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## Poilievre plays to his core

By **KYLE DUGGAN**, **ZI-ANN LUM** and **NICK TAYLOR-VAISEY** | 10/20/2023 06:00 AM EDT

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Thanks for reading Ottawa Playbook.

### In today's edition:

- A closer look at how **PIERRE POILIEVRE**'s viral apple-eating video is resonating.
- A Russian economist was dropped from Canada's sanctions list.
- Ambassador **KIRSTEN HILLMAN** played host to the billion-dollar club in D.C.

### DRIVING THE DAY

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**INTERNATIONAL MAN OF INTRIGUE** — Conservative Leader **PIERRE POILIEVRE** did something unusual for a Canadian politician this week.

He broke through the zeitgeist and became a sensation in the U.S. and abroad, over a [viral video](#) showing him munching on an apple while dressing down a local reporter who couldn't back the assertions in his question up with examples.

A high-five moment for his team that can end the week with a victory lap: defeating a journalist, mortal frenemy of the conservative, by using their own tools of the trade no less.

It quickly caught fire online. [Fox News](#) described him as "calmly batting down reporter's questions," [aggregator Real Clear Politics](#) phrased it as the dismantling of a "reporter's ego," while the [Daily Mail](#) went with "calmly tears apart reporter." A lot of [ink](#) has [spilled](#) in Canada across the [spectrum](#), too.

— **Ask an American:** Republican political consultant **DOUG HEYE** tells Playbook it comes across like the reporter is asking "boilerplate questions with conclusions already formed," and the nonchalant apple munching suggests there's almost no effort involved.

"It sends the message he could eat this guy/the left for lunch," he said.

Heye had never heard of Poilievre before, but said he is "potentially someone to watch."

“With much of viral communications being about ‘owning’ political opposition or the press, this is a great introduction.”

— **Ask a Canadian:** Earncliffe’s **COLE HOGAN** said the video is unusual in a few ways. It’s visually interesting and feels dynamic, with a conversational tone compared to the typically adversarial one found in Ottawa scrums. And it was posted in long form, rather than just a short clip — a conscious decision that follows a trend by the Poilievre team.

Exchanges with a reporter like this are “generally very risky” for party leaders, but opposition leaders are more willing to take risks.

“Most times, you’ll see like a leader or premier behind a lectern when they go five, six questions” in a “way more controlled atmosphere,” Hogan said. “Maybe now we’ll see more instances like these over time.”

— **Upshot:** Lots of free earned media. Red meat to the base. A classic fundraising pitch.

“He obviously wasn’t interested in even pretending to be unbiased,” the party said of the reporter in a fundraising email sent out Thursday, complete with a .gif of the leader munching away. “The media doesn’t want Pierre to win.”

— **Missed opportunities:** There were specifics the reporter could have pointed to that might have produced a more thoughtful exchange. Several of Poilievre’s political opponents and detractors have [tried to brand him as Trumpian](#), for starters.

“I never really talk about left or right,” Poilievre also said. A quick Hansard search finds plenty of times. The Liberals [noticed](#).

**COLBY COSH**’s [National Post column](#) on the viral encounter bills it as a takedown that’s being “studied as an example of political jiu-jitsu worldwide.”

And he pointed out that the reporter on the losing end of the exchange skipped through that whole painful part in his article and landed on describing Poilievre as “[acerbic](#)” — reinforcing conservative narratives about an unfair liberal press.

— **Rings familiar ...:** Ask around about the last time another politician was as combative with the press and willing to tussle, some Ottawa political denizens point to another Pierre.

Some of the best scraps on record might be [the times](#) former Prime Minister **PIERRE TRUDEAU** and **JACK WEBSTER** [grappled in interviews](#), not to mention the famous **TIM RALFE** [exchange](#) during the FLQ crisis.

It’s not entirely like these exchanges don’t happen anymore. Aggressive back-and-forths with politicians and reporters on the Hill are standard daily bloodsport. They’re just usually sanitized.

Many a flak can be heard in West Block shouting “last question!” to open up a quick getaway, after their boss delivers a hit and run of some sterile and (probably) warmed-over talking points.

That’s because everyone knows the danger of scrums. Think back to the “[Spray-pec Affair](#)” and the time **JULIE VAN DUSEN** gotcha’d cabmin **ANDY SCOTT** with the ultimate tough question: “So, were you hit in the head with a rock?”

One theory from a former Ottawa newsroom bureau chief on why more examples of these incidents aren’t readily at hand: No one holds onto the tapes.

Just try looking for that one. If you find a copy, please [send it Playboy’s way](#).

#### FOR YOUR RADAR

**SANCTIONED NO MORE** — A former economist at energy giant Gazprom recently won a legal fight to have his name removed from Canada’s sprawling list of sanctioned Russian oligarchs and close **VLADIMIR PUTIN** allies.

**IGOR SHATALOV**, who was added to the sanctions list on Oct. 2, 2022, asserted in an application for judicial review in Federal Court this past June that he was not a senior official in a company in Russia’s energy sector — and the feds were unjustified in slapping sanctions on him. **GLEN MCGREGOR** reported on the application [at the time](#).

Ukraine’s anti-corruption agency called on Western allies, including the U.S. and EU, [to target Shatalov](#). Only Canada did.

Shatalov’s court filings describe a man who was not only far removed from Russia’s fight with Ukraine, but more financially and morally supportive of the Ukrainian side of the conflict. He made several eye-opening claims about his pre-sanctions life:

— **Gazprom disapproved of his marriage:** Shatalov married a Ukrainian citizen, and says the company responded by demoting him from deputy head of the financial and economic department to a “much lower-ranked position” as chief economist elsewhere.

— **He left Russia:** In November 2018, Shatalov took an extended parental leave, moved with his family to Monaco, and says he “had no involvement whatsoever” with Gazprom until he quit in 2021. He says he spends most of his time with family, and tends to his investments.

— **He supports his in-laws:** Shatalov claims to offer financial assistance to his wife’s sister, parents and grandparents. His mother-in-law lives in Cyprus, but the docs claim his father-in-law is “not permitted” to leave Ukraine. The grandparents are also in Ukraine.

— **He supports refugees:** Shatalov claims to support a Cyprus-based charity that “funds Greek language learning programs for children of Ukrainian refugees.”

— **Cricketts:** Shatalov argued in the court documents that Foreign Minister **MÉLANIE JOLY** failed to make the case for including him on the sanctions list. Joly, the docs claim, also failed to respond to his application for delisting within the legislated 90-day window.

— **The legalese:** “The Minister acted contrary to law upon making her initial decision and in failing to make a decision to remove [Shatalov],” reads the application. “The Minister is in breach of the Russia Regulations and of Canada’s international law obligations.”

**WILLIAM PELLERIN**, a partner in the international trade group at McMillan, offered Playbook a couple of scenarios. Ottawa could have simply not prioritized the file, he said, or it could have sat on its hands deliberately.

“It may have been a conscious decision to simply not respond, or not [to] provide the delisting request any consideration,” he said. “There’s a strong imperative in the government policy realm to not do anything that can even be remotely seen as supporting Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.”

Global Affairs offers few details when it announces sanctions. The department did not respond on the record to Playbook after four days of requests. In the absence of any kind of publicly stated rationale, Shatalov’s claims go unchallenged.

“You read some of these judicial review applications, and you’d be tempted to think that the person was a saint rather than what they’re accused of being,” says Pellerin, who reserved judgment on the merits of Shatalov’s claims in court filings.

— **A quiet resolution:** Shatalov’s lawyers ultimately made a persuasive case.

An order-in-council dated Oct. 6 wiped his name from a sanctions list that still includes more than 1,400 individuals and nearly 500 entities. The court proceedings were discontinued Oct. 10 by mutual agreement of Shatalov and the Department of Justice.

In other words, both sides agreed to drop the case.

Shatalov’s lawyers at the firm Tereposky & DeRose, who represent two other Russians challenging sanctions imposed against them, didn’t return Playbook’s request for comment.

— **More from POLITICO:** [The secret, slipshod evidence the EU uses to sanction Russian oligarchs](#)

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**BAD COP** — Housing Minister **SEAN FRASER**’s streak of happy-go-lucky housing accelerator funding deals has hit its first major public obstacle.

Fraser sent a letter Thursday to **CHRIS FONSECA**, the acting mayor of Mississauga while **BONNIE CROMBIE** is focused on her provincial Liberal leadership race.

The message from Ottawa: Build faster or federal dough won’t flow.

— **Money quote:** “I am not confident that Mississauga intends to seize this opportunity to fully leverage the federal dollars on offer from the Housing Accelerator Fund. At this time, in the absence of a definitive path forward on ending exclusionary zoning, I am not in a position to approve Mississauga’s application.”

— **The rationale:** Fraser’s letter namechecked all the cities that *have* played ball with his demands for denser zoning bylaws and expedited approval processes: London, Calgary, Hamilton, Halifax, Kitchener, Vaughan, Guelph and Burlington.

The minister credited city councilors **ALVIN TEDJO** and **CAROLYN PARRISH** with moving a motion that could’ve helped unlock funding. (Both have Liberal history: Tedjo campaigned for the provincial leadership in 2020. Parrish was a Liberal MP from 1993 until 2004.)

Mississauga's council didn't pass the motion, which failed on a tie at an Oct. 11 meeting.

— **Back and forth:** The city had previously revised its application for a piece of the C\$4 billion accelerator fund. But Fraser specifically cited “the defeat of Councillor Tedjo’s motion and the arguments made during its deliberation” as a factor in his rejection.

— **What’s next:** Fraser’s letter closes on a line dripping with Disappointed Parent vibes. “I look forward to our ongoing discussions, and to learning more about how Mississauga intends to accelerate the implementation of measures that will address the housing crisis.”

#### ALSO FOR YOUR RADAR

**COPY PASTE** — Deputy Prime Minister **CHRYSTIA FREELAND** and Energy and Natural Resources Minister **JONATHAN WILKINSON** went to Washington to meet White House energy adviser **AMOS HOCHSTEIN** and all they brought back was a super bland readout.

“The meeting affirmed Canada and the United States’ alignment on the mandate of the energy task force,” it read, summarizing the second Canada-U.S. energy transformation task force meeting as a “productive” one. It listed a sweep of previously announced government funding and programs.

— **Nuclear detail:** Both sides showed interest in working together to establish a supply chain for “specialized forms of uranium such as high-assay low-enriched uranium” used by small modular reactors.

#### TALK OF THE TOWN

**BILLION DOLLAR CLUB** — The Canadian embassy in Washington threw a rooftop party this week (with a custom Coleman BBQ grill, so you know it was a jam) to fête congressional districts that are top traders with Canada.

Ambassador **KIRSTEN HILLMAN** hosted more than 40 members of Congress at the embassy on Wednesday evening. She handed out certificates and maple leaf-shaped glass trophies to leaders representing districts that export more than \$1 billion U.S. in goods.

The trophies were etched with a message both simple and wordy: “Congratulations on creating jobs and strengthening the North American partnership.”

**103 congressional members** are considered part of the “Billion Dollar Club,” according to a list provided by the embassy. Awards were also given out for “Quarter Billion Dollar Club” inductees.

The annual reception also doubled as a party for the American-Canadian Economy and Security Caucus that launched in June.

— **Who showed up to the party:** Rep. **TED LIEU** (D-Calif.); Rep. **MIKE COLLINS** (R-Ga.); Rep. **LISA MCCLAIN** (R-Mich.); Rep. **GLENN THOMPSON** (R-Pa.); Rep. **DON BACON** (R-Neb.); Rep. **MARC MOLINARO** (R-N.Y.); Rep. **JIM COSTA** (D-Calif.); Rep. **JOHN CURTIS** (R-Utah); Rep. **MARK AMODEI** (R-Nev.); Rep. **JERRY CARL** (R-Ala.); Rep. **BUDDY CARTER** (R-Ga.); Rep. **LIZZIE FLETCHER** (D-Texas); Rep. **BILL FOSTER** (D-Ill.); Rep. **VICENTE GONZALEZ** (D-Texas); Rep. **KAY GRANGER** (R-Texas); Rep. **MARCY KAPTUR** (D-Ohio); Rep. **ALEX MOONEY** (R-W.Va.); Rep. **NATHANIEL MORAN** (R-Texas); Rep. **SYDNEY KAMLAGER-DOVE** (D-Calif.); Rep. **NICK LANGWORTHY** (R-N.Y.); Rep. **BOB LATTA** (R-Ohio); Rep. **MARIANNETTE MILLER-MEEKS** (R-Iowa); Rep. **JOSEPH MORELLE** (D-N.Y.); Rep. **BRANDON WILLIAMS** (R-N.Y.); Rep. **SANFORD BISHOP** (D-Ga.); Rep. **BRAD SCHNEIDER** (D-Ill.); Rep. **PETE SESSIONS** (R-Texas); Rep. **MARILYN STRICKLAND** (D-Wash.); Rep. **CLAUDIA TENNEY** (R-N.Y.) ... Sen. **KEVIN CRAMER** (R-N.D.); Sen. **JON TESTER** (D-Mont.); Sen. **ANGUS KING** (I-Maine) ... Canadian American Business Council acting CEO **BETH BURKE**.

#### TODAY'S HIGHLIGHTS

— Deputy Prime Minister **CHRYSTIA FREELAND** is in Toronto where she will meet with private sector economists and pension fund executives.

**1:30 p.m.** NDP Leader **JAGMEET SINGH** will be in Iqaluit to meet with Premier **P.J. AKEEAGOK**.

#### WHO'S UP, WHO'S DOWN

**Up:** Manitoba Premier **WAB KINEW**, ushering in a diverse Cabinet for the province.

**Down:** House decorum, after Conservatives lodged protest over new Speaker **GREG FERGUS** in the form of heckles.

## MEDIA ROOM

- **STEVEN CHASE** and **MARIEKE WALSH** say Trudeau is grappling with a divided Liberal caucus as he navigates Israel-Hamas war.
- Did the PM just walk into a trap set by Alberta Premier **DANIELLE SMITH**? “Well, yes,” **GRAHAM THOMSON** writes in the Star.
- **EVAN DYER** and **DARREN MAJOR** [report for CBC](#) that 41 diplomats left India amid strained diplomatic tensions.
- CP’s **LIAM CASEY** and **ALLISON JONES** report Ontario NDP MPP **SARAH JAMMA** served Premier **DOUG FORD** with a [cease-and-desist notice](#) over comments he made about her statement on Israel and Hamas.
- The Globe’s **RITA TRICHUR** asks: Why is the federal government picking on banks?
- In Vice News, **MANISHA KRISHNAN** writes: [Canada will legalize medically assisted dying for people addicted to drugs](#).
- **SEAN SPEER** joined Sen. **PAMELA WALLIN** on her pod for a conversation about modern Canadian Conservatism.
- The Canadian Press’ **MIA RABSON** [followed up on Canada’s promise to stop exporting unwanted plastic waste](#) and found a load of garbage.
- House Republicans have dumped plans to empower temporary speaker, Rep. **PATRICK MCHENRY**. [More details here from POLITICO’s Inside Congress live team](#).
- Finally, this morning: **DAVID SUZUKI** is the subject of the Saturday profile in The New York Times.

## PROZONE

**If you’re a subscriber, don’t miss our latest policy newsletter from ZI-ANN LUM:** [Canada says it won’t retaliate as diplomats are expelled from India](#).

### In other news for subscribers:

- [To ban or not to ban: Fixing the EU’s global plastic waste mess](#).
- [China now has more than 500 nukes, Pentagon says](#).
- U.S. Federal Reserve Chair **JEROME POWELL**: ‘Inflation is still too high.’
- [Biden administration to roll out ‘bonus’ incentives for clean energy in low-income areas](#).
- [The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration forecasts a winter shaped by El Niño](#).

## PLAYBOOKERS

**Birthdays:** HBD to **JULIE PAYETTE** (60!), MP **BOB ZIMMER**, former MP **NINA GREWAL** and Crestview birthday twins **GINNY ROTH** and **ASHTON ARSENAULT**.

**Celebrating Saturday:** Former Newfoundland and Labrador premier **BRIAN TOBIN** and former MPs **CHRISTINE MOORE** (40!) and **ROSANE DORÉ LEFEBVRE**.

**On Sunday:** **ROB EVERSHERD**, principal and co-founder at Prospectus Associates, former Parti Québécois Cabinet minister **CLAUDE CHARRON** and **RAYMOND BACHAND**, once a Liberal finance minister in the same province.

Send birthdays to [ottawaplaybook@politico.com](mailto:ottawaplaybook@politico.com) .

**Spotted:** Kitchener Mayor **BERRY VRBANOVIC** and Regina Mayor **SANDRA MASTERS** [in Washington, D.C.](#) for the 10th Bloomberg CityLab.

Actor **DONALD SUTHERLAND** on a new movie-poster-inspired [Canada Post stamp](#).

**DAVID HERLE**’s [podcast empire growing](#), with a new B.C.-focused show called “Hotel Pacifico” hosted by **MIKE MCDONALD**, **KATE HAMMER**, and **GEOFF MEGGS**

**Movers and shakers:** Liberal MP **HEDY FRY** celebrates 30 years in Parliament at an [anniversary bash in Vancouver Centre](#) on Saturday. There will be VIP special guests. Next Wednesday is [Hedy Fry Day](#) in Vancouver.

Toronto Mayor **OLIVIA CHOW** marks her 100th day in office today.

**ISABELLE VALOIS** replaces **NELL STEWART** as ambassador to Morocco.

McDonald's posted a Thursday meeting in the lobbyist registry with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship DM **CHRISTIANE FOX** and assistant deputy minister **MICHÈLE KINGSLEY**. They discussed labor and skills training.

**Media mentions:** **HEIDI PETRACEK** joined Global National as [Atlantic correspondent](#).

The Globe's **JANICE DICKSON** [won](#) the Amnesty International Canada Media Award for a [story](#) on an Afghani family attacked while waiting for Canada to help them.

#### ON THE HILL

**10:30 a.m.** Governor General **MARY SIMON** will receive the first poppy of the National Poppy Campaign during a Rideau Hall ceremony.

#### TRIVIA

**Thursday's answer:** The Canadian coast guard ship Alexander Henry was designated a national historic site this week under Parks Canada's national program of historical commemoration. [The vessel is named after fur trader ALEXANDER HENRY.](#)

Props to **DOUG RICE**, **GEORGE SCHOENHOFER** and **BOB GORDON**.

**Today's question:** On this day in history, which U.S. president signed the treaty that established the boundary between U.S. and Canadian territories at the 49th parallel?

Send your answer to [ottawaplaybook@politico.com](mailto:ottawaplaybook@politico.com)

Think you have a harder trivia question? [Send us your best](#) .

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**Playbook wouldn't happen without:** POLITICO Canada editor Sue Allan, editor Emma Anderson and Luiza Ch. Savage.

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