

Smith urges PM to give Alberta more say in selection of judges

Premier threatens to withhold funding for new appointments if Ottawa doesn't agree to demands

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JUSTICE REPORTER

Alberta Premier Danielle Smith is calling on Prime Minister Mark Carney to give her United Conservative Party government more say over judicial appointments, citing what she described as the province's distinct legal traditions.

In a letter to the Prime Minister published on Tuesday alongside a news release, Ms. Smith said she also wants the province to have an increased say in appointments to the Supreme Court of Canada, and for Ottawa to reduce bilingualism requirements for judges on the top court.

Ms. Smith said she would withhold some judicial funding if Ottawa did not agree to her demands. It was the latest in a series of moves from the Premier through

which she has sought to impose more provincial political power in the realm of the courts.

"We are simply asking for a formal and meaningful role in the judicial appointment process," Ms. Smith said in the news release, adding that such changes would support national unity – an allusion to the separatist movement in her province.

According to Canada's Constitution, Ottawa is in charge of appointing judges to higher levels of courts across the country, including the Supreme Court and the federal courts, as well as the appeal and superior courts in each province.

Justice Minister Sean Fraser's spokeswoman, Lola Dandybaeva, said in a statement on Tuesday that the federal government "values engagement with Alberta" and will continue to work within Canada's constitutional framework.

"Respecting that framework is essential

to protecting Canada's sovereignty and democratic system," Ms. Dandybaeva said.

Tuesday's demands represent another foray from Ms. Smith into the justice system, after other decisions and declarations in recent months.

In late January, on a radio show, in response to a caller's question about federal bail laws, Ms. Smith said, "I wish I could direct the judges." Critics saw the remark as potential political interference in the courts. Several days later, top judges in Alberta, led by the province's acting Chief Justice Dawn Pentecost, issued a rare statement that underlined the importance of independent courts in a healthy democracy.

Ms. Smith last fall shielded four different laws from court challenges by invoking the notwithstanding clause in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

■ SMITH, A6

Canada, France signal support for Greenland with consulate openings

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NUUK, GREENLAND

Greenlanders are about to receive some crucial diplomatic support from Canada and France in the island's continuing battle with Donald Trump.

Governor-General Mary Simon will be in Nuuk on Friday to open a consulate in the capital. A Canadian Coast Guard ship, the Jeanne Goodwill, will be on hand for the ceremony. And French officials are expected to open a consulate on Thursday.

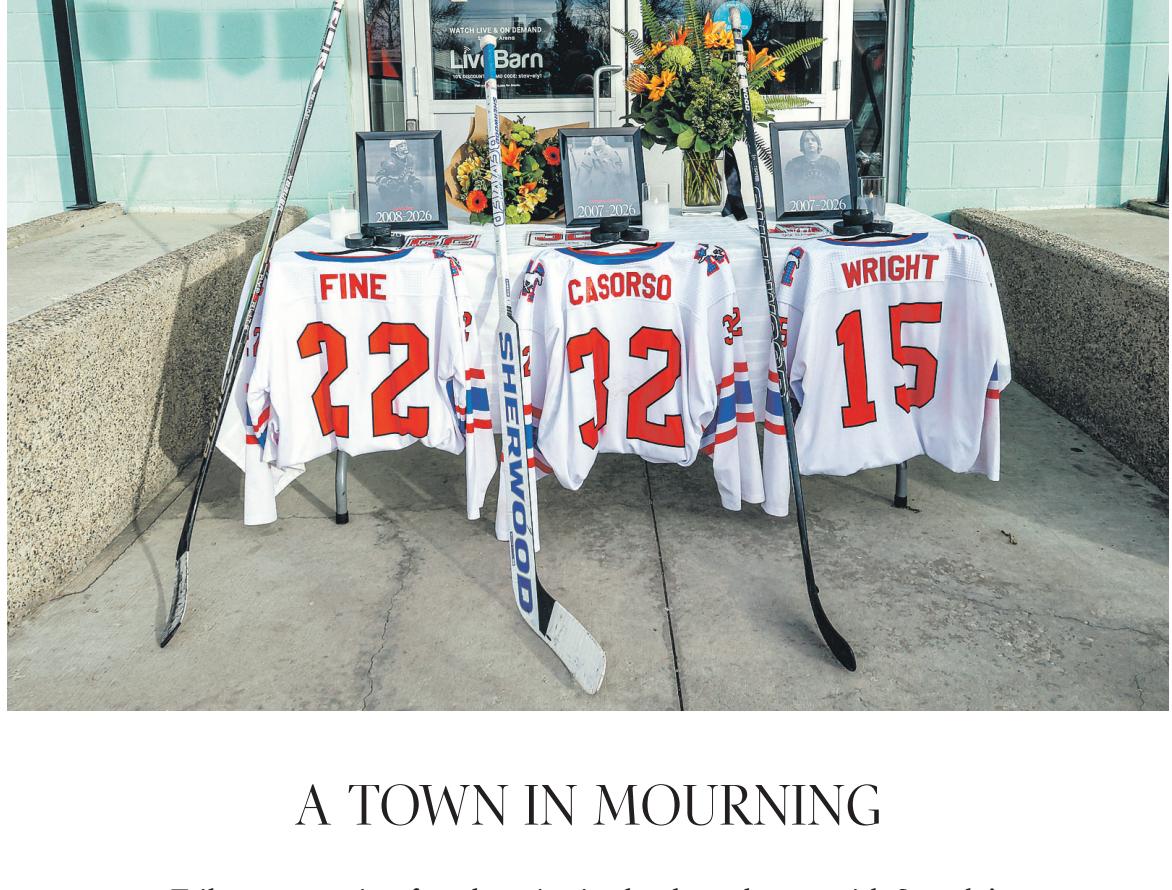
Canada and France are among the first countries to establish diplomatic missions in Greenland in the wake of the U.S. President's threats to acquire the Arctic island, which is a self-governing part of Denmark. Canada's pledge to set up a consulate was made in late 2024 as part of a review of Arctic foreign policy, but the proposal took on added importance in recent months as Mr. Trump ratcheted up his rhetoric.

Currently, only Iceland and the United States have diplomatic consulates in Nuuk, although several countries have honorary consuls, who are typically local citizens and provide limited services.

The new consulates are part of a growing effort by European and NATO countries to show support for Greenland and its 57,000 residents.

"Let me be clear: Canada stands firmly in support of the people of Greenland who will determine their own future," Ms. Simon said during a speech at the Arctic Frontiers conference in Norway on Tuesday. "Another country should not interfere in a sovereign state," she added in an interview with the CBC.

■ GREENLAND, A7



A TOWN IN MOURNING

Tributes pour in after three junior hockey players with Stavely's Southern Alberta Mustangs were killed in a car crash ■ A3

Jerseys honouring Caden Fine, Cameron Casorso and JJ Wright lie atop a memorial outside the main doors of the local arena in Stavely, Alta., on Tuesday. LARRY MACDOUGAL/THE CANADIAN PRESS



BRIANA SHEPHERD/AP

AUSTRALIA 'Determination and courage'

Boy, 13, swims for hours to save mother, siblings swept out to sea ■ A4

FOLIO
At Sweden's Icehotel, Alberta artists sculpt ephemeral scenes inspired by home ■ A8

REPORT ON BUSINESS
Hedge-fund trading of government bonds poses risk to financial stability, BoC report warns ■ B1

Upward trend: Winter Games' newest event, ski mountaineering, puts a familiar sport in reverse

ERIC REGUY
EUROPEAN BUREAU CHIEF
BORMIO, ITALY

Racing down mountains on skis has been an Olympic sport since the German Winter Games in Garmisch-Partenkirchen in 1936. The Milan Cortina Winter Olympics will see a variation on the theme: racing up mountains.

Ski mountaineering, a combination of skiing and hiking, will debut as a medal sport in this year's games, which start on Friday. Skimo, as it's known, is the only completely new competition in the whole event – and long overdue, since it is one of mankind's oldest winter activities. (Dual moguls is also a new sport in the Games, but it's a variation of an existing race.)

"Skimo was an activity before it became a sport," said Italy's Robert Antonioli, the winner of seven gold medals in the skimo World Championships. "If you wanted to go from one mountain to another in the snow, you had to do skimo."

Before the invention of ski lifts, mountain people who needed to travel or hunt in the winter attached wooden boards to their feet and, no doubt, unstrapped them on the difficult bits. Some of the first-known skis are more than 1,000 years old.

In more recent times, military games inspired the development of what would become a sport. The 1924 Olympics in Chamonix, France, held a military patrol competition that required competitors to shoot guns at targets after skiing through the mountains. The sport evolved into the biathlon in later Olympics.

Skimo is effectively the son of the biathlon, without the bang-bang bits. The first skimo World Championships were held in 2002 in France. They take place every two years, alternating with continental championships. There is also a World Cup circuit held every year.

The sport took off during the COVID-19 pandemic, when training outdoors, alone in the cool, clean, winter mountain air, proved rather more appealing than being glued to the couch watching Netflix.

Skimo is still not a huge sport, but it has been gaining popularity in recent years and has captured the imaginations of northern Italians. Olympic skimo tickets have sold out in what Milan Cortina organizers called "an extraordinary public response" in a statement this week to journalists.

■ OLYMPICS, A7

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PODCAST Dave McGinn checks in on what's gone right and wrong with Canada's \$10-a-day child-care program tgam.ca/TheDecibel



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