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# THE HILL TIMES

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EXCLUSIVE FEATURE: PART I

# The hate MPs get

There's a growing toxicity against public figures. Harassment and hate have been on the rise against federal MPs for years now. MPs have been harassed, threatened, stalked, sworn at, accosted, spat at, and worse. Many MPs have formed informal support groups across party lines to share their stories. This is the first of a three-part series looking into the increasing anger.

BY CHELSEA NASH & MIKE LAPOINTE

Liberal MP Iqra Khalid has endured a lot of hatred during her seven years in office: death threats; people spitting at her; her office vandalized; misogynistic, racist, and Islamophobic comments on social media; hate-filled letters addressed to her office, including one letter hand-delivered to her by a group of white people while she was out door-knocking in her community.

In 2019, Khalid (Mississauga-Erin Mills, Ont.), who was born in Pakistan, said while knocking on doors, she noticed a group of older, white people watching her from afar.

"As we were knocking, they were kind of following me at a distance," she said. Finally, one of the men came towards her. She introduced herself, and the man asked what she was doing "in this neighbourhood."

"And I said, 'We're here just knocking on doors, to hear what the issues or concerns are.' And he says, 'I have a letter for you.' And he passed me this letter, and his hands were visibly shaking. Like he was clearly nervous and distraught," she recounts. He instructed her not to read the letter until she got back to her office.

When she did open it, she discovered it was full of what

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NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh



Deputy PM Chrystia Freeland



NDP MP Jenny Kwan



NDP MP Charlie Angus



Lib MP Ariella Kayabaga



Lib MP Judy Sgro



Lib MP Yasir Naqvi



Independent MP Kevin Vuong



Lib MP Jenica Atwin



PM Justin Trudeau



Lib MP Iqra Khalid



Lib MP Ken Hardie



Green MP Elizabeth May



Minister Randy Boissonnault



Lib MP John Aldag



Lib MP Mark Gerretsen



CPC MP Michelle Rempel Garner



Former minister Catherine McKenna

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## Exclusive Feature

# Spitting, stalkers, and death threats: a 'routine' part of being a politician, say MPs

MPs are fearful that someone will get hurt before things start to improve.

Continued from page 1 she described as "Islamophobic content."

She remembered his shaking hands, which she interpreted as a sign of the man's fear. She called him up and invited him to go for a coffee, hoping to open a line of dialogue and show him there was nothing to be afraid of. He initially agreed, but ultimately cancelled at the last minute, she said.

"It's been a number of years now. I still think of him. I still think about his shaking hands, and how he felt so threatened, I guess, by somebody like myself," she said.

Khalid, a woman of colour and a religious minority, is no stranger to vitriol at that point in



Liberal MP Iqra Khalid, pictured in her Parliament Hill office in June. Khalid said through the worst of the harassment she faced in 2017, and even sometimes now, she feels 'numb.' Having received a total of six death threats throughout her seven years in office, Khalid says the hate is a regular occurrence for many MPs. *The Hill Times* photograph by Chelsea Nash

her political career. She said one comment stands out in her mind; a few words over social media that were particularly disturbing to her: "fuck you gently with a chainsaw."

It was one of many hateful messages that Khalid, 36, received on and off social media in 2017 while advocating for M-103, a motion in the House to condemn Islamophobia and religious discrimination.

The volume and severity of hate and harassment levelled against Khalid has been severe, but it is far from unique among Parliamentarians. Having received a total of six death threats throughout her seven years in office, Khalid says the hate is a regular occurrence for many MPs.

"[Six death threats] on paper, is like, 'Oh my God,' but as we go day-to-day, I'm sure other MPs kind of feel the same—it's become a routine in our lives to receive that vitriol. It shouldn't be part of our normal lives, but it is becoming more and more [frequent]," she said.

NDP Charlie Angus (Timmins-James Bay, Ont.) and Liberal MP Arielle Kayabaga (London West, Ont.) have both had stalkers. NDP MP Jenny Kwan (Vancouver East, B.C.) and her family have been subjected to racist slurs and attacks. Green Party MP Elizabeth May (Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C.) has had to call the police twice in the past year after people upset with vaccination requirements and public health restrictions became "aggressive" with her constituency staff.

There are other well-known instances of harassment and attack, including against Prime

Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), when someone threw gravel at him during a London, Ont., campaign stop during the 2021 federal election campaign. NDP leader Jagmeet Singh (Burnaby South, B.C.) was harassed when he visited the Ontario community of Peterborough in May 2022. At the time, Singh called the attack—during which an angry mob yelled profanities and death wishes at the leader, calling him a "traitor" and a "lying piece of shit"—one of the "most intense, threatening, insulting" experiences of his career.

Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner (Calgary Nose Hill, Alta.) has openly discussed the vitriolic levels of hate and harassment she and her office have received. In 2020, Bloc Québécois MP Alain Thérien (La Prairie, Que.) said he received tens of thousands of hateful messages on social media and through email—including death threats—after Singh levied allegations of racism against him in the House, leading Thérien to seek out police protection.

For Kwan, the hate that stands out in her mind is more recent. During the pandemic, someone on social media told the Hong-Kong-born NDP MP: "This is the Kwan virus. You're killing people."

It's not just words, and MPs' family members are not immune: this September, Kwan's 19-year-old daughter was on the bus to school when an 18-year-old classmate spat on her in an act of racism, Kwan said.

"This is what's happening. White supremacy is on the rise," said Kwan.

For Khalid, the hatred, harassment, threats, and intimidation she and her office received—which reached a peak in 2017—are deeply entrenched in the very thing her motion stood against: Islamophobia.

Khalid tabled her motion in December, and in January, it was picked up by the far-right website Rebel Media, she recounts.

"[Rebel] brought in this whole concept of creeping Sharia law, and how I'm a Muslim MP trying to push the Muslim agenda, and said some really nasty things. And that's really where it snowballed. And then at the end of January, six Muslims were gunned down in Quebec. And

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For NDP MP Jenny Kwan, the hate that stands out in her mind is more recent. During the pandemic, someone on social media told the Hong-Kong-born NDP MP: "This is the Kwan virus. You're killing people." *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Some of the hate and harassment directed at MPs since 2020

### 2020:

**July 2, 2020:** A military reservist was charged in connection with an armed trespassing incident on the grounds of Rideau Hall, after ramming his truck through the gate on July 2, 2020. **Corey Hurren**, a Manitoba man angered by the federal government's COVID-19 restrictions and ban on assault-style firearms, is now serving a six-year sentence minus a year served.



Corey Hurren rammed the gates of Rideau Hall in July 2020 with loaded firearms and multiple rounds of ammunition. Screenshot courtesy of CTV News

**Aug. 6, 2020:** Ottawa police investigated an event that occurred at then-Ottawa Centre Liberal MP **Catherine McKenna's** constituency office following an incident caught on camera. A man approached the office and was told it was closed before he proceeded to yell obscenities at a staffer.



Former infrastructure minister and Liberal MP Catherine McKenna answers questions about an incident at her constituency office in Ottawa on Aug. 10, 2020. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

**August 2020:** The RCMP's protective policing division logged 130 threats made against Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** or members of his cabinet between January and July 2020—up from 100 recorded during the same period in 2019, as reported by the *Toronto Star*.

**September 2020:** Video posted to social media shows NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** being followed down the street in front of Parliament Hill on Sept. 25, 2020, by a man who asks if he wants to be arrested, later saying that the next time they see each other, the two will "have a dance."



NDP Leader Jagmeet Singh pictured with a staffer departing from the the National Commemorative Ceremony in honour of Queen Elizabeth II, on Sept. 19, 2022, at the Christ Church Cathedral in Ottawa. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia



## Exclusive Feature

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you would think that would have stopped the vitriol. It did not," Khalid said in an interview with *The Hill Times* from her Ottawa office.

The Québec City mosque shooting of Jan. 29, 2017, only seemed to embolden Khalid's harassers, she said.

Khalid, then a rookie MP and in her early 30s, expressed feeling a deep sense of guilt for happenings that were beyond her control, but that she felt wouldn't have happened had it not been for her motion.

She recalls having dinner with some stakeholders in her riding, while the news was on in the background.

"There were these protesters and anti-protesters on M-103 at Nathan Phillips Square [in Toronto], and they were beating each other up. And I wanted the ground to open and just swallow me whole. Because I felt I was responsible for this," she said.

Looking back, she said it was an important and necessary conversation for the country to have, even if it came at the cost of her feeling unsafe in her own home, her staff working in a stressful and fearful environment, and looking over her shoulder in the community she grew up in.

"I think throughout that whole period, and oftentimes even today, I feel quite numb," she said.

As Khalid and Kwan both point out, their experiences are not



Liberal MP Arielle Kayabaga, first elected to the House of Commons in 2021, had a stalker in 2020 when she was a city councillor in London, Ont. 'I think being a Black woman, the experiences are quite different from other people.' Photograph courtesy of the Liberal Party of Canada

unique among politicians these days, and many of them have formed informal support groups across party lines in which they find a safe space to share their experiences and share advice.

### MPs of colour, women experience 'more aggressive' harassment

Liberal MP Arielle Kayabaga, who was first elected in 2021 in London West, Ont., said when she was a city councillor in 2020 she was stalked by a constituent for eight months. At the time, she

tweeted that a man had been calling her every day for months to tell her that he felt sorry for Black women and told her he was going to show up at her house.

"I told him, 'I'll be waiting,'" Kayabaga tweeted at the time. "I just wanted to say, 'You'll never make me quit!'"

The harassment and hate is tied to racism and misogyny, and even more so where the two intersect, MPs say.

Kayabaga said she spent eight months enduring daily phone calls before deciding to speak about the situation publicly and to take it to the police.

"I think being a Black woman, the experiences are quite different from other people," she said. "When I made the decision to actually address it and call the police, and have the person first identified and penalized, it was more of a safety [concern] for my family as well. Like I was focused on the safety of my child," Kayabaga, a single mom, said.

Kayabaga, the current chair of the Liberal

Black Caucus, said she doesn't think there's enough data about women and people of colour in politics to definitively say that hate and harassment based in racism and misogyny is getting worse.

"There's been a lot more people of colour who have been interested in participating in the political system, which was not the case before," she said. It's her impression that a lot of the racist and misogynistic hatred comes from people trying to push back against marginalized groups taking

political power, and trying to dissuade them from participating in political life.

"When I share some of my experiences, many people did not know what to say, what to do, or whether that was normal or not, because they hadn't encountered anything like that before. But they could compare it to their experiences as elected officials and realize that mine is much more aggressive than theirs," she said.

Kayabaga said she saved some of the worst emails she's received, but also stopped reading them.

"I think of the theory of paper, taking the paper and crushing it, and hoping that it's going to be straight again when you open it. That's literally how our hearts are. We started a certain way and our hearts have changed shape. And that's from the words that people have thrown at us," she said.

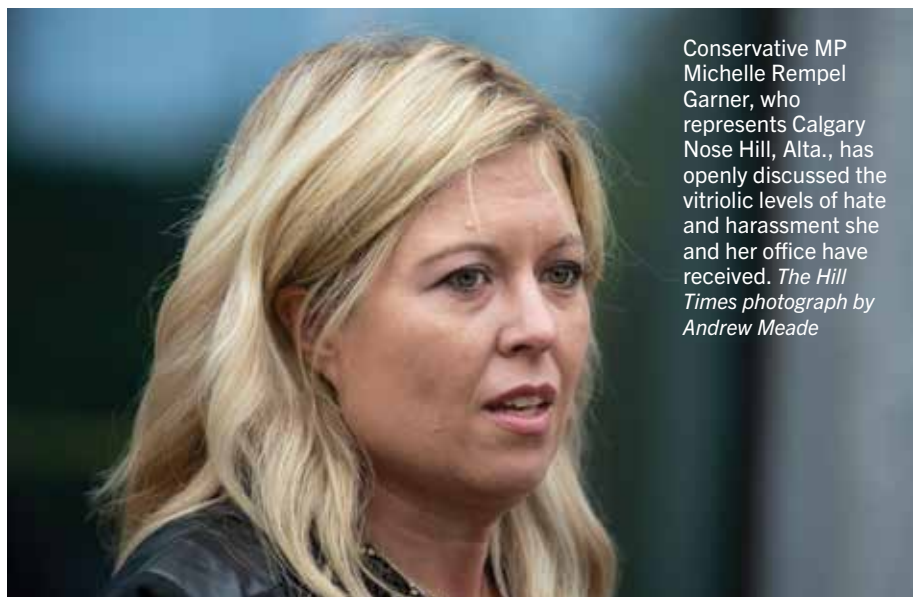
Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi (Ottawa Centre, Ont.), first elected federally in 2021 and a former Ontario attorney general, said he has not experienced anywhere near the level of harassment that his predecessor, Catherine McKenna, did. He attributes this stark difference in treatment to McKenna's high-profile position as a minister, and misogyny.

"Catherine McKenna was subjected to a level of harassment that I have not experienced in my past political life as a member of provincial parliament, nor am I experiencing as a Member of Parliament of the same riding," he said. "And I think that speaks volumes."

That said, when taking over from McKenna, Naqvi still wanted to take precautions.

"I've always been concerned about safety of the staff, because the staff were also subjected to a lot of harassment when she [McKenna] was our local member. And so we did take some steps in consultations with parliamentary security to have a different office," he said. For instance, he chose an office that is not street-facing for that reason, he said.

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Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner, who represents Calgary Nose Hill, Alta., has openly discussed the vitriolic levels of hate and harassment she and her office have received. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MP Yasir Naqvi said he has not experienced anywhere near the level of harassment that his predecessor, Catherine McKenna, did. He attributes this stark difference in treatment to McKenna's high-profile position as a minister, and misogyny. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Some of the hate and harassment directed at MPs since 2020

### 2021 campaign trail:

**August 2021:** Conservative MP for Calgary Nose Hill **Michelle Rempel Garner** said she was cornered on the street by men demanding she respond to conspiracy theories and has received death threats online, following a video that surfaced on social media on Aug. 27, 2021, showing the politician and her husband confronted inside a restaurant booth.



Conservative MP Michelle Rempel Garner, pictured with her husband in August 2021 on the campaign trail as they are confronted inside a restaurant booth. Screenshot courtesy of CTV News

**August 2021:** Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau's** campaign was forced to cancel an event on Aug. 28, 2021, over security concerns in Bolton, Ont., after dozens of protesters showed up and began chanting obscenities before the prime minister could address the crowd, which included children. The OPP escorted the campaign bus away from the site.

**September 2021:** Police in London, Ont., investigated an incident on the campaign trail when an individual threw gravel at Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** on Sept. 7, 2021, as he was getting into his campaign bus. Trudeau at the time expressed concern for the safety of his volunteers, his security detail, and journalists covering the campaign.



Police investigated an incident after an individual threw gravel at Prime Minister Justin Trudeau during a campaign stop in London, Ont., in September 2021. Screenshot courtesy of Global News

**September 2021:** Calgary police investigated an incident when volunteers for federal Liberal candidate **Sabrina Grover** were spat on, slapped, and sworn at on Sept. 7, 2021. One of the volunteers, **Robert Tremblay**, tweeted that as he and another volunteer were leaving their first building, an individual "yelled something like 'how can you live with yourselves campaigning for these guys,' called us communists, stupid, etc." The incident happened on the same day the prime minister was pelted with gravel.



## Exclusive Feature

## Spitting, stalkers, and death threats: a 'routine' part of being a politician, say MPs

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Kayabaga attributes the hatred towards women politicians "as a way to sort of discourage you to be in this public life."

"And I think sometimes standing your ground is the best response," she said.

## MPs more vulnerable in their ridings than in Ottawa

Angus, who was first elected in Timmins-James Bay, Ont., in 2004, experienced what he called a "major stalking incident" in his constituency in 2020. It took a while for police to take the threat seriously, he said, but eventually he was able to get a restraining order. He was being followed "pretty much everywhere," he said, and his office was getting three or four calls a day from other constituents who were seeing what he described as a very public attack on him.

"It started online. A person commenting ... and then it escalated very rapidly," said Angus.

Harassment of staff is also a major issue, particularly in constituencies where staff are more directly engaged with members of the public than they are in Ottawa. May, who rep-



The pandemic and the Freedom Convoy occupation, pictured on Feb. 12, 2022, in downtown Ottawa, exacerbated the hatred and harassment MPs were facing. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

May was more blunt: "It got worse once Donald Trump got to the White House, because then sexism and misogyny had a big fat billionaire's face on it," she said.

"I think any political leaders, whether they're in Canada, United States, or anywhere else in the world, [as long as they] continue to cajole, condone, play footsies with those [people], I think [they] are just putting more oxygen to the fire," said Naqvi.

Then there was the Freedom Convoy, which occupied downtown Ottawa for more than three weeks last February and had amongst its ranks people flying Nazi and Confederate flags. More omnipresent were the popular 'Fuck Trudeau' flags. During the convoy, many MPs stayed home, but those who did continue to show up in person in the House of Commons were unable to do so without assistance from the RCMP, said May.

May said that during the parliamentary debate on the implementation of the Emergencies Act, her staff had a difficult time getting any work done, because both her constituency and Hill office were inundated with "literally hundreds of people ... phoning in, some with threats of violence," she said.

Angus said threats and harassment against MPs worsened during the Freedom Convoy and its illegal occupation of the streets of Ottawa.

"During the convoy, we saw much, much more elevated levels of toxic abuse and threats, and that I can only assume will reappear [again]," said Angus.

Bernie Farber, chair of the Canadian Anti-Hate Network, said he has a theory: "if it happened once, it will happen again, it's just a matter of time."

"There's just such a growing toxicity. It's not just Members of Parliament. I've talked to small town councillors, who tell me they have been threatened and

resents Saanich-Gulf Islands, B.C., said that during the 2021 election campaign, while she was mainstreeting (the practice of walking down a main street and campaigning for support), a man ran at and tried to knock over a young woman on her staff. Her

constituency office also had a man who "forced his way into our office when it wasn't open, setting off a blow horn and air horn, and really quite unnerving, scaring the staff [who] were in the office," May said.

Angus said while there's ample security on Parliament Hill, there's very little in MPs' ridings.

"Much of our work is in the public. And when we're out in the public and in our riding, you're very much on our own. And that's where I think public officials are much more at risk," he said.

## Trump, convoy fed oxygen to the fire

Naqvi attributed the rise of hatred and harassment directed towards those in office in part to the leadership of former U.S. president Donald Trump.

"When you saw leaders, at one of the highest offices in the world, saying things that were not ever said before in polite company—especially from leaders—I

think that gave a lot of people the licence or the liberty or the agency to say, 'He can say it. And I've always thought about this, and I can say it too,'" said Naqvi.



Green Party MP Elizabeth May: "It got worse once Donald Trump got to the White House, because then sexism and misogyny had a big fat billionaire's face on it." *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade



NDP MP Charlie Angus experienced what he called a 'major stalking incident' in his constituency in 2020. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

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## Some of the hate and harassment directed at MPs since 2020

## 2021 campaign trail:

**September 2021:** People's Party of Canada Leader **Maxime Bernier** was hit with an egg at a campaign event on Sept. 8, 2021, in Saskatoon, Sask. The event, caught on video, unfolded when the perpetrator appeared to request a photo before smashing the egg into the back of Bernier's head.



PPC Leader Maxime Bernier with 'Freedom Movement' supporters at the War Memorial in Ottawa on June 30, 2022. *The Hill Times* photograph by Andrew Meade

## Most recently:

**February 2022:** Edmonton police investigated a Feb. 17, 2022 incident at Tourism Minister **Randy Boissonnault's** constituency office, where an individual assaulted a staff member when he did not receive the information he wanted. Boissonnault denounced the act of violence, saying it "does not reflect the Edmonton that I know and love."



Tourism Minister Randy Boissonnault, pictured in April 2022. An individual entered his Edmonton constituency office and assaulted a member of his staff back in February. *The Hill Times* photograph by Sam Garcia

**May 2022:** Prime Minister **Justin Trudeau** cancelled a Liberal party fundraising event on May 24, 2022, in Surrey, B.C., when a large gathering of protesters assembled outside, harassing and hurling racial slurs at volunteers and attendees. Liberal MP **Randeep Sarai** said "we had a lot of South Asian volunteers ... that were harassed, sworn at, called towel head, rag head, you're all immigrants."

**May 2022:** NDP Leader **Jagmeet Singh** was verbally abused at an event supporting Ontario NDP candidate **Jen Deck** in Peterborough, Ont., on May 10, 2022. Singh said the experience "would rank among the worst experiences" during his time in Canadian politics. Protesters called him a "traitor" said that he was "not welcome," with one man yelling for him to "stay the fuck out of Peterborough."



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abused for working for their community. This sort of vilification of public officials maybe could have been the paranoia that came out of COVID, but there's a growing toxicity and I think that that spills over into threats," said Angus.

### 'It's only a matter of time' before someone gets hurt

Naqvi said his "deepest, darkest fear is that something really tragic is going to happen" before people finally say enough is enough.

"I hope I'm absolutely wrong," he said. "But ... it only takes one person ... to do something that could really hurt someone."

Angus said he shares that fear. "I am seriously concerned. I think that someone will get hurt. A public official, going to work, going to a community clinic, is going to be targeted and hurt," Angus said. "I think it's only a matter of time and the language being used around public officials is really, again, we're moving into really uncharted territory."

Referencing the incident where rocks were thrown at the prime minister, or when Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland (University-Rosedale, Ont.) was accosted while getting into an elevator,



Bernie Farber said he has a 'dark view' of where things are heading with the rates of hate and harassment: 'we're talking about assaults, we're even potentially talking assassinations. It's possible in a not-so-distant future.' Photograph courtesy of Bernie Farber

Farber said the moment is ripe for more serious, physical attacks.

"We've seen other forms of physical threatening [behaviour] and harassment during election campaigns and the like. We are there. It's not a matter of where it's leading to—we are there," he said.

On Oct. 26, it was revealed that the specialized RCMP officers who provide protection to ministers are understaffed. Data obtained by Radio-Canada showed that in Ottawa alone, 75 positions out of 315 were vacant.

As he was heading into caucus on Oct. 26, the prime minister was asked about the RCMP's protective services shortage.

"We have seen, unfortunately, a lot of people are facing intimidation and threats at work, whether it's health-care workers, whether it's municipal officials, or whether it's politicians," said Trudeau. He said it's healthy and good for Canadians to be able to see ministers and other elected officials "out in the community without having to create distance or barriers between them and citizens," because it strengthens democracy, he said.

But at the same time, "we have to make sure that people are not afraid for themselves or for their families, and this is something that is going to require us to reflect and us to work very carefully with security agencies, with police forces, and as a government to make sure that we're keeping people safe," said Trudeau.

Farber said he doesn't think authorities are paying sufficient attention to the hate and harassment of public officials—and of other community leaders.

"What I'm afraid of is how far up the road are we going to go? And my view is a dark one. I hate to say it, because I don't think the authorities are paying near enough attention to what the final outcomes here can be. And you know, we're talking about assaults, we're even potentially talking assassinations. It's possible in a not-so-distant future," he said.

Farber said that any person experiencing harassment or hate should immediately report it to the police.

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The Hill Times

## Survey results on hate and harassment in federal politics

The Hill Times commissioned a poll of all sitting MPs through Forum Research earlier this year to gauge the level of harassment and hate in federal politics within the last few years.

MPs were given the option of responding to the survey with information about their experiences without revealing their names.

Most respondents chose not to reveal their identities, but did provide candid accounts of what they have seen, heard, and been subject to in their line of work.

Responses from those MPs who participated in the survey reveal a startling picture of the current landscape. From suspicious packages making their way into offices, to outright stalking, to physical threats—not to mention the increasingly familiar attacks on social media—politicians of every stripe have been forced to call for greater security as threats towards them and their staff increase.

One MP recounted an incident where an individual called their office repeatedly, and while "starting innocently about a matter related to a CRA benefit they had questions about," the situation "quickly escalated into shouting about 'illegal aliens' and threats that they will come to our office."

"They sent suspicious packages, and eventually the House sergeant-at-arms had to be involved and the local police had to pay him a visit," wrote the MP.

Another MP noted that they had been threatened online, and with the bully saying they would come to their home.

Liberal MP John Aldag (Cloverdale-Langley City, B.C.) noted in the survey that he had been stalked during the last election campaign while door-knocking, to the point that an individual in a passing vehicle stopped to intervene, record the situation, and offered to call police or remain to offer protection.

He also said that he had his home address broadcast during local 'Freedom Convoy' protests with the intent to have protesters stop by his home, in addition to his constituency office stalked and stormed during and beyond the protest.

"There was enough hateful, threatening, intimidating and otherwise concerning comments online that necessitated the involvement of Hill security and local police," he said.

Liberal MP Jenica Atwin (Fredericton, N.B.) said that she has seen a steady stream of hateful content and attacks online and that her office often receives angry and threatening phone calls.

"We have [had] a physical altercation in my office during the convoy, we had a bomb threat related to my vote on the Emergencies Act... I could go on unfortunately..." said Atwin.

One MP noted that right-wing outlet Rebel Media "did a couple of pieces asking for readers to 'let my office know how they feel,'" resulting in a swarming of calls often completely jamming lines.

"Callers are abusive to staff and most often won't identify themselves. The connection between organized harassment and this outlet is concerning," the MP said.

Another MP noted that their office "frequently receives emails or phone calls from constituents on all sides of the political spectrum that are upset at either the direction the government is going, or expect more from me as their representative or don't like the policies my party is putting forth."

"Sometimes they curse or swear or are visibly upset, they said. "However, I'm a bit of anomaly, being former military. I don't get flustered very easy."

In the midst of multiple antisemitic comments and threats via online and by phone, another MP reported two in-person encounters with people following them and making threats.

Liberal MP Ken Hardie (Fleetwood-Port Kells, B.C.) noted an incident when a pickup truck "festooned with 'Freedom Convoy' messaging" stalked out his constituency office before relocating and parking next to his personal vehicle for an extended period.

"We took photos and reported the incident to the police, who expressed concern regarding the individuals involved," he wrote.

One MP, who provided answers in French but chose not to be identified, said their office had endured "insults from a total stranger, in English, on Parliament Hill, in addition to insults via email from unknown English speakers from other constituencies."

Another MP said they've been on the receiving end of "social media bashing from men who think I can't be a good MP AND a good mother at the same time." People also occasionally shout at their assistant on the phone, they said.

Another MP noted several incidents including an individual following them and lunging at them to "try to attack me across a Tim Hortons (blocked by a patron), with police involved."

Two occasions of criminal charges have been laid in terms of physical interactions, one resulting in a conviction and one settled for a peace bond, after an individual followed the MP home from their constituency office at night and blocked them in their driveway with bright headlights.

The MP also noted that there have been "at least a dozen times" where harassment and threats were directed towards their staff—"especially racialized staff"—that escalated to calls to police.

"Doxxing me, posters taped on my home and office doors with conspiracies about me, a photo of me in my car, make and model of car (I traded in my car after)—watching my home, two times [where there was] suspicious entry of my home, trucks parked and revving engines outside my home—more incidents of verbal harassment, threats and online abuse than I can count."

Liberal MP Judy Sgro (Humber River-Black Creek, Ont.) noted that she's seen an uptick in abuse in the last several years, and has been confronted in person while walking home.

Independent MP Kevin Vuong (Spadina-Fort York, Ont.) said he regularly receives racist attacks online through email, his MP website, and on social media "where I am called a 'Chink' and told to 'Go kill yourself.'"

"This includes hopes that the 'Russians shoot [me]," said the MP.



Liberal MP Ken Hardie mentioned an incident when a pickup truck 'festooned with 'Freedom Convoy' messaging' stalked out his constituency office. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Liberal MP Jenica Atwin says she has seen a steady stream of hateful content and attacks online and that her office often receives angry threatening phone calls. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade



Independent MP Kevin Vuong said he regularly receives racist attacks via email, his MP website, and on social media. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

## Some of the hate and harassment directed at MPs since 2020

### Most recently:

**August 2022:** In a video widely circulated online, Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland was accosted on Aug. 26, 2022, outside a Grand Prairie, Alta., city hall elevator after a man spotted her and yelled "Chrystia, what the fuck are you doing in Alberta?" He proceeded to call her a "traitor" and a "fucking bitch." Another woman could also be heard saying "you don't belong here."



Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland, right, was the latest political leader to be on the receiving end of profanity and aggression. The incident, in which a man yelled at her on Aug. 27, 2022, was captured on video and shared on social media. The Hill Times photograph by Sam Garcia and Screenshot courtesy of Twitter

**September 2022:** Liberal MP Mark Gerretsen tweeted an image that he received in which an individual called on him to "loan me" his wife for a night. The MP noted that the incident was reported to the Parliamentary Protective Service as well as the Kingston Police, and that since January of this year, his office has opened six people files, "including an individual who came into my local constituency office and said he planned to shoot the prime minister and me."

**September 2022:** New Conservative Leader and long-time MP Pierre Poilievre said he became aware of "disgusting comments" made by Jeremy MacKenzie and Alex Vriend, who discussed sexually assaulting Poilievre's wife, Anaida Poilievre. The comments were referred to the RCMP. MacKenzie is the leader of the "Diagolon" movement, and was arrested in a Canada-wide warrant in late September.



Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre and his wife Anaida Poilievre at the Shaw Centre in Ottawa on Sept. 10, 2022. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

**November 2022:** CBC reports that the RCMP's close protection unit is understaffed, with RCMP and government officials saying the shortage of officers is complicating efforts to protect the prime minister, the Governor General, Supreme Court justices, diplomats, and foreign dignitaries.

Source: Compiled with files from the Library of Parliament of Canada