



THE HILLTIMES --- RESEARCH



October 5, 2021



Table of Contents

Research

New health lobbying registrations aim to turn Liberals' attention to non-COVID policies

Upcoming Events

Emergency COVID-19 summit tonight: Canada's doctors and nurses meet to discuss devastating impact on health system

News

'A lot of people's jobs are at stake': Trudeau's transition team has big decisions to make before cabinet sworn in

Press Releases

Bell Canada

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences

Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada

New health lobbying registrations aim to turn Liberals' attention to non-COVID policies

RESEARCH EXCLUSIVE | OCTOBER 5, 2021

As a re-elected federal Liberal government prepares for another round at leading Canada during pandemic times, some health advocacy groups are further equipping themselves to argue why their non-COVID-related asks should be a priority.

“Obviously, the pandemic is something that all of society and the whole world has had to deal with,” said Manuel Arango, director of health policy and advocacy at the Heart and Stroke Foundation, in a phone interview with Hill Times Research on Oct. 4. “But It seems like we are turning the corner on it and so as a result, it's critical that we address many of the other commitments, really important policy commitments that have been made by the government.”

Hill Times Research spoke with three organizations who have joined the federal lobbyists' registry or strengthened their lobbying representation to push their policy priorities forward during Parliament 44:

Time to get front-of-pack labelling 'across the finish line'

Heart and Stroke recently hired three Counsel Public Affairs consultants, all of whom have been tasked with discussing a single subject with federal officials, according to the federal lobbyists registry: “Introduce improved front of package labelling on food products.”



Heart and Stroke's Manuel Arango says that front-of-pack labelling regulations, published in draft form in 2018, are at a "critical point" right now. (Photo courtesy of the Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada)

Counsel's Ben Parsons and Sheamus Murphy registered to represent the organization on Aug. 18, while Bridget Howe added her name to the file on Sept. 22. Heart and Stroke CEO Doug Roth represents the organization as the in-house officer on the registry.

Since first being elected in



2015 under Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), the federal Liberals have repeatedly promised changes to Canada's nutrition policy through election platforms and multiple mandate letters for the health minister. While initiatives to ban partially hydrogenated oils (the main source of industrially produced trans fat) in foods and update

the Canadian food guide were implemented, other promised policy changes – restricting the marketing of some foods to children and requiring nutrition labels on the front of food products – were stalled even prior to the pandemic.

RELATED: [Government bills necessary when it comes to “contentious” policy, says Heart and Stroke director](#)

Heart and Stroke has strongly lobbied to make both incomplete promises a reality. Arango said both issues continue to be a priority for the organization, but he noted that front-of-pack labelling is at a “critical point” right now.

Regulations concerning front-of-package labelling were published in Canada Gazette I in February 2018, but have not been finalized in Canada Gazette II, meaning they cannot be implemented.

“I’m sure the government has done a lot of work on this file, and we’re very close to getting it done, so we just need to take that final action, and get it across the finish line,” Arango said, noting that the Liberals promised to take action on the measure through their 2021 election platform.

Advocates aim to keep political momentum going on perinatal mental health

The Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative began as a way to catch the attention of politicians during the 2019 federal election. Its founding members, Patricia Tomasi (communications director) and Jaime Charlebois (research director) began their informal advocacy with a letter to all the major party leaders, asking them what their position was on implementing a national perinatal mental health strategy.

Only the NDP’s Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) responded. He wrote that he did support the creation of a strategy.

Fast forward three years, and the call for a national strategy has been raised in the House of Commons through an e-petition (sponsored by NDP MP Heather McPherson who represents Edmonton Strathcona, Alta., in the House), a non-binding motion (also brought forward by McPherson), and a private member’s bill (sponsored by NDP MP and long-time health critic Don Davies, who represents Vancouver Kingsway, B.C.).



Patricia Tomasi and Jaime Charlebois formed their advocacy group for perinatal mental health after they realized they couldn't find other organizations that were discussing the topic. (Photo



courtesy of the Canadian Perinatal Mental Health Collaborative)

The introduction of McPherson's e-petition was the first time "perinatal mental health" was included in a

Hansard transcript, according to Tomasi. Both Tomasi and Charlebois spoke to Hill Times Research over Zoom on Oct. 1.

It might also be the first time that the subject has landed on party platforms. During the 2021 election campaign, the now-governing Liberals promised to work on ensuring "timely access" to perinatal mental health services, while the NDP said it would create a strategy if elected.

Tomasi and Charlebois formed the collaborative after meeting each other for professional reasons. Tomasi was a journalist who interviewed Charlebois, a registered nurse, about maternal mental health for an article. They both had lived experience – Charlebois had experienced depression and anxiety following her daughter's birth 16 years ago, while Tomasi was diagnosed with postpartum bipolar disorder eight years after her first child was born.

"We kept having this conversation over and over again, 'well, who is advocating for perinatal mental health in Canada?' And we couldn't find those advocates so we decided to do it ourselves," said Tomasi.

The duo legally incorporated their organization in May 2021. Due to that change in legal status, they registered to lobby on behalf of their organization on Aug. 16.

Tomasi said their goal moving forward is to hold the Liberal government accountable for its election promises on mental health, and to ensure that they are involved in discussions on those promises, which include the creation of a federal transfer to help provinces and territories deliver free mental health services.

"We just keep doing what we've been doing. We just keep fighting, we keep having meetings with MPs, we keep doing social media campaigns, we keep working behind the scenes, in front of the scenes, just elevating the national consciousness and the national conversation around understanding the importance of perinatal mental health," Tomasi said.

['It's amazing' there's so little discussion on fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, says advocate](#)

A recent review of the Canada FASD Research Network's (CanFASD) strategic plan led to a decision by the organization's board of directors to focus its advocacy efforts on a call for a national strategy for fetal alcohol spectrum disorder (FASD).

Although the network has previously asked federal governments for a strategy for FASD, the 2021 election is the first time CanFASD embarked on a campaign for one, according to Audrey McFarlane, its executive director, in a phone interview with Hill Times Research on Oct. 1.

Election 2021 was an opportune time to focus on this request because of developments in research showing the outcomes of people in Canada with FASD, McFarlane said. That research documents the prevalence of people with FASD in the child welfare and justice systems.

RELATED: [Research network is on a quest to improve services and the language around fetal alcohol spectrum disorder](#)

For example, a CanFASD-supported [research paper](#) on FASD and child welfare indicates that between three and 11 per cent of Canadian children in foster care have FASD, and that this is likely a conservative estimate. That paper was published in January 2020.

Also likely underestimated is the number of Canadians overall with FASD. The commonly cited figure is four per cent but many researchers say that it is likely higher, according to McFarlane.



CanFASD's Audrey McFarlane said that her organization's push for a national fetal alcohol spectrum disorder strategy during the recent federal election was the first time they embarked on a campaign on the issue. (Photo courtesy of CanFASD)

"It's extremely worrying that we're not doing better, and caregivers are under an extreme amount of stress. Add in the COVID situation with the pandemic [and] it is just overwhelming," she said. "We really need some federal leadership."

Unlike the subjects of nutrition and perinatal mental health, FASD was not a line item in the federal Liberals' platform, nor did it make the election documents of any of the opposition parties that currently hold seats in the House of Commons.

"Given how common this disability is, and how preventable it could be, it's

amazing that we're not talking about it more," said McFarlane.

CanFASD's strategy to convince politicians to pay attention to the issue is to demonstrate how FASD is connected to subjects that did make party platforms, such as housing, substance use and decreasing criminal activity.

The network has also hired third-party consultants for the first time. Don Moors and Kristina Proulx of Temple Scott Associates registered to represent the organization in discussions on the development of a national strategy. McFarlane has also been registered to lobby for her organization since April 2019.

"The federal system is complicated and it's hard to navigate on your own," she said about the decision to hire lobbyists for the first time. "We're a relatively small but mighty organization, and so we decided that we needed help."

Emergency COVID-19 summit tonight: Canada's doctors and nurses meet to discuss devastating impact on health system

Location: online - Date: October 6, 2021

The Canadian Medical Association and the Canadian Nurses Association will hold a press conference following an emergency COVID-19 summit, discussing the pandemic's devastating impact on Canada's health care system and health workers. Participants include: CMA President Dr. Katharine Smart; CMA Quebec board member Dr. Abdo Shabah; and CNA President Tim Guest. Details [online](#). Call 613-807-0457.

‘A lot of people’s jobs are at stake’: Trudeau’s transition team has big decisions to make before cabinet sworn in

NEWS | OCTOBER 4, 2021 | PETER MAZEREEUW |

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s press conference on Sept. 28 shed light on some of the hard choices his transition team has been weighing since the start of the last election campaign, including who will stay and who will go in the top ranks of cabinet, the PMO, and the public service, and what priorities they will pursue.

The work of a government-to-government transition team starts with setting just a handful of top priorities, and taking a hard look at who is up to the job of delivering on them, say members of transition teams for three different federal governments.

Mr. Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) won his third term in the Sept. 20 election. The Liberals will have another minority government, and all the parties in the House have roughly the same number of seats as they did in the last Parliament.

Mr. Trudeau’s office declined to comment on his transition team when contacted by The Hill Times.

The former transition team members say the prime minister and Privy Council Office will almost certainly have put together a small group of senior advisors to make decisions about how to govern in the 44th Parliament.

“This is an opportunity for a prime minister to reset the government, and to put in place all the pieces that are going to implement the platform that they’ve campaigned on for the last 35 days,” said David Zussman, a former public servant and political adviser who led prime minister Jean Chrétien’s transition teams in 1993, when he formed his first government, and in 1997.

“So this should be very serious business. It shouldn’t be business as usual, because they’ve made promises to Canadians, and they’ve got to be able to structure their government both organizationally, and people-wise, [in a way that will] help them get there.”

Janice Charette, the clerk of the Privy Council, is almost certainly a key player in the government’s transition planning, say former advisors to governments in transition. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia

The Hill Times also spoke to Anne McLellan, who worked on Mr. Trudeau’s last transition team following the 2019 election, and served as deputy prime minister in Paul Martin’s Liberal government; Elizabeth Roscoe, a consultant at Rubicon Strategy and former Conservative staffer who worked on Stephen Harper’s 2006 transition team; and Derek Burney, a former chief of staff to Brian Mulroney who led Mr. Harper’s 2006 transition team.

Transition teams begin their work during the election campaign, if not earlier, and

work until the new cabinet is sworn in. Political advisers prepare for both minority and majority government scenarios, while the Privy Council Office—the lead department in the public service—prepares for those outcomes, as well as the possibility that another party could win power.

“I can assure you that the Privy Council Office has been preparing for precisely this event, and they’ve got a long list of suggestions and ideas that are going to be part of the Trudeau transition,” said Mr. Zussman.

The first order of business is creating a shortlist of top priorities which, in the case of a minority government, can realistically be achieved in short order, the former team members said.

“They need to get a sense of what their priorities are for the coming three or four months, and what they think is doable, because that is the biggest challenge they are going to face going forward. If they stumble, it will make life very difficult for them going forward. If they succeed, it will provide momentum of its own that will galvanize their own caucus [and] galvanize the cabinet,” said Mr. Burney.

Setting a few clear priorities will create cohesion in cabinet and in caucus, which is especially important when the government does not control the House, he said.

Mr. Trudeau said during his press conference last week that his top priority was to continue trying to manage the COVID-19 pandemic, including by requiring that federal public servants and those who wish to travel by train or air have been vaccinated, and working on vaccine passport systems.

He identified other priorities as well, including his government’s housing and daycare programs, climate change, economic aid for workers harmed by the push for green energy, Indigenous reconciliation, and his campaign promise to create new penalties for anyone who harasses a health care worker.

Cabinet turnover coming

Randy Boissonault has a strong case to join the cabinet after winning a seat for the Liberals in Edmonton, one of only two the party holds in Alberta. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

The next challenge for Mr. Trudeau and the transition team will be picking the people who are best suited to deliver on those priorities. The team will review how ministers performed in the last Parliament; which newcomers or backbenchers have the talent to join cabinet; and how to ensure different regions and demographics are represented in cabinet. Newcomers will have to pass security and tax record checks.

Harjit Sajjan (Vancouver South, B.C.) and Patty Hajdu (Thunder Bay-Superior North, Ont.) came under pressure numerous times during the last Parliament for missteps or miscommunications made under their watch as ministers of defence and health, respectively. Bill Blair (Scarborough Southwest, Ont.) has been criticized for his work addressing the Liberals’ gun control promises by gun control advocacy group PolyseSouvient, which called on Mr. Trudeau to find a new public safety minister for the new cabinet.

Randy Boissonault (Edmonton Centre, Alta.) and George Chahal (Calgary Skyview, Alta.) may be considered for cabinet posts after winning the only Liberal seats in Alberta, though Mr. Chahal has become embroiled in a controversy after being caught on video discarding a flyer placed at a home in his riding by a Conservative candidate.

The Commissioner of Canada Elections is conducting an investigation into the matter.

Anne McLellan worked on Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's last transition team following the 2019 election, and served as deputy prime minister in Paul Martin's Liberal government. The Hill Times photograph by Jake Wright

Mr. Trudeau confirmed last week that he will maintain a cabinet with as many women as men. Four women who served as ministers in the last cabinet either did not run for reelection or were defeated.

Once the cabinet ministers have been chosen, the clerk of the privy council—in this case, Janice Charette—will review the roster of top public servants, promote and demote as needed, and help to match ministers with suitable deputies and assistant deputies.

If a rookie MP is brought into cabinet, odds are that they will be paired with a seasoned deputy minister, said Mr. Zussman.

Political staff in the PMO and ministers offices, and parliamentary secretaries will be put under the microscope as well, said Ms. Roscoe.

"It's a tense time," said Mr. Zussman, "because a lot of people's jobs are at stake at this very moment. Everyone at PMO in a senior position is asking themselves whether they're going to be asked to stick around or not."

Mr. Trudeau said during his Sept. 28 press conference that he would choose his new cabinet before the end of October, and that Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) would retain her job as finance minister and deputy prime minister in his next cabinet.

When asked whether he would change the senior staff in the PMO, Mr. Trudeau responded but did not directly answer the question.

The transition team will also scrutinize the structure of cabinet committees and the number and alignment of government ministries, to see whether they can be reshaped to help the government reach its goals more easily, said Ms. McLellan.

Preparing mandate letters and the Throne Speech, and deciding on the first items in the government's legislative agenda are also major responsibilities of the transition team.

peter@hilltimes.com

Bell Canada

OCTOBER 5, 2021

Bell Let's Talk is introducing a new mental health podcast series, *From Where We Stand: Conversations on Race and Mental Health*, hosted by CTV's *Your Morning's* Anne-Marie Mediwake, iHeartRadio Canada's CHUM 104.5 co-host of Marilyn Denis and Jamar, Jamar McNeil, and broadcaster and comedian, Candy Palmater. Starting on October 6 and over the next 6 weeks, the series will explore mental health issues affecting culturally diverse communities throughout Canada and feature mental health experts and guests from Black, Indigenous and People of Colour communities. "Bell Let's Talk is pleased to launch this new mental health podcast series to put a spotlight on mental health in culturally diverse communities," said Mary Deacon, Chair of Bell Let's Talk. "By taking part in these podcast conversations, this informed, diverse group of mental health experts and people with lived-experience will help advance mental health and wellness in new and necessary ways." The full release is available online. Call 613 785-1427.

Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Sciences

OCTOBER 5, 2021

As Canada joins the World Health Organization and countries around the globe in recognizing World Mental Health Day on October 10, a new Ipsos poll conducted on behalf of Ontario Shores Centre for Mental Health Science has revealed a majority of Canadians believe we are in the midst of a new pandemic. "To know Canadians are suffering from a mental health standpoint is heartbreaking, but, unfortunately, not surprising," notes Karim Mamdani, President and CEO of Ontario Shores, a specialty mental health hospital which has been treating mental illness for more than a century. The full release is available [online](#). Call 416-324-2002.

Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada

OCTOBER 5, 2021

Recent Canadian studies, lead by Professor Esme Fuller-Thomson PhD, Director of the Institute for Life Course & Aging at the University of Toronto, report that one in four women with ADHD have attempted suicide in their lifetime and are 69 per cent more likely to have has a substance abuse disorder. Women with ADHD have triple the prevalence of insomnia, chronic pain, suicidal ideation, childhood sexual abuse and generalized anxiety disorder and double the rate of substance use, smoking, depressive disorder, severe poverty, and childhood physical abuse compared to women without ADHD. "Considering this Canadian data, it is very worrisome that more attention is not being paid to the impact of ADHD on suicidality, addiction, mental and physical health in general and specifically in women," states Heidi Bernhardt the Director of Education and Advocacy for The Centre for ADHD Awareness Canada. Call 905-471-3524 .