with the goal of reaching a deal before the formal signing of the proposed United StatesMexico-Canada Agreement at the end of November.

Talks have focused on Canada agreeing to a quota on exports of those metals to the United States in exchange for the Trump administration lifting the tariffs, people in both countries with knowledge of the talks said. The Globe and Mail granted anonymity to five sources because they were not authorized to speak publicly on the matter.

Foreign Minister Chrystia Freeland and U.S. Trade Representative Robert Lighthizer discussed the matter last week at Ms. Freeland's Toronto home, a Canadian government source said, and agreed they had to reach a resolution. The sit-down - over a roast-beef dinner cooked by Ms. Freeland - included one of Mr. Lighthizer's deputies, C.J. Mahoney; Canada's ambassador to Washington, David MacNaughton; as well as members of Ms. Freeland's family.

Talks over steel, which is subject to a 25-per-cent tariff, have been more difficult than those on aluminum, which faces a 10-per-cent levy, said the source, as well as another Canadian government source. A deal on steel is unlikely before the Nov. 6 mid-term elections, they said, though an aluminum one might be possible.

Mexico and the United States, meanwhile, are increasing the pressure on each other. Mr. Trump on Thursday hinted he might not sign the USMCA if Mexico doesn't do more to stop Central American migrants from arriving at the U.S. border.

And a representative of Mexican president-elect Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador threatened not to close the trade pact without a deal on tariffs.

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One U.S. industry source said the White House wanted some distance between the USMCA and the lifting of tariffs to keep up the pretext that the tariffs were put in place for national-security reasons rather than purely to gain negotiating leverage.

Making it obvious the tariffs were not actually related to security, as the White House maintained, would make it easier for other countries to challenge them at the WTO.
The source said Canada might ultimately avoid having to agree to quotas at all and instead make some kind of deal that builds on existing commitments to supply the United States with the metals it needs for military and other national-security purposes.

However, four other sources - the two Canadian government sources, as well as two Canadian industry sources - said quotas have been the basis for discussion. The two industry sources said Ottawa has been sounding out steel and aluminum producers in recent days on what sort of quota levels they could live with.

A deal on aluminum may land sooner than one on steel: The United States imports 85 per cent of the former, compared with only a third of the latter, meaning the U.S. constituency for maintaining aluminum tariffs is relatively small compared with the companies that want the levy lifted.

The Beer Institute, which represents American brewers, estimates the aluminum tariff has saddled its members with US$347-million in additional costs and will ultimately lead to 20,000 job losses as a result of an increase in the price of cans. Brewers are also hit by the steel tariff when they buy kegs or expand operations.

"This is definitely sending shock waves through the beerbrewing community," Jim McGreevy, the Beer Institute's chief executive, said in an interview. "Beer is getting hit in several different ways."

The picture is more complicated for steel, which has a larger presence in the United States.

Even there, however, some powerful voices are advocating for Canada.

United Steelworkers president Leo Gerard supports tariffs generally but argues Canada should be excluded. The problem, he says, is countries such as China that subsidize steel and dump it in the U.S. market - not Canada, which is heavily integrated with the U.S. industry.

"To be saying that Canada should be included in these tariffs, it's ridiculous," he said. "Go after the damn cheaters."

With a report from Reuters
October 1 deadline for a new deal - the United States-Mexico-Canada Agreement (USMCA) - the U.S. did not remove the tariffs.

"The best outcome for both countries would be for the U.S. to rescind their tariffs," said Adam Austen, a spokesperson for Freeland.

"The unjust and illegal tariffs that the U.S. has imposed under Section 232 are separate and apart from the USMCA negotiations. We have taken strong responsive measures to defend our workers and our industry, including measured, dollar-for-dollar tariffs."

Zekelman's comments came as the parliamentary committee has been taking a closer look at the impact of the tariffs on Canadian businesses and workers. Over several days of testimony, some business owners have told MPs they have been forced to introduce layoffs or reduce shift work as a result of the tariffs. Zekelman said that pain could have been avoided had the Canadians just accepted the American quota system.

"They will do reduced shipments, or level shipments, but they will not do increased shipments," Zekelman said of the American negotiators.

An outspoken critic
He also took a personal shot at Freeland over her difficult relationship with Lighthizer.

"He can't stand negotiating with her because she's just not a businessperson. She's way out of her league."

Zekelman has been outspoken on the issue of U.S. tariffs - and even welcomed the idea when it was first floated back in March as a way to crack down on the dumping of cheap steel, mostly from Asia.

"Is that 25 per cent duty enough? I don't think it is and I actually think those duties should be much higher," he told CBC News at the time.

But his previous comments suggested he thought that Canada would get some sort of exemption. "President Trump doesn't view Canada as an enemy," he said at the time.

Les brasseurs saluent la décision d'exemoper de droits les cannettes américaines
TORONTO _ Les producteurs canadiens de bière trinquent à la décision du gouvernement fédéral d'exemoper de droits douaniers la plupart des cannettes de bière importées des États-Unis.

Le gouvernement canadien avait notamment imposé en juillet dernier des droits de douane sur les importations de cannettes américaines pour riposter contre l'imposition par l'administration de Donald Trump de tarifs douaniers sur l'acier et l'aluminium canadiens.

Ottawa a finalement annoncé, la semaine dernière, que plusieurs produits en métal américains seraient exemptés des droits de douane en raison d'une pénurie d'approvisionnement, d'obligations contractuelles ou de toute autre situation susceptible d'avoir de graves répercussions sur l'économie canadienne.

Bière Canada, l'association qui défend les intérêts des brasseurs canadiens, affirme que "l'allégement tarifaire sur les cannettes de bière élimine un gros problème pour les brasseurs locaux, et reconnaît le fait que les taxes sur la bière sont déjà trop élevées".

L'association estimait que les droits de douane de 10 pour cent imposés par le Canada sur les importations de cannettes d'aluminium américaines, équivalent au montant imposé par les États-Unis sur les exportations canadiennes, représentaient des coûts supplémentaires de 10,5 millions $ par année pour les brasseurs canadiens.

Bière Canada affirme que l'allégement tarifaire est particulièrement important pour la grande cannette de 473 millilitres, populaire chez certains petits brasseurs. L'année dernière, les brasseries canadiennes ont importé des États-Unis près d'un demi-milliard de ces grandes cannettes.

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Toujours peu de détails sur la compensation pour les producteurs laitiers

OTTAWA _ Le ministre Jim Carr a offert peu de réponses sur l'indemnisation qui sera offerte aux producteurs laitiers pour compenser les brèches ouvertes dans le système de gestion de l'offre après la signature de l'accord commercial avec les pays du Pacifique. 

Questionné par des sénateurs québécois jeudi lors de son témoignage devant le comité des affaires étrangères et du commerce international, M. Carr a réitéré que son gouvernement allait offrir une "pleine indemnisation" aux agriculteurs et que des discussions avec l'industrie laitière avaient présentement cours.

Jim Carr a été nommé ministre de la Diversification du commerce international lors d'un remaniement ministériel en juillet pour tenter d'ouvrir de nouveaux marchés pour le Canada.

Le gouvernement veut ratifier l'Accord de Partenariat transpacific global et progressiste (PTPGP) au début du mois de novembre, a-t-il indiqué en incitant les sénateurs à l'étudier rapidement.

Les producteurs de lait au Québec et ailleurs au pays craignent l'impact négatif de cet accord commercial qui cède 3,25 pour cent du marché des produits laitiers aux pays signataires. Cette brèche s'ajoute à celle qui avait déjà été créée par l'accord Canada-Union européenne et celle qui a par la suite été accordée dans le cadre de l'Accord États-Unis-Mexique-Canada conclu à la fin du mois de septembre avec l'administration Trump.

Le PTPGP remplace le Partenariat transpacific dont les États-Unis s'étaient retirés après l'élection du président Donald Trump. Il a été conclu avec l'Australie, le Brunei, le Chili, le Japon, la Malaisie, le Mexique, la Nouvelle-Zélande, le Pérou, Singapour et le Vietnam.

Le ministre Carr a défendu l'accord qui permettra, dit-il, de créer de la richesse au Canada.

Trump official called Trudeau 'little punk,' report says

An official in the Trump administration privately referred to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau as "that little punk kid running Canada," another Trump official said at an event on Wednesday.

Larry Kudlow, Trump's chief economic adviser, recounted the story at a dinner hosted by the American Spectator, a conservative magazine.

According to the Washington Examiner, which was in attendance, Kudlow said that one of his friends in the White House, "who will go unnamed," said they were pleased they had managed to come to a trade agreement with Canada - despite Trudeau.

"We didn't walk away. We didn't end it. We made a deal. Alright? Spite that little punk kid running Canada, we still made it," Kudlow said, the Examiner reported. "And I've had some wonderful run-ins with him."

Trump and his aides, including Kudlow, had hurled public insults at Trudeau during the contentious negotiations on the future of the North American Free Trade Agreement.

But the president's language brightened two weeks ago when they announced their deal. Trump called Trudeau "a good person who is doing a good job," and he said the bilateral tensions had "ended."

New Brunswicker at the centre of pot legalization

She is the New Brunswicker at the centre of one of the greatest policy shifts of our generation.

But Federal Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor says if you asked her just a few short years ago if legalizing recreational pot was the right way to go, she admits her answer would be different than the one she now champions.

"I'll be very frank with you, if you would have asked me back in 2014 about the legalization of cannabis I would really have to say I was one of those people who was on the fence," said Petitpas Taylor, who was a frontline social worker with the RCMP at the time.
She believed in decriminalization, seeing first hand that weighing down people with a criminal record was detrimental. But as a parliamentarian, she said a report by the task force on cannabis legalization and regulation convinced her.

"As I look now, decriminalization would not provide a safe supply (of cannabis) to Canadians and it absolutely wouldn't keep it out of the hands of our youth," Petitpas Taylor said.

Since being promoted to the country's Health minister in August last year, addressing the continued concerns around the health risks of legal cannabis has been a major part of Petitpas Taylor's file.

And now, with Canada becoming only the second country in the world, after Uruguay, to legalize the recreational use of cannabis, that work isn't stopping anytime soon.

An editorial in the latest edition of the Canadian Medical Association Journal labels legal cannabis a "national, uncontrolled experiment." The largely unknown health hazards of pot remain cause for concern.

"When you say there hasn't been a whole lot of research that hasn't been done in the field, you're absolutely right," Petitpas Taylor said. "The reason why is that the substance was illegal up until now.

"We certainly recognize that there is a lot of researchers interested as we move forward with with legislation and we are making investments in research as well because we really want to find out more about the health effects associated with cannabis use."

She said the main priority now public awareness is education. But Petitpas Taylor also points to Statistics Canada data that shows five million Canadians have admitted using cannabis last year.

"I think we recognize that we're not starting a new trend here," she said. "This is something Canadians are doing and we certainly want to make sure we move forward with this to stress that it's really about keeping it out of the hands of our kids and then displace the black market."

So will Petitpas Taylor consume cannabis, now that it's legal?

"I tried cannabis on a few occasions while at university and that was many moons ago," Petitpas Taylor said. "I have no intention of picking up cannabis now.

"It's just not a personal choice of mine. I'm not a consumer now and I'm not planning to be a consumer in the future."

Cannabis à 21 ans au Québec: Ottawa anticipe des contestations judiciaires

Marie Vastel

La ministre fédérale de la Justice s'attend à ce que les lois provinciales qui ont restreint la légalisation du cannabis par Ottawa soient fort probablement contestées devant les tribunaux du pays.

Et dans le lot : la volonté du nouveau gouvernement caquiste de hausser l'âge légal à 21 ans.

« Relever l'âge légal a des répercussions », a tranché la ministre Jody Wilson-Raybould jeudi, au lendemain de la légalisation du cannabis et quelques heures avant que François Legault ne dévoie la composition de son conseil des ministres, qui comptera parmi ses priorités de resserrer l'accès à la marijuana au Québec.

« Nous voulons nous assurer que les individus puissent avoir accès au cannabis. Et de hausser l'âge, cela doit être mûrement réfléchi », a fait valoir la ministre à Ottawa. « Je ne vais pas me mettre à la place d'un individu qui habite au Québec, mais ils pourraient être inquiets de l'accès qu'ils ont au cannabis. Au cannabis légalement disponible », a-t-elle souligné, en évoquant l'exemple d'un adulte de 20 ans qui souhaiterait faire le choix de consommer du cannabis récréatif et qui voudrait s'en procurer de façon légale.

Jody Wilson-Raybould a pris soin de marteler que la loi fédérale permettait aux provinces de légiférer l'accès au cannabis sur leur territoire en tenant compte de leurs propres réalités sociales.

Le Québec interdit en outre la culture à domicile -- comme le Minnesota -- et la Coalition avenir Québec veut prohiber la consommation sur la place publique -- comme cinq autres provinces. La CAQ prévoit aussi réduire à 15 grammes la quantité de possession personnelle autorisée, plutôt que les 30 g permis par la loi fédérale.

Or, la ministre Wilson-Raybould a peu de doute que des citoyens s'adresseront aux tribunaux pour tenter de forcer la main de leurs gouvernements provinciaux.

« Le gouvernement du Canada ne contestera pas une loi provinciale », a-t-elle assuré, prudente. « Mais cela ne veut pas dire qu'une tierce partie ou un individu ne le fera pas. On pourrait probablement s'attendre à des contestations. » Et c'est à ce moment qu'on verrait si Ottawa choisira d'intervenir. Jody Wilson-Raybould a refusé de « prédéterminer » si elle prendrait part à une « cause hypothétique ».

2018 Le Devoir (site web)
Cannabis
le marché noir pourrait se tourner vers les produits comestibles

OTTAWA _ Le marché noir du cannabis au Canada est désormais confronté à la concurrence des détaillants autorisés, mais il pourrait miser sur l'intérêt du public pour des produits tels que des jujubes, des comprimés, des vaporisateurs et des crèmes au cours de la prochaine année, tant que ces produits commerciaux demeureront illégaux.

Bien que le Canada soit devenu le premier pays du G7 à légaliser, mercredi, le cannabis à des fins récréatives, il a limité l'offre légale au cannabis séché ou frais et à l'huile de cannabis, vendus par des détaillants autorisés par le gouvernement. Les Canadiens peuvent également concocter leurs propres produits à base de cannabis, incluant les produits comestibles, à la maison.

Les autorités surveillent de près la situation et certains services de police comme celui d'Ottawa ont indiqué que les lois concernant la vente et la distribution de produits illégaux seraient appliquées et que les agents étaient au courant des points de vente au détour qui ne sont pas légaux.

La police observe aussi l'évolution du marché noir maintenant que la consommation de cannabis à des fins récréatives est légale.

Le ministre de la Réduction du crime organisé, Bill Blair, a déclaré qu'Ottawa savait que les consommateurs voudraient peut-être acheter des produits comestibles et des produits très puissants sur le marché noir, mais qu'il était important d'adopter une réglementation prudente en raison des "complexités et des risques importants".

"Une partie du problème est que, selon la manière dont ces produits sont fabriqués, emballés et vendus, les gens n'ont aucune idée de la puissance de ce qu'ils consomment", a souligné M. Blair en entrevue.

Le porte-parole du Nouveau Parti démocratique en matière de police, de la santé et du logement, de la maison, de l'information et des technologies, de l'environnement, de l'énergie et de la réduction du crime organisé, Donald MacPherson, directeur général de la Coalition canadienne des politiques sur les drogues, a souligné que ce type de produits étaient recherchés par plusieurs consommateurs.

Donald MacPherson, directeur général de la Coalition canadienne des politiques sur les drogues, a souligné que l'exclusion de ces produits constituerait une brèche importante, tout en ajoutant qu'elle était intentionnelle.

Le gouvernement fédéral a tiré des leçons de l'expérience canadienne des politiques sur les drogues, a convenu, jeudi, M. MacPherson.

MacPherson a fait valoir que le marché avait échappé au cadre légal pendant tellement longtemps qu'il faudrait un certain temps avant de s'en réapproprier tous les éléments, "si cela est possible".

Un groupe de travail sur la marijuana mis sur pied par le gouvernement fédéral s'est dit préoccupé par une augmentation du nombre d'enfants consommant accidentellement des produits contenant du cannabis dans les États américains où la drogue est légale.

"Nous reconnaissons qu'un manque de réglementation a contribué à ce risque", indique le rapport.

"Si la vente des produits aliments était autorisée au Canada, ceux-ci devraient au moins se conformer aux exigences les plus strictes en matière d'emballage et d'étiquetage applicables aux produits alimentaires actuellement en vigueur aux États-Unis."

"(It's) the way to go': Brian Mulroney explains his about-face on cannabis

Former prime minister Brian Mulroney, whose government once introduced legislation to keep marijuana in the same legal category as heroin, hasn't merely become a born-again weed evangelical - he now says Canada is poised to influence the rest of the world to join the cannabis bandwagon.

"I'm saying the government's position that was taken yesterday is the way to go," Mulroney told CBC News Thursday.

"It takes a while for certain people and certain things to catch up with reality and great social advances - as I've indicated - come in waves. And this is one of the waves that I think will have Canada showing the way for the rest of the world."

It was announced yesterday that Mulroney is joining the board of Acreage Holdings, a New York-based marijuana company that also counts former U.S. Speaker of the House John Boehner and former Massachusetts governor William Weld among its directors.

It's a long way from his stance in the early 1990s, when Mulroney's government introduced Bill C-85 - which would have entrenched marijuana in the same legal category as LSD and heroin.
And while Mulroney may be the latest high-profile political figure to switch sides in the cannabis debate - and to take advantage of the commercial opportunities legalization offers - he's definitely not the first.

Julian Fantino, Toronto's former chief of police and a Conservative cabinet minister under former prime minister Stephen Harper, has become chairman of the board for 48North, a medicinal marijuana company.

That's a significant course correction for a longtime opponent of marijuana legalization who told the Toronto Sun in 2004 that legalization would not cut down on crime.

"I guess we can legalize murder too and then we won't have a murder case," Fantino said at the time. "We can't go that way."

Fantino is following in the footsteps of another former cabinet minister - Liberal Herb Dhaliwal, who served in former prime minister Jean Chrétien's cabinet. Dhaliwal founded cannabis producer National Green Biomed Ltd., based in the Fraser Valley.

'Hypocrisy'

If it's a trend - political foes of legal recreational cannabis getting involved in the market once they're out of politics - it's one that doesn't sit well with many, including current Liberal MP (and longtime legalization proponent) Nathaniel Erskine-Smith.

"I mean, there are lots of different words to describe that, and certainly, they're adults and can make their own decisions, but one word that comes to mind is 'hypocrisy,'" Erskine-Smith said Thursday.

Mulroney said he took policy positions while in office that did not single out cannabis, but rather were focused on curbing the use and spread of "lethal drugs" that were "floating around Canada big time, way back in the mid 80s."

The former prime minister said there has been a "sea change in attitudes in the reality of the use of cannabis" since his time in office - and his thinking has evolved as well.

Will the U.S. follow?

"You know, if you had told me ... when I was in office 30 years ago that same sex marriage would be on everybody's radar screen today, I would have said, 'That's a bit of a stretch.' But it is and that's the way social advance occurs," Mulroney said. "In the fullness of time, all of these important matters become accepted."

Mulroney said he supports the federal government's plan to offer pardons quickly, and free of charge, to people convicted of simple possession of cannabis; some of those people would have been convicted during his time as prime minister.

Going forward, Mulroney said he expects to see Canada's example followed by our allies, and perhaps even by our neighbour to the south.

"Well, I don't know if anything is imminent in the United States because the politics there are more complicated than in a parliamentary democracy like ours," he said.

"But obviously, the good ideas over the last 200 years that have come from the U.S. usually find their way into Canada and other countries, and the same thing is true of Canada."

Other politicians chasing the green

Here are some of the more high-profile former politicos in the marijuana trade now - and one whose move into the market didn't quite work out.

Julian Fantino: After a long career in policing, Fantino became a Conservative MP and a cabinet minister under Stephen Harper. He is chairman of the board for Aleafia Inc., a medicinal cannabis company.

Martin Cauchon: A former Liberal MP and cabinet minister under Jean Chrétien, Cauchon was justice minister in 2003 when the government introduced a bill to decriminalize possession of small amounts of cannabis. He is chairman of the board for 48North, a medicinal marijuana company.

Terry Lake: The ex-mayor of Kamloops and former B.C. Liberal health minister is vice-president of corporate and social responsibility for HEXO Corp, a cannabis producer. The co-founder of the company is Adam Miron, who was once on the national board of directors for the Liberal Party of Canada.

Mike Harcourt: The former B.C. NDP premier has been chairman of the board for True Leaf Medicine International Ltd., which oversees two divisions - one for medicinal marijuana, the other for hemp-based products for pets.

Ernie Eves: The former Tory premier of Ontario is chairman of the board for Timeless Herbal Care, a Jamaican medicinal marijuana company, and Asterion BioMed Inc., a health company that also provides medicinal cannabis services.

Chuck Rifici: A one-time Liberal Party of Canada chief financial officer - he served as treasurer for five years until June 2016 - Rifici heads the private equity firm Nesta Holdings Co., which invests in cannabis companies.

John Turner: In 2014, Mulroney's Liberal foe backed a bid by a company called Muileboom Organics to turn into a medicinal cannabis grower. Locals weren't interested, the project didn't go ahead and Turner backed out.
Pot sales quickly clean out supplies

Product Shortage

Armina Ligaya

Marijuana retailers were running low or were cleaned out completely by the end of the second day of legal sales, and the shortfall could last for months.

Manitoba Liquor & Lotteries said Thursday it is expecting product shortages in both brick-and-mortar and online stores could last "up to at least six months."

"Every province - not just Manitoba - is receiving substantially less cannabis than originally requested. ... Retailers in Manitoba will be receiving staggered shipments over the next few weeks (some daily) in an effort to meet their requests," said a spokeswoman for the Manitoba crown corporation.

Meanwhile, Quebec Cannabis Corp. said Thursday that some items are unavailable on its website and it expects further product shortages - particularly oil, capsules, atomizers and prerolled joints.

Alberta and Prince Edward Island also said certain products have sold out online, and Nova Scotia said it ran out of certain strains.

Cannabis industry players and watchers had warned that there would be shortages amid supply chain issues, but the actual appetite of Canadian consumers for legal pot was unclear until Wednesday.

On the first day of legalization in Canada, Quebec's crown cannabis corporation had recorded more than 12,500 in-store transactions and 30,000 online orders, which "far exceeds" its expectations.

The Nova Scotia Liquor Corporation said it conducted 12,810 transactions totalling more than $660,000, of which almost $47,000 were online. In P.E.I., first-day sales exceeded $152,000 after tax, nearly $21,000 of which was online.

In Alberta, where private retailers handle in-store sales, the government-run website processed 8,300 orders as of 3:30 p.m. local time on Wednesday, worth approximately $730,000, a spokeswoman for the province's gaming, liquor and cannabis commission.

The online-only Ontario Cannabis Store would not release numbers, but spokesman Daffyd Roderick said "the response to cannabis legalization has resulted in a high volume of orders." Online delivery will now take as long as five days, as opposed to the earlier timeline of one to three days, he added.

Meanwhile, in B.C. where there is only one legal store, RCMP raided two illicit marijuana dispensaries on Vancouver Island on Wednesday.

An RCMP statement says officers seized an undisclosed amount of cannabis from both locations and issued violation tickets for the unlawful sale of marijuana.

Under regulations that came into effect Wednesday, cannabis is to be sold exclusively at government-run stores, licensed private retailers and the B.C. government's online store.

However, the province only has one licensed location at this point, a government-run store in Kamloops in B.C.'s Interior.

Consumers going to British Columbia's website on Wednesday were told that several strains of marijuana were sold out and B.C.'s only retail location in Kamloops ran out of one variety of dried cannabis.

The celebratory mood that marked the legalization lost a bit of its high for some consumers who found themselves with hefty fines for allegedly violating laws around pot use.

Hours after people lined up outside Newfoundland cannabis stores to buy the first legal bud in Canada, police in St. John's say they ticketed a man accused of having more than 30 grams of weed in a public place without a licence.

In Nova Scotia, RCMP said they issued a $295 fine after officers spotted an open bag of government-supplied cannabis within the driver's reach after he was pulled over for having expired plates at 2:30 a.m. Thursday in Dartmouth. "It was right in the centre console," said Cpl. Dal Hutchinson.

The Ontario Provincial Police took to Twitter early Wednesday to post a photo of a $215 ticket given to someone who allegedly had a baggy of marijuana in their car, urging people not to indulge while in a vehicle.

RCMP raid two B.C. cannabis dispensaries

Mounties seize products, level fines against stores in Port Alberni amid first crackdowns after legalization

Andrea Woo, Mike Hager

Mounties entered two illegal dispensaries on Vancouver Island and seized all cannabis products in plain view - but made no arrests - in swift raids that were Canada's first apparent police crackdown against the illicit retail sector since recreational marijuana became legal this week.

RCMP officers in Port Alberni, B.C., went to the city's six dispensaries without a warrant on legalization day on Wednesday, checking for compliance with the new provincial Cannabis Control and Licensing Act. The officers took cannabis products from the two stores that were open and selling these items without a provincial licence.

Trevor Bertrand, owner of the Port Alberni Cannabis Club, said officers seized about $6,000 worth of prerolled joints,

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edibles and cannabis concentrates on display. They also fined him $575 for the unlawful sale of cannabis.

"They looked in my window, saw my case and came in without a warning saying they could seize what they see and that's basically what they did," he said.

About three hours later, officers raided the Leaf Compassion Cannabis Dispensary, where general manager Erik Vesaranta estimates they seized roughly the same amount of product and issued him the same violation ticket.

"Our headquarters in Victoria, they had a huge party on legalization day. It was like one of their busiest days," he said. "They were on the news, people were partying and playing music and having munchies. It looked like a good time, whereas us, we were sitting here stressing out and having anxiety. It didn't seem like legalization day for me at all."

The raids were frustrating for the two men, as both locations had been operating for at least two years with municipal business licences and both had paid the $7,500 fee to apply to the province for private retail licences.

"Nothing on the website said I had to close my store," Mr. Bertrand said of the guidance B.C. has given private shops trying to transition to the legal sector. "I figured there'd be a transitional period."

Earlier this week, B.C.'s Minister of Public Safety Mike Farnworth told reporters that his government will move to shut down illegal storefronts once more outlets become licensed.

Mr. Bertrand said he will wait for his provincial licence before opening his dispensary, and now that cannabis is legal, we're not open?"

"They came in here and wanted their CBD tinctures or pain creams, and I have to say, 'Sorry, we got raided. You can't get anything here.' They don't even know what to think. They had just transitioned into being comfortable to going to a dispensary, and now that [cannabis] is legal, we're not open?" Mr. Bertrand said he will wait for his provincial licence before selling more cannabis from the store.

"The RCMP of Port Alberni have fuelled the illegal market because there are no weed stores open in Port Alberni today, but I know a phone number where you can get something from the street," he said. "I was talking to my street competition yesterday and he was laughing."

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Earlier this week, B.C.'s Minister of Public Safety Mike Farnworth told reporters that his government will move to shut down illegal storefronts once more outlets become licensed.

Mr. Bertrand said he will wait for his provincial licence before opening his dispensary, and now that cannabis is legal, we're not open?"

"They came in here and wanted their CBD tinctures or pain creams, and I have to say, 'Sorry, we got raided. You can't get anything here.' They don't even know what to think. They had just transitioned into being comfortable to going to a dispensary, and now that [cannabis] is legal, we're not open?" Mr. Bertrand said he will wait for his provincial licence before selling more cannabis from the store.

"The RCMP of Port Alberni have fuelled the illegal market because there are no weed stores open in Port Alberni today, but I know a phone number where you can get something from the street," he said. "I was talking to my street competition yesterday and he was laughing."

"Our headquarters in Victoria, they had a huge party on legalization day. It was like one of their busiest days," he said. "They were on the news, people were partying and playing music and having munchies. It looked like a good time, whereas us, we were sitting here stressing out and having anxiety. It didn't seem like legalization day for me at all."

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the U.S. government's highly contentious detention of parents and their children.

Michel Leduc, CPPIB's global head of public affairs and communications, said the shares in the two prison companies were acquired through an algorithm that captures more than 3,000 companies as a way to diversify the fund's portfolio.

"I want to be crystal clear about this: no CPPIB employee made a decision ... to invest in those two companies," he said in an interview, before noting that many mutual funds and pension plans in Canada likely contain shares in the prison firms as well.

He added that CPPIB is an active manager in its major investments in areas like ports, electricity grids, toll roads and shopping centres. But the fund tends to be passive when it comes to its smaller holdings in publicly traded companies.

Due to CPPIB's size, it's one of the 10 largest retirement funds in the world, the value of the prison company shares make up only 0.001 per cent of its total investments, he said.

The organization, Leduc argued, takes pride in its very high standards when it comes to ethical, environmental and social considerations. CPPIB also follows a strict policy of only investing in businesses that would be lawful if they operated in Canada.

"The CPP Investment Board is seen around the world as one of the most ethical institutional investors on the planet," he said.

After Morneau defended the CPPIB on Monday in the House of Commons, Angus criticized him the following day: "Could the finance minister explain what is it about privatized American prison camps that he thinks represents any kind of ethical investment standard?"

In his response Tuesday, Morneau appeared to tone down his position on the matter.

"All Canadian Crown corporations, all Canadian government institutions are expected to live up to the highest standards of ethical behaviour and corporate governance. That includes the Canada Pension Plan Investment Board," Morneau said.

"This is important. We monitor it. We stay on top of it."

WHAT THE EXPERTS SAY

Many experts credit CPPIB for having a very strong model when it comes to responsible investing. But they argue it could go even further if it truly wanted to avoid making gains from certain types of businesses.

Tim Nash, a financial planner and founder of Good Investing, questions whether the for-profit U.S. prisons comply fully with Canadian laws because of the related concerns around human rights.

He recognizes CPPIB is the Canadian leader on sustainable investment policies. But he also argues it's not the highest ranked globally.

"In this specific case, I would argue there is a breach of those policies and that, in fact, they are not living up to those highest standards with the inclusion of these companies within the investment portfolio," said Nash, who added the controversial nature of these prison operators... and the possibility of lawsuits raises the risk level of the investment.

"As far as I can tell when it comes to CPPIB's specific investment policy, they should not be owning these companies."

He said CPPIB could easily adjust its approach to omit some types of companies without sacrificing financial returns.

Lisa Kramer, a University of Toronto finance professor, said so-called ESG investing principles, which are followed by CPPIB, are part of an emerging area that's still not well defined. ESG stands for environmental, social and governance.

"Socially responsible investing is often in the eye of the beholder depending on what principles one holds dear to her own heart," said Kramer, an expert on behavioural finance.

"It can be very difficult to adopt an investment strategy that makes everybody happy."

Tessa Hebb, a Carleton University expert on responsible investment, credits CPPIB for having a very good model of responsible investing.

But Hebb stressed there's a difference between responsible investing and ethical investing. Responsible investing makes a business case for investments and helps investors avoid riskier decisions.

Ethical standards, on the other hand, are far more subjective, she said.

"It's interesting that Minister Morneau would use the term ethics," Hebb said. "If he had said that they were one of the top responsible investors... absolutely."

THE VERDICT

In this case, Morneau said CPPIB is living up to the "highest standards of ethics and behaviour" as he responded to a question about its investments in U.S. prison companies.

But while experts say CPPIB is viewed in many ways as a leader in responsible investing, they argue determining ethical standards depends on an individual's views and can vary greatly.

For that reason, Morneau's statement rates "some" baloney.

METODOLOGY

The Baloney Meter is a project of The Canadian Press that examines the level of accuracy in statements made by politicians. Each claim is researched and assigned a rating based on the following scale:

No baloney _ the statement is completely accurate
A little baloney _ the statement is mostly accurate but more information is required
Some baloney _ the statement is partly accurate but important details are missing
A lot of baloney _ the statement is mostly inaccurate but contains elements of truth
Full of baloney _ the statement is completely inaccurate

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OTTAWA _ The Liberal government is proposing changes to strengthen laws against bestiality and animal fighting, but advocates against animal cruelty, including a Liberal MP, say these measures are the bare minimum of what is needed.

Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould introduced legislation Thursday that would expand the definition of bestiality to make it clear the offence prohibits any contact for a sexual purpose between a person and an animal.

Current bestiality laws are too narrowly defined and must be broadened to ensure both animals and the general public are better protected, Wilson-Raybould said.

"For many Canadians, animals are an important extension of our families and of our communities. Our laws need to reflect these values and protect animals and provide protection to them that they require from such senseless acts of violence," she said.

The changes stem from a court ruling two years ago that saw a B.C. man who was found guilty of sexually molesting his two step-daughters and one count of bestiality successfully challenged the bestiality conviction in the B.C. Court of Appeal based on the fact the activity did not involve penetration.

The Supreme Court of Canada affirmed that ruling.

Wilson-Raybould says this new bill would address the loophole in the current laws, acknowledging that had these measures been in place already, the B.C. case might have turned out differently.

Another change in the law will also ban a broad range of activities involving animal fighting, including promoting, arranging and profiting from animal fights as well as breeding, training and transporting animals to a fight _ activities that have been linked to organized crime.

Two years ago, Liberal MP Nathaniel Erskine-Smith put forward a private member's bill to address the bestiality loophole and animal fighting, but his bill also included a ban on importing shark fins and cat and dog fur. It also would have made the "brutal and vicious" killing of an animal a new offence and would have changed the standard for animal cruelty from wilful neglect to "gross negligence."

His bill was defeated after members of his own Liberal caucus voted against it.

Erskine-Smith characterized the changes in his justice minister's bill as "modest," and hopes they will mark the first steps in a larger conversation about addressing animal cruelty in Canada.

He was also critical of the "meat and hunting" lobby, which he contends influenced the defeat of his bill by spreading misinformation about the impact on their industries.

"Everything gets politicized in this place (so) even modest measures, and measures that should be non-controversial to end animal cruelty, become a great controversy because of the great disinformation spread by the meat and hunting lobbyists in particular," he said.

"Getting to a place where we have consensus amongst Conservatives, Liberals, NDP, Greens and the stakeholders here, not just the animal activists, but the meat and hunting lobbyists _ it takes time to get that place."

He pointed to a letter published in December 2017 jointly signed by a number animal welfare, veterinary and meat production advocacy groups, including the Canadian Federation of Agriculture, saying they had reached consensus to support the two changes now included in Wilson-Raybould's bill.

This letter was likely the licence Wilson-Raybould needed to "act in a way that previously the controversy prevented her from acting," Erskine-Smith said.

The government's news release announcing the bill highlights that a "common ground approach" was taken to the proposed Criminal Code changes to ensure the law does not interfere with legitimate farming, hunting and trapping practices.

Camille Labchuk, executive director of the group Animal Justice, which intervened in the B.C. bestiality case, says Ottawa's attempts to make this "palatable" to animal production and hunting industries is "very disturbing."

"In my view, government should not be making animal cruelty legislation designed to protect animal-use industries, they should be designed to protect animals," she said.

Labchuk says she remains deeply concerned the bill does not address broader promises from the Trudeau Liberals to reform Canada's animal cruelty laws.

"What we've seen today on bestiality and animal fighting is literally the very least thing that they could have done," she said.

"These provisions are welcome, but they really should have been introduced as part of a larger package of desperately needed Criminal Code reforms."

_ Follow ?ReporterTeresa on Twitter.
End segregation in jails, NDP critic says
Andrea Gunn Ottawa Bureau

A new government bill that the Liberals claim will end the use of solitary confinement in federal prisons should prompt action to end similar practices in provincial jails, the provincial NDP says.

Bill C-83, which was introduced earlier this week, would put a halt on disciplinary and administrative segregation as it currently exists. Instead, inmates who require segregation for safety reasons would be transferred to "structured intervention units" while maintaining access to programming and health care. The bill would also ensure prisoners transferred to these structured intervention units are offered the opportunity to spend four hours a day outside their cell, and a minimum of two of those hours would include human interaction.

The government says the bill is a direct response to recommendations from a coroner's inquest into the 2007 death of a 19-year-old New Brunswick woman, Ashley Smith, who killed herself in a segregation cell.

Several provincial Supreme Courts have also ruled that current solitary confinement practices are inhumane and in some cases unconstitutional.

Claudia Chender, MLA for Dartmouth South and the NDP's justice critic, said this move should signal to the provinces that it's time to follow suit.

The Nova Scotia NDP has long advocated for a third-party review of the use of separation in provincial correctional institutions.

Earlier this month, a proposed class-action lawsuit was filed against the provincial government on behalf of people who have been in solitary confinement in Nova Scotia's correctional facilities for 15 consecutive days or longer, something that the United Nations has defined as torture.

A May report by the Nova Scotia auditor general's office also found that provincial policies surrounding solitary confinement are not always being followed.

"I think what the federal legislation signals is that the enormous amount of pressure from advocates and lawyers and others around a real need to investigate the practice of solitary and how it's administered as well as obviously commentary from the UN and others is moving the needle," Chender said.

"Whether it has moved the needle far enough is going to be a big question, but the needle is moving so I think it's time for that to happen provincially as well."

El Jones, who has been a public advocate for better treatment of inmates in Nova Scotia, says the federal legislation offers nothing more than a name change.

"They aren't ending the practice of segregation, people can still be segregated on ranges. The big issue is Correctional Service Canada still has the authority of who is placed in confinement," Jones told The Chronicle Herald.

Judicial oversight is a key recommendation in the 1996 Louise Arbour commission.

"They are saying 'OK, well now you're allowed out four hours a day,' but people are still confined, so all they're doing is renaming the practice and saying they ended it."

Jones also said staffing and resources are still a major issue in Canadian prisons.

Jones' concerns have been echoed by others, including the Canadian Association of Elizabeth Fry Societies and Sen. Kim Pate.

"We know that solitary confinement is overwhelmingly directed at people with mental health problems," Jones said.

"We have to demand not that we rename this practice, or shuffle it around, or cut a couple of days here, or give a couple more hours out there. Jails are not a treatment facility for mental illness. Until we recognize that, nothing we do is going to address that issue."

West Nova MP Colin Fraser, a lawyer who sits on the House of Commons justice committee, said he's heard criticism of the bill from both sides.

"As I understand it, the Conservatives might not be supporting it because they feel that it might not be harsh enough on prisoners and then there are people on the other side that have expressed concerns that the structured intervention units might not be sufficiently different from administrative segregation," he said.

Fraser said it's important to strike a balance between ensuring there are options for segregation when it is needed for safety reasons, and respecting the constitutional rights of prisoners.

"The idea of these structured intervention units is that it will be different than administrative segregation and (prisoners) will still be able to get access to some of these things that will help them while still making sure that everyone is safe," he said.

In an emailed statement, Heather Fairbairn, spokeswoman for the provincial Department of Justice, said the province has been taking steps to reduce the use of close confinement for several years now.

Some of those measures include the Transitional Day Room program, a partnership between Correctional Services and the Nova Scotia Health Authority, which Fairbairn said has reduced the use of administrative close confinement for inmates who cannot function in the general population, as well as other policy changes which have resulted in reducing the
average number of days for disciplinary close confinement from 5.4 days to 3.3 days per incident.

"We are always seeking approaches and alternatives that may enhance outcomes for inmates," she said.

With files from Canadian Press

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**NDP calls on Liberals to further reduce credit card fees paid by small business**

OTTAWA _ The federal New Democrats are calling on the Liberal government to lower and cap the fees credit card companies collect from small businesses.

Last summer, Ottawa announced voluntary, five-year deals with Visa and MasterCard to trim the fees to an average annual effective rate of 1.4 per cent _ down from 1.5 per cent _ and narrow the gap between the highest and lowest rates they charge retailers.

In making the announcement, Finance Minister Bill Morneau said he expected the changes will provide a boost to small- and medium-sized firms by saving them a total of $250 million in credit card fees per year.

But the NDP says the Liberals' agreements are not good enough because they offer no certainty for retailers and favour big business by keeping rates too high at 1.4 per cent.

The NDP says smaller businesses are particularly vulnerable to credit card fees, which force them to make up for the lost revenue by passing on the extra costs to consumers.

The opposition party is calling for Ottawa to implement a maximum cap of one per cent on credit card fees for small- and medium-sized firms as a way to free up cash that they could use to invest into their operations, raise wages and increase hiring.

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**Boissons sucrées alcoolisées**

**pas de restrictions supplémentaires pour l' instant**

OTTAWA _ Les trois principaux partis d'opposition ont dénoncé jeudi la lenteur du gouvernement fédéral à agir pour encadrer les boissons sucrées alcoolisées.

Ottawa prêche la patience, alors que cette question avait fait l'objet d'une étude d'urgence en comité parlementaire au printemps dernier après la mort d'une adolescente québécoise.

"On a eu une réunion urgente pour avoir une réponse et la réponse du gouvernement est mauvaise", a dit la députée conservatrice Marilyn Gladu, qui est membre du comité.

Dans sa réponse déposée en début de semaine, la ministre de la Santé, Ginette Petitpas Taylor, évite de s'engager à appliquer les 15 recommandations du comité de la santé. Celui-ci suggérait de sévères restrictions quant au contenu et à la publicité des boissons sucrées alcoolisées.

"Ce qui était une urgence quasi-nationale, qui a amené un décès dramatique, a rappelé le député bloquiste Luc Thériault. Câline, on les protège-tu nos jeunes ou on ne les protège pas?"

"Des discussions, d'autres consultations, je pense que ce n'est pas ça qui va faire en sorte que ce qui est arrivé à Athena, ça n'arrivera pas à d'autres encore", s'est indignée, à son tour, la députée néo-démocrate Brigitte Sansoucy.

Athena Gervais, une adolescente de 14 ans de Laval, avait été retrouvée sans vie en mars dans un ruisseau près de son école secondaire. Selon des témoignages, elle aurait consommé des canettes de FCKD UP. Cette boisson qui était vendue moins de 4 $ dans les dépanneurs contenait 11,9 pour cent d'alcool dans un format de 568 ml, soit l'équivalent de quatre verres de vin.

Le groupe Geloso l'a depuis retirée des tablettes, mais d'autres marques sont toujours vendues.

Cri du coeur

L'étude d'urgence du comité avait été lancée à la demande des néo-démocrates après la mort de l'adolescente. Son père avait fait le voyage jusqu'à Ottawa pour demander des changements.

Dans son rapport publié en juin, le comité recommandait, entre autres, de réduire la quantité d'alcool, de sucre et de caféine de ces boissons _ ces deux derniers ingrédients masquent les effets de l'alcool.

Lors des consultations du comité, l'Institut national de santé publique du Québec (INSPQ) avait également appelé le gouvernement à mieux encadrer la publicité pour ces boissons sur les réseaux sociaux, la comparant à un véritable "Far West".

La chercheuse Manon Niquette avait alors pointé du doigt ces publicités qui s'adressent aux adolescents et même aux enfants.
Hausse marquée des hospitalisations

CRISE DES OPIOÏDES

Pierre-andré Normandin

Les hospitalisations en raison d'une intoxication aux opioïdes ont augmenté de moitié depuis 10 ans au pays, et la tendance s'accélère depuis 3 ans. Et pour la première fois, une étude de Statistique Canada sur le profil des victimes révèle que la crise touche particulièrement les membres des Premières Nations ainsi que les personnes à faible revenu.

Hausse des hospitalisations

+53 %

Le nombre d'hospitalisations en raison d'une intoxication aux opioïdes a augmenté de moitié depuis 10 ans, selon l'Institut canadien d'information sur la santé (ICIS). « C'est quand même important. Et on constate que presque la moitié de cette augmentation s'est produite au cours des trois dernières années », dit Christina Lawand, chercheuse principale de ce groupe. L'an dernier, 17 personnes par jour ont été hospitalisées à la suite d'une intoxication aux opioïdes. C'est quatre de plus qu'il y a trois ans. À ces hospitalisations s'ajoutent les surdoses mortelles : 11 morts surviennent en moyenne chaque jour. « Les préjudices causés par les opioïdes sont très importants au pays », constate Mme Lawand. Après les États-Unis, le Canada est au deuxième rang des pays les plus touchés par la crise des opioïdes.

Autochtones à risque

4 fois

Devant l'ampleur de la vague, Statistique Canada a décidé de dresser le profil des personnes hospitalisées afin de mieux cibler la prévention et les traitements. « La crise des opioïdes a des répercussions plus importantes sur plusieurs groupes, notamment les itinérants, les détenus et les personnes issues d'une Première Nation », conclut ce rapport rendu public cette semaine. Les membres des Premières Nations sont en effet près de quatre fois plus à risque de subir une intoxication aux opioïdes. Statistique Canada a recensé chez les autochtones 38,4 hospitalisations par 100 000 habitants, alors que le taux était de 10,9 dans le reste de la population. La crise est particulièrement importante dans les réserves, où le taux grimpe à 61,2 cas par 100 000 habitants. C'est deux fois la proportion chez les autochtones vivant hors réserve. À l' inverse, les minorités visibles sont nettement moins susceptibles d'être victimes d'une intoxication, car celles-ci affichent un taux de 2,9 hospitalisations par 100 000 habitants.

Faibles revenus, plus touchés

Statistique Canada a également observé une corrélation entre les revenus et le risque d'hospitalisation. Ainsi, les personnes ayant les plus faibles revenus se sont retrouvées nettement plus souvent à l'hôpital en raison d'une intoxication aux opioïdes que les plus fortunés. Le statut d'emploi semble également avoir un impact. Chez les personnes en emploi, l'étude a recensé 5,5 hospitalisations par 100 000 habitants. Chez les chômeurs, le taux grimpe à 17 cas et il atteint 22,5 dans la population inactive.

Risque dans les villes moyennes

La taille des villes semble également avoir une influence. Les données indiquent que les centres urbains de taille moyenne, soit de 30 000 à 100 000 habitants, présentent un taux d'hospitalisation deux fois plus élevé que dans les grandes villes. Les petites localités sont davantage touchées que les grandes, mais nettement moins que celles de taille moyenne. Statistique Canada constate également que les taux d'hospitalisation sont plus élevés dans l'ouest du pays, notamment en Colombie-Britannique, en Alberta et en Saskatchewan, ainsi que dans les territoires.

Le Québec davantage épargné

La crise des opioïdes se fait moins sentir au Québec, où la hausse des hospitalisations est plus faible. En 10 ans, le nombre de cas est passé de 8 hospitalisations par 100 000 habitants à près de 10. En comparaison, le taux a doublé en
Les surdoses mortelles concordent avec celles sur les surdoses mortelles, constate Statistique Canada. Loin d'être endiguée, la crise continue à prendre de l'ampleur. Le pays a déploré la mort de tout près de 4000 personnes en 2017. Et pour les trois premiers mois de 2018, déjà 1036 morts ont été enregistrées, soit 8 % de plus qu'à pareille date l'an dernier. 2018 La Presse+
Crown-Indigenous Relations and Indigenous Services hired KPMG in October 2017 to investigate the use of the fake cards because of their "high degree of resemblance" to real Indian status cards.

KPMG submitted its findings this past July. "The government of Canada is continuing to assess the findings of this report and it will determine next steps in the coming months," said Indigenous Services in an emailed statement.

The report will also be shared at an upcoming meeting with Kahnawake and the Mohawk community of Kanesatake which sits west of Montreal, said the department.

**DNA tests used to obtain cards**

The KPMG report noted all the cards suggested the holder was entitled to rights in section 35 of the Constitution. An Indian status card is proof the bearer is registered as an Indian under the Indian Act. The current on-reserve tax exemptions stem from the Indian Act.

"Five [card] types included the Canadian flag or maple leaf," said a redacted version of the report provided to CBC News by the department.

The report said that one card - issued by the Confederation of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada (CAPC) - used the word "government" in between a Canadian flag logo and the word Canada.

"The cards could appear to have been issued by the government of Canada," said the report.

CAPC uses Indigenous ancestry DNA tests conducted by Toronto lab Viaguard Accu-Metrics to determine its card-holding membership.

CBC News reported earlier this year the lab returned positive Indigenous ancestry results on two dog DNA samples.

The lab also found three CBC employees born in India and Russia had the same percentage of Indigenous ancestry.

Guillaume Carle, the grand chief of the organization, said he still sends DNA samples to Viaguard Accu-Metrics for testing and doesn't fear the investigations.

"The card is legal; we are recognized as the government," said Carle.

"I don't know what they can investigate because we are all legal." The lab's owner Harvey Tenenbaum did not respond to a request for comment.

The KPMG report said the Sû?reté du Québec (SQ) began its investigation in November 2017 on a referral from police in Chateauguay, Que., which sits next to Kahnawake.

An SQ spokesperson said the provincial police force does not comment on ongoing investigations.

An RCMP spokesperson said the force does not comment on ongoing investigations.

**Several groups issuing cards**

KPMG investigators met with the Kahnawake Mohawk Peacekeepers during their investigation. They provided 28 occurrence reports involving individuals caught using the cards to receive goods tax-free on the reserve.

Purchases delivered to a reserve for people with Indian status are tax exempt.

KPMG's report said 24 of the occurrence reports included deliveries of a car, truck or van.

The report said retailers believed the fake cards to be real.

The majority of individuals involved in the purchases lived in Montreal, but others were found to reside in northern Quebec and in the Gaspé peninsula, said the report.

The report said Kahnawake Peacekeepers seized cards issued by a number of groups including:

- Native Alliance of Quebec
- Mètis Federation of Canada
- Gaspé Peninsula, Lower St-Lawrence, Magdalen Islands ?Mètis Aboriginals
- Bedeque Native Community
- Eastern Woodland Mètis Nation of Nova Scotia
- Mikinak
- Confederation of Aboriginal Peoples of Canada (CAPC).

The report said individuals paid between $40 to $1,000 for the cards.

The KPMG report takes particular note of CAPC, which is headquartered in Gatineau, Que.

KPMG investigators interviewed an individual - whose name is redacted from the report - who stated that some prospective members paid $250 to CPAC for DNA tests that were never conducted.

The individual told KPMG that some of the DNA test results were photocopied and altered with white-out.

The report also noted that the individual referred to dog DNA and tap water sent for tests that returned with positive Native American ancestry results.

Carle said the allegations are false because each test is accompanied by fingerprints and information from federal or provincial government issued ID.

"Dogs don't have fingerprints," he said.
Aware of the dangers she faced, Raven was just 16 at the time of the moose hunt but was well aware that those women's remains are found.

The grim reality of that 2011 hunting trip along B.C.'s Highway 16, where as many as 30 or more Indigenous women have disappeared, marked the beginning of the Moose Hide Campaign, a national, grassroots initiative that encourages men and boys, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, to take a stand against violence against women.

On Thursday, several hundred people - from high school students to Cabinet ministers - joined the Moose Hide Campaign as the Lacertes took their message to Parliament Hill.

"We got a moose that morning," recalled Paul, a member of the Yinka Dene of the Carrier First Nation of northern B.C. "We had been talking about the Highway of Tears and Raven said, 'You know Dad, I wish there was a way that we could wipe away some of those tears.'"

Raven was busy cleaning their kill when they realized the hide from that precious moose could become a symbol for their movement. They brought the hide home, cleaned and tanned it, then Raven and her three sisters set to work cutting it into tiny squares and hand-lettering 25,000 cards explaining its significance.

Seven years later, more than 1.2 million patches of moose hide have been distributed in more than 350 communities.

"It's a reality for a young Indigenous woman like me that life is not as safe," she said. "I've heard the stories of murdered and missing Indigenous women all my life."

"Our family is close and connected. I knew that we could get together and make something happen and make a difference." Among the hundreds who took part in Thursday's ceremonies were nearly 200 Ottawa and area high school and post-secondary students who had pledged a daylong fast, with neither food nor water, to show their commitment to ending violence against women.

"We will not solve the problem of violence against women - violence against Indigenous women and girls - without the help of men and boys," said Minister of Crown-Indigenous Affairs Carolyn Bennett, who addressed the crowd on the steps of Parliament Hill.

Bennett talked of the inter-generational nature of the violence and the harmful legacy of Canada's residential school system. "When we talk about trauma-informed counselling, the question is not, 'What's the matter with him or her?' The question has to be, 'What happened to him or her?'" she said.

"We have to understand trauma or we're not going to be able to heal."

Paul Lacerte understands all about inter-generational trauma. His father attended residential schools.

"Like a lot of guys in this country, I grew up in the home of a violent, alcoholic father," he said. "That's the story of so many guys who are in jail or who are struggling. When they were little, their dad would drink and beat them up. It's almost as simple as it gets for some of the domestic violence cycles in Canada."

Lacerte said he and his father have now healed that broken relationship.

"It's amazing now. He's still on his healing journey, but that's not my story to tell.

"He wears a moose hide patch and he believes in the campaign."

More information about the organization can be found at moosehidecampaign.ca bcrawford@postmedia.com Twitter.com/getBAC
**Jagmeet Singh en visite dans le Nord de l'Ontario**

Le chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique fédéral, Jagmeet Singh, entame jeudi une visite de quatre jours dans le Nord-Est de l'Ontario. Il se rendra à Timmins, dans la communauté autochtone de Kashechewan, ainsi qu'à Kapuskasing et à Hearst.

Jeudi, M. Singh effectuera une tournée de la scierie de Timmins de l'entreprise EACOM, avant de se diriger vers l'École secondaire catholique Thériault et le Collège Northern.

Il rencontrera également le regroupement d'entrepreneurs Timmins Downtown Business Improvement Area (BIA), des agences de lutte contre les violences faites aux femmes et les cadets de Timmins.

Vendredi, le chef du NPD sera dans la Première Nation de Kashechewan, sur la côte ouest de la baie James.

La circonscription de Timmins-Baie James, dont fait partie Kashechewan, est représentée au niveau fédéral par le député néo-démocrate Charlie Angus, qui milite depuis longtemps pour l'amélioration des conditions de vie des membres de la communauté autochtone.

Des centaines de résidents de Kashechewan doivent être évacués d'urgence chaque année à cause des crues printanières de la rivière Albany.

M. Angus dénonce l'inaction du gouvernement fédéral quant au déménagement de la Première Nation. L'année dernière, le gouvernement de Justin Trudeau avait signé une entente prévoyant la possibilité de déménager la communauté vers des terres surélevées.

En fin de semaine, M. Singh sera à Kapuskasing et à Hearst. Il s'arrêtera notamment à l'Université de Hearst dimanche.

**Brian Francis helped pick senator before he became one - but says he was cleared of conflict**

Kerry Campbell

P.E.I.'s newest senator Brian Francis says he sought and obtained clearance from the federal ethics commissioner to apply for a position with the senate.

That's because a little more than two years before he became a senator, the former chief of the Abegweit First Nation was appointed for a one-year term to the body that recommends new members for the senate.

On July 7, 2016, the federal government announced Francis had been appointed to represent P.E.I. on the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments.

Resigned from advisory panel

Francis was part of a five-member panel that recommended Diane Griffin to the senate in November 2016.

He said he resigned from the board after Griffin's appointment and wrote to the ethics commissioner "to see if I was potentially interested in putting in an application in the future, would I be in a conflict of interest? And the reply was that I would not be."

Francis said being one of the people who makes recommendations on who gets to be on the senate did not give him an edge when it came time to apply for a seat himself.

"No, because it's a merit-based criteria and that criteria is very strict. It's not different in any other public-service type of hiring. I've been on both sides of the board in my career as a public servant, and either you have it or you don't. It's as simple as that."

No 'cooling off period' required

According to Stéphane Shank, manager of media relations with the Privy Council in Ottawa, two of the five board members who recommended Francis also sat with him when he was a member of the advisory board.

CBC asked but did not receive a reply as to whether those members sought an opinion as to whether they should recuse themselves from the process to select Francis based on the board's own conflict of interest policy.

According to Shank, the work Francis did with the board "was essentially completed a few months after his appointment, culminating in the appointment of Senator Griffin in November, 2016."

"As such, a 'cooling-off period' of almost two years, although not required, has been observed between the completion of his
work for the Independent Advisory Board for Senate Appointments and his appointment to the Senate."

Shank said Francis' appointment to the advisory board would have been made in consultation with the provincial government in P.E.I.

Francis says he's a 'non-partisan leader'

According to the Twitter feed of Premier Wade MacLauchlan, Francis was one of the first to sign his nomination papers when MacLauchlan was seeking the leadership of the Liberal party on P.E.I. in 2014.

Francis said Thursday he didn't recall signing MacLauchlan's papers, but said he has no political affiliation, and will sit as an independent senator.

"I was always a non-partisan leader in my role as a First Nation chief, and it's important that I was that way," Francis said, mentioning the ongoing fight he was involved in, challenging the P.E.I. government's sale of the Mill River golf course.

Francis said he hasn't had time yet to come up with a list of issues he'd like to tackle in the senate, but said he would serve his province and country "to the best of my abilities."

"It's the first time in the province of P.E.I. that a Mi'kmaq person has been appointed to a position of this type, so I'm deeply honoured, deeply proud."

MP Pierre Poilievre announces birth of baby girl

Pierre Poilievre took to Twitter Thursday afternoon to announce the birth of his daughter, Valentina Alejandra Poilievre Galindo.

The Conservative Member of Parliament for Carleton tweeted a picture of the baby girl to the world, introducing his "beautiful angel & new daughter of a brave mother and overjoyed father."

Meet Valentina Alejandra Poilievre Galindo-beautiful angel & new daughter of a brave mother and overjoyed father.

pic.twitter.com/gmWxqEYPs5
- Pierre Poilievre (@PierrePoilievre) October 18, 2018

Poilievre served as Minister of State for Democratic Reform between 2013 and 2015. In 2015 he was also the Minister of Employment and Social Development. He was first elected as an MP in 2004 when he defeated incumbent Liberal MP David Pratt.

A few months ago, he tweeted a photo of his wife's belly and asked "Boy or a girl?"

Boy or girl? pic.twitter.com/skLxginRiK
- Pierre Poilievre (@PierrePoilievre) August 22, 2018

According to the MP's public facebook page, he and Anaida Galindo were married last winter in Portugal.

Gov. Gen. Julie Payette inspires during first official visit to Saskatchewan

Despite the controversy surrounding Gov. Gen. Julie Payette during her first year on the job, one thing is clear - she serves as a strong role model for women everywhere.

That is why Julia and Ankit Kapur and their eight-month-old daughter Anya spent a little over an hour with Her Excellency during a walk around Wascana Lake on Thursday afternoon.

"We're really always looking for opportunities to have (Anya) around strong women and role models to look up to in the future," said Julia as the trio trailed closely behind Payette. "We got a picture with her today and I think that will be great in the future for her to see."

The walk was part of Payette's first official visit to Saskatchewan and brought together a couple of hundred students, as well as teachers, members of the public and other dignitaries.

The Kapurs' excitement was tangible as Ankit bounced Anya up and down and the couple made their way around the lake amongst the hordes of students who often ran up to Payette to excitedly ask a question, get a photo or embrace in a quick hug.

"She stands up for values and ideals, that I think all Canadians believe in, about equality, about science, about being better and being good to each other," said Ankit.

Dressed in all-black walking attire - her iconic curls tied back in a loose ponytail - Payette emanated warmth and kindness as she walked and chatted with students about space, science and their hopes for the future.

She listened as students told her what they wanted to be when they grew up. One girl announced matter-of-factly that she plans to be "a vet or a seismologist" and then gave a quick but earnest "thank you" after Payette took a selfie with her.

"I'm very delighted to come back to Saskatchewan," said Payette, who trained to be a pilot in Moose Jaw in the '90s. "I know that the people from Saskatchewan are incredible. They have such a heart and such a perseverance."

Less than one day into her first official visit, which required "a lot of special protocol," she said she's already looking forward to coming back to visit smaller communities.

"I would love to go to northern Saskatchewan," she said. "I'm already trying to take along the premier and the Lieutenant-Governor so we can visit communities that sometimes don't get visitors."

Recently in Nunavut, Payette said she arrived just after a recent youth suicide.
"It happens a lot. Too much. And that is something that we all have to address as a society," she said. "It is a collective duty to look at this and to work together."

Payette met with Premier Scott Moe, and is scheduled Friday to visit CFB 15 Wing Moose Jaw and tour the NATO Flying Training in Canada (NFTC) academy on Friday, and drop the puck at Saturday's Humboldt Broncos game.

She was also to make an appearance at the Black Tie Auction held at Government House on Thursday night.

"It's probably a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity," said event co-chair Elayne Bennett Fox of Payette's presence at the auction. "She certainly is a role model for a lot of women. I think."

Bennett Fox praised Payette for being a diligent, articulate and bright leader, and acknowledged the difficulties of transitioning from astronaut to Governor General.

"It's kind of changing gears a little bit for her. All of sudden she's got to be a very public person with very large constraints on her," said Bennett Fox. "The first year of any job is difficult, and so I just think she needs a little time."

The bumps along the way haven't seemed to matter to Julia and Ankit Kapur.

"We think she's been doing awesome. That's why we're here," said Ankit with a big smile.

"I think anytime anyone takes a stand you can risk alienating people, but I think that its better to believe in something than to believe in nothing and have everyone agree with you."

jackerman@postmedia.com

Gov. General Payette planning province visit in November

Dylan Robertson

OTTAWA - Gov. Gen. Julie Payette has changed course, planning a visit to Manitoba in late November, after her provincial counterparts had said it wouldn't be possible until 2019.

The about-face came after sustained media scrutiny over Payette's work ethic; she has shirked some of the ceremonial duties that make up the vice-regal's gruelling schedule.

Tradition holds that most governors general visit all provinces and territories within their first 12 months. Payette has been in the job for just over a year.

Premier Brian Pallister broke the news of Payette's visit Thursday afternoon on Twitter, writing that the vice-regal will visit Manitoba on Nov. 25 to 27.

"We look forward to showing her all our beautiful province has to offer and to introducing her to our thoughtful and hardworking people," he wrote.

Rideau Hall did not release more details.
The private secretary to Manitoba Lt.-Gov. Janice Filmon confirmed it was a last-minute arrangement.

"We've not had the opportunity to speak about any programming," Kate Gameiro told the Free Press.
She said Filmon's office only got confirmation in recent days and they don't know yet whether she'll travel outside Winnipeg.

"We're just thrilled that a window of opportunity presented itself, and it worked for all three people," Gameiro said.
On Sept. 19, Gameiro said it seemed impossible to co-ordinate a time in 2018 that worked for Payette, Filmon and Pallister.

"Now, we're shooting for early in the new year," Gameiro said at the time.

Payette did not visit Saskatchewan until this week. She is scheduled to take in a Humboldt Broncos junior hockey game on the weekend - six months after 16 people affiliated with the team were killed and 13 were injured in a bus crash that rocked the nation. Earlier, sources told the Free Press they'd urged Payette to make that visit much sooner.

The vice-regal will visit West Africa later this month. She has not announced plans to visit the Yukon.

It has come to light the federal Liberal party vetted Payette's appointment, rather than an arm's-length advisory board, and Payette has an unusual arrangement in which she lives with a longtime friend, whom she has hired as her chief of staff.
An Angus Reid poll earlier this month found Manitobans had diverging opinions about Payette, with 28 per cent deeming her "poorly suited" for the job, and 22 per cent saying she "will eventually settle" into it.

dylan.robertson@freepress.mb.ca
Le Québec et le Canada, deux solitude jusque dans l'utilisation de la clause dérogatoire

Le premier ministre du Québec François Legault entend recourir à la clause dérogatoire si l'éventuelle loi interdisant le port de signes religieux est contestée par les tribunaux. Cette clause controversée a été utilisée plus de 100 fois depuis 40 ans par l'Assemblée nationale, selon une étude empirique. Le Canada, lui, n'y a pas touché, sauf... durant la crise d'Octobre.

Débroussaillage historique.

Un texte d'Anne Marie Lecomte

Le premier ministre sortant du Québec, Philippe Couillard, l'a qualifiée « d'arme nucléaire en matière constitutionnelle ». L'ex-premier ministre du Canada, Jean Chrétien, affirme qu'il y a un prix important à payer lorsqu'on y recourt. Quant au premier ministre canadien Justin Trudeau, il a prévenu, début octobre, qu'on n'y recourrait pas « sans considération profonde sur les conséquences ».

Sitôt élu, François Legault s'est dit prêt à y faire appel au besoin. Aux yeux du gouvernement de la Coalition avenir Québec (CAQ), il faut légitimer pour interdire le port de symboles religieux aux employés de l'État en situation d'autorité : juges, procureurs, policiers, gardiens de prison et enseignants.

Le Québec a « tous les droits », a déclaré M. Legault le 11 octobre dernier. Il sortait tout juste de son premier entretien avec le premier ministre canadien, Justin Trudeau, pour qui il ne revient pas aux gouvernements de dire aux citoyens quoi porter...

La clause dérogatoire soulèvera les passions. Scruter son utilisation équivaut à fouiller dans les entrailles constitutionnelles du pays. C'est sensible.

Quand Bourassa a légiféré sur l'affichage

« Gouverner, c'est choisir », déclarait le premier ministre Robert Bourassa, il y a presque 30 ans, pour justifier le recours à la clause de dérogation pour imposer l'affichage unilingue français à l'extérieur des commerces au Québec. La Cour suprême du Canada vient alors de lui asséner un soufflet en disant qu'interdire l'anglais dans l'affichage commercial est contraire à la liberté d'expression.

Pour maintenir l'affichage extérieur unilingue français dans la Belle Province, le gouvernement Bourassa adopte la loi 178, non sans heurt.

Déroger signifie « ne pas observer une loi, une règle ». Ce que fit Robert Bourassa. D'ailleurs dans leur jugement, les magistrats avaient eux-mêmes proposé au Québec « d'utiliser, si c'est dans l'intérêt public, une clause dérogatoire ».

« Exercer légitime dans certaines circonstances », la clause procure au Québec « la sécurité juridique dont nous avons besoin [...] », avait expliqué M. Bourassa.

Se servir de la clause en guise de riposte aux tribunaux est « une exception à la règle », affirme Guillaume Rousseau, professeur de droit à l'Université de Sherbrooke. Dans une centaine d'autres cas, dit-il, le législateur québécois s'en est servi avant même que les tribunaux de première instance ne soient appelés à se prononcer.

« Il y a beaucoup de précédents et presque tous sont à "titre préventif", affirme-t-il. Même moi, ça m'a surpris. »

Une étude « drôlement importante », selon Benoît Pelletier

Six cent six : c'est le nombre de fois où la disposition de dérogation a été utilisée au Québec dans plus de 40 lois distinctes, selon une étude publiée en 2016 et intitulée La disposition dérogatoire des chartes des droits : de la théorie à la pratique, de l'identité au progrès social.

Son auteur, Guillaume Rousseau, n'est pas « neutre » politiquement parlant : il a brigué les suffrages pour le Parti québécois dans Sherbrooke le 1er octobre dernier, mais en vain.

Son étude est « drôlement importante » de l'avis de Benoît Pelletier, professeur de droit à l'Université d'Ottawa et ex-ministre au Québec dans le gouvernement libéral de Jean Charest. Surtout dans la perspective où la clause dérogatoire pourrait être invoquée par le gouvernement de la Coalition avenir Québec.

Contrairement aux experts qui parlent du caractère « exceptionnel » du recours à la clause, « Guillaume Rousseau dit non [...] c'est quelque chose d'assez fréquent en droit québécois », explique Benoît Pelletier.

À l'inverse, Ottawa a été « un petit peu frileux à l'utiliser », constate M. Pelletier.

Jean Chrétien affirme qu'en près de 40 ans, Ottawa ne l'a jamais utilisée. Et les occasions où les autres provinces s'en sont servies se comptent sur les doigts d'une main : par exemple la Saskatchewan y a eu recours en 2017 relativement au financement des écoles catholiques.

Dans un document intitulé Votre guide sur la Charte canadienne des droits et libertés, le gouvernement du Canada affirme que « jusqu'à aujourd'hui, les législatures des provinces se sont rarement prévalues de cet article. Le Parlement ne l'a jamais utilisé ».

Des données significatives

À 38 ans, Guillaume Rousseau a fouillé dans des archives plus vieilles que lui afin d'y colliger faits et données quantitatives. « Ce sont des données comme pures, n'importe quel chercheur en droit qui irait dans les archives trouverait exactement le même résultat au niveau quantitatif », allègue-t-il.

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L'Institut de recherche du Québec (IRQ) a diffusé une version française de l'étude, et La revue générale de droit, publication scientifique de l'Université d'Ottawa, l'a publiée en anglais.

**Déroger au nom de l'identité et du progrès social**

L'étude révèle que des 41 lois adoptées par l'Assemblée nationale avec recours à la clause dérogatoire, 9 prévoyent des dérogations aux deux chartes, la canadienne et la québécoise.

« Ce sont 106 paragraphes » dans un total de 41 lois, sur un certain nombre d'années, explique Guillaume Rousseau.

Pour une seule loi, on peut compter plus d'une dérogation. De plus, la clause de dérogation de la Charte canadienne a une date de péremption - si on peut dire - de cinq ans (la clause québécoise reste en vigueur tant et aussi longtemps qu'est maintenue la loi pour laquelle elle a été invoquée). La clause canadienne doit donc être renouvelée au besoin et le nombre 106 tient compte de ces renouvellements.

De ces 41 lois, pas moins de 11 étaient encore en vigueur en 2016.

Autre observation : 11 des 41 lois étaient liées à l'identité (lange, école, religions) et 22 à un objectif de progrès social.

Elles [les statistiques] révèlent que la pratique de la disposition dérogatoire est très différente au Québec.

Guillaume Rousseau, avocat et auteur de l'étude « Comparées aux trois seuls cas d'utilisation de la disposition dérogatoire de la Charte canadienne dans toute l'histoire du Canada anglais (territoires, provinces et fédéral compris) et à l'unique cas d'utilisation de la disposition dérogatoire de la Déclaration canadienne des droits par le fédéral, ces statistiques sont révélatrices », souligne Guillaume Rousseau.

1970, la Loi sur les mesures de guerre


Des heures sombres : le Front de libération du Québec (FLQ), mouvement politique radical prônant de séparer le Canada du reste du monde. Il a kidnappé le délégué commercial britannique James Richard Cross, puis le ministre québécois de l'Industrie, Pierre Laporte. On retrouvera ce dernier mort, dans la voiture d'une voiture. Dans les rues de Montréal, 8000 soldats de l'armée canadienne sont déployés. Le décret suspend les libertés civiles : environ 500 personnes sont arrêtées parce que la police les suspecte d'être liées au FLQ.

Au bout du compte, la majeure partie d'entre elles ne seront jamais inculpées.

**Un Jean Chrétien « culotté », selon Guillaume Rousseau**

La disposition dérogatoire dont s'était servi Pierre Elliott Trudeau était contenue dans la Déclaration canadienne des droits, l'ancêtre de l'actuelle Charte canadienne, adoptée en 1960 sous l'égide de John Diefenbaker. Mais, contrairement à l'actuelle Charte, cette Déclaration n'était pas encasée dans la Loi fondamentale du pays, « la loi des lois » qu'est la Constitution.

« Autrement dit, le seul usage le moindrement choquant de la clause dérogatoire qu'il ait pu y avoir dans l'historique du Canada, c'est le gouvernement Trudeau, c'est M. Chrétien », affirme Guillaume Rousseau. [Jean Chrétien était alors ministre du Revenu national et des Affaires indiennes et du Nord canadien.]

Aux yeux de Guillaume Rousseau, compte tenu du contexte historique, il est « assez culotté » de la part de Jean Chrétien « de venir nous faire la leçon » dans le débat sur le port de signes religieux par les personnes en poste d'autorité.

« Je ne pense pas que M. Legault en connaisse beaucoup sur la Charte des droits et libertés [...] », a raillé Jean Chrétien la semaine dernière dans une entrevue avec La Presse canadienne durant laquelle il avait aussi écorché Doug Ford « certainement pas professeur de droit ». Le premier ministre de l'Ontario a brandi la menace de la clause nonobstant pour un projet de loi visant à réduire de moitié la taille du conseil municipal de Toronto.

**Un outil puissant**

Pour le législateur, la disposition de dérogation « donne le dernier mot automatiquement », a affirmé Stéphane Beaulac, professeur de droit à l'Université de Montréal (UdeM), en entrevue à ICI RDI. Aux mains des législateurs, la clause rabat le caquet aux tribunaux et permet, selon ses détracteurs, d'outrepasser certains droits fondamentaux.

Au plan politique, la disposition de dérogation est un outil particulièrement puissant. Les efforts pour contester le raisonnement quant à son utilisation n'ont eu aucun succès jusqu'ici.

Eric Adams, professeur en droit constitutionnel à l'Université de l'Alberta, dans une entrevue accordée à CBC.

Mais d'y recourir est un geste qui « se fait avec un prix politique, selon Stéphane Beaulac de l'UdeM. C'est important de le souligner ».

**Rapatrier la Constitution et créer une charte**

Benoît Pelletier rappelle le « cas marquant » du recours à la clause de dérogation par le premier ministre René Lévesque après le rapatriement de la Constitution.

Rappel : le 4 novembre 1981 au soir à Ottawa, les négociations entre le fédéral et les provinces sur ledit rapatriement sont dans l'impasse. M. Lévesque regagne son hôtel... Dans les heures qui suivent, les autres premiers ministres provinciaux et l'équipe de Pierre Elliott Trudeau se réunissent et en viennent à une entente. Au terme de ce qui sera appelé « la nuit des longs
Ils auraient dû être là. Les 32 années de château bleu, le Québec est isolé et René Lévesque estime avoir été trahi.

Ironie de l'histoire, c'est à la suite de ces événements que le gouvernement Lévesque utilisera, à son avantage, la disposition de dérogation. Cet outil, c'est un Pierre Elliott Trudeau très réticent qui avait accepté de l'enchâsser dans la Charte canadienne, sur les conseils de Jean Chrétien. La disposition de dérogation est donc ajoutée à toutes les lois québécoises antérieures à 1982 « pour que l'Assemblée nationale garde intacts les pouvoirs législatifs du Québec sans être assujettie à un cadre juridique extérieur ».

Une clause utile dans une variété de domaines

En 1999, pour réparer des iniquités à l’encontre de certaines enseignantes, le ministre de l'Éducation dans le gouvernement péquiste de Lucien Bouchard recourt à la disposition de dérogation. Son nom? François Legault.

La mesure visait à réparer des iniquités à l’encontre des femmes ayant touché de faibles salaires par le passé et qui se retrouvaient par conséquent avec une retraite « famélique », d'expliquer Guillaume Rousseau.

En 2014, pour cette même Loi sur le régime de retraite d'enseignantes, le gouvernement de Philippe Couillard reconduit la dérogation.

Selon les situations, les clauses de l'une et l'autre charte sont invoquées et, quelquefois, les deux. Le gouvernement Legault utilisera tant la clause québécoise que canadienne, précise Guillaume Rousseau, car, « s'il utilise [seulement] une des deux, la loi va être cassée ».

La disposition de dérogation s'est avérée utile au législateur québécois pour les libérations conditionnelles, les programmes d'accès à l'égalité, l'exemption d'immeubles, les retraites, les audiences à huis clos, l'agriculture, ainsi que pour favoriser l'accès à la justice devant la division des petites créances de la Cour du Québec. Pour ce faire, il a fallu déroger à l'article 34 de la Charte québécoise, qui prévoit que toute personne a le droit de se faire représenter par un avocat.

Éviter « d'euthanasier » la laïcité

L'intention de François Legault de légiférer pour interdire le kippa, le hijab ou autres signes religieux suscite une levée de boucliers. Dans sa démarche, le nouveau gouvernement caquiste puise à même le concept d'« identité » qui a motivé, par le passé, nombre de recours à la clause dérogatoire au Québec.

Le débat est ouvert et, côté controverse, il a du potentiel.

Le 12 octobre, dans une lettre ouverte publiée dans Le Devoir, une vingtaine de voix s'élèvent contre la possible interdiction des symboles religieux au Québec.

« Déroger aux libertés et droits fondamentaux est une question d'une exceptionnelle gravité », disent la vingtaine d'avocats et de professeurs d'université dont font partie Vrinda Narain, Lucie Lemonde, May Chiu et Finn Makela, pour ne nommer qu’eux.

« [...] En interdisant à des personnes issues d'une diversité de cultures et de religions de travailler, l'État échoue à son devoir de protéger sa neutralité tant à l'égard des croyants que des non-croyants », disent les signataires de cette lettre.

Le gouvernement Legault, affirment ces experts en droit, ne veut pas tant la séparation de l'État de la religion que « le rejet de la diversité ».

Décidément, cela semble être le propre de la clause de dérogation d'entrainer, dans son sillage, un vocabulaire musclé.
Father of 'Jihadi Jack' accuses Andrew Scheer of lying about his son

Murray Brewster

The parents of a young British-Canadian man accused of being a member of ISIS have written an open letter to members of Parliament challenging what they claim are "lies" about their son being repeated by Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer.

The letter was circulated Thursday by John Letts, the Canadian-born father of Jack Letts - known to the British news media as "Jihadi Jack."

Jack Letts is one of several Canadians being held by Kurdish authorities in Syria following the collapse of the Islamic State last year.

As CBC News first reported in February, the Canadian government has been trying to negotiate his release from a prison where he is being held alongside hardened ISIS fighters.

Simply repeating a lie four times does not make it true. - John Letts, father of Jack Letts, in an open letter to MPs

In the House of Commons this week, Scheer attacked the Liberal government for helping Letts and considering his appeal to come to this country.

"British terrorist Jihadi Jack, a U.K. citizen, who may or may not have ever set foot in Canada, reportedly received help from a government representative," the Conservative leader said, leading off question period on Tuesday. "The Liberals proactively reached out to him to help him come to Canada. Why?"

In his letter to MPs, John Letts pushed back against Scheer's comments, saying he believes his son is innocent and pointing out that Canada and the U.K. have not laid charges against him.

"I am writing to you because I have to do something to challenge the misinformation that has appeared in the Canadian media recently - lies repeated and exaggerated by Mr. Andrew Scheer," reads a copy of the letter, obtained by CBC News.

"Mr. Scheer confidently claimed that Jack is 'a known jihadi fighter' - a blatant lie that he knows is untrue. Simply repeating a lie four times does not make it true."

The younger Letts, a Muslim convert who grew up in Oxford, went to Syria in 2014.

His parents say he wanted to come home in late 2015 and their attempt to transfer him money ran afoul of Britain's anti-terror financing law. They were charged under that law in 2016; they maintain their innocence, but the case is still pending.

John Letts and his wife Sally Lane insist the allegations against their son Jack are false and that he has the right to answer any charges against him in a British or Canadian court.

"If Mr. Scheer has any evidence that our son is a 'known jihadi fighter' he has a duty to report this information to the Canadian and British authorities," Letts wrote. "No such evidence has ever been passed to us, or to our lawyers in the U.K."

A spokesman for Scheer said the Conservatives have seen the letter and stand by their earlier statements. "It is understandable that parents want to give their children the benefit of the doubt, however, news reports of Jack Letts' activities in Syria paint a very different picture and indeed indicate that he joined ISIS,” said Brock Harrison, the communications director for the opposition leader, in an email.

Harrison added reports show the "Trudeau government is making efforts to reach out to a widely reported British terrorist to try and bring him to Canada without any assurances that he will face justice."

Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale said earlier this week any suspected ISIS fighters will have to face Canadian justice if they return here.

In his letter, Letts claims the family has evidence about his son's activities in Syria - information that would exonerate him - that they wanted to present to Canadian security officials last spring.

He and his lawyer, Clive Stafford-Smith, tried for a meeting with the RCMP and the Canadian Security Intelligence Service, but were rebuffed.

"They were unwilling to meet us and were not interested in our information - we think because they knew Jack was not a member of ISIS and just another naïve young person who went to Syria hoping to help create a peaceful, utopian, Muslim state," Letts wrote.

He said he shares "the disgust of my fellow Canadians" over the atrocities committed by ISIS, especially those involving people who betrayed their homelands.

That is a reference to the case of Canadian ISIS fighter Muhammad Ali, who went by the Abu Turaab Al-Kanadi. Global News has reported that at least three Canadians who allegedly travelled to Syria to join ISIS, and are now imprisoned by the Kurds, are asking to return home. Their three spouses and seven children are also detained.

Letts said he will be in Ottawa next week to talk about his son's case.
His 911 call made him a target - and a symbol

Husband Charged For Chasing Off Thieves Says Canada's Self-Defence Laws Need to Change

Tyler Dawson

When the Mounties showed up at Edouard Maurice's home just outside the town of Okotoks one morning last February, he figured they would tell him they'd caught the thieves he'd called them about, the ones he'd seen breaking into his vehicle earlier that morning. Perhaps they would help him search his place, to make sure the intruders hadn't stuck around after he'd fired his rifle to warn them away.

He certainly didn't expect the officers to arrive with their guns drawn, arrest him and lay charges against him.

To his fellow rural Albertans, the story Eddie Maurice tells about that morning seems to confirm their worst fears: that crime is out of control, that police are unable to do anything about it, and that, should they try to defend themselves, their family or their property, those same cops will drag them off in handcuffs.

Maurice has become one of the foremost symbols of the deepening misgivings so many westerners have about the state of rural justice.

When he phoned the RCMP that day in February, it was just weeks after a jury in Battleford, Sask., had acquitted farmer Gerald Stanley in the 2016 shooting death of Colten Boushie, a resident of the nearby Cree Red Pheasant First Nation. While Boushie's death and Stanley's trial commanded national headlines for the racial tensions they highlighted, for some they also spoke to questions about the reliability of policing outside the West's cities and towns.

A spokesman for the Alberta RCMP refused to answer National Post's questions about the Edouard Maurice case, and the force has declined to corroborate or contradict his account of that morning - including whether its officers drew their guns upon arriving at the Maurices' property. The Alberta justice ministry told the Post the Crown would not comment on the case.

But in June the Crown withdrew the three charges Maurice had faced, for careless use of a firearm, pointing a firearm and aggravated assault. On Thursday, four months later, Maurice and his wife Jessica were in Ottawa, testifying before the public safety committee of the House of Commons as part of its study of rural crime. But at their home a few weeks earlier, the couple gave their first sit-down interview to discuss the "nightmare" that began eight months ago with their call to the police for help.

The Maurices live just south of Okotoks, a bedroom community of roughly 30,000 down the highway from Calgary. He worked as a machinist and she runs a pet daycare, and they help Jessica's family with their farm down the road.

"I love it," Edouard told the Post in September. "Just the freedom to do whatever you want to do ... you can walk outside your door, you just have open space."

But, being outside of town, they're a ways from street lights or neighbours.

"You can't yell for help if you need help - the neighbours won't hear you. So I guess in a way you're your own first responder for anything."

According to Edouard, around 5 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 24 - a couple of hours before the sun comes up in an Alberta winter on what would be his 33rd birthday - he woke up to the sound of the dogs in a state of agitation. Not barking, he said, but worked up about something. That's not unusual - there are deer and coyotes that wander through the yard and set off the dogs.

But when he got up to take a look, he said he could see through the glass panelling on the front door that his vehicle lights were on, and there were people out there.

Alone in the house with their infant daughter - Jessica was in Las Vegas for a conference and their other daughter was with Jessica's parents - Maurice retrieved a gun, opened the door and, when his demands for the trespassers to leave had no effect, he said, he fired what he said were two "warning shots" with what court documents identify as a .22-calibre rifle. The two people in the yard took off.

"It's basically a split-second of fear just rushing through you, you don't even know what's happening, what's going on," Maurice told the Post.

The decision to fire the rifle was the first decision that would upend the Maurices' lives; the second was the decision to phone the police.

Maurice dialed 911; he said the police took two hours to arrive at his home - the RCMP declined to comment on this - during which time he set the gun aside, which he said he didn't have it on him when the police arrived, and sat up on his living room couch to wait for them, his adrenaline pumping.

Three RCMP cruisers eventually arrived, Maurice said, and the officers approached with their guns drawn. Somebody had been injured, he said they told him, and he was coming with the cops.

An RCMP ballistics report found one of the shots Maurice fired ricocheted, hitting a 41-year-old man named Ryan Watson in the arm. Watson faces several charges stemming from that morning - trespassing, theft from a motor vehicle, mischief, possession of methamphetamine and probation violation - and goes to trial in the new year. Stephanie Martens also faced three charges from what occurred that night, but the
Crown has since withdrawn trespassing and theft charges against her, and in September she was sentenced to a $200 fine and a $60 victim surcharge for mischief.

Meanwhile, Maurice said, he had "a million things" running through his head. His youngest daughter was still asleep in her crib - he needed to get someone to come watch her. Police took him into custody. Jessica's birthday phone calls to her husband from Las Vegas went unanswered. It was her mother, watching the children, who eventually told her what had happened.

After four months, the Crown withdrew the three charges against Maurice. "Information came to light and as a result there's not a reasonable chance of conviction at this time," Crown attorney Jim Sawa told the court. When he announced the withdrawal of the charges, dozens of onlookers in the courtroom erupted in cheers.

For the Maurices, there is a clear link between the controversial acquittal of Gerald Stanley and their own treatment by the RCMP. "They wanted to make an example out of me," Edouard told reporters in Ottawa after Thursday's committee meeting. Jessica told the committee she believed the RCMP "jumped the gun" in charging her husband, the incident at their house coming just two weeks after Stanley's acquittal in the fatal shooting of Boushie, which had prompted outrage across the country. In her testimony Thursday, she referred to Stanley as a victim.

Eddie told the committee that if he were in the same situation again, he would not call the RCMP. "The RCMP are losing the trust of the people they are supposed to protect," Jessica said. The couple called on the government to implement stronger self-defence laws, so that people can protect themselves "without fear of prosecution."

In one charged exchange, Toronto Liberal MP Julie Dabrusin questioned how the Maurices believe Canada's self-defence laws should be altered, pointing out that the charges against them were dropped. "If you looked at a crime's severity, presumably a gunshot wound is more severe than property crime, overall," she said. The RCMP should review their policies to deal with such cases, Jessica Maurice replied.

As winter again looms, the talk in some rural Alberta circles is still tough: shoot, shovel and shut up, and it's good to have friends with snowshoes. After all, if Edouard Maurice got arrested and charged, why should folks risk calling the cops and landing themselves in legal trouble? "We know people who have had encounters with criminals, and the homeowners had guns and scared them off, and have not reported it to the police because they're scared of what the police will do," Jessica told the Post last month.

"I don't think we'll ever go back to normal. I think we have a new normal. It changed us as people, and as a family, and so we're getting back into a new normal for us."

National Post, with files from Maura Forrest in Ottawa
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**LNG facility will prolong China's reliance on fossil fuels, renewable energy expert says**

Tracy Sherlock

Building a new LNG facility in B.C. is a step in the wrong direction, a noted renewable energy expert says.

Mark Z. Jacobson, a professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering at Stanford University who will be speaking in Vancouver next week, says building an LNG facility will only discourage China from transitioning to clean energy. And building it now means it will be around for 30 to 40 years, needlessly carrying on the world's reliance on fossil fuels.

Earlier this month, the provincial and federal governments announced the approval of a $40-billion **LNG plant in Kitimat**, which will add significant emissions into our atmosphere.

At the same time, the B.C. government promises to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40 per cent from 2007 levels by 2030, and by 60 per cent by 2040.

Although the LNG project will require British Columbians to tighten their emissions belts to meet those goals, both Prime Minister Justin Trudeau and B.C. Premier John Horgan said the project would be **good for the planet overall** because it would reduce China's reliance on coal.

Jacobson doesn't agree.

"(With LNG), you have to mine it, transport it and refine it and that's all taking energy, so this is contributing to the problem. It's not a good idea. It's a bad idea," Jacobson said in an interview.

"It's going in the opposite direction that we should be going. It's definitely a bad thing for people's health, for climate and for jobs."

He calls B.C.'s updated climate pledges "pretty modest goals."

"I think more necessary goals are 80 per cent by 2030 and 100 per cent by 2050 for renewable energy," he said. "If you transition all energy sectors to renewable energy - not only electricity, but transportation, industry, and heating and cooling - that would effectively eliminate 80 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions and that's necessary to eliminate 1.5 degrees of global warming if we did that everywhere."

He's referring to the recent United Nations report **warning** that drastic emissions cuts are needed by 2030 to limit global warming to 1.5 degrees C or face devastating and possibly irreversible effects.

We need to transition all energy to clean energy, he says.
"That means electrification of all energy and then providing electricity with wind, water and solar power," he said. On the positive side, pledges and goals by governments do work as a strategy to get there, he says.

"There are over 80 cities, towns and counties in North America that have committed to 100 per cent (renewable electricity) by various dates," he said, mentioning both California and Hawaii as examples.

Today, about 30 per cent of California's electricity is from renewable sources like wind, solar, geothermal, small hydro, and tidal power, while the other 70 per cent is from natural gas, coal and nuclear power, he said.

In B.C., there is an abundant source of clean electricity from hydro power, which supplies 17 per cent of B.C.'s total energy needs, according to Fortis BC. Thirty-seven per cent comes from petroleum, 30 per cent from natural gas and 16 per cent from biofuels. In 2016, B.C.'s greenhouse gas emissions totalled 60.1 megatonnes.

Jacobson says more than 140 of the world's biggest companies have pledged to use 100-per-cent renewable energy in their operations. Six countries in the world are already at 98 to 100 per cent (renewable) electricity, (including) Costa Rica, Iceland, Norway, Paraguay, Tajikistan and Albania, Jacobson said.

The dominant form of electricity in all of those cases is hydro, like British Columbia.

When in Vancouver, Jacobson will talk about how to convert much of the non-renewable energy we use over to electricity - the electrification of our homes and our industries. He will discuss both what individuals can do and what government policies can accomplish.

He believes we can achieve the targets needed to avoid catastrophic warming.

"I know it's technically and economically possible, but it's a question of if we set our priorities in the right direction," he said.

And it won't kill the economy, he says.

"Clean energy creates more jobs and it results in lower costs and lower energy," he says. "We did a cost analysis of the 100-per-cent system across 139 countries of the world and we found we would create 24 million net jobs around the world. These are long-term, full-time jobs."

Jacobson says when you add up the social costs, using renewable energy only costs one-eighth as much as using fossil fuels. He breaks down the social costs into direct costs, what you actually pay out of your pocket for the energy, plus the health costs, like air pollution, and climate costs, which include costs due to flooding, droughts, sea level rise, loss of agriculture, wildfires and severe weather.

Earlier this year, Jacobson filed a $10-million libel lawsuit against a group of scientists who disputed his findings. Later, he withdrew the lawsuit, which he says was not a dispute over the science, but rather about false statements. He says his reasons for withdrawing the lawsuit were not related to the probability of winning the lawsuit.

Jacobson will be giving the 2018 Gideon Rosenbluth Memorial Lecture, sponsored by the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives and UBC's Vancouver School of Economics, on October 25 at 7 p.m. at the Simon Fraser University Segal Graduate School, 500 Granville Street. Registration is required.

Tracy Sherlock writes about B.C. politics for National Observer. Send your tips and ideas to tracy@nationalobserver.com.
Our dollar isn't just about oil

Traders predict uptick of loonie versus U.S. buck

Este Ban Duarte and Austin Weinstein

There's a lot more to our dollar than just oil these days.

The industry is less critical than it once was to the nation’s prospects, enabling some Canadian dollar bulls to look past the recent slide in domestic crude prices and focus instead on the outlook for economic growth and the prospect of higher interest rates.

The price of Western Canada Select, or WCS, a blend that represents about half the country's crude exports, has plummeted even as global benchmarks such as West Texas Intermediate have risen.

Yet analysts continue to predict gains for the loonie, with the median forecast in a Bloomberg survey showing it appreciating to $1.25 per dollar by the end of next year from current levels around $1.30.

"Good economic conditions in Canada are leading toward ongoing tightening by the Bank of Canada," said Greg Anderson, head of foreign-exchange strategy at Bank of Montreal, who expects the Canadian dollar to strengthen to about $1.27 over the next three months.

While the price of WCS is trading close to its widest discount to WTI on record, the world’s 11th largest economy is running near its potential and the unemployment rate has fallen to around 5.9 per cent as other sectors such as technology boom. Businesses see their sales outlook improving, according to the Bank of Canada's survey conducted last month. And that was even before the government cemented a deal on the North American Free Trade Agreement, which had been a source of considerable uncertainty.

The fixed-income market is currently pricing in about four increases over the coming year for the BOC’s benchmark, which currently stands at 1.5 per cent. The odds of an increase at next week's meeting have climbed to around 84 per cent and economists surveyed by Bloomberg predict it will rise to 1.75 per cent, the highest in a decade.

Oil prices are no longer a good proxy for Canadian currency trends, in part because the local energy sector isn't receiving the kinds of foreign investment it used to, according to Bank of Montreal's Anderson.

Government data show that oil and gas accounts for around 15 per cent of the foreign stock of investments in Canada.

That's down from about 17 per cent in 2014, before a decline in oil prices triggered a swath of restructuring across the industry.

The correlation between the loonie and WCS was strong as recently as 2016, before falling off, according to data compiled by Bloomberg. The correlation was strong even for most of 2015 as well, when a sharp decline of oil prices triggered an outflow of investment in Canadian energy industry.

That said, energy products - including oil - do still account for a significant chunk of the nation's exports, so it certainly can't be ignored by central bankers. It's something that the Bank of Canada may point to as a reason to insist on pursuing a gradual tightening path, according to Andrew Kelvin, senior Canada rates strategist at TD Securities.

There is also potential for energy to recover some of its influence on the currency further down the track with the development of the $40 billion liquefied natural gas project on the coast of British Columbia.

But cash is unlikely to flow from that for quite some time and it's largely irrelevant for the loonie at the moment, according to Darcy Briggs, a Calgary-based portfolio manager at Franklin Bissett Investment Management, which has around $6 billion in fixed-income assets.
With the new North American Free Trade Agreement pending ratification, and the Bank of Canada's rate hike path priced-in, some strategists are watching Canada's terms of trade. For example, lumber has slid by nearly half since a May peak, and that can weigh on the loonie, said Shaun Osborne, chief foreign-exchange strategist at Bank of Nova Scotia. "It's not just Canadian oil prices that have declined, quite a few relevant Canadian commodities have as well," said Osborne. "And that has a long-run impact on the value of the Canadian dollar."

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**Nova Scotia becomes third province to grant investment regulator greater investigative power**

The Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada will have the legal ability to enforce through the courts its fines against individuals who engage in misconduct, a power it did not have before

Clare O'hara

Nova Scotia has become the third province to grant one of Canada's national investment regulators with greater investigative power in hopes of strengthening investor protection, particularly for seniors and vulnerable retail investors.

The province has passed legislative amendments to its securities act to provide the Investment Industry Regulatory Organization of Canada (IIROC) with the legal authority in Nova Scotia to more effectively investigate and prosecute those who harm investors. The regulator will have the legal ability to enforce through the courts its fines against individuals who engage in misconduct, a power it did not have before.

With the changes in legislation, which took place in recent days, Nova Scotia becomes the third province to give IIROC greater investigative power, joining Alberta and Quebec. A 2017 Globe and Mail investigation found that the amount of unpaid securities fines in Canada is more than $1.1-billion.

"Together, we are giving potential wrongdoers notice that if they break the rules, there will be consequences," IIROC's president and CEO, Andrew Kriegler said in a statement. IIROC was formed by the securities industry, and oversees about 160 investment dealers and their trading activity in Canada's debt and equity markets. It investigates and prosecutes firms and investment advisers that breach its rules. Such infractions could include misappropriating funds from clients, signing documents on behalf of clients without their knowledge or making unsuitable recommendations to investors - frequently seniors and vulnerable people, for whom the financial losses can be significant.

Across Canada in 2017, cases involving seniors represented almost 40 per cent of all IIROC reviews and approximately 30 per cent of prosecutions.

Now, IIROC will have the ability in Nova Scotia to enforce fine collection against individuals that engage in misconduct, to collect and present evidence during investigations and at disciplinary hearings; and be protected from malicious lawsuits while it conducts its work.

To date, IIROC has authority to enforce fine collection in seven provinces: Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Alberta and British Columbia.

Since 2008, IIROC has issued more than $43.5-million in sanctions against individuals across the country. As of March, 2017, the regulator had collected just over $8.8-million, leaving about $34-million in unpaid fines.

As a result of the legislative amendments, IIROC has seen Alberta and Quebec collection rates increase. For the period between 2008 and 2016, the collection rate of fines in Alberta was 26 per cent, while 36 per cent of fines have been collected in Quebec - both of which are well above the national average.

IIROC continues to be in discussions with other jurisdictions with plans "to achieve a consistent level of investor protection from coast to coast," the regulator said.

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**CBC.ca**

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**Snow crab fishery changes tactics as stocks hit 25-year low**

A study six years in the making shows some grim statistics for snow crab in Newfoundland and Labrador.

The study was released at the same time the Department of Fisheries and Oceans announced the crab fishery was moving to a precautionary approach. That means if the crab numbers are low, the total allowable catch will be lowered, meaning less fishing for the province's harvesters.

According the Darrell Mullowney, a DFO scientist working on the study, the change comes at a crucial time in the crab fishery.

"As [the number of crab] has gone down, the exploitation rates have gone up in some areas," he told CBC's The Broadcast.

"We are concerned as a science branch about the state of crab. We are not sure that it can continue to sustain the levels of fishing pressure that have been imposed upon it in recent years.
particularly in some of its biggest and most important areas where the majority of the stock lies."

Over the last few years, biomass numbers have gone down in many areas around the province, Mullowney said.

Their study did not use a single indicator to gauge the health of the industry, but instead used a multi-indicator approach looking at things like female egg clutches, catch rates and discard rates.

While Mullowney doesn't make the decisions on stock management, he said he doesn't mince words when speaking with crab harvesters.

"I generally try to, as much as I can, tell it as it is.... You have to work off of truthful information even if it's inconvenient."

**Some good news in 3Ps**

DFO managers will hit the road at the end of November to meet with the men and women making a living in the industry. They'll hold meetings in St. John's, Clarenville, Gander and Port Hope Simpson.

Despite the change in fishery management and the findings of Mullowney's report, there has been one recent success in the industry.

Area 3Ps, located off the island's southern coast, saw a crash in total allowable catch from 2014 and 2017. But as the quotas went down, the health of the stock improved, Mullowney said.

In 2018, the total allowable catch went up slightly, from 1,505 tonnes to 1,792 tonnes.

"They seem to be a bit of a good news story in the broader pictures in terms of seeing some bounce back, whereas these other areas like 3L in particular seem to be arriving at a place where 3Ps was a few years ago," Mullowney said.

"Just because we're out here saying we're concerned about the status of the stock, doesn't mean it's necessarily game over."

*With files from The Broadcast*
Only after it couldn't produce a Speaker either was the assembly dissolved for an election.

Higgs said last month that Roy Vienneau told him she would ask the PCs to take power if Gallant could not win the confidence of the legislature.

The PCs won the most seats, 22, in September's election. But Gallant's Liberals, with 21 seats, hope to try to govern by winning the support of smaller parties for their throne speech.

**Stalemate**

Because of the close standings, neither of the two mainstream parties want to give up one MLA to sit in the Speaker's chair.

The Liberals announced Thursday that all their MLAs eligible to become Speaker had signed formal withdrawals. The 11 members who are cabinet ministers are not eligible for the position.

The leaders of the two smaller parties, the Greens and the People's Alliance, also said none of their MLAs would remain on the ballot.

"The new MLAs of course want to be MLAs and be active in the house representing their constituencies," Green Leader David Coon told reporters.

Alliance Leader Kris Austin echoed that. "We only have three seats in the legislature and we don't want to diminish our voice," he said.

Austin said speculation about what will happen if no Speaker can be chosen next Tuesday may be academic.

"I'd be kind of surprised if we get to that point," he said. "If I was Mr. Gallant and if I did not have full assurance that I had the 25 votes for a throne speech or if I didn't have a Speaker, I would resign."

Gallant's office had no comment Thursday other than the announcement that all eligible Liberal MLAs were withdrawing from the Speaker's race.

But Liberal MLA Jean-Claude D'Amours said the other party leaders had pressured their members into withdrawing, and some of them may yet change their minds before the 5 p.m. Monday deadline.

If that doesn't happen, "at that time we will make a decision and discuss with caucus" whether any Liberals would let their names stand.
We need a tax overhaul. Now!

Doug Black

Canada has lost its competitive edge.

This is the inescapable conclusion of the Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce's latest report, which comes after eight months of senators studying the biggest issues facing importers and exporters in Canada.

The investment differential between Canada and its largest trading partner, the United States, is widening - and not in our favour. Our corporate income taxes are higher after the U.S. cut its corporate tax rate from 39.1 per cent to 26 per cent in 2017, undercutting the Canadian rate of 26.7 per cent.

At the same time, individual income tax rates, looming carbon taxes, a lack of capital expenditure tax deductions, and a burdensome regulatory regime are proving to be barriers to investment in this country.

The results of this evergrowing differential are already being felt.

Investment in Canada has stopped - in fact investors are fleeing the country. Major energy projects are dead or dying. It's not just money leaving Canada; attractive businesses and individuals are heading south in favour of a warmer investment climate.

Something has to be done.

Not for the sake of a few people working in office towers in major cities across this country, but for every single Canadian, no matter where they work or live.

If Canada is not competitive, our economic prosperity as a nation is at risk - and consequently, so are our citizens.

The federal government must therefore act with dispatch to equalize the investment differential between Canada and the U.S.

How? It is time to overhaul our taxation system. The last Royal Commission was undertaken in 1962. Much has changed since then - yet, our foundational taxation system remains the same.

Sure, we've made additions, renovated bathrooms and replaced the odd electrical supply outlet but more piecemeal renovations won't restore Canada's competitiveness in the modern, digital world. It's time to rebuild from the ground up.

That's why one of the key recommendations in our report, Canada: Still Open for Business?, is for the federal government to launch a Royal Commission on Taxation, to be completed in no less than three years.

But even if that review is completed on time, it won't come soon enough to reverse the current trends. The federal government therefore must also begin work on our five other recommendations to: encourage investment, streamline regulatory regimes, help companies commercialize intellectual property, improve our trade infrastructure and step up trade with emerging markets.

When Finance Minister Bill Morneau releases his fall economic update, I urge him to announce the federal government's intention to adopt and immediately implement our six recommendations. Failure to do so will put at risk the economic prosperity of our country.

I ran in Alberta to become a senator for one reason: to ensure the Canada we leave to our children and grandchildren offers the same opportunities it has afforded me. If the federal government does not take steps now to reverse the challenges facing Canada's competitiveness, I fear for our future. Senator Doug Black, QC, chairs the Senate Committee on Banking, Trade and Commerce. He represents Alberta.
How a shift in Ottawa's bookkeeping is going to make the deficit loom larger

Karina Roman

The deficit and debt numbers in the federal government's Annual Financial Report being released today will be higher than projected because of a significant accounting change Ottawa is making. The federal government is changing how it calculates the discount rate, which is used to value the current cost of future pension obligations. When interest rates are low (as they have been in recent years), pension liabilities go up because the earning potential of those pension investments is reduced as a result. Low interest rates should mean a low discount rate - but that hasn't been the case because, until now, the discount rate for unfunded pensions was based on a moving average of Government of Canada long-term bond rates.

**Interest rates and pensions**

A moving average takes into account past interest rates - in Canada's case, that means higher rates - leading to a higher discount rate. Earlier this month, at a hearing of the House of Commons committee on government operations and estimates, MPs heard from experts on the issue. "At the federal level, you still see these discount rates that are just based on history, on an assumption about return on assets" said Bill Robson, president and CEO of the C.D. Howe Institute. "To me, that makes no sense." Critics like Robson argue that practice meant the government was underestimating its pension payments in the future. "Those pensions are ... more valuable to their recipients than what the federal financial statements indicate, and they are correspondingly more costly to taxpayers," said Robson. In the last two reports on the consolidated financial statements of the federal government, the auditor general has put into writing his fear that the discount rate has been too high.

Now, sources tell CBC that the Liberal government has decided to comply with that advice in time for today's Annual Financial Report. Under the new approach, the discount rate will be based on the actual year-end interest rate of those Government of Canada bonds. For this year, that means the discount rate will go from 3.9 per cent to 2.2 per cent.

"The amounts we are talking about wouldn't be material changes in the context of a federal budget," said the senior government official. Others disagree. "This is a big adjustment," said Kevin Page, the former parliamentary budget officer who now heads the Institute of Fiscal Policy and Democracy at the University of Ottawa. "It would have a corresponding large adjustment on estimated long-term liabilities."

**Discount rate goes down, deficit goes up**

By the auditor general's assessment, a decrease of one per cent in the discount rate would increase the government's future pension obligations by $7.7 billion. A 1.7 per cent decrease would mean an increase in pension obligations of just more than $13 billion. According to government sources, adopting the new discount rate will push the deficit for 2017-2018 to $19 billion, up from $18.5 billion. It will add $20.1 billion to the debt, pushing it to $671.3 billion.

And it will increase the federal debt-to-GDP ratio from 30.4 per cent to 31.3 per cent. The Liberal government has made that ratio its key deficit yardstick for determining whether it is on track financially. The Liberals also have based their financial plans on ensuring that ratio declines over time. "We are still on track (for that)," said the government official. Making the discount rate change now means that today's numbers will look worse than they would have without the change. But annual financial reports look backwards as well - and the new rate will be applied to previous recorded bottom lines, including the previous Conservative government's much-touted $1.9 billion surplus in 2014-2015. Today's annual financial report is expected to change that year's surplus to a $550 million deficit. Government pensions are defined benefit plans, meaning when employees retire they are guaranteed a certain level of pension income based on their earnings. Until 2000, those pensions were unfunded, meaning current and future benefit payments were reliant on government general revenues. Starting in 2000, the government started putting aside assets to fund the pensions. The discount rate accounting change applies only to the pre-2000 unfunded pensions.
Pourquoi une amnistie pour le pot ?

Yves Boisvert

Que faire avec 600 000 personnes qui ont un casier judiciaire pour « possession simple » d'une substance qu'on a maintenant le droit de posséder ?

Les libéraux ont commencé par dire l'an dernier qu'il n'était pas question de les « amnistier ». On a ensuite étudié la question. Et le gouvernement promet maintenant un processus de « pardon » accéléré et gratuit, dont les modalités ne sont pas connues.

Toute personne condamnée au Canada a droit à une « réhabilitation », qu'on appelle communément « pardon ». Ça rend le casier invisible, y compris à la frontière, à moins d'y avoir déjà été intercepté et d'être fiché aux États-Unis.

Pourquoi faudrait-il précipiter le « pardon » ou plus encore « amnistier » les personnes ayant un tel casier ?

Parce que ce crime n'existe plus, et qu'il serait donc injuste de voir des citoyens traîner un casier quand d'autres leur fument du pot en pleine face, nous dit-on.

L'argument est logique. Je précise aussi que je suis favorable à la légalisation et que je trouve vaguement victorien l'envernement de tous ceux qui se demandent ce qui arrivera dans la construction, dans la circulation automobile, avec les animaux de compagnie... comme si on ne fumait pas déjà du pot partout, dans les parcs, dans les rues et sur les balcons partout en ville.

L'argument de l'amnistie est donc logique. Mais en apparence seulement.

Car on n'a pas tout « légalisé » en ce qui concerne le cannabis.

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Comme le dit la professeure Anne-Marie Boisvert de l'Université de Montréal, on n'a pas légalisé le cannabis, on a simplement « déplacé le curseur » de la criminalisation. Il y a un espace de possession et de vente sous contrôle de l'État qui échappe au droit criminel. Mais passé quatre plants de marijuana à domicile (au Québec, c'est totalement interdit), ce n'est plus légal. Passé 30 grammes aussi. Acheter sur le marché noir est encore interdit. Posséder du pot non autorisé est encore prohibé.

Toute une nouvelle série d'infractions réglementaires a été créée. On utilisera des « contraventions » pour certains manquements et en cas de non-paiement des amendes, ces infractions réglementaires entraîneront... un casier judiciaire !

Je vois mal pourquoi, dans ce contexte, il faudrait précipiter le pardon des 600 000 personnes concernées, qui ont été accusées dans des circonstances aussi variées que la topographie de ce pays.

Certains ont été condamnés pour « possession simple » pour un joint (situation de plus en plus rare ces dernières années) ; d'autres après une négociation où l'on a retiré une accusation de trafic. Bonne chance pour démêler tout ça.

Mais suivons la logique du gouvernement libéral. Celui qui a été arrêté pour possession de quelques joints en 2016 serait « pardonné » instantanément et gratuitement... Tandis que celui qui sera arrêté la semaine prochaine avec du pot de contrebande, ou juste avec un peu trop de pot, devra attendre de trois à cinq ans pour obtenir son pardon... comme tout le monde. Et payer 631 $.

Autrement dit, ce qui semble une mesure de cohérence juridique et pénale n'est logique qu'en apparence.

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Le ministre de la Sécurité publique, Ralph Goodale, a raison de dire que la décriminalisation partielle du cannabis ne se compare nullement à la décriminalisation de l'homosexualité. On touche dans ce dernier cas aux droits fondamentaux, aux rapports intimes.

Dans le cas du cannabis, il s'agit d'un produit prohibé comme il y en a une flopée. Est-ce moralement plus répréhensible d'avoir été arrêté pour possession de champignons hallucinogènes ?

Pourquoi celui qui a un casier judiciaire pour possession de champignons devrait-il suivre le processus normal, et celui qui a été condamné pour possession de cannabis passer devant tout le monde ? Sans parler de tous les crimes mineurs pour lesquels des gens traînent un casier judiciaire.

Pour finir, il y a une question de politique judiciaire. Quel message envoie-t-on en « effaçant » de toute urgence le casier du pot au moment où toute une série de nouvelles infractions apparaissent pour cette même substance ?

C'est en toute conscience de cause que les infractions passées ont été commises. Quelle crédibilité aura l'État au moment de faire appliquer les nouvelles infractions ? Bah, dans cinq ans, on assouplira encore la loi de toute manière, et il y aura une autre amnistie...

Les pardons sont faciles à obtenir. Tout le monde en obtiendra un s'il attend quelques années. Les permissions de séjour aux États-Unis le sont aussi, en attendant.

Bref, il n'y a aucune raison pressante de décréter des « pardons » accélérés, encore moins une amnistie... à moins de décriminaliser TOUT ce qui touche au cannabis.
As others go backward, Canada moves forward

Legalizing cannabis is latest example of how our country stands above G20 counterparts

John Ibbitson

Australia's coalition government blamed an "administrative error" after many of its senators supported a motion that declared: "It's OK to be white."

The motion, which also decried the "deplorable rise of antiwhite racism and attacks on Western civilization," was narrowly defeated, by a vote of 31-28 on Monday, thanks to opposition by Labour, the Greens and independents.

After the government forced a revote, the motion was decisively defeated. But the fact that the Australian Senate could even be debating these noxious words is remarkable.

Any Canadian politician who tried to introduce such a declaration into a legislature would surely be expelled from whatever caucus they belonged to.

In that sense, the legalization of cannabis use on Wednesday is simply the latest evidence that Canada has set itself apart from the world.

We are the only Group of 20 country to have legalized cannabis use at the national level, and to offer pardons to those convicted in the past.

We are also the only large developed nation that continues to embrace high levels of immigration. Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada expects to take in 330,000 immigrants and refugees next year, and 340,000 in 2020.

In Sweden, which accepted a record number of refugees from the Middle East on a per-capita basis during the migration crisis of 2015, anti-immigrant sentiment powered the far-right Sweden Democrats to a strong showing in September's elections. Six weeks later, the mainstream parties still haven't figured out how to form a government.

The Trump administration wants to build a wall along the border with Mexico. In Britain, the Conservative government imposes tougher restrictions on immigration every year. New Zealand is also discouraging new arrivals: Parent-class approvals fell by 63 per cent in 2016-17, while 6 per cent fewer skilled immigrants were approved.

While Australia continues to have a robust immigration policy, the United Nations has condemned rules that imprison asylum seekers in offshore detention centres, sometimes for years.

The UN has also condemned the deplorable conditions in which many Canadian First Nations live. And the federal Liberal government is internally divided over whether Canada suffers from systemic racism.

"That expression is not a part of my vocabulary," Pablo Rodriguez, Minister of Canadian Heritage and Multiculturalism, told The Globe and Mail's Daniel Leblanc. But Liberal MPs Celina Caesar-Chavannes and Greg Fergus maintain systemic racism is a fact of Canadian life.

We are far from perfect.

But if perfection is at the end of a scale, Canada is further along than most. Not only was this country one of the first to legalize same-sex marriage, it is the only country to formally apologize and offer restitution to those who were dismissed from the public service and military in the past simply because of their sexuality.

Same-sex marriage in the United States arrived through a Supreme Court decision that LGBTQ advocates fear could be reversed, now that conservative jurist Brett Kavanaugh is on the court, tilting it further to the right. Advocates for women's rights fear the court might also reverse Roe v. Wade, which made abortions legal in the United States.

In contrast, this Liberal government mandates that half the ministers in cabinet be women.

More than half (55 per cent in 2016) of the federal public service is female.

At least 40 per cent of full-time university faculty are women (up from 37 per cent in 2010), although they make up less than 10 per cent of senior management in major companies.

And how do Canadians feel about this march toward greater tolerance? A recent international Ipsos poll says Canadians are less likely to feel their country is in decline than almost anyone else.

Only 30 per cent of us agreed with the statement: "Your country is in decline," in contrast to 51 per cent of Americans, 49 per cent of Brits and 36 per cent of Australians. Among 24 countries surveyed, only the Germans and Chileans were more confident than Canadians that things are getting better rather than worse.

While much of the developed world stagnates or backslides in the struggle for greater equality, Canadians remain determined to keep going forward.

There is no excuse for complacency. But we might be permitted a moment or two of quiet satisfaction.
Bloom off the rose
Death knell beginning to toll for Trudeau Liberals

Mark Bonokoski

If Justin Trudeau wore a rose in his lapel like his dearly-departed father, it would not only have no dew on its petals but little life left.

The 2019 federal election - coming exactly a year from this Sunday - does not look good for the Trudeau Liberals, with recent polls predicting the next government will be formed by Andrew Scheer's Conservatives.

And it won't even be close. A year is an eternity in politics, of course, but it would appear Canadians, including a substantial number of card-carrying Liberals, are already tired of Justin Trudeau being mostly spit and polish but with little or no substance, and with his caucus' entrenched unwillingness to face real issues head-on.

For all intents and purposes, Trudeau has been an absentee prime minister for most of his first three a jet-setter and playing PM McDreamy before the international media.

Next week, for example, he is off to Burkina Faso, the Ivory Coast, and Nigeria, perhaps having heard that some distant relative died there and, according to the e-mail from Barrister Favour Lovely, had left him a $168-million fortune that needs only some personal banking information in order to obtain.

What other purpose could such a trip be for? In a Postmedia/DART Insight poll released Friday, a vast majority of the Canadian electorate (76%) believe the Trudeau Liberals are vulnerable to a significant out of every 10 Liberals.

That polling was done in September, before Trudeau managed to pull Canada's NAFTA trade deal with the U.S. out of the fire.

However, the resulting support - 39% for the Tories and 30% for the Liberals - would translate into a majority government for Scheer.

As the poll states, only one in three Canadians 68% (including 56% of Liberal voters) think the "government has been consumed more with looking good than dealing with key issues" that are forefront in the minds of Canadians.

Like the economy, like getting our national resources to world markets at a world-market price, not carbon taxes.

There are those who believe, of course, that there should be a pox on all polls but, to politicians and the pundits who write about them, polls are also a great source of both fodder and entertainment.

But believe them implicitly at your peril.

A more recent Angus Reid survey took a closer look at the three principal party - to see where they stood among their own parties.

Because the Conservatives' membership base is larger than that of the Liberals and the NDP, it means more Canadians are open to voting for the Tories than any of the competitors.

Some 37% of Canadians, however, said they would "never" vote for the Conservatives, compared to 49% who would "never" vote Liberal, and 50% who ruled out ever voting for the Dippers.

Even among party membership, Singh does not fare well, with 39% telling pollsters they were still undecided about him.

He has his work cut out, but with no seat in the House of Commons, and Trudeau in no rush to call a byelection in the B.C. riding of Burnaby where Singh will eventually run, his time to get national recognition and electorate traction is quickly disappearing down the drain.

On Thursday, for example, there was absolutely nothing to gain by Singh visiting Timmins and the northern Ontario riding of Timmins-James Bay that has been held by NDP incumbent Charlie Angus since 2004.

But there he was nonetheless.

As for Maxime Bernier, who recently broke away from the Tories to form his own right-wing party, the People's Party of Canada, only 6% of voters polled by Postmedia/DART indicated Bernier would "very likely" get their nod at the ballot box.

It translates into a hiccup. markbonokoski@gmail.com @MarkBonokoski
Does a Twitter block violate charter rights?

Susan Delacourt

There is something undeniably satisfying about blocking a troublesome person on Twitter. One click, and the noise is over.

But that simple act, if carried out by a government official, could end up being unconstitutional in Canada if a newly launched court challenge is successful against Ottawa Mayor Jim Watson.

Three Ottawa residents formally launched a case against Watson this week, arguing that he is violating the Charter of Rights and Freedoms when he blocks users on Twitter.

Here's how it's worded in the application filed this week with Ontario Superior Court:

Watson's Twitter account is "a public digital space where individuals can express and disseminate their views on public matters," and his blocking of citizens' access to his account "infringes their right to freedom of expression as protected by subsection 2(b) of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

This isn't a frivolous case. The complainants are serious people: Dylan Penner works with the Council of Canadians, James Hutt is with the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and Emilie Taman is a lawyer, professor and former NDP candidate, as well as the daughter of former Supreme Court of Canada justice Louise Arbour.

Their lawyer is Paul Champ and I talked to him briefly this week after he filed the application. Yes, it's true, Champ said - politicians don't have any constitutional obligations to listen to citizens in Canada, with some notable, if limited exceptions seen in recent court cases about Indigenous rights.

But the charter does give us rights to speak, and like it or not, a lot of that dialogue between the government and the governed is taking place on Twitter.

We probably have Donald Trump to thank for that. As it happens, the U.S. president was also found in violation of the U.S. Constitution earlier this year for his habit of blocking people on Twitter. (The Star's Daniel Dale enjoys the distinction of being one of those who Trump has blocked, it should be noted, though he wasn't part of that case.) While that U.S. court decision doesn't count as a legal precedent here, it's a powerful example.

A couple of years ago, I was predicting that Twitter would fade away as a social medium in politics, merely because I was hearing so many people in politics talk of their fatigue or annoyance with it. But the ascent of Trump and his style of politics has turned it into the perfect channel for the distemper of our times - a place for polarized political rivals to yell past each other with personal insults and tribal rallying cries.

It's a bit uncomfortable to see that kind of debate elevated to the realm of cherished constitutional rights, in the United States or Canada, but here we are. Watson, in his defence, has said his Twitter account is personal and that he has the right to block people on social media in the same way that he has the right to walk away in public from those exercising their free speech too aggressively.

I don't know about that first part. In this day and age, can politicians or any person, really, neatly divide their social-media lives into separate, public/private categories? During the recent tornado in Ottawa, for instance, Watson was tweeting out important public notices about the recovery and rescue efforts.

But many of us can have some sympathy for the Ottawa mayor's views about having the right to walk away from pointless interactions. I do a lot of blocking on Twitter and don't feel badly about it - though this case does have me thinking.

One of the unfortunate side effects of seeing citizens as consumers is this whole idea that customers are always right. That may be a good strategy for running a business, but it's simply not true that in a democracy, citizens are always correct. Some people trying to elbow their way into the public square are just plain wrong - climate-change deniers, white supremacists or any of those folks who try to trade on the idea that saying a blatantly wrong fact publicly makes it true.

The citizens involved in the case against Mayor Watson don't fall into this category; as mentioned, they are serious people. But if they are successful in making Twitter access a constitutional right, are we somehow cheapening the idea of what counts for public/political debate in 2018?

The Ottawa complainants make a good case in their application that Twitter has become a public-information channel and politicians have no more right to block citizens from that sphere than they do in other realms. You don't see mayors, except in rare circumstances, being allowed to stop people from walking into city hall or cutting them from municipal mailing lists.

I'm guessing, inexpertly, that the Ottawa case might be stronger if the complainants can argue that Watson is giving information exclusively through Twitter that he isn't giving through other channels - that it is, as Trump has more or less rendered it, an official, stand-alone medium.

However, Twitter does give another option - "muting." When you "mute" someone, you don't see their Tweets, but they can still see what you are posting. That sounds just about perfect for politics these days - the right to speak, but no obligation to listen. Very 2018. For what it's worth, the Ottawa complainants say they'd be fine if Watson merely muted them on Twitter.
When I set out to write this column this week, I asked around about whether any of the political parties had policies for blocking on Twitter. The prime minister’s account, @JustinTrudeau, does not block any users, PMO spokesperson Cameron Ahmad told me, but some ministers may block “in the case of bots, abusive or threatening language.”

The New Democrats, including leader Jagmeet Singh, have an informal policy of discouraging blocking, I was told. No one for the Conservatives got back to me by deadline. However, I have seen people complaining about various MPs in that caucus blocking critics on Twitter - Michelle Rempel is reportedly an enthusiastic blocker - so I assume no prohibition on blocking exists for the official Opposition.

That could all change if this interesting challenge with the Ottawa mayor goes ahead and suddenly Twitter access is deemed a charter right. A court date has already been set for the end of January and many of us will be keenly watching.

Twitter: @susandelaourt

They Keep Coming

Canada's border crossing numbers are in for September

Anthony Furey

It's been a funny phenomenon, the conversation around Canada's illegal border crossings. It was a big deal back last year when the problem was first reported upon, albeit a little late and more than a little begrudgingly, by my venerable colleagues in the press.

Since then, it dies down and flares up every couple of months. Like in April, when Conservative MP Michelle Rempel proposed making the entire border an official point of entry. Or in July, when federal Liberal minister Ahmed Hussen inferred Ontario PC cabinet minister Lisa MacLeod was "unCanadian" for her questions on the file.

Now, it only makes sense to bring up the issue again when there's something new to report, say a new development or policy revision and so on. But these lull periods in the news give people the impression that these are also lull periods when it comes to the actual numbers. And that when we are not talking about all of these people crossing illegally into the country every month that's because they aren't doing it or at least not as much. That is not the case. Far from it.

On Thursday, the government released the September numbers and they tell an interesting story. They haven't really gone down either. They're just there. Constant.

And that's the thing.

Canada's illegal border phenomenon hasn't gone way. It's staying put. It's the new normal.

Last month, a total of 1,601 people crossed "irregularly" into Canada and made an asylum claim. That's far fewer people than the record high of last August, which was 5,712. But it's higher than several months out of this year, including June's tally of 1,263 people.

If you average out all of the reported monthly numbers since the problem began at the beginning of 2017, you get 1,729 as the monthly average number. So right now we're just slightly below average, with around 50 people a day making the journey.

That is not the 200 or more that some experts worried would become the new normal. But it's still a major departure from where we were at before this all began. In 2016, there were 2,464 people apprehended. That's not just for one month. That's the whole year.

Back in August, Louis Dumas, a senior public servant with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, told the city council of Cornwall - which is Ontario's unofficial welcome wagon to the Roxham Rd. crossers who decide they won't stay put in Quebec - that we're now witnessing migration patterns similar to what's happening in Europe.

"Canada is no longer protected from this reality," he said.

Looks like he was right. afurey@postmedia.com @anthonyfurey