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Long way home: Blamed for affordability crisis, Liberals look to pivot on housing

Chris Burke and his fiancée have been less than a year away from buying their first home for the past three years.

Saving for a down payment was the first challenge. Now, rising interest rates have kicked home ownership down the road again, stalling the couple's plans to get married and have children.

"Any gains we make towards purchasing a house, we're watching the goalposts move further and further away," the 31-year-old Ottawa resident said.

Feeling "stuck," as Burke put it, is a sentiment shared by many young Canadians who are increasingly pessimistic about their home ownership prospects.

For the federal Liberals, the growing discontent with the state of the housing market is becoming a political threat.

"I'm a former Liberal voter," Burke said. "I certainly wouldn't be voting for them this time around."

Experts say the housing crisis poses a great risk to the incumbent government in the next election if it doesn't take drastic action soon.

"This has become probably the most important both economic and political problem facing the country right now," said Tyler Meredith, a former head of economic strategy and planning for Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

"And especially given the significant emphasis the government has put on immigration and the relationship between immigration and the housing market, there is a need to do more."

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has taken direct aim at the Liberals for the state of the housing market, highlighting the dramatic increases in home prices, rents and over-inflated rates.

According to the Canadian Real Estate Association, the national average price of a home sold was \$709,000 in June 2023, up from \$455,000 in Oct. 2015, when the Liberals first came to power.

And the cost of getting a mortgage has soared, following a series of aggressive interest rate increases by the Bank of Canada in response to rising inflation following the COVID-19 pandemic.

Rent prices have also skyrocketed, with some cities seeing double-digit increases over the last year.

Trudeau has tried to deflect for the housing crisis, recently saying there are limits to what the federal government can do.

"It'll be blunt as well: housing isn't a primary federal responsibility," Trudeau said during a housing announcement in Hamilton on July 31.

"It's not something we have direct carriage of. But it is something that we can and must help with."

His remarks were quickly blasted by Poilievre, who reminded people of earlier promises Trudeau had made when he was in power.

"(Trudeau) held a news conference to tell you all he's not responsible for housing. That's funny, because eight years ago, he promised he was gonna lower housing costs," Poilievre said in a news conference Thursday.

Most experts agree that Ottawa isn't solely responsible for the problem. But many say the federal government could still be doing more to alleviate the shortage of housing at the most of the affordability crunch.

The Canada Mortgage Housing Corp., the national housing agency, warned last year that the country needs to build 5.8 million homes by 2030 to restore affordability.

If the current pace of building continues, then only 2.3 million homes will have been added to the housing stock by then.

There are several things experts say the federal government could be doing, such as better calibrating its immigration policy with housing and reforming tax laws to incentivize rental developments. It could also push local governments to adopt housing built faster.



Hundreds protest in Pickering, demand province reverses Greenbelt land swaps

Hundreds of people staged a protest Sunday outside the office of Ontario Finance Minister Peter Bethlenfalvy to demand permanent protection for the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP), which was removed from the Greenbelt.

The protest comes days after the province's auditor general said the Ontario government's process for choosing protected Greenbelt land to open up for housing development was heavily influenced by a small group of well-connected developers who now stand to make billions of dollars.

In a 95-page report released Wednesday, Bonnie Lyjak offered a damning assessment of how the province selected sites last year for removal from the Greenbelt - a vast 810,000-hectare area of farmland, forest and wetland stretching from Niagara Falls, Ont., to Peterborough, Ont., that was meant to be off limits to development.

Lyjak made 15 recommendations in the report, but Premier Doug Ford said his government would accept and implement only 14. The single recommendation it will not accept is the call to revert the land swaps and possibly reverse the decisions, he said.

Ford said Friday that he will not back away from plans to build on the protected Greenbelt, despite the damning auditor general's report and experts saying his housing targets can be met by building elsewhere.

Speaking with CBC News Sunday, Abdallah Mir, co-chair of Stop Sprawl Durham, the group which organized the protest, said they want the Ford government to adopt the lone outstanding recommendation.

"They've said they're going to adopt 14 out of the 15 recommendations of the auditor general's report. The only consequential one, they're not adopting. I want them to adopt it, which [would] return the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve lands to their rightful owners - the people of Pickering," Mir said.

"Return the agricultural easements on those lands, keep them as agricultural lands in perpetuity... They can do this as of tomorrow. On Monday, recall the legislature... and returns these lands. Do the right thing."

"Disturbed by what Doug Ford has been doing," Brooker-Nulman said.

"This is also coming at a time when we are having things like the firm in Hawaii, the firm right here in Canada, lots of climate change related to disasters. We're starting to see what Mother Nature can do when we don't listen."

Brooker-Nulman said he expected to see more younger people at the protest.

"I'm only almost 18 and this is the stuff that could impact our kids, this is the stuff that could impact their kids. And I am a little bit upset that not more younger people [are here]," he said.

"At the same time, I'm also really, really glad to see a lot of older people who will still care about our future, their children's future and the whole future of Ontario and this planet."



Canada's rental market facing 'perfect storm' as prices hit new high in July: report

Canadian renters have long lamented the increasing prices they see landllords request of tenants, but in July, those totals hit a level unseen in the country's history.

Data from Rentlist.ca and research firm Urbanation released this week show July's average asking rent hit \$2,078, just shy of nine per cent above the same month last year.

The organizations behind the data said July's numbers also constitute the fastest pace of growth over the past three months and add the average asking rent rose 1.8 per cent between June and July, the most rapid month-over-month increase in the last eight months.

Compared to July 2021, the average asking rent increased by 21 per cent, adding \$154 per month on average.

Rentals.ca and Urbanation attributed the rise to a surge in post-secondary students signing leases before the fall, unprecedented levels of population growth and homebuyers holding off on purchases as interest rates have risen.

Eleanor Nash currently lives in Whitechurch-Stouffville, Ont., but said she and her late husband once operated a 160-hectare farm in the DRAP.

Nash said she has been "very actively involved" since the early 1990s in trying to set up some kind of protection for the land so it wouldn't revert to housing.

"Food land is critical for all of us. And I think that this is really Class A farmland and we need to hang on to it," she said.

"We're losing it very fast right now. I think 300-and-some-old acres a day. And it's critically important we hang on to what we have, and it's right on the edge of Toronto. We need to have farmland there too."

Meanwhile, Mir said Sunday's protest is just the beginning of their campaign to pressure the Ford government to implement the 15th recommendation.

"Five hundred people showing up, spending their Sunday out on the side of the road protesting is the beginning," he said.

"We're going to continue to keep this heat up, we're going to continue to protest, we're going to continue to send letters to our ministers, to our representatives, to everyone around, to the premier... We're going to continue to make our voices heard."

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Canada 'absolutely' can't build more houses without more immigrants, minister says

Canada's housing crisis "absolutely cannot" be solved without the aid of new immigrants who bring their skills here, Immigration Minister Marc Miller told reporters on Friday.

"The federal government is making housing more affordable and bringing in the skilled workers required to build more homes," Miller said in Montreal.

"Without those skilled workers coming from outside Canada, we absolutely cannot build the homes and meet the demand that exists currently today."

Miller was asked by reporters if he was considering slashing Canada's immigration targets, which are currently at historic highs, in response to a recent Bank of Canada report that new immigrants are adding to housing demand.

The minister said he was not. "People coming to this country are resourceful. When they bring capital, they are able to acquire homes," he said. "If people are asking us to slash, what does that mean? Does that mean slashing the skilled workers that we

need to actually build those houses? Slash family reunification, which can be devastating for the mental health and well-being of the families that are already here?"

Canada aims to welcome 451,000 new immigrants in 2024. By 2025, the number is expected to go up to 500,000 new immigrants in one year.

Miller said around 60 per cent of new immigrants to Canada are economic migrants, many of whom are the kind of skilled workers needed to build more housing. Family reunification visas account for around 20 per cent of those

migrating. There's, he said, an refugees and asylum seekers.

"We have a humanitarian duty towards people that are fleeing war and persecution," Miller said. STORY CONTINUES BELOW

ADVERTISEMENT Last week, a spokesperson from Miller's office told Global News that fulfilling Canada's labour shortages is one of his key priorities, and a key goal of the government's immigration targets.

"Strategies like Express Entry, and the historic Immigration Levels Plan, which is largely made up of economic

migrants, are a great asset to our nation as they will directly help combat the ongoing labour shortage. This is especially true when it comes to the housing sector," Baboo Dera Aziz, press secretary to the immigration minister, told Global News.

"With provinces like Ontario needing 100,000 workers to meet their housing demands, it is clear that immigration will play a strong role in creating more homes for Canadians."

The federal government increased its immigration targets in November 2022, and Miller has suggested those targets may need to be kept rising.

The construction industry is short tens of thousands of workers, and experts say a cooling wave of retirements could make the problem worse.

Meanwhile, Canada is millions of homes behind what's needed to reach housing affordability in a decade.

Those vacancies, which push up building costs and impede productivity, come at a time when the residential construction industry is under pressure to meet the demands of a growing population.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. forecasts a need for 3.5 million more homes by 2030 than the country is currently on track to build.

"The number of new homes built, however, has been in decline, from just over 271,000 in 2021 to 260,000 in 2022. And in May this year,

'It was that or go home and prepare to die': Canadians on why they sought surgery outside the country

"You're too ill. We can't operate." Those were the words Allison Ducluzeau, 57, said she was told in January, a month after being diagnosed with a rare and terminal abdominal cancer.

"I felt completely hopeless and powerless and (at) a complete loss about what to do with my health," Ducluzeau told CTV News. "But (there) was not an alternative. It was that or go home and prepare to die."

Ducluzeau started researching options to tackle her illness within Canada and found out she required a time-sensitive, specialized surgery to treat her Stage 4 cancer. That's when her general practitioner referred her to cancer specialists.

From there, she was told she would have to wait almost two months for an initial consultation with a specialized surgeon in Vancouver.

But she'd been told she might only survive another two months, suggesting the consultation might be too late.

So, the mother of two started looking for options outside of the country.

Ducluzeau eventually landed on the Mary Medical Center in Baltimore, Md., where she met with a specialist one week after sending the results of an imaging test that detects early signs of cancer. She was told she could have the abdominal surgery done two weeks later.

Her husband accompanied her on the trip in February, for the procedure she described as her last resort. After the surgery in the U.S., Ducluzeau said she learned that if she had stayed in Canada, waiting to meet with the Vancouver surgeon, there would have been a wait of six to eight weeks to have the operation done in Vancouver, in addition to the two months she had to wait for the consultation.

By her calculations, she believes she had surgery approximately three months earlier than the best-case



scenario in B.C., because of her trip to the States.

And based on the timeline given to her when she was diagnosed, she may not have survived long enough to have the surgery in Canada.

"I never should have had to travel away from the support of family and friends," said Ducluzeau. "But (there) was not an alternative. It was that or go home and prepare to die."

Ducluzeau's experience is not unique. With long wait times becoming a defining characteristic of Canada's health-care system, many Canadians are taking matters into their own hands by travelling outside of the country to get surgeries and other medical procedures done sooner.

HOW LONG IS THE WAIT? Each province and territory is responsible for administering and delivering health care to its residents, meaning the average wait times for surgeries and other procedures vary across the country.

The pan-Canadian benchmark for a hip replacement surgery is 26 weeks, or 182 days, according to the Canadian Institute for Health Information. But based on the provinces' and territories' own electronic wait time estimates, most patients wait longer than that.

Ontario had the lowest waiting times, based on these trackers, with an average of 87 days between the time of referral to the first consultation, and 138 days for hip surgery. B.C. and Newfoundland and Labrador indicated nine in 10 patients are waiting an average of 348 and 385 days for hip surgery, respectively.

P.E.I., Saskatchewan and Nova Scotia had some of the longest wait times, with 90 per cent of patients waiting more than 600 days for their



orthopedic surgery.

Alberta also had among the longest wait times indicated, with nine in 10 patients waiting an average of 80 weeks, or 560 days, for hip replacement surgery.

ONCE YOU START WAITING, OTHER THINGS START TO BREAK DOWN.

For Edmonton resident Trevor Bukieda, 60, waiting for surgery meant enduring agonizing pain.

Bukieda said he started feeling pain in his hip four years ago. The initial X-rays and ultrasound showed minor joint wear, so after a cortisone injection, he continued on with his life. But he said the pain intensified and became unbearable in March of this year.

He had new X-rays done, which he says showed that his hip had totally degenerated, and there was no cartilage left at all.

In an attempt to ease the pain, Bukieda said, he contacted an Alberta clinic that specializes in hips and knees in hopes of having his injury treated. Three weeks later, he said, he received a letter saying he had been accepted for an appointment to see a surgeon in 14 to 16 months. The actual hip replacement surgery would've taken another nine months' wait, he told CTV News.ca.

Losing patience, Bukieda started looking for out-of-country options and found a clinic in Kaunas, Lithuania, that could take him in as soon as July, three months after his most recent X-rays.

"The biggest reason why I chose to go overseas is because once you start waiting, other things start to break down in your system," Bukieda said.

Federal government releases new draft regulations on clean electricity

Electricity infrastructure expenses are expected to increase significantly over the next several decades as demand is estimated to cost \$400 billion by 2050.

The country's grid is already seeing 85 per cent clean, but demand is expected to double by 2050 as things like cars, buses and trains become electric.

"Why not make sure that this build-out is clean and affordable?" the minister asked.

The government expects that draft regulations would ease greenhouse gas emissions by 342 million tonnes between 2024 and 2050.

The ministry has been seeking feedback on the regulatory framework for nearly a year and will consult on the draft regulations for 75 days, with a final version expected to be published in January 2025, but give on the long lead time needed to build new electricity infrastructure.

Gailbeault said the government wants to give the industry plenty of notice. "One thing we've heard from investors, from energy companies, is: 'Tell us what the rules are, and we will comply with them,'" the minister said.

"They want to know what the rules of the game will be, and that's exactly what we're doing. We're giving them a lot of time to prepare."

Gailbeault said the draft regulations are designed to be affordable and achievable with existing technology that is already being used across the country.

They are also intended to show some flexibility, he said, particularly for remote communities that aren't part of the power grid and will be exempt from the new rules.

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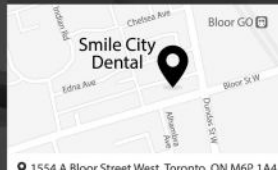
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Jaya Prada Gets Sentenced To Jail For 6 Months, Pay Rs 5000 Fine, In An Old Case

Vietnam actress and politician Jaya Prada was one of the most-sought after celebrities in the entertainment industry during the 70s and 80s. While she went on to quit her career as an actress in 1994, to focus on her career in politics, fans still dare remember her for her versatile performances. She made the headlines on Friday when she was sentenced to jail for six months by a court in Chennai.

According to a report by IndiaTV, a case was registered against her and her business partners Ram Kumar and Raja Babu by the Labour Government Insurance Corporation. For the unaware, she and her partners owned a theatre which did not do well. After incurring losses they decided to cease its operations completely. The former employees filed a complaint against the trio, accusing them for non-payment of the ESI that was deducted from their salaries.

In their complaint, the employees went on to claim that the ESI deducted from their salaries weren't even paid to the Government Insurance Corporation. This led to



the Labour Government Insurance Corporation filing a case against the trio at the Madras Magistrate Court. As per the media publication, the 61-year-old actress admitted to her charges and even promised to clear all the dues. Despite seeking out dismissal of the case, the court dismissed her appeal.

Not only has she been sentenced to jail but she also has to pay a fine of Rs

Diljit Dosanjh starrer Punjab '95, based on Jawsant Singh Khaira, removed from TIFF 2023 line-up due to political reasons?

Ever since Diljit Dosanjh starrer Punjab '95 was announced, the film has been in the headlines. A biopic based on the life of eminent human rights activist Jawsant Singh Khaira, the film was set for the premiere at the prestigious Toronto International Film Festival (TIFF). However, it seems like the movie has been removed from the line-up of the festival.

While the makers note the festival organizers have not commented on why the film is not on the line-up anymore, an insider, a source told the publication that "there are political forces at play in the film being pulled from Toronto. Canada has the second largest Sikh population in the world after India."

The film also made headlines as the Central Board of Film Certification (CBFC) took six months to provide a certificate to the movie. They even cleared the movie with 21 cuts and asked to change the title from Chhathara to Punjab '95. RSVF, the production house of Ronnie Screwvala appealed the decision in the Bombay High Court and the decision is still pending.

Talking about the film, it is based in the thick of a troubled and hostile decade of the early 1990s in Amritsar, Punjab, where protagonist Jawsant Singh Khaira, a bank employee and human rights activist lives with his wife, a librarian, and their two little kids. Inclined to stay detached from the hostility that surrounds them, he wants nothing more than a regular, middle-class existence when his hopes of living such a life are thrown into turmoil when he learns of the disappearance of his late friend's mother, Bibi Gurpre. And so begins his journey to find his old aunt, and he soon realizes that the deeper he digs in his search, the murkier and more dangerous the situation becomes, for him as well as his family.

Brevis, Ferreira and Coetzee earn maiden T20I call-ups

South Africa have handed maiden T20I call-ups to Dewald Brevis, Donovan Ferreira, Gerald Coetzee and Matthew Breetzke for the forthcoming three-match home series against Australia. The 15-member squad has notable absences in the form of Quinton de Kock, Heinrich Klaassen, David Miller as well as the fastest bowler pair of Kagiso Rabada and Anrich Nortje, who will all be available for the five ODIs that follow and serve as tune-up for the World Cup in India.

Brevis, 20, will be available for both the white-ball series, underscoring his rapid progress since topping the run charts at the ICC Under-19 World Cup 2022. He has since featured in T20 leagues around the world, including at the IPL where he has a trade for five times the champions Mumbai Indians. The right-handed batsman also currently holds the record for the highest individual domestic T20 score in South Africa, a 57-ball 162 he struck at last season's CSA T20 challenge.

Meanwhile, left-arm spinner Keshav Mahara, who suffered a ruptured Achilles tendon in the Test series against West Indies in March, is expected to be available for the second and third T20Is and work towards peak fitness in the ODI that follow.

Commenting on the selections, white-ball head coach Rob Walter said: "We are looking for opportunities to grow our base of players, and the T20I series against Australia is a perfect chance to give some of the rising cricketers in the country the chance to show us they are capable."

"For this reason, we have included players such as Dewald, Donovan and Matthew. These are guys that have been performing consistently well in and out of domestic so we are now looking forward to seeing what they can do at the next level. We also possess a particular skill set that fits into the way we are looking to play the game moving forward."

"We are also happy to welcome back Keshav. He has made significant progress and is ahead of where we expected him to be at this point in time with his recovery and so we've included him in the squads to give him the best chance to be available for selection for the World Cup squad."



Steven Finn retires from professional cricket

England fast bowler Steven Finn has announced his retirement from professional cricket on Monday (August 14). Finn suffered a knee injury in 2023 and hasn't played a game in red-ball cricket in over a year.

"Today I am retiring from all forms of cricket with immediate effect," Finn said in a statement. "I have been fighting a battle with my body for the last 12 months and have admitted defeat to it. I feel incredibly lucky to have been able to play cricket in my vocation since I made my debut for Middlesex in 2005. The journey hasn't always been smooth, but I have loved it nonetheless."

"I have played 125 games for England, including 36 Tests, far surpassed what I dreamed of. I retire with some amazing memories with England, Middlesex and Sussex, shared with fantastic people. Those will live with me forever."

Making his first-class debut for Middlesex in 2005, Finn broke into the national side and played his first Test against Bangladesh in 2010 before making his ODI bow the following year. He picked up 125 wickets in 36 Tests and managed to win the Ashes twice in his career. In ODI cricket, he picked up 102 wickets in just 69 games and played in the 2015 World Cup opener.

Having played for Middlesex for the major part of his career, Finn made the move to Sussex in 2022 and played 19 matches before getting injured. He did make a comeback earlier this season in a One-Day cup against Durham but had to leave the field after bowling just four overs. The 34-year-old also went on to feature in 21 T20Is but his final appearance in national colours came in the 50-over final in 2017 just before the Champions Trophy.

"I have had the real pleasure of watching him develop from a young bowler in the pathway to being three times Ashes winner," Sussex Head Coach, Paul Pottinger said.

Priyanka Chopra Jonas is all geared up for the Jonas Brothers concert tour,

Priyanka Chopra recently took to Instagram to give a shoutout to her husband Nick and his brothers Kevin and Joe Jonas, who are about to embark on their concert tour.

The Hunk of State actress, who is eccentric about the Jonas Brothers' - Nick Jonas, Kevin Jonas, and Joe Jonas - upcoming concert tour, shared a video clip from the stadium on her Instagram story. The video shows the celebrated singer brothers performing the final soundcheck at the stadium as they prepare for the first night of their tour concert.

"Wowoooo! Opening night of The Tour! Soundcheck @yankeestadium @jonasbrothers." Priyanka Chopra, who gave a big shoutout to her husband and brothers-in-law in the video, wrote in her caption. Later, she shared a photo of her personalized coffee mug and signature 'Jonas Brothers' tumbler with a sparkling drink, as she prepared to watch the



trio perform on stage.

Later, to the delight of their fans, the Jonas Brothers took to their official Instagram account and shared images of their final rehearsal at the stadium. "See you at 8 p.m."

Why BCCI, ICC opted for staggered sale of World Cup tickets

The hosts and governing bodies of the World Cup, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) and the International Cricket Council (ICC), have decided to release tickets for non-India games before making India game tickets accessible. This approach, it is understood, arises from concerns that the ticketing website might experience crashes if online consumers for all games are simultaneously opened. This potential issue largely stems from the immense demand for India fixtures.

This scenario is not without precedent. In the preceding edition of the 50-over World Cup held in England in 2019, the demand for tickets to India's matches was so overwhelming that technical glitches caused the website to crash. The substantial influx of fans attempting to access the website resulted in its malfunctioning.

An insider shared, "The staggered sale approach is designed to handle the expected surge in demand efficiently. It's the most effective way to manage the system for the benefit of the fans."

October 22), the England match in Lucknow (on October 29), and the Sri Lanka match in Mumbai (on November 2) can be accessed on September 2.

Tickets for the matches against South Africa in Chennai (on November 8) and the Netherlands in Bengaluru (on November 10) will be offered on September 2. Lastly, for the highly anticipated India-Pakistan clash in Ahmedabad on October 14, tickets will be up for grabs on September 3.

Fans have been encouraged to register for tickets beginning August 15.

Despite queries, Book My Show, the ticketing partner, did not provide any response regarding this strategy of staggered releases.

Timeline for the ticket sale:
August 25: Non-India warm-up matches and all non-India international matches

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Conservatives launch massive ad campaign amid surge in polls

The Conservative Party of Canada is launching a multi-million-dollar ad campaign that depicts its leader, Pierre Poilievre, as a family man who wants to fix the country - all while his party is soaring in the polls and his main rival is going through a public split with his spouse.

"This is not a branding campaign. This is an amplification of who Pierre is and always has been," said Regan Watts, a former adviser to several ministers in the Harper government.

"He's warm, he's kind, he's empathetic and he listens... It's important for people to delineate between Parliament Hill and the rest of the country, engaging with Canadians one-on-one."

Two of the three ads focus on showing a more human side of Poilievre, whose aggressive, bulldog style has seen him spar with journalists and politicians alike, prompting Maclean's magazine to ask "Why is Pierre Poilievre so angry?"

A senior Conservative source confirmed to CBC News that the party will spend more than \$3 million over three months to push

three bilingual ads in every province and territory.

The ads will air on TV, radio, digital platforms and print media.

Polling analyst Eric Grenier, the author of TheWrite.ca, says the timing of the campaign makes sense.

"Usually when there is a new leader in place and Canadians don't know who to look to, there is an attempt to try to make them seem more like a likeable person," he said.

The first ad features voice-over from Poilievre's wife, Anaida, a Montreal-raised Venezuelan immigrant who has been described in a Quebec newspaper as Poilievre's "hidesense" in Quebec.

"Who is Pierre Poilievre?" she narrates, before showing the Conservative leader at different stages of his life, including playing hockey while growing up in Calgary, and playing with his own children.

"And I know him as a guy who loves me for who I am," she says in the ad. "A Canadian, who came to call Canada home, and his wife."

It was released less than a week after Justin Trudeau's high-profile

separation from his wife, Sophie Grigoin-Trudeau.

The second ad shows Poilievre sitting with his son, doing a puzzle.

"Everything feels broken in Canada. Unaffordable, unsafe, divided. But we can put the pieces back together," he says in voice-over.

The third ad is an attack on the carbon tax, which Poilievre says he would undo if elected.

A spokesperson for Poilievre did not respond to a request for comment about the ad campaign.

A surge in polls

This ad campaign comes while the party surges in the polls.

"All the national polling that we've seen over the last few months have given the Conservatives a wide lead, sometimes as wide as 10 points, and that has increased over the last few months," Grenier said.

"The question is whether it's going to hold into the fall."

Radio comes weeks after he ditched his tie and glasses for a more casual look, which some strategists say could signal an effort to present a more laid-back, likeable version of

himself.

These ads could be an appeal to women - a key demographic Conservatives are trying to court, says Grenier.

"The Conservatives in general poll less well among women than they do among men... For Pierre Poilievre, we've seen the same kinds of things. Negatives tend to be a lot higher among women than among men," he said.

"This is a way to make him seem less abrasive, less partisan."

Canada's Transport Minister Pablo Rodriguez was asked about the new ad campaign and said he doesn't believe the ads will sway people, particularly in his home province of Quebec.

"You can change the packaging if you want, you can change the packaging, but not the contents," he said. "The content is not something that we're worried about."

"Money to burn"

Though the \$3-million price tag might seem expensive, the Conservative Party of Canada is out-fundraising its rivals - by a lot.

From April to June alone, the Tories raised nearly \$8 million in donations, a slight decrease from the \$8.3 million the party raised during the first three months of the year.

provinces to sign on to digital ID systems for their residents in order to get billions in new health-care funding. That conspiracy was also debunked.

Duane Bratt, political science professor at Mount Royal University in Calgary, said some people have long embraced conspiracies, but now they have moved into mainstream politics.

"There will be no mandatory digital ID in this country, and I will ban all of my ministers and top government officials from any involvement in the World Economic Forum," Poilievre said, chucking as he received lengthy applause for the remark.

Canada has long participated in WEF events. Former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet ministers attending the summit regularly. Trudeau attended in person in 2016 and 2018 and his ministers have attended as well. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland went to the most recent annual summit in January.

Digital IDs, the federal government has been looking at technology to create a national digital identification document to help people access government services. It has not been promoted as something that will become mandatory.

Last winter, a conspiracy theory circulating on social media suggested Trudeau was going to require

How developers influenced the Ford government to open up their Greenbelt land for housing

One of the most stunning revelations contained in Auditor General Bonnie Lysyk's explosive report into Ontario's controversial Greenbelt land swap was how a small number of real estate developers were able to use their access to a high-level government staffer to have protected land - some of which was recently purchased - opened up for housing development.

Through encounters at an industry event and emails sent by their lawyers, developers successfully lobbied for the removal of environmental protections on land they own in the Greenbelt - a vast 810,000-hectare area of farmland, forest and wetland stretching from Niagara Falls to Peterborough that's meant to be permanently off-limits to development.



Packages at an industry dinner

Lysyk's audit found that in the first week of October, Amato presented the project team with "hard-copy information from packages he received" from developers on eight sites to consider for removal from the Greenbelt.

Later that month, he provided to the Greenbelt Project Team five USB keys containing additional information on proposed sites for removal.

As for how the initial eight sites were selected, Amato told the auditor general's team he "regularly attends industry events and meets with housing developers and their representatives, who at times pass along information about land that they recommend the ministry consider removing from the Greenbelt."

One of those encounters took place on Sept. 14, 2022 at the Building Industry and Land Development Association's (BILD) chair's dinner event.

Amato and Clark's deputy chief of staff were seated at the same table as a number of housing developers and a registered lobbyist, according to Lysyk's report.

At the event, two developers not named in the auditor general's report, provided Amato with "packages" containing information about two sites - the Duffins Rouge Agricultural Preserve (DRAP) in Pickering, Ont., and a site in King Township, in York Region.

As CBC Toronto has reported, Lysyk's audit found that in the first week of October, Amato presented the project team with "hard-copy information from packages he received" from developers on eight sites to consider for removal from the Greenbelt.

After the BILD event, while the project team was still conducting its work, Amato said that the "developer for the DRAP site" made requests to also remove three additional sites from the protected Greenbelt: a Hamilton, Ont., site owned by Fiddlegate Homes, a site in Richmond Hill, Ont., and another in Vaughan, Ont., both of which are owned by Tacc Developments, according to Lysyk's report.

"These five sites ultimately make up 92 per cent of all land removed from the Greenbelt in 2022," the report said.

Lawyers sent Amato's chief of staff Lysyk's audit also found a law firm representing three housing developers, not named in the report, asked Amato to remove their land from the Greenbelt.

On Sept. 27 and 29, the law firm sent emails to Amato requesting sites in Markham, Ont., and Whitchurch-Stouffville, Ont., be removed. Farn Developments, whose CEO is Shkir Rehmanullah (again, Lysyk's report doesn't list names), owns land in both areas, according to the report and CBC Toronto's reporting. Tona Inc. is another one of the developers of the Stouffville site.

Ont. mayor can't afford to buy house in township she leads

Waterloo Region's red-hot housing market has led to homes for Wilmot Township Mayor Natasha Salomon. Despite earning around \$90,000 a year between her work as mayor, regional councillor and with the local electric utility, she says she can't afford to buy a home in the municipality she leads.

"To live at home with my parents," Salomon says. "Living in this region is really not attainable for a young professional who doesn't have university debt and I know I'm certainly not alone in that."

Located just outside Kitchener, Waterloo, Wilmot Township has a population of around 22,000. According to the Waterloo Region Association of Realtors, the average home in Wilmot sold for \$916,167 last month.

While it's worth noting Salomon is just 28 years old, her situation is still unique among her political peers.

"I realized around the table, I was the only one who doesn't own a house out of my mayoral colleagues in the region," she says.

Salomon became the first female mayor of Wilmot in October 2022 when she received over 60 per cent of the vote.

She is still paying off her student loans after graduating from England's University of Oxford in 2019, and says that contributing to why she can't afford a home.

Many of her friends in their late 20s are unable to afford homes in Wilmot too, she says.

"I mean, one just went on the market. I don't know what it sold at, but it was listed for \$798,900 and about 1,000 square feet."

Poilievre's Conservative party embracing language of mainstream conspiracy theories

Conservative Leader Pierre Poilievre has been hitting the summer barbecue circuit with ramped-up rhetoric around debunked claims that the World Economic Forum is attempting to impose its agenda on sovereign governments.

It is, some experts suggest, another sign that some conspiracy theories are moving from the fringes of the internet to mainstream thinking, as people's distrust of government grows.

In speeches to Conservative supporters across Canada, Poilievre has promised that none of his ministers will attend the international organization's conferences, including the annual meeting typically held in Davos, Switzerland.

"It's far past time we rejected the globalist Davos elites and bring home the common sense of the common people," said a Saturday fundraising email.

The Conservative party also recently sent out mailers with a poll asking people to tell Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who they think the



prime minister should stand with working Canadians or the World Economic Forum.

The wording implies Trudeau's cabinet is beholden to the latter.

Poilievre did not agree to an interview on the matter. His spokesman instead pointed the Canadian Press to a clip of him at a rally in Peñíscola, B.C. in July, expressing concerns over the

government invading people's personal privacy and financial decisions.

"There will be no mandatory digital ID in this country, and I will ban all of my ministers and top government officials from any involvement in the World Economic Forum," Poilievre said, chucking as he received lengthy applause for the remark.

Canada has long participated in WEF events. Former Conservative prime minister Stephen Harper and his cabinet ministers attending the summit regularly. Trudeau attended in person in 2016 and 2018 and his ministers have attended as well. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland went to the most recent annual summit in January.

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Last winter, a conspiracy theory circulating on social media suggested Trudeau was going to require

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