



# David Mitchell and Sara Caverley:

## The year's top policy stories

DAVID MITCHELL

SARA CAVERLEY

Published on: December 28, 2014 Last Updated: December 28, 2014 9:00 AM EST



General Tom Lawson, Chief of the Defence Staff, centre, takes a question during a technical briefing on Operation IMPACT, Canada's support to the mission against the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) as Lieutenant-General Jonathan Vance, Commander Canadian Joint Operations Command, left, and Brigadier-General Michael Rouleau, Commander Canadian Special Operations Forces Command, look on in Ottawa on Friday, Oct. 17, 2014. [Justin Tang / THE CANADIAN PRESS](#)

It was a busy, boisterous year in the world of Canadian governance and public policy. Here's the Public Policy Forum's top 10 list for 2014:

### **Cyberbullying**

Bill C-13, revamped as a response to cyberbullying, included long-promised measures to assist police in dealing with what the Bill described as "online crimes", most notably broader powers to compel Internet service providers to turn over subscriber data, including private communications. Despite the public misgivings articulated by the federal privacy commissioner, the bill received Royal Assent in December.

### **Blueprint 2020/Destination 2020**

The Clerk of the Privy Council led the federal public service through a successful engagement exercise aiming to make smart use of new technologies to improve networking, access to data and customer service, among other things. While skepticism lingers about past efforts at public service renewal, managing generational change in the public service is essential to our country's future competitiveness

### **Income splitting**

Experts and policy-makers are split on whether this measure will benefit the Canadian economy. Its detractors maintain that the chief beneficiaries will be families with above-average incomes. Economic incentives like income splitting raise important questions about how best to allocate a budget surplus and the next federal election may turn on how Canadians choose to answer such questions.

### **End of universal day care subsidies in Quebec**

Quebec's faltering finances mean the cherished one-low-cost-for-all daycare system needs replacing. A proposed program based on family income could see some households, especially with single mothers, forced to choose between working and raising their children.

### **Liquefied Natural Gas projects in B.C.**

Falling gas prices, rising construction costs and project approval delays have created greater uncertainty for natural gas development in B.C. While changes to the province's taxation scheme reflect a shift from high hopes to lowered expectations, energy analysts are less optimistic given competition in global markets. As B.C. proceeds to develop its LNG potential, the provincial government will need to balance complex fiscal and regulatory considerations with public confidence, including the engagement of First Nations.

### **Federal government rewrites Canada's prostitution laws**

The federal government pushed a major rewrite of Canada's prostitution laws through Parliament to comply with a Supreme Court decision. Bill C-36 may reduce the ability for sex workers to screen clients safely, increasing opportunities for violence against sex workers. The law will likely be challenged in the courts.

### **Calls for a national public inquiry into missing and murdered Aboriginal women**

A shocking and sobering RCMP report found 1,181 reported cases of missing and murdered Aboriginal women over the past generation. Pitted against several provinces and a sizeable public outcry for a national public inquiry, the federal government maintains that this undeniable pattern of violence is not a policy problem, but a matter best reserved for the police and courts.

### **Return of activist government**

The re-election of a Liberal government in Ontario in June, under the new leadership of Premier Kathleen Wynne, signalled a return to activist government in Canada's largest province. Emblematic of the government's approach is the proposed establishment of the Ontario Retirement Pension Plan.

### **Pipelines**

Keystone XL is still pending US approval, with the new Republican-led Congress facing a Presidential veto on the project. The Northern Gateway pipeline received conditional approval from the National

Energy Board, but the lack of public confidence in the project – particularly among First Nations – remains an obstacle. And the new Energy East pipeline proposal, providing a route from western oil fields to the east coast, is stalled pending further public engagement.

### **Canadian troops join combat operations against ISIL**

Canada joined the United States and other nations in the war against ISIL militants. The government's resolute involvement in this conflict speaks to a larger foreign policy question: what is Canada's role in the international community? When our country agrees to participate in a military conflict where lives, including those of Canadian soldiers, are at stake, it's an extremely significant decision – and that's why the deployment of troops in this theatre of war is the top Canadian policy story of 2014.