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Editorial

Editorial

Don Oliver was a class act, and will be missed

Former Nova Scotia Conservative Senator Donald Oliver, who was Canada's first Black man appointed to the Senate in 1990 by then-Progressive Conservative prime minister Brian Mulroney, died on Sept. 17 at the age of 86. He served in the Upper Chamber from 1990 until he retired in 2013, and loved Parliament Hill and federal politics, even after he left Ottawa. Senators paid tribute to him last month in the Upper Chamber.

A former trial lawyer, law professor, and a real estate developer, Oliver was also a big player in the former federal Progressive Conservative Party of Canada before he became a Senator. Once he was in the Upper Chamber, he became an influential Senator, a deputy Senate Speaker, and an advocate against anti-Black systemic racism. He led a massive research project on the barriers to the advancement of visible minorities in both the public and private sectors. He was a vocal advocate for hiring more Black public servants in Parliament and in the federal public service, and he became an advocate for equality, diversity, and pluralism. He helped create the Black Cultural Centre for Nova Scotia, and worked with the Writers' Federation of Nova Scotia to establish the Senator Don Oliver Black Voices Prize for emerging Black Nova Scotian writers.

Oliver grew up in the only Black family in Wolfville, N.S., and lived through racism. His grandparents fled slavery in the United States, and Oliver

once told *The Hill Times* that he was raised to "work hard, be humble, love the Lord, and do all you can to help other people." He gave it his best shot. In 2015, he was diagnosed with cardiac amyloidosis and given six months to live, but lived for another 10 years. He also wrote a book about his life, *A Matter of Equality: The Life's Work of Senator Don Oliver*, published in 2021.

"Being a Black man in the Senate afforded me countless opportunities to promote tolerance, fairness, and equality, both in Canada and abroad, that I would not have otherwise had," he told *The Hill Times* in 2021 when asked what was his greatest accomplishment and achievement for advancing the rights and equality for Black people in Canada, Parliament, and the public service.

Nova Scotia PSG Senator Wanda Bernard, who described Oliver as a mentor, said his mission was simple: to remove barriers.

"One of the greatest lessons I learned from him is that when you are a 'first,' especially as an African-Nova Scotian entering spaces our ancestors were once excluded from, it is never by accident. We are here because of their sacrifices. And with that legacy comes a responsibility to continue the fight for equality and justice," Bernard said in the Senate on Sept. 24.

Oliver's work in federal politics and on Parliament Hill will be remembered, especially in today's world.

The Hill Times

Letters to the Editor

With climate deniers in the White House, it's up to scientists to stop the lies: McElroy

Politicians talk about red lines between countries and their armaments: how they're going to deploy them, how the troops are going to behave, and how pugnacious they're going to be. But is it really regulating society? We've always agreed to red lines between politics and science. Science: what is it? It is seeing the way the world is, and politics does not intrude into that. And as a result, scientists try very hard, even through the IPCC process, and other international bodies, to maintain that separation. It was a decision that communication from the influential science community might intrude into the democratic process. Information needs to be provided, but the voters must decide on the path forward.

But the current United States government, under President Donald Trump, has walked all over that red line, totally obliterated it, and gone

way into our territory where they should not have even stepped. Trump is a climate denier in the face of obvious climate change. Recent articles report that he has cancelled the Keeling measurements at Hawaii's Mauna Loa that confirmed the rise of CO2 in the atmosphere. Well, if climate change is a scam, and it's unrelated to carbon dioxide, why does he have to kill the measurements? The Keeling curve: lies and more lies. It's incredible.

My mother always said you can catch a thief, but you can never catch a liar, they just tell more lies. And we've never seen a liar loose in the White House like this. It looks like it may come down to us, as scientists, to attempt to stop it.

Tom McElroy
 Professor emeritus and senior scholar
 York University
 Toronto, Ont.

Singh pushed Liberals on pharmacare, dental care, childcare, and more: letter writer

Re: "Finally, the left fights back," (*The Hill Times*, Oct. 6). I read the opinion piece by Susan Riley regarding Avi Lewis. In the piece, she referred to a "hall monitor role" performed by former NDP leader Jagmeet Singh, contrasting that with a potential return to a focus on social democracy by Lewis.

It is fashionable to pillory Singh given his recent shellacking at the polls. As "hall monitor," Singh pushed the Liberals on a national dental care scheme; to start a national pharmacare program; to deliver on a 28-year old national daycare promise; to work toward massive greenhouse gas reductions; to provide up to 10 days of paid sick leave for federally regulated workers; and to prohibit the use of "scabs"; to make it easier to vote; to

move forward on the housing issue; and to push Indigenous reconciliation. The government of Justin Trudeau would have done some of this on its own. Nonetheless, with daycare, dental care and pharmacare, Singh pushed forward some of the most significant changes to the social fabric of this country in at least a quarter century.

The junior partner in any coalition government usually pays a heavy price in the subsequent election. Singh was no exception. But has any junior partner ever accomplished more? It is arguable that this man fell on his political sword, and millions of Canadians will benefit for decades to come. Some "hall monitor." Keep up the great work.

Ronald Heale
 Ottawa, Ont.

