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Federal Cabinet Ratings: A happy new year for Freeland; Hussen, Sohi face cold winter ahead

Files Trudeau government has found itself vulnerable on take toll on ministers responsible for them

December 14, 2018 – While members of the federal cabinet prepare to escape the political and literal biting cold of Ottawa during the winter break, some will leave Parliament Hill feeling more festive than others.

The second annual public opinion survey from the Angus Reid Institute canvassing Canadian opinion on the performance of the Trudeau government's cabinet finds some, such as Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland and Minister of Transport Marc Garneau, riding high once more.

With 49 per cent of Canadians saying she has done a 'good job' this year, Freeland's performance score of +20 (the percentage of those saying "good job" less those saying "bad job") is the highest among her peers.
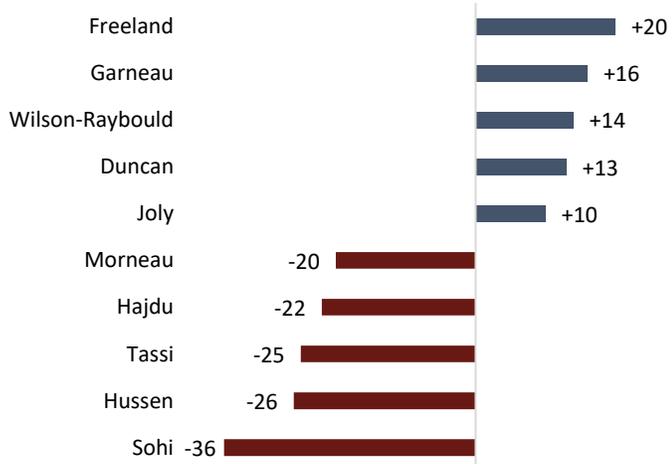
Others, such as Minister of Natural Resources Amarjeet Sohi and Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Ahmed Hussen – receive far less credit from the Canadian public.

Sohi, a key figure in the TransMountain tumult of 2018, receives a -36 – ten points worse than anyone else.

Top Five, Bottom Five 'Performance Scores' of federal cabinet ministers (% saying Good job minus bad job)

Minister	Score
Freeland	+20
Garneau	+16
Wilson-Raybould	+14
Duncan	+13
Joly	+10
Morneau	-20
Hajdu	-22
Tassi	-25
Hussen	-26
Sohi	-36

METHODOLOGY:

The Angus Reid Institute conducted an online survey from November 28 – December 6 among a representative randomized sample of 1,800 Canadian adults who are members of Angus Reid Forum. For comparison purposes only, a probability sample of this size would carry a margin of error of +/- 2 percentage points, 19 times out of 20. Discrepancies in or between totals are due to rounding. The survey was self-commissioned and paid for by ARI. Detailed tables are found at the end of this release.

More Key Findings:

- While he has garnered far fewer headlines this year, Finance Minister Bill Morneau receives the same score this year as he did last. Just under one-quarter of Canadians say he is doing a good job (23%) and more than four-in-ten disagree (43%)

- Morneau also holds a place as the most recognized minister in Justin Trudeau's cabinet. More than four-in-five (83%) recognize him, followed by Freeland (79%), Harjit Sajjan (75%) and Catherine McKenna (75%)

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- Even among the Liberal base, two ministers do not have a positive performance score. Minister of Seniors Filomena Tassi receives an even rating with 2015 Trudeau supporters, and Minister of National Revenue Diane Lebouthillier receives a -3

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<u>The Recognizable Faces</u>

Canadians' familiarity with cabinet members has grown over the last year. When the Angus Reid Institute asked in November of 2017, just five cabinet ministers were known by more than six-in-ten Canadians. That number more than doubles to eleven this year, though awareness appears to have brought with it increased negativity about some ministers' performances.

Note, each respondent was shown either 11 or 12 cabinet ministers, along with their name and title. They were asked whether they believe each person is doing a good or bad job, or if they did not recognize that person or know enough to say.

As mentioned, Minister of Foreign Affairs Chrystia Freeland, whose primary task in 2018 was overseeing the negotiation of the new North American Free Trade Agreement is seen to be doing a good job by half of Canadians (49%) – considerably higher than anyone else in the cabinet. Her +20 performance score among all respondents, and +65 among Liberal supporters, represent the highest marks in this exercise.

Ministers of Transport, Marc Garneau, and Public Safety, Ralph Goodale, are the two other cabinet members whose awareness is above 62 per cent and who receive a net positive score from Canadians.

Seven other members are recognizable to at least that many Canadians, but each receives a net negative score. The three ministers facing the most criticism are those dealing with issues that proved difficult for the Liberal party in 2018.

Minister of Finance Bill Morneau is praised by 23 per cent of Canadians and panned by 43 per cent. The Liberals have faced concern about the federal deficit and criticism over the decision to purchase the TransMountain pipeline expansion project earlier this year – both of which likely contribute to the view many hold of the Finance Minister.

Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Ahmed Hussen and Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction Bill Blair fare poorly, with a -26 and -21 score respectively. This was a year when Canadians voiced significant concern about immigration and asylum claims, with many saying immigration levels were too high, and that the surge of irregular border crossings was reaching crisis levels.

The 10 most well-known ministers are shown in the table that follows.

Canadian assessments of the 10 most recognized Ministers in the federal government Ratings are given only by respondents who recognize the Minister in question					
Minster Of…		Awareness	Good Job	Mixed	Bad Job	Performance Score (Good – Bad)
Finance - Morneau		83%	23%	34%	43%	-20
Foreign Affairs - Freeland		79%	49%	22%	29%	+20
National Defence - Sajjan		76%	32%	28%	39%	-7
Environment and Climate Change - McKenna		75%	32%	28%	40%	-8
Transport - Garneau		74%	37%	42%	21%	+16
Public Safety and Emergency Preparedness - Goodale		73%	36%	31%	33%	+3
Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction – Blair		68%	22%	35%	43%	-19
Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship - Hussen		65%	23%	27%	49%	-26
Indigenous Services - Philpott		64%	23%	45%	32%	-9
Veterans Affairs, Associate National Def. - O'Regan		62%	24%	35%	41%	-17

The Middle Ministers

The next group of ministers are those recognized by between half and six-in-ten Canadians. They are familiar but not as recognizable as the top 10, who make up the public face of the government.

The minister who receives the most praise in this group is Minister of Justice and Attorney General Jody Wilson-Raybould. Four-in-ten (39%) say Wilson-Raybould has done a good job thus far. She figured heavily in the implementation and communication of the Liberal government's marijuana legalization and control strategy. The proportion saying she is doing a "good job" rises to 48 per cent in her home province of British Columbia.

Mélanie Joly, who was shuffled from Heritage Minister to Tourism, Official Languages and la Francophonie in a move that many saw as a demotion, receives the second highest performance score in this group at +10.

The member of cabinet with the worst net rating is Amarjeet Sohi, in charge of Natural Resources. Sohi appears to be taking the brunt of a perceived failure of the federal government to secure the construction of the TransMountain pipeline expansion. Early in December the Edmonton MP penned an op-ed in the Calgary Herald attempting to convince Albertans that the government "has always had your back". It apparently failed to resonate as 61 per cent of Alberta residents say he has done a bad job (see comprehensive tables for provincial results).

Overall, Sohi has a performance score of -36. No other minister is lower than -26.

Canadian assessments Ministers recognized by half to six-in-ten residents Ratings are given only by respondents who recognize the Minister in question						
Minster Of…		Awareness	Good Job	Mixed	Bad Job	Performance Score (Good – Bad)
Justice, Attorney General of Canada - Wilson-Raybould		61%	39%	36%	25%	+14
Tourism, Official Languages and la Francophonie - Joly		57%	36%	38%	26%	+10
Crown-Indigenous Relations - Bennett		57%	23%	39%	38%	-15
Innovation, Science and Economic Dev. - Bains		57%	21%	39%	41%	-20
Natural Resources - Sohi		54%	17%	30%	53%	-36

Health - Petitpas Taylor		53%	28%	39%	32%	-4
Intergov. and Northern Affairs and Internal Trade - LeBlanc		50%	25%	42%	32%	-7
Agriculture and Agri-Food - MacAulay		50%	24%	56%	20%	+4
Employment, Workforce Dev. and Labour - Hajdu		49%	21%	36%	43%	-22
International Trade Diversification - Carr		49%	29%	39%	32%	-3
Status of Women - Monsef		49%	31%	33%	36%	-5

The Relative Unknowns

The least well-known member of the cabinet for the second year in a row is Minister of Democratic Institutions Karina Gould. Just 32 per cent of Canadians say they know who she is, up from 29 per cent last year.

Despite having only been appointed Minister of Seniors in July, Filomena Tassi has already surpassed Gould in awareness. Unfortunately for Tassi, while four-in-ten Canadians know who she is, among them, just 19 per cent say she is doing a good job, and her performance score is -25. Tassi fares poorly with her most important constituency – those Canadians over the age of 55. Among them, half say she is doing a poor job. (See comprehensive tables for responses by age)

The following table shows the 13 least-recognized members of cabinet, and the assessment of their performance among Canadians who are aware of them:

Minster Of…		Awareness	Good Job	Mixed	Bad Job	Performance Score (Good – Bad)
Families, Children and Social Dev - Duclos		48%	30%	43%	27%	+3
Fisheries, Oceans and Coast Guard – Wilkinson		45%	31%	45%	24%	+7
President of Treasury Board Digital Govt - Brison		45%	23%	48%	29%	-6
Small Business and Export Promotion –Ng		44%	23%	46%	32%	-9
National Revenue - Lebouthillier		44%	19%	45%	36%	-17
Leader of the Govt in HOC- Chagger		43%	27%	43%	29%	-2
International Development - Bibeau		41%	29%	41%	29%	0
Seniors –Tassi		40%	19%	36%	44%	-25
Infrastructure, Communities - Philippe Champagne		39%	26%	39%	35%	-9
Science and Sport - Kirsty Duncan		39%	35%	43%	22%	+13
Heritage and Multiculturalism – Rodriguez		38%	29%	39%	32%	-3
Public Services, Procurement, Accessibility - Qualtrough		33%	29%	41%	30%	-1
Democratic Institutions - Gould		32%	25%	37%	38%	-13

Table title: **Canadian assessments Ministers recognized by fewer than half of residents. Ratings are given only by respondents who recognize the Minister in question**

The partisan factor

As one might anticipate in the political climate of 2018, partisanship is a significant factor in driving opinion of cabinet members. Not a single cabinet member receives a net positive score from non-Liberals (those who voted for any other federal party in 2015). Freeland comes closest, with 37 per cent of non-Liberals saying she has done a good job and 40 per cent disagreeing. Among Liberals however, seven-in-ten (72%) say she has performed well, and just a handful (7%) say "bad job".

The following table shows how each of the ten best-known ministers fare among their own base, relative to past non-Liberal voters. For such results for all cabinet members, see comprehensive tables.

For each one, please indicate whether you think the person pictured has done a good job or a bad job over the first two years of the Trudeau government.					
Ministers sorted by Awareness	**Liberals**			**Non-Liberals**	
	Good Job	**Bad Job**	**Performance Score**	**Good Job**	**Bad Job**	**Performance Score**
Morneau	41%	15%	+26	15%	55%	-40
Freeland	72%	7%	+65	37%	40%	-3
Sajjan	57%	17%	+40	21%	49%	-28
McKenna	55%	18%	+37	20%	51%	-31
Garneau	60%	3%	+57	26%	30%	-4
Goodale	49%	16%	+33	31%	40%	-9
Blair	36%	17%	+19	16%	54%	-38
Hussen	41%	23%	+18	15%	61%	-46
Philpott	38%	11%	+27	15%	43%	-28
O'Regan	40%	22%	+18	16%	51%	-35

How cabinet performance compares to last year

Comparing their scores from 2017 to 2018, only Kirsty Duncan, Minister of Sport and Science, has a performance score higher this year than last. She moves from +12 in 2017 to +13. Due to such significant levels of polarization, noted in the preceding section, even ministers who fare well among their base have seen a decline.

This trend significantly impacts many of the most high profile cabinet ministers. Harjit Sajjan is down 22 points from last year. So to is Minister of Environment and Climate Change Catherine McKenna. Her file has become increasingly prominent – and contentious – as the government focuses in on emission reduction targets and inches closer to the implementation date for a federal carbon tax.

Ralph Goodale, Minister of Public Safety and the highest scoring minister in 2017, is down 21 points this year. Goodale and the federal government faced criticism after Terri-Lynne McClintic, convicted co-conspirator in the kidnapping and murder of an eight-year-old child, was transferred from a prison to an Indigenous healing lodge. The government ultimately tightened the rules regarding this type of transfer and McClintic is back in a Kitchener prison.

Notably, despite Canada's unemployment rate recently falling to 5.6 per cent – the lowest since 1976, Minster of Employment, Labour and Workforce Development Patty Hajdu sees a net decline of 25 points in her performance score. This may be due to the fact that Hajdu's remit also included the recent Canada Post strike, in which union members were legislated back to work.

Summary of Performance Scores			
	Among those who are aware of each individual minister: See Comprehensive tables for individual sample sizes		
	Performance Score 2017	Performance Score 2018	Change
Morneau	-20	-20	0
Freeland	23	20	-3
Sajjan	15	-7	-22
McKenna	14	-8	-22
Garneau	21	16	-5
Goodale	24	3	-21
Blair	-	-19	-
Hussen	-6	-26	-20
Philpott	1	-9	-10
O'Regan	-1	-17	-16
Wilson-Raybould	22	14	-8
Joly	11	10	-1
Bennett	-5	-15	-10
Bains	10	-20	-30
Sohi	-2	-36	-34
Petitpas-Taylor	-5	-4	-1
LeBlanc	20	-7	-27
MacAulay	6	4	-2
Hajdu	3	-22	-25
Carr	-8	-3	-5
Monsef	13	-5	-18
Duclos	5	3	-2
Wilkinson	-	7	-
Brison	7	-6	-13
Ng	-	-9	-
Lebouthillier	-10	-17	-7
Chagger	2	-2	-4
Bibeau	11	0	-11
Tassi	-	-25	-
Champagne	9	-9	-18
Duncan	12	13	+1
Rodriguez	-	-3	-
Qualtrough	1	-1	-2
Gould	-7	-13	-6

The **Angus Reid Institute (ARI)** was founded in October 2014 by pollster and sociologist, Dr. Angus Reid. ARI is a national, not-for-profit, non-partisan public opinion research foundation established to advance education by commissioning, conducting and disseminating to the public accessible and impartial statistical data, research and policy analysis on economics, political science, philanthropy, public administration, domestic and international affairs and other socio-economic issues of importance to Canada and its world.

For detailed results by age, gender, region, education, and other demographics, click here.