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**Senators support greater expenses disclosure, Sen. McCoy calls for an independent Senate audit committee**

Former Senate Clerk Gordon Barnhart says Senate expenses reform is a step in the right direction, it will give power back to Senate administration.

By LAURA RYCKEWAERT

The embattled Senate's attempt to improve internal processes to prevent ineligible expense claims from being made in the future is a good move because it empowers the Upper Chamber's bureaucracy to say "no" to Senators who feel entitled to perks, says former Senate clerk Gordon Barnhart.

On May 9, the Senate Internal Economy, Budgets and Administration Committee tabled a report with 12 recommendations to

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**Novak steps into toughest political storm yet as PM's new chief of staff**

At 36, Ray Novak is also one of the youngest chiefs of staff to a Canadian Prime Minister.

By LAURA RYCKEWAERT

Even before the Conservative government was first elected in 2006, Ray Novak, 36, has sat in on the highest levels of discussions as a top aide to Stephen Harper.

He's been by Mr. Harper's (Calgary Southwest, Alta.) side when he was Canadian Alliance leader, Conservative Party leader, and finally Prime Minister, and today Conservative insiders say Mr. Novak was the best choice to replace Nigel Wright,

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PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE: SENATE & POLITICS

## Senate expenses scandal shakes PMO, Tories



**Batten down the hatches:** Pictured top left and clockwise: Prime Minister Stephen Harper, Senate Government Leader Marjory LeBreton, Nigel Wright, Ind. Sen. Pamela Wallin, Ind. Sen. Mike Duffy, Conservative Sen. Carolyn Stewart Olsen, and Senate Speaker and Tory Sen. Noel Kinsella and Conservative Sen. David Tkachuk.

**Fife, the reporter who broke the Duffy-Wright story**

CTV's Bob Fife has been working on the Hill for more than 30 years. He's also been breaking exclusives nearly every night on the Senate expenses scandal.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

CTV National News Ottawa bureau chief Bob Fife is a "pitbull" with "one of the strongest work ethics," say colleagues. It's how they say he broke one of the most explosive stories the Conservative government has had to manage in the last seven years.

"He is a guy who really works sources, and a lot of reporters, believe it or not, don't."

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**Working it:** CTV's Bob Fife, centre, pictured in January with Conservative MP Merv Tweed, left, and Conservative Sen. Vern White on Parliament Hill.

**PM's Conservative caucus 'horrifically depressed' about Senate expenses scandal, brand takes big hit, say Tories**

But Conservatives also say they won't be down indefinitely.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

The majority-governing Conservative caucus is "horrifically depressed" and "disappointed" that three of their Senators appointed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper are embroiled in an explosive housing and travel expense scandal that is putting a major blow to their brand and party, say Conservatives and political insiders.

"Caucus is horrifically depressed. They are more depressed than angry," said one Conservative insider, who did not want to be identified. "It's hurting the government, it's a

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**House to sit until midnight for next four weeks, Tories say NDP forced it**

The government would need unanimous consent to adjourn the House early and the NDP says it won't give its consent.

By BEA VONGDOUANGCHANH

MPs will be sitting until midnight for the next four weeks until the House adjourns for the summer recess, and opposition MPs say they will continue to hammer the majority-governing Conservatives on the Senate expense scandal which they say can "bring the government down."

"The Prime Minister's Office is under a huge cloud of scandal

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## FEATURE

Q&amp;A: NICK SAUL

# Canada needs modern, holistic solution for the three million people who are food insecure, don't know where next meal coming from: organizer Saul

Poverty and its related issues cost Canada at least \$25-billion a year, according to the National Council of Welfare.

By JESSICA BRUNO

Support for Canada's three million food insecure people, who don't know where their next meal is coming from, needs to change from supermarket leftovers doled out at food banks to food centres where people can come for a meal, be treated with dignity, and stay to gain new life skills, says author and community organizer Nick Saul.

Mr. Saul was director of Toronto's The Stop community food centre from 1998 to 2012, shifting the organization away from a food bank model and into a community hub with a kitchen garden, cooking lessons, and a portal for other social services in the working-class neighborhood. Though there is a wave of interest in eating locally-grown food, sustainable farming, and other whole food movements, it's a wallet-driven revolution and it's leaving low-income people out, he said.

"Still, with all this talk about food, it's astonishingly rare for anyone to touch on issues of justice or equality. ... The reality is, the poor, marginalized and hungry rarely get a place at the discussion table," Mr. Saul writes in *The Stop*.

Mr. Saul co-wrote *The Stop* with his wife, Andrea Curtis. Ms. Curtis is an author and penned the children's book, *What's for Lunch? How Schoolchildren Eat Around the World*.

Mr. Saul's way forward has been met with resistance from those in the social sector who say promoting community food centres over food banks doesn't address immediate hunger, but he believes the point is to treat low income people with dignity and to give them the tools to be critical of the larger issues—like government social policies and the

minimum wage—that mean they are ultimately unable to afford food after paying the rent and other obligations.

Governments need to look at food in an interconnected way, said Mr. Saul.

"We need to think preventatively and integratively, and I often find that that's hard to do in government. Is food a community and social services issue? Is it an [agriculture] issue? Is it an environmental issue? Is it a health issue? We need almost a Minister of Food who can quite pointedly connect the dots," he said.

"Government is so slow. Civil society leads on this stuff," he added.

Poverty and its related issues cost Canada at least \$25-billion a year, according to the National Council of Welfare.

Last year, Mr. Saul left The Stop to become president of Community Food Centres of Canada, which will bring the community food model to other Canadian cities. His goal is to open up 15 branches of the organization across Canada in the coming years. He sat down with *The Hill Times* to talk about his book, his new job, and the politics of poverty in Canada.

This Q&A has been edited for length and style.



**The Stop: How the Fight for Good Food Transformed a Community and Inspired a Movement,** Nick Saul and Andrea Curtis, 320 pages, Random House Canada, \$29.95

**In the early chapters of the book, you talk about changing the public perception that beggars can't be choosers. How do you turn that idea on its head—people deserve dignity and quality of service?**

"Isn't it as simple as, you should treat people the way you expect to be treated? It seems pretty straightforward. How we've gotten to a place where we think the castoffs of big industrial food is okay to be, literally, thrown at low-income people as they walk into doors at food banks.

"The fact that three million Canadians are food insecure—which means that they're not sure where their next meal is going

to come from, or they're missing meals so their kids can eat—that's a startlingly big number that we need to pay attention to.

"People aren't hungry because there isn't enough food. Walk into any supermarket and it's overflowing with food. We throw out 50 per cent of the food we produce. It's about distribution and ensuring that people have the economic means to walk into that supermarket and buy their own food. A lot of those vulnerabilities are obviously rooted in better public policy.

"This is a provincial issue, but social assistance rates that support people to live with dignity and health. We need to have a national housing strategy. We need to have minimum wages that allow people to work hard, because people want to. No one is poor because they're a poor budgeter or it's a character flaw or it's a lifestyle choice. It's got nothing to do with poverty.

"Poverty is about the things I'm talking about: inadequate social assistance, low minimum wages, lack of affordable housing and childcare. Those are issues that we need to continue to fight for so that our collective tax dollars are actually able to create some equity in our society. So that if you are down on your luck for whatever myriad of reasons: for an addiction, for health, a low wage job, that we're not going to ridicule you or beggar you. We're going to create a social infrastructure that supports you to bounce back and become a taxpayer again. I mean, everyone wants to work, no one wants to be poor.

"That's kind of my perspective. The community food centre idea is trying to create a place that is generous and respectful and doesn't point any fingers. It says you have something to contribute, come on in, have a great meal, and how do we improve your lot? How do we make a safer, more inclusive, community? You can do that through good food."

**Marginalized people are rarely at the table when it comes to determining policy. So how should policymakers and advocates incorporate their point of view and issues into larger policy decisions?**

"At The Stop, we named healthy food as something that was really important. That doesn't mean healthy food is going to somehow end up in your community centre. You have to name it, raise money for it. You've got to fight for it. Change

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**On the table:** Author and community activist Nick Saul, pictured recently in downtown Ottawa, not far from Parliament Hill, says access to food is an issue that touches on health, poverty, social justice, equality and agricultural policy.

## FEATURE

Q&amp;A: NICK SAUL

# 'We need a Minister of Food, who can connect the dots'

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happens because you fight for it.

"My point being, if we think that our democracy, it's important that all voices are heard, you have to name that and create structures to allow people to actually voice what they have to say, what's on their mind.

"In the case of The Stop, we created fora in those early days as we were trying to re-imagine our organization away from the transaction of a handout of not very healthy food to a place where we were using the power of food to create health and inclusion and sustainability and greater equity.

"We created a space for people to speak. Whether that was in town halls or one-on-one sessions or surveys, neighborhoods have a lot to say, and the fact is that those voices, those folks, are most adversely affected by policies such as reduced social assistance rates or a low minimum wage. They're out there trying to hustle just to keep themselves together, so it's asking a lot for them. But if you don't create meeting spaces where you provide food, provide daycare for their kids, do it at a time that works for them, then I don't know how you get those voices.

"You've got to name it, and then you've got to create vehicles by which people can actually participate in a meaningful way. It's not easy, it costs money, you've got to be creative. We lack creativity on how we support voices to be heard. People have meaningful things to say, and I would humbly suggest that low-income people have a lot to say about these issues. Our organization is one attempt to try and create space for them to come in and then not only articulate their particular situation but then link it to the broader public policy issues that need to change."

**You mentioned the idea of a national housing strategy. What do you think about creating a national food strategy, as some are calling for?**

"This is a classic example of how we need to create vehicles of hearing a diverse set of voices. Our current [agriculture] policy is all about big, export, chemical, monoculture.

"If you look at an organization like Food Secure Canada, which I have a lot of respect for, which is a national organization, they did the people's food policy. They talked to 3,500 Canadians from coast to coast to coast in a really robust conversation that said, 'We don't want to see food as a commodity,' which is the way our Ag stuff, for certain, works. It's just like a commodity—got to grow it, sell it, conquer the markets wherever you can go.

"They talked to people who saw food imbued with culture, with the environment, with health. A holistic perspective on food. We're way ahead of government on this. Government is so slow. Civil society leads on this stuff.

"Food Secure Canada, if you read their report and recommendations on a national food strategy, it's holistic, it's preventative, it is interconnected. It sees the connection between good food and good health. To me, if I were to point to a voice right now that is reflective of a democratic process, it's Food Secure Canada's work on this.

"The average food item in Toronto travels 4,500 km from field to table. That has a huge impact on our environment. They say a third of greenhouse gases and pollution are connected to the way we move food from field to table. When in every province in the country there's an explosion of diet-related illness: diabetes, cancer, heart-disease, obesity. That's what you get, all of those things, when you treat food as a pure commodity.

"To link this back to Community Food Centres Canada, which is the organization I work for, it's one of those organizations where we talk about food not as a commodity.

"Farmers' markets and community shared agriculture and gardens and schools and 100-km restaurants, all that stuff is led by the wallet, the consumer. That consumer good

food revolution leaves low-income people out. So if we can agree that sustainable local food is the best food for our planet and our bodies, we believe everyone should have access to that, so how are we going to do that? Partly it's through public policy change, like a national school nutrition program. That would be a really good place to start."

**You've mentioned social programs, income inequality, are these realms where the federal government can intervene or are you looking more towards the provincial government?**

"Our first kind of pressure point is to try to create these community food centres from coast to coast to coast. We're trying to build 15 over the next five years, in the midst of a \$20-million capital campaign to do that.

"We are still trying to figure out our way as to what our key public policy issues are. We're surfacing those through the work on the ground. Right now, I kind of lean on Food Secure Canada stuff, to some extent, so there are some kind of obvious federal plays, like a National Housing Strategy. That's something that the feds could absolutely say, 'This matters.' Because the vast majority of funds that people spend in my neighborhood is on housing. It's why so many thousands of people don't have enough food to eat, because they're

spending all their money on housing. It's a bit of a crisis when it comes to housing. The other key issue for us is social assistance rates, which is a provincial matter. We will eventually probably create a linked campaign across the provinces that speaks to the inadequacy of rates, because they're woefully inadequate.

"We need to think preventatively and integratively, and I often find that that's hard to do in government. Is food a community and social services issue? Is it an Ag issue? Is it an environmental issue? Is it a health issue? We need a Minister of Food who can almost quite pointedly connect the dots.

"It is connected. It's complicated, but you can figure it out, and the more we think about it as an integrated issue, I think the better off we'll be.

"I always think social change happens when you have good, smart, politicians. Good, smart, bureaucrats, and a really lively civil society. If you were to do a Venn diagram of those three things, in the middle you'd have change. You're putting pressure from down below, you have folks who are receiving it and thinking from a bigger perspective, and change happens."

**How is your new job at Community Food Centres Canada?**

"I left The Stop in August, and there's

eight of us working at Community Food Centres Canada. The kind of first thrust of our work is to trying to raise dollars that allow us to build Stop-like organizations. The model is built off of what we created at The Stop. We have two community food centres in Ontario aside from The Stop, one in Perth and one in Stratford. We just announced a month ago Winnipeg, Dartmouth, and another one in Toronto, in Regent Park. The idea is to create 15 of these.

"We're partnering with Food Secure Canada on some of the campaigns they're working on, but we're honestly trying to figure out if we're going to interject in this conversation. I come out of a neighbourhood-based organization and much of our work was provincially focused. I have to learn too. I'm in the process of trying to figure out the federal landscape, and I'll be honest about that. But we'll certainly have something to say, and it will come through what we're learning on the ground, and how we link what we're learning on the ground to what public policy needs to change."

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