‘We’re still here’: MP Idlout on bringing Inuktitut to the House

Governor General Mary Simon’s use of Inuktitut during last month’s Throne Speech was a historic first, and new Nunavut MP Lori Idlout is making efforts of her own to incorporate her mother tongue into her work.

BY LAURA RYCKEWAERT

This year’s Throne Speech marked the first time a Governor General has substantially addressed Parliament in a language other than French or English, and for Nunavut NDP MP Lori Idlout, hearing Governor General Mary Simon’s use of Inuktitut during last month’s Throne Speech was a historic first, and new Nunavut MP Lori Idlout is making efforts of her own to incorporate her mother tongue into her work.

New Fisheries Minister Murray has list of ‘urgent’ priorities to grapple with

New Fisheries and Oceans Minister Joyce Murray has a difficult file ahead of her with competing priorities, many of which fall under the umbrella of climate change and the environment, experts say, but observers say she appears up to the job.

Crystallizing into focus one of the major issues facing fisheries in Canada, Oceana’s Nov. 16 audit of the sector found that fewer than one-third, or just 30.4 per cent, of the country’s fisheries are healthy.

“It’s urgent,” said Robert Rangeley, Oceana Canada science director, of rebuilding fish stocks.

‘In this fight we shouldn’t be left alone’: Kosovo urges Canada to combat influence of Russia, China in Western Balkans

Kosovo is calling on Canada to not ignore its position in the Western Balkans as its president visited Ottawa to tell the federal government that it is the nation that is representing Canadian values in the region.

Kosovo President Vjosa Osmani was in Ottawa last week where she held meetings with Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), Governor General Mary Simon, cabinet ministers, and Liberals MPs.

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Canada’s measured response to Ethiopian crisis leaves some wanting more forceful action

With other nations more forcefully denouncing the actions of the Ethiopian government, Canada’s measured response to the crisis unfolding in Ethiopia has drawn a mixed reaction.

In the last month, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.), in the House of Commons Chamber in the West Block building on Nov. 25. Along with speaking Inuktitut in her riding and in the House, Ms. Idlout requested that the sign for her MP office in the Justice Building in Ottawa include English, French, and Inuktitut, and has asked that her name also be shown in syllabics, both on ParlVu and in Hansard, when she rises to speak in the House. The Hill Times photograph by Andrew Meade

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New Fisheries Minister Murray has list of urgent priorities to grapple with

In a big portfolio with major decisions ranging from Indigenous rights, to environmental concerns, to shipping, observers say ‘hard-working’ Joyce Murray has a lot of pressure on her shoulders.

Ms. Murray (Vancouver Quadra, B.C.) comes into this environmentally charged frame-work with a long history of political and business work. She started out in B.C. with one of the first tree-planting contracts in the province, setting forward a domino effect that would eventually lead her corporation, Brinkman and Associates Reforestation, into planting its one billionth tree in 2011. As a politician, she began provincially, elected as a B.C. Lib-eral in 2001, serving as B.C.’s first water, air, and land protection minister, before moving on the federal level, where she’s served as an MP since 2008.

Re-elected with 43.6 per cent of the vote in September, Ms. Murray was shuffled from the now-defunct digital government portfolio to Fisheries, Oceans, and the Canadian Coast during October, taking over from former minister Bernadette Jordan, who lost her bid for re-election in South Shore-St. Margarets, N.S.

Guy-Pascal Weiner, director of commercial fisheries for the Wolastoqiyik Wabashpek First Nation, said that the only thing he’s heard about Ms. Murray is that she is “very conservative. [as in] she is very eco-friendly,” which he said is a good thing given “there’s no business if the resource is in bad shape, but sometimes decisions are not always well taken.”

“I’ve always been impressed by how smart she is, how well she thinks though problems,” said Andrew Trites, professor at the Institute for the Oceans and Fish-eries at the University of British Columbia. “It’s a big portfolio and there’s a lot of pressure being put on her to make decisions.”

Prof. Trites emphasized, that as his Member of Parliament, he’s seen that Ms. Murray “under-stands the need to conserve, she also understands the needs of those who need their livelihood.”

Liberal MP Kendal MacDonald (Fleetwood-Port Kells, B.C.) said she is warm, intelligent, and collab-orative.

Prof. Kendal emphasized, that as his Member of Parliament, he’s seen that Ms. Murray “under-stands the need to conserve, she also understands the needs of those who need their livelihood.”

Ms. Murray’s portfolio change “has added a lot of scrutiny,” said Michael Fullen, president of the Federation of Canadian Fishers. “There’s been a lot of other portfolio changes and it’s clear that the Department of Fisheries and Oceans’ policies result in fewer jobs.”

In his portfolio change, Ms. Murray will be working with the House Fisheries and Oceans Committee, which typically has eastern MPs, thus allowing for a combination of her knowledge of the West with the insight of other Members.

There may also be more room for political manoeuvring for the new minister, Prof. Silver said. She noted that the former minister was largely pulled into political manoeuvring for the new minister, Prof. Silver said.

While Prof. Pauly said he expects Ms. Murray to have an ear to these issues, “what she can do is a bigger problem. Ministers come and go very rapidly, the DFO is very entrenched and it’s a sprawling bureaucracy.”

Prof. Silver echoed this sentiment, calling Ms. Murray “hard working,” and ready to take on the file with “the nimbleness in the political fish-erly file.” He said he was particularly interested in working with her on developing a Canada-wide strategy and the blue economy. As the founder of the Great Lakes Taskforce, Mr. Badawey empha-sized the “economic, environ-mental, and social impacts of the Great Lakes, and that’s important to the fisheries file.” He said that her ability to collaborate will be appreciated here, since this topic requires work across borders with many stakeholders.

Her long political career was of particular note to Jennifer Silver, associate professor of geog-raphy, environment, and geopolitics at University of Guelph.

What the position really needs is somebody with a familiarity for coastal provinces and people, and familiarity with the way in which political machinations [may play out], but also the way in which different stakeholders will want to talk about these things and the different positions they take,” she said, noting that Ms. Murray has the nimbleness in the political sphere and the regional back-ground to do well in the role.

For Keith Watts, general manager of Torsat Fish Produc-ers Co-operative, the key for Ms. Murray is to navigate, particular-ly in regards to Indigenous rights and fisheries.

“She’s high time that the federal government respected Indig-enous rights based fisheries, not just trying to deflect and smooth over with nice talk and no sub-stance.”

The fisheries and oceans minister position has jumped from coast to coast to coast since the Liberals under Justin Trudeau (Papineau, Que.) took power. Prior to Ms. Jordan holding the position, Jonathan Wilkinson (North Vancouver, B.C.) was fisheries minister, preceded by Dominic LeBlanc (Beaujoué, N.B.) and former Liberal MP Hunter Tootoo, who represented Nunavut.

“I think a western perspective on marine resources is actually a good thing,” Mr. Weiner said. “It’s a different mindset than East Coast folks. I think a change of scenery, a different outlook on things, could be welcomed.”

Mr. Hardie noted that Ms. Murray will be working with the House Fisheries and Oceans Committee, which typically has eastern MPs, thus allowing for a combination of her knowledge of the West with the insight of other Members.

For Prof. Trites, the name of the game is coming to a consensus on how marine mammals will be dealt with, with some fisheries pushing for a culling of seals and whales over the concern that “there’s not enough fish to go around.”

“It’s about defining the rela-tionship we want with marine resources and deciding whether or not marine mammals belong in our ecosystem, yes or no, and if so how we accommodate them and their needs.”

There’s also the classic ques-tions of capitalism and invest-ment, Prof. Silver said. With increasing interest from large Canadian and transnational firms in looking at “fish and seafood as a place to invest,” she said, “the minister might want to give some thought to the role of large and transnational firms in fisheries and the fish processing sector.”

For instance, she asked, do we need a balance between larger and smaller firms or do there need to be limits on foreign in vestments in these fisheries?

“We can’t afford another five years of the status quo,” Mr. Rangeley said in a press release. “The steps needed to [create change] may sometimes be diffi-cult but they are clear. Rebuilding wild fish populations, providing lasting support for coastal com-munities and helping feed future genera-tions, can be a part of this government’s legacy.”

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