

## January 2022

### **January 5<sup>th</sup>**

In a recent report, I referenced an exchange that I had in June of 2020 with the Minister of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

In the exchange I was asking the question; "Can the Minister please tell us the current balance of the EI account?"

As it would turn out I never did receive an answer to that question from the Minister in question.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) also noticed the Liberal government secrecy around the EI account balance.

The PBO stated:

*"Given that forecasted EI expenses far exceed projected program revenues, the EI Operating Account is on track for a cumulative deficit of \$52 billion by the end of 2024."*

Why does this matter?

As I pointed out back in my December 2020 report;

*"by law, the EI premiums that Canadians pay must cover the expenses of the Employment Insurance program. If the expenses exceed the revenue, as is currently the case, the Government must, within a seven-year time frame, recover the deficit of EI funds that have been paid out."*

Why mention this now?

As of January 1st, 2022, the EI premiums many Canadians pay will potentially increase.

Next year, on January 1st. of 2023, when a two-year freeze on EI increases expires, EI premiums will increase again.

The EI increase for this year is based on the maximum insurable earnings increasing from \$56,300 to \$60,300.

This works out to a maximum weekly EI benefit increase in from \$595 to \$638 per week.

In turn the maximum annual EI premium will increase to \$952.74 as opposed to \$889.54 in the previous year.

Next year the EI premiums will start to increase more significantly from \$1.58 per \$100 of insurable earnings up to \$1.83 per \$100 of insurable earnings by the year 2027.

Obviously, these EI premium increases mean many workers may have less net take home pay as a result.

At the same time, a recent University 2022 food prices study, prepared by researchers with Dalhousie University, the University of Guelph, the University of Saskatchewan and the University of British Columbia, has forecast that food prices in Canada will increase between 5% to 7% in 2022.

In other words, at a time when many households may see net income drop, the purchasing power of your dollar will be less because of these inflationary pressures.

My question this week:

How much are you concerned about this situation?

## **January 12<sup>th</sup>**

Recently my email inbox, as well as a significant number of calls to my office have raised significant opposition to a proposed annual home equity tax.

The overwhelming feedback on this topic has come somewhat as a surprise to me as this what not a major media story nor have I raised this topic in a weekly report.

Because of the level of responses I have received to this proposed homeowners equity tax will be the focus of this week's report.

First off – what is it?

Recently a Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) funded report from a group known as “Generation Squeeze”.

This report recommended an annual home equity tax on residences values in excess of \$1 million dollars or more.

The proposed tax would be 0.2% for homes with a value between \$1 million up to \$1.5 million and would increase again to 0.5% up to \$2 million and would ultimately increase to 1% on homes valued over \$2 million payable annually like income taxes.

What if you could not afford to pay the annual home equity tax?

The program would be designed to defer the balance owing with a rate of interest charged on the outstanding balance.

The idea being the balance owing would be paid when the home is sold, or title transferred through an inheritance.

How does this make housing more affordable?

In theory the government would use this tax revenue to invest in affordable housing.

The report's author also believes it would create a disincentive for those who invest in housing for a monetary return.

My thoughts?

To be candid I oppose this tax proposal.

As has already been shared with me, there are citizens who now find themselves living in homes with a value in excess of a million dollars and would be subject to such a tax despite not having purchased a "million dollar home".

As these individuals point out, they could never afford to purchase a million-dollar home.

On the surface they can "sell" and cash in on the increase in their home value but as has been pointed out, with the average price of a home in Kelowna now over \$1 million, it is pointless as your gains would be wiped out trying to purchase in the current market.

As we have seen large jumps in home values throughout BC in recent years, it would be only a matter of time before more and more households qualify to pay this tax regardless of their household income.

It has also been pointed out that selling a million-dollar home in itself negatively can impact your equity as real estate commissions and the BC property purchase tax are much higher on homes with a value in this price range.

As one individual shared with my office, they are only a "millionaire" homeowner on paper and could not afford to sell and buy another home at the current market rates as it is all relative.

I have heard other reasons why citizens are opposed to this idea.

One common question is what happens in the event that housing markets decline, having a natural effect on reducing your home equity, when at the same time the home equity tax you owe would continue to increase.

There is also a challenge when the value of the home you own does not necessarily accurately reflect your household income and by extension the ability to pay a home equity tax.

From own perspective I don't believe the Government has a revenue problem that requires a home equity tax.

The challenge is spending.

As one example, our current Liberal Government has invested in the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank.

I believe our shares in this bank should be sold and those funds would be better spent investing here in Canada, building Canadian infrastructure.

Final and important point.

The Liberal Government has stated that they will not be implementing this home equity tax.

My question this week:

Do you support the idea of a home equity tax to fund affordable housing?

## January 19<sup>th</sup>

This week Canada's Parliamentary Budget Office (PBO) released the 2021 Economic and Fiscal update report for Parliamentarians.

The reports tells us that:

"Since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Government has spent, or has planned to spend, \$541.9 billion in new measures over 2019-20 to 2026-27, of which \$176.6 billion (or about one third) is not part of the COVID-19 Response Plan".

The PBO also notes that there is \$57.8 billion in new spending that will be related to the Liberals 2021 election platform.

One interesting observation from the PBO is that Canada has now recovered 106% of jobs that were lost at the outset of the pandemic.

Despite this positive news, the PBO notes that the government has also dropped previously announced plans to wind down stimulus spending by the end of the 2021-22 fiscal year.

Noting that the labour market in Canada has now recovered, the PBO questions the need to continue to spend billions on stimulus spending despite previous plans to wind that spending down.

From my perspective here locally, one of the most frequent concerns that I hear is from pensioners and families who are struggling to keep up with inflation at the pumps and at the grocery stores.

I have also heard from small and medium sized business owners about the difficulty they have filling jobs, and worsening supply chain issues leading to shortages that lead to increased prices for goods and services.

Many are worried that more stimulus spending may only further increase inflationary pressures making goods even less affordable.

Given Canada's current employment numbers, low interest rates, coupled with higher levels of government spending both in Canada and the United States during a time where we have seen continued supply chain issues, leads to bigger questions around inflation.

Statistics Canada has recently reported that Canada's inflation in December was running at 4.8%.

Economists have noted that this is the largest surge of inflation we have seen in 30 years.

My question this week relates to stimulus spending and its role in the economy.

While the debate in Ottawa will continue on the need for more stimulus spending versus winding it down, what is your opinion here locally on stimulus spending?

## January 26<sup>th</sup>

It was on June 1st of 2021 that the Liberal Government last increased the “stress test” for home buyers taking on a mortgage, which encompasses the vast majority of home buyers.

For those unaware, a stress test requires that a home buyer must qualify at a higher rate of interest compared to current lower interest rates to ensure they can still make their mortgage payments if interest rates rise.

In essence a stress test is intended to ensure that a home buyer has some excess fiscal capacity at their level of income to afford an increase on their mortgage payment if interest rates should increase.

While some may argue that the stress test protects people from potentially higher interest rates, in my experience many who are fortunate enough to pass the stress test and buy a home don't stop there.

They proceed to borrow to make additional purchases, like home improvement, furniture or car loans.

Why do I raise this now?

As many will know this week it was widely expected that the Bank of Canada (BOC) would raise the key interest rate however this did not occur.

Instead, the current rate was maintained although the BOC did warn that:

“Interest rates will need to increase to control inflation. Canadians should expect a rising path for interest rates,”

This means for those with a variable rate mortgage. their monthly payments will be increasing in the near future.

For those with a fixed rate mortgage, when their current rate expires, they may also face higher rates upon renewal.

While stress tests are important public policy tools, there are also other challenges that remain.

Based on feedback I am hearing from many households here in our region, there are new fiscal challenges emerging putting pressures on household finances.

Obviously with the highest in 30-year inflation, many citizens are now forced into paying more for goods, groceries and in some cases services and yet receive less value in return.

Gasoline and diesel prices have increased, likewise the cost of gas to heat your home has also increased, as have some of the taxes on your home heating.

At the same time many citizens have also noticed, because of higher premiums for payroll deductions like the Canada Pension Plan, that their net take home pay is less from what it was last year.

In addition, despite Liberal Government promises to reduce your monthly cell phone bills by “25%” this has not occurred.

While the Liberal Government also promised not to tax online streaming services such as Netflix, as many now know, online streaming services are now taxed.

All of these increased taxes and fees take a bigger bite out of your household net income at a time when payroll deductions are doing the same.

Depending on how much the Bank of Canada raises the interest rate, I have heard from various citizens who indicate their monthly mortgage payment could increase as much as \$400 to \$800 a month, which is a significant hit to their net income.

Some have suggested increased interest rates combined with higher inflation, fees and tax increases is creating a situation they cannot afford.

More so as ever increasing CPP and Employment Insurance premiums (which the freeze on premiums ends this year) further erodes their net discretionary income.

My question this week:

Are you concerned about your own household affordability?

## February 2022

### **February 2<sup>nd</sup>**

For the most part, events that are the focus of attention in Ottawa are seldom the same concerns that I hear from citizens locally.

This is why Ottawa is often referred to as “the Ottawa bubble”.

This week all of that changed.

The focus of many across Canada has been on Ottawa as the trucker “freedom convoy” has arrived in addition to news mid-week that the Leader of the Official Opposition was also voted out as leader by a Conservative caucus vote.

By the time you read this there will likely be a new interim leader of the official opposition that will have been elected by Conservative MP's.

As for the “freedom convoy”, it is less clear what will become of this protest movement currently shutting down much of the downtown area around Parliament Hill.

During my time in Ottawa, I have been fortunate to sit on both the Government and Opposition sides of the House.

Over that time frame I cannot recall the exact number of different protests that have occurred on the front lawn of the House of Commons, but it is fair to say a great many.

It is unfortunate, but not uncommon, that fringe groups with a different message or agenda will also join in on a protest.

Sadly, this has occurred with the Freedom Convoy in Ottawa where some individuals have used the protest as an opportunity to spread hateful messages and symbols.

Examples include use of Nazi and Confederate flags, disrespect of national moments, and other actions that have no place in Canada.

Fortunately, all Parliamentarians have condemned these hateful messages through various channels including some resolutions that passed unanimously in the House of Commons.

That said, there are many peaceful, law abiding citizens, the majority of them professional truck drivers, who have expressed other areas of concern most often not the opposition to vaccination but a mandatory vaccine mandate where one can lose their job if they are not vaccinated.

Other concerns have been raised against the Prime Minister specifically as well his Liberal Government.

From my perspective this is also not uncommon.

When I was on the Government side of the House there were often protests against former PM Stephen Harper.

Last year we witnessed protests where rail lines and some highways were shut down in opposition to energy projects.

During the protests last year PM Trudeau was quoted by CTV News as saying,

“Prime Minister Justin Trudeau said the disruptions must be resolved through dialogue, not by ordering in the police.”

The PM further added...

“We are not the kind of country where politicians get to tell the police what to do in operational matters,”.

While Prime Minister Trudeau, in the past, has recommended dialogue as a means to resolving peaceful protests, in the case of this current protest, the Prime Minister is refusing to meet with any of them.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the Prime Minister’s decision?

## **February 9<sup>th</sup>**

This has been another unusual week here in Ottawa.

The protest of the truckers in the “Freedom Convoy” remains a topic of serious concern here in Ottawa and is one I continue to hear about from local citizens at home as well.

On Tuesday an unusual event occurred when a Liberal MP, Joël Lightbound, a Quebec MP from the riding of Louis-Hébert staged a press conference.

While it not uncommon for MPs to host media events, this one was highly unusual in that MP Lightbound raised some serious concerns of his against PM Trudeau.

Specifically MP Lightbound, as reported by media stated:

“A decision was made to wedge, to divide and to stigmatize” Canadians over the topic of vaccination and vaccine mandates by PM Trudeau and the Liberal Party.

The Liberal MP stated it was time to “stop these divisive measures” and “it is time we stopped dividing people, pitting people against each other”.

As CBC reported “people who question existing policies should not be “demonized” by their prime minister.” And “It’s becoming harder and harder to know when public health stops and where politics begins,”

Ultimately by his own admission, MP Lightbound is concerned that the Prime Minister continued politicizing of vaccines and vaccine mandates risks undermining public trust in our country’s public health institutions.

It is rare for a Liberal MP to publicly call out the actions of the Prime Minister and I would like to commend



MP Joel Lightbound for sharing his concerns with Canadians at considerable risk to his own standing within the Liberal caucus.

From my own perspective I think we should all be mindful of the words of Prime Minister Trudeau from two years ago this February, when he said:

“There is always a place for Canadians to protest and express their frustrations, but we need to ensure that we also listen to each other. The reality of populism, and its siren song in our democracies these days, is a desire to listen only to ourselves and to people who agree with us and not to people of another perspective.”

My question this week: do you think it is time for the Prime Minister to follow his own advice or is he right to continue to ignore the concerns of those who oppose policies such as the vaccine mandates?

## **February 16<sup>th</sup>**

It was two weeks ago that CBC reported that Canada’s Chief Public Officer, Dr. Theresa Tam stated: “all existing public health policies, including provincial vaccine passports, need to be "re-examined" – because it's clear now that Canada and the rest of the world will be grappling with COVID-19 for months or years to come.”

Unfortunately, we have yet to see any sort of plan for our path forward from this Trudeau Liberal government.

As a result, earlier this week the official Conservative opposition tabled the following motion:

“That, given that provinces are lifting COVID-19 restrictions and that Dr. Theresa Tam has said that all existing public health measures need to be "re-evaluated" so that we can "get back to some normalcy", the House call on the government to table a plan for the lifting of all federal mandates and restrictions, and to table that plan by February 28, 2022.”

This motion by design did not dictate what that plan should look like only that we should have a plan.

It was a motion that Global News Chief Political Correspondent described as a “very reasonable proposition to the Government”.

Sadly, this Government is not, in my view, in a reasonable mood and opposed this motion.

Fortunately, the BLOC was in support of this motion leaving the NDP to be the decider.

I regret to inform you that once again the NDP has sided with the Liberals and opposed this motion.

With no plan in place the illegal protests have continued and the tension in Ottawa has increased significantly.

As you may now be aware, PM Trudeau announced he was invoking the Emergencies Act, which is the replacement for the former War Measures Act.

The War Measures Act was only used once outside of wartime by Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the request of

the Quebec Government in 1970.

The replacement Emergencies Act has also never been used until PM Justin Trudeau decided to invoke it this week, despite opposition from many provincial Premiers most notably Quebec.

However, the Premiers of BC and Ontario do support the Emergencies Act being used.

What is the Emergencies Act?

As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association describes it:

"The Emergencies Act can only be invoked when a situation "seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada" & when the situation "cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada."

The last reference is of particular importance: that "cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada."

As all Canadians will know prior to the Emergency Act being invoked police were able to peacefully clear the Freedom protest that was occurring on the Ambassador Bridge under existing Canadian laws.

In British Columbia we have witnessed the RCMP clearing anti-pipeline and old growth logging protests over the past six months also under existing Canadian laws.

In summary, much as the Canadian Civil Liberties Association has also concluded, PM Trudeau has "not met the threshold necessary to invoke the Emergencies Act".

So how does Prime Minister Trudeau get away with invoking this if the threshold is not met?

The Emergencies Act will need to be confirmed in the House of Commons where it is expected once again the NDP will prop up and support PM Trudeau and his minority Government.

My thoughts?

Aside from the fact that it is well established that existing Canadian Laws can deal with protests, in reality this is largely an Ottawa problem where the Ottawa police for whatever reason have either been unable or unwilling to deal with.

Now many Canadians will be subject to the Emergencies Act for what we hope will be a short period of time largely to solve an Ottawa problem.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the decision by PM Justin Trudeau to invoke the Emergencies Act?

## February 23<sup>rd</sup>

On Family Day, Monday, February 21, a vote was held in the House of Commons to “confirm the declaration of a public order emergency proclaimed on February 14, 2022.”

In other words, to confirm PM Trudeau invoking the Emergencies Act here in Canada.

I seldom share my personal thoughts, but I will admit to being surprised by this.

Given that the only remaining blockade in Canada was in Ottawa, that had been cleared by police over the previous weekend, I had anticipated the order would be revoked on Monday.

I was wrong.

Not only did the Prime Minister insist on maintaining the Emergency Act, he also made the vote a “confidence vote” meaning if the vote did not pass, the PM would once look to call an election.

Two Liberals MPs, who joined the Conservative and BLOC position that was also backed by the Canadian Civil Liberties Association that the legal threshold to invoke the Emergency Act had not been met, admitted they would have to vote in favor of the motion solely because of the Prime Minister’s threat.

The NDP had already committed support for invoking of the Emergency Act, before the details of what was being proposed by PM Trudeau was tabled in the House.

Ultimately the motion to invoke the Emergency Act passed with 185 votes in favour and 151 votes opposed, including my own.

Fortunately, two days later, on Wednesday, February the 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Prime Minister reconsidered and announced that the Emergency Act was being revoked.

I fully support this action by the Prime Minister to revoke these provisions of the Emergencies Act.

With so much attention on the trucker protest in Ottawa, and the debate in the House regarding the Emergency Act, other matters that occurred went largely unnoticed.

One item that was completely overlooked relates to your wireless cell phone bills.

On Wednesday February 9<sup>th</sup>, in the House of Commons, Prime Minister Trudeau made the following comment:

“We promised Canadian families that we would reduce the cost of their cell phone bill. Today, I am happy to announce that we have met our 25% price reduction target. In fact, we have done so three months ahead of schedule.”

This statement from PM Trudeau relates to his 2019 election promise that your cell phone bills would be reduced by 25% within two years saving the “average Canadian family \$1,000” a year.

The leads to my question for this week.

Have your wireless cell phone bills gone down by 25% as Prime Minister Trudeau claims they have?

## March 2022

### **March 2<sup>nd</sup>**

When I wrote my report last week Putin's invasion of the Ukraine had not yet begun.

One week later and we are now bearing witness to the atrocities of war due to the actions of the Russian President.

Over the past seven days we have also witnessed the incredible bravery of a proud Ukrainian nation determined to fight for their homeland that has inspired the free world to come together in response to this brutal invasion.

With sanctions growing by the day and more nations joining in to stand with Ukraine, the financial impacts are now beginning to show an impact in Russia.

In Ottawa there has been widespread support among all the parties behind the government to take increased action against the Putin regime.

From my own perspective I believe the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have been doing an effective job given that one country, such as Canada, can only do so much to impact a country like Russia that we have limited trade with.

I will continue to support the government in taking actions against Russian and standing with the Ukraine as it fights off this Putin provoked military invasion.

While I am writing this week's report, the Bank of Canada has announced that the key interest rate is being increased to 0.5%.

This is potentially the first interest rate increase with more to follow.

To some this will be of little concern, however I am already hearing from others who are very concerned.

Why?

In November of 2021, the consumer credit rating agency Equifax reported that "Increasing credit activity in tandem with mortgage growth has pushed the overall consumer debt up to \$2.2 trillion, an increase of 7.8 % in Q3 2021 when compared to Q3 2020."

It was also reported that "average consumer debt (excluding mortgages) is now \$20,739"

For consumers who have variable rate mortgages, a line of credit or credit card debt increased interest payments mean there is less money remaining in the household budget after making your monthly or bi-weekly payments.

Worse, this comes at a time when many household budgets are already stretched coping with increased costs on groceries, gasoline, utilities, taxes, insurance other inflationary pressures.

As others have noticed, net take home pay was also decreased in January of 2022 on account of larger payroll deductions from increased CPP deductions.

My question this week relates to the increase in interest rates:

Is this a concern to your household budget?

### **March 9<sup>th</sup>**

The atrocities of the Putin regime, as it continues to take the lives of innocent Ukrainians, remains a serious international concern for democratic nations.

Our Federal Government continues to explore and identify new actions to assist Ukraine, as well as targeting new measures to sanction Russia.

The Government and all Opposition parties remain in support of these ongoing efforts.

At the same time, we also recognize that there is only so much impact one country -- the size of Canada, can have.

Canada's sanctions against Russia are further complicated by the fact that we have overall, very limited dealings with Russia.

This raises the question as to what can Canada do both in the short term and the long term to restore peace, stability, and respect for democratic sovereignty to the Ukraine?

In the short term, aside from efforts already underway, Canada could also join with other European countries and allow Ukrainians to travel to Canada without requiring a visa.

This measure is supported by the Official Opposition however the Government thus far has not agreed to implement this policy.

In the longer-term Canada should no longer ignore that Russia supplies 40% of Europe's natural gas as well as a significant amount of oil.

This dependence on Russian oil and gas has limited Europe from taking more proactive stances against previous instances of Putin's aggression in the Ukraine.

Further by purchasing Russian oil and gas the proceeds from the sale of these natural resources are used by Putin to finance the Russian military campaign currently committing war crimes against Ukrainians.

This should not be tolerable.

If Canada was able to get our natural gas and oil to the Atlantic via pipeline, we would become a valuable alternative energy supplier for Europe to displace Russian oil and gas.

Likewise, if the Keystone XL pipeline was built the capacity of this pipeline would more than offset the current levels of Russian oil imported into the United States annually.

This would result in USA importing more energy from its trusted ally and closest trading partner here in Canada instead of looking to countries such as Iran or Venezuela for increased energy supply.

The major obstacle to doing this is of course politics.

Killing pipelines here in North America has become a hallmark of progressive politicians both here in Canada and in the United States.

These policies have been to the benefit of Russia, and potentially now Venezuela and Iran.

None of these countries have an environmental record or regulatory regime anywhere near approaching what exists here in Canada.

We must also not overlook that even within North America when pipelines are not built, we instead see a greater reliance of foreign oil and gas importations as well as greater use of oil by rail with our domestic oil and gas.

My question this week:

Do you believe Canada should play a great role in exporting our oil and gas to displace the European reliance on Russian oil and gas?

### **March 16<sup>th</sup>**

I had already written my report for this week and my question to you was going to be:

“Do you think it is time for the Federal Government to announce a plan and tell Canadians when federal mandates in areas such as air travel and at the Canada /USA border will be revised and updated?”.

I had yet to send it out when some good news arrived.

On Thursday, March 17<sup>th</sup>, the Federal Government has suggested it will indeed be revising and updating some of the current restrictions in federally regulated sectors, more specifically when travelling to Canada.

CTV has reported that “as of April 1, the federal government will be lifting the pre-arrival COVID-19 testing requirement at the border for fully vaccinated travellers.”

Passengers may still be subjected to random PCR testing at the airport, and travellers will still have to use the ArriveCAN app to enter their proof of vaccination and other required information,”

While this ongoing requirement of utilizing a government app will still pose a challenge for those without a smartphone, this is a significant step as it eliminates the current testing requirement that has resulted in many travellers, particularly destined for Canada’s tourism sector, to avoid coming to Canada.

For many here in the Okanagan tourism industry who depend upon visitors from United States, the federal restrictions on air travel, as well as at the border, have been resulting in cancellations and lost business.

Likewise for some Canadians with family members located outside of Canada, there have also been hardships as many have been unwilling to navigate around the ongoing restrictions.

Recently the Global Business Travel Association along with other group such as Destination Toronto had

called for the pre-departure testing requirement for fully vaccinated travellers to be removed no later than April 1.

It had also been brought to my attention that for many citizens fleeing Ukraine attempting to come to Canada would be more challenging to navigate and comply with Canada's federal restrictions.

I welcome the Federal Government for announcing these changes.

We are all deeply shocked and saddened by the ongoing death and destruction in Ukraine and I know that many citizens will do everything possible to help accommodate those who may soon be coming to Canada.

Eliminating some of the regulatory challenges to help make it easier to come to Canada is an important step.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the Federal Government announcing this elimination of the pre-arrival COVID-19 testing requirement?

### **March 23<sup>rd</sup>**

The House of Commons is in session this week and the week began with some interesting developments.

Most notable was an announcement between the Liberals and the NDP that a back-room deal has been reached that will result in the NDP supporting all Liberal confidence votes until the next election in 2025.

This deal essentially gives Prime Minister Trudeau the majority government he was unable to achieve at the ballot box in last year's \$600 million federal election.

In exchange for offering their support, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh received promises from PM Trudeau that the Government will work towards implementing some key NDP programs.

Some of the more significant programs include potential "dental coverage for low-income Canadians" that would start with children under 12 this year and be expand to those under 18, seniors and persons living with a disability next year.

Full implementation is promised by 2025 although coverage would be restricted to families with an income under \$90,000 annually.

At this point we do not know what dental services would be covered and to what extent.

Another promise involved in this deal is, and I quote directly:

"Continuing progress towards a universal national pharmacare program by passing a Canada Pharmacare Act by the end of 2023."

The details of how this program would work given that provinces like BC already have a successfully working pharmacare program are unknown.

The deal also includes promises related to “tackling the climate crisis”, a “better deal for workers” that includes a prohibition from using replacement workers or “scabs”, during a strike or lockout in a federally regulated sector.

There are also promises on reconciliation, a “fairer” tax system, and “making democracy work for people”.

From my perspective what is most fascinating about this deal is that it was only back in September of 2021 that PM Trudeau, as reported by CBC, “dismissed the NDP as an unserious option, saying the NDP has presented a vague plan to spend \$200 billion more over the next five years while offering few details”.

What the PM claimed was “unserious” then, he is supporting now- all in an exchange for power.

Meanwhile NDP leader Jagmeet Singh also said in September that: “We think Mr. Trudeau is bad for Canada because he's failed on the crises and made things worse, not better”.

The National Post this week has reported that: “Some MPs in the NDP caucus oppose the party’s confidence deal with the Liberals”.

As the Official Opposition, we view this as a power grab by PM Trudeau.

The PM could have introduced any of these measures since coming to power in 2015 and has failed to do so.

In fact, when the NDP proposed some of these measures through Opposition Day motions the Trudeau Government has consistently voted against them.

Likewise, nothing prevents Prime Minister Trudeau from proposing any of these actions in a government bill going forward that the NDP would clearly support.

However, none of that would give the Prime Minister the effective power of a majority and the added unaccountability and lack of transparency that comes with that.

My question this week:

Do you share the concerns voiced by unnamed NDP MPs that oppose this backroom deal?

## **March 30<sup>th</sup>**

Prime Minister Trudeau has long held a firm position on the Lockheed Martin F-35 multi-role jet fighter aircraft.

In 2015 his promise to Canadians was clear “we will not buy the F-35 stealth fighter bomber”.

PM Trudeau further stated the F-35 “did not work” and that “It no longer makes sense, if it ever did, to have a stealth, first-strike capacity fifth-generation fighter,”.

Things changed this week as the Trudeau Liberal Government announced that it has now decided that



the F-35 will be the preferred replacement aircraft for the CF-18.

Negotiations will now begin to purchase 88 new F-35 fighter jets at a currently estimated cost of around \$19 billion.

What was also very interesting about this Liberal decision was that recently released documents obtained under 'Access to Information' revealed the Liberal Government communication strategy to justify purchasing the F-35 was developed two years ago, in 2020.

Why was a “communications strategy” required?

As reported by the Ottawa Citizen it was to: “justify how the federal government could purchase the F-35 even though Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s claimed Canada wouldn’t buy the stealth fighter and had no use for it”.

What was in this communication strategy?

Advice to avoid “dealing with the direct statements from the Liberals that the F-35 would not be purchased. Instead, the focus was on the procurement process itself.”

This is largely what Procurement Minister Filomena Tassi did at the announcement that PM Trudeau did not attend.

This is not the first time the Liberals have played politics when it comes to replacing aging equipment required by our forces.

Many may recall that in 1992 the Liberals also campaigned to cancel the EH-101 helicopter replacement for the aging Sea-King helicopter.

This cancellation cost taxpayers \$478 million in penalties when the Liberals cancelled the \$4.8 billion EH-101 helicopter order that was to replace the aging Sea-Kings.

Cancelling the replacement for the Sea-King did not negate the need to replace this aging helicopter, it only delayed it further, and at a much greater cost to taxpayers.

In fact when the same Liberal government, only a few years later announced the replacement of the Sea-King, the new helicopters came at an increased cost said to be \$6.2 billion.

When that contract was finally signed for 28 new CH-148 Cyclone helicopters the total cost had increased more to \$7.6 billion.

Because of the many delays created by this Liberal cancellation, an additional \$495 million maintenance contract was required to keep the 55-year-old Sea-King helicopters safely in the air.

I mention all of this because playing politics with military procurement does little more than leave our forces with aging, less effective aircraft that is very costly to fly.

It also drives up the eventual replacement costs to taxpayers.

My question this week:

Do you support the purchase of the 88 Lockheed-Martin F-35 jet fighters?

## **April 2022**

### **April 6<sup>th</sup>**

It is not a secret that traditional print media organizations have struggled financially as advertisers have increased spending on online advertising.

This has forced some media organizations to adapt to this new dynamic by downsizing and in some cases closing their doors, a situation that no one in a healthy democracy embraces.

In 2019 the Trudeau Liberal Government announced a controversial program by creating a \$600 million dollar media subsidy fund.

This program raised concerns, even from some journalists, who questioned how media could be independent and criticize a government that was subsidizing it.

Others questioned how and who would decide what media organizations would or would not receive this bailout funding, and based upon what criteria.

In response to those concerns the Liberal Government did what it generally does when facing controversy and that is to make promises they have no actual intention of fulfilling.

The Minister, at the time, when asked if the Liberal Government would be transparent and disclose in detail how decisions were made on who received this money and why, answered: "Absolutely".

Flash forward to 2022, and while we do know who is on the five-member panel making these decisions, it remains a secret what media organizations were deemed eligible for this funding and how much they received.

It is also a secret what media organizations were rejected for this funding and the reasons why.

Full credit to the relatively small number of media organizations who have openly disclosed they did not apply for this funding.

The vast majority are silent on if they applied and received this funding.

Also, this week the Liberals have introduced Bill C-18 "An Act respecting online communications platforms that make news content available to persons in Canada".

According to the Liberals this bill "regulates digital news intermediaries to enhance fairness in the Canadian digital news marketplace and contribute to its sustainability."

What this really means is that the Liberals are proposing that online companies such as Facebook and Google will be forced to pay eligible Canadian media organizations for content that is shared on their platforms.

As many experts and stakeholders in Ottawa are pointing out, this raises serious concerns.

The purpose of advertising is ultimately to drive customers to a business.

Therefore, many media organizations share links of their content on social media sites hoping to drive traffic to their websites.

The vast majority of these media organizations sell their own online advertising, so the added traffic from platforms such as Facebook and Google help increase the revenue generated.

Now Bill C-18 proposes to financially penalize these same platforms for the fact that users share links that ultimately benefit the media organizations in question.

This process, it is proposed, would be regulated by the CRTC.

This once again raises the concern by what process will “eligible” media be determined or rejected?

Will eligible organizations be disclosed, or will this once again be a “secret”?

My question this week relates to Bill C-18.

Do you agree with the Liberal Government's increasing attempts to regulate “approved” online content?

### **April 13<sup>th</sup>**

Since my report last week the Trudeau Liberal government introduced the 2022 federal budget document.

As is often the case with government budgets, various media organizations, political pundits, as well as political parties will often characterize a budget in various ways and this one was no different.

From the perspective of the Finance Minister, she has labelled the budget as a “return to fiscal responsibility”.

Largely on account of her budget proposing to spend less money than the previous pandemic related budgets.

In other words, this is intended to be more of a “back to normal” budget.

This raises an important question.

What is ‘normal’ in terms of the federal budget going forward, post COVID?

For some context, in 2015, the final year of the Harper government, total federal spending was just over \$248 billion.

In the 2019-2020 fiscal year, with the Trudeau Liberal majority government, spending was just over \$338 billion.

That's a significant increase of \$90 billion.

Leaving out the COVID pandemic period, where total federal spending in the 2020-2021 fiscal period hit a record high of \$608 billion, we are now facing this new "back to fiscal reality" Liberal budget that proposes a total of \$434.3 billion in spending.

To recap, pre-COVID spending was \$338 billion and the Liberals "new normal" is now \$434 billion.

An increase of \$96 billion over pre-COVID spending.

What this means is that some of the "temporary" spending measures are now becoming permanent.

It is also worth pointing out that in the Liberals previous 2019 budget, they included forecasts of future spending in the amount of \$358 billion for this current fiscal year.

This amount, as it turns out, is short by \$76 billion from the today's budget.

While this 2022 budget includes yet another deficit, this time in the amount of close to \$53 billion, the Liberals argue this is all affordable.

The Liberal "affordability" argument is based on the principal that as Canada's economy grows– the added GDP growth will increase government revenues at a faster pace than the increases in government programing spending, and by extension, lower the debt to GDP ratio.

While this is true and applies to all governments when it comes to budgeting, it also depends upon some constants such as the rate of growth and spending being sustained at proportional levels.

In the case of this Liberal government, as is well documented, even when excluding COVID related spending, this Prime Minister will always increase spending well beyond what was forecast, and further increase our deficit in the process.

Even in this current, "back to fiscal reality" budget, many of the Liberals campaign promises are missing from it.

Likewise, the recent backroom deal with the NDP calls for, among other programs, national pharmacare, which is completely un-funded.

According to the Parliamentary Budget Officer, a national pharmacare program could cost close to \$20 billion a year.

So as these various Liberal/NDP promises are eventually announced, this will increase our deficit spending.

Let us all hope that Canada's economic growth does not also decline.

My question this week.

Are you satisfied with the "new normal" of Liberal budgetary spending?

## **April 20<sup>th</sup>**

It will be six years this May since I opened my joint Summerland constituency office with Penticton MLA Dan Ashton.

At the time this was one of, if not the only, joint constituency offices in Canada shared by a federal MP and provincial MLA or MPP.

So rare of an occurrence, that CPAC, the Parliamentary affairs cable channel, flew out from Ottawa to cover the opening.

From my perspective a shared office made sense.

Often there may be confusion as to what level of government; federal or provincial, is providing a service that a citizen may be having difficulty with.

It also makes sense from a cost saving perspective as fixed costs and resources can be shared.

As I have stated many times while there may be three levels of government in Canada, there is only one taxpayer.

After six years in operation the office remains a success.

Citizens of Summerland can have a one stop shop to make inquiries on provincial or federal concerns as well as meet with their local MP or MLA without having to travel to a nearby community.

Unfortunately, despite the success of increased service and the savings of a shared office, the idea has not caught on in other regions across Canada.

Fortunately, as of this week, that is about to change.

By the time you read this week's report I will have announced the opening of my second shared constituency office, this time with Kelowna-Mission MLA Renee Merrifield.

This shared office will be located at the existing office of Renee Merrifield located at #102, 2121 Ethel Street, in Kelowna.

With this new location the citizens of Kelowna, who fall within my riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola, will now have a much closer location to access their MP and federal services they may be having challenges with accessing.

For those not familiar with how constituency offices operate, due to privacy, citizens must sign a written consent form that allows an MLA or MP to make inquiries on your behalf.

All personal information shared with a constituency office is protected and is not subject to Freedom of Information laws.

I should also add that constituency offices are strictly non-partisan.

The dedicated staff are there to assist you free of any political considerations or obligations whatsoever.

My question this week:

Do you think there should be more emphasis on shared service delivery between different levels of government?

### **April 27<sup>th</sup>**

As both interest rates and inflation continue to rise and negatively impact many households here in our region, I doubt there is much attention on the current discussion in Ottawa over the Trudeau Liberals invoking of the Emergencies Act earlier this year.

However, that does not mean that many Canadians should not be seriously concerned over what is transpiring in Ottawa on this subject.

To recap, in my February 16, 2022 report I explained the Emergencies Act is the replacement for the former War Measures Act.

The War Measures Act was only used once outside of wartime by Pierre Elliott Trudeau at the request of the Quebec Government in 1970.

The replacement Emergencies Act had never been used until Prime Minister Justin Trudeau decided to invoke it, claiming it was the only way to end the truck protests occurring in Ottawa in February.

As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association describes it:

"The Emergencies Act can only be invoked when a situation "seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada" & when the situation "cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada."

The purpose of my report this week is not to revisit the decision to invoke the act but rather to share my concerns with the process that led up to this decision.

To be clear invoking the Emergencies Act is the most serious action that a Canadian government can take against its own citizens.

In this case some citizens alleged to be involved in the protests had their personal bank accounts frozen based on unverified leaked documents that were reported through some media sources.

This was done without formal verification of the facts and no due process whatsoever for those alleged to be involved.

Indeed, during the Emergencies Act debate in the House of Commons, close to a dozen Liberal MPs, as well as many NDP MPs, claimed that an act of "attempted arson" on behalf of the protestors was part of their justification to vote for invoking the act.

This was a media reported rumour at the time however the Ottawa police have stated that this allegation against the protestors was untrue.

Likewise, some media also reported claims of “armed weapons” being found at the Ottawa trucker protests.

This claim was also cited by many Liberal and NDP MPs as justification for invoking the Emergencies Act.

These allegations have so far been proven to be false.

In other words, many of the claims argued by the Liberal Government, supported once again by the NDP, to justify invoking the Emergencies Act were entirely false.

Fortunately, the law that allows for the invocation of the Emergency Act also requires that an independent review of the use of the act must occur after the fact.

At the same time several groups, including the Canadian Civil Liberties Association, are suing the Liberal Government, claiming the threshold to invoke the Emergencies Act was not met.

A sentiment that I share and is the reason why I voted against invoking the act.

Unfortunately the Trudeau Liberal Government revealed in the Supreme Court that they will claim cabinet confidence in order to withhold many of the reasons that led up to them deciding to invoke the Emergency Act.

My question this week:

Are you concerned that this Liberal Government decided to invoke the Emergencies Act and is now withholding the reasons why from Canadians?

## **May 2022**

### **May 4<sup>th</sup>**

If you are in public office, “polls” are increasingly part of the territory.

Governments themselves increasingly pay for polling data.

In 2020 it was revealed that the Trudeau Liberal Government had tripled its spending on polls.

One of the reasons why governments spend your money on polling is to determine what decisions and policies will be more politically popular with certain voting demographics.

As an example, right before PM Trudeau called the “pandemic election” last year, polling by Ipsos revealed that roughly 80% of Canadians supported the idea of mandatory vaccine mandates.

Over 70% supported the idea of vaccine passports.

As we know PM Trudeau campaigned heavily on these things during the election despite previously rejecting the idea of vaccine passports claiming that they would create "divisive impacts on community and country."

Another poll, this one from Angus Reid as reported by the Financial Post, also caught my attention.

The poll showed that 86% of Canadians support a national pharmacare program.

This of course is one of the announced objectives between the recent backroom deal made between the Liberals and the NDP in Ottawa.

However, a recent Leger poll asked this question differently.

If a national pharmacare program came with a hike in the GST to pay for it, the support dropped down to just 40%.

The purpose of my report this week is not actually about polling despite the increasing use being a topic of interest.

My report is actually about the promise of a national pharmacare as promised by the Liberal/NDP agreement.

Although pharmacare is a provincially funded and delivered program, I seldom hear complaints from citizens on the lack of availability of drugs or coverage from those in need.

Likely this is because BC already has an income based fully functional “Fair Pharmacare” program that works well that citizens in BC are already paying for.

This is a point raised by Premier John Horgan, who on behalf of all provincial premiers, has publicly pointed out that federal transfers for health care are the priority to deal with surgical backlogs over new federal program spending such as pharmacare.

This is consistent with what I hear from constituents with increasing alarm: the long surgery waitlists and lack of family doctors are pushing our provincial health care system to its limits.

My question this week: where do you see a greater need- more doctors or a national pharmacare program?

## **May 11<sup>th</sup>**

One of the first terms I became familiar with, when I was elected as a Member of Parliament, was the term “Ottawa bubble”.

So what exactly is the “Ottawa bubble”?

It can have a variety of different meanings .

From my own view, it describes how the culture and perspectives on Parliament Hill is often very different from what exists in many Canadian communities.

One example of this is the current record high gas prices.



For many Canadians who are forced to commute for a variety of different reasons, the added costs are in some case adding hundreds of extra dollars to the monthly fuel bill.

For families already struggling with higher grocery bills and other inflationary cost increases, along with the rise of interest rates, I have heard reports of some households being out over an extra \$500 a month that they cannot afford.

When our Conservative Opposition noted that the federal government was cashing in with GST on gas and diesel, as fuel prices rise, we proposed to temporarily suspend the GST on fuel sales.

Our motion was defeated as the Liberal/NDP partnership literally laughed at us while voting against this motion.

There is little recognition from this Prime Minister on the effects that rising gas prices are having on families and commuters.

Another example of the “Ottawa Bubble” in action pertains to crime.

I hear immense frustration from many communities who are upset by chronic offenders who continue to commit crimes only to be released back into communities where they re-offend.

This is one of the reasons why we have mandatory minimum penalties (MMP) for crimes at the federal level to ensure that, for certain types of crimes, there is a mandatory penalty that must be applied.

However recently the Trudeau Liberal Government introduced Bill C-5 that proposes to repeal fourteen different mandatory minimum penalties under the Criminal Code.

What are some of these offences proposed to be repealed?

Some examples include using a firearm or imitation firearm in commission of offence, possession of firearm or weapon knowing its possession is unauthorized, possession of prohibited or restricted firearm with ammunition.

It is also proposed to repeal mandatory minimum sentences on discharging firearm with intent, discharging firearm — recklessness, robbery with a firearm and extortion with a firearm (if not part of a criminal organization).

To be clear, Bill C-5 does not suggest there should not be penalties for these offences but that penalties for these offences should be entirely at the discretion of the judge, to allow for more “flexibility”.

The Liberals are pointing to the fact that:

*“Between 2007-2008 and 2016-2017, Indigenous and Black offenders were more likely to be admitted to federal custody for an offence punishable by an MMP. In 2020, despite representing 5% of the Canadian adult population, Indigenous adults accounted for 30% of federally incarcerated inmates. The proportion of Indigenous offenders admitted with an offence punishable by an MMP has almost doubled between 2007-2008 and 2016-2017, from 14% to 26%”.*

The Liberals have stated the intent of this bill is to “target” the data that shows the higher level of these incarceration rates.

My question this week:

Do you support repealing mandatory minimum sentences in favour of more judicial discretion in sentencing?

## **May 18<sup>th</sup>**

Back in January of 2021, when the idea of a “vaccine passport” first emerged that would prevent unvaccinated citizens to travel and have access to various public amenities and services, the idea was strongly opposed by PM Trudeau.

As PM Trudeau stated the idea of a vaccine passport was, and I quote directly, “fraught with challenges and would have “divisive impacts on community and country.”

As we know the Prime Minister reversed his stance against vaccine passports and used vaccine passports as a wedge issue during last year’s pandemic election.

Indeed, as the Prime Minister himself confirmed in January of 2021, the implementation of the vaccine mandate has indeed created “divisive impacts”.

Fortunately, in all Canadian provinces, citizens who are vaccinated and not vaccinated can now enjoy equal access to public and private amenities and services with one glaring exception.

Air travel, which is a federally regulated sector, still requires proof of vaccination in order to fly.

For those who are vaccinated, which is the majority, this is not an inconvenience, although it had added to more congestion and some delays at many Canadian airports.

However, for those who are not vaccinated it has and continues to cause serious hardship in many situations.

For many who are unvaccinated it means being unable to see loved ones or to care for a sick and elderly parent in another part of Canada.

It means holidays alone.

These are not just cases of people who want to travel for a vacation.

I have heard of husband and wives being separated overseas and adult children separated from their parents who are in hospice.

It is often heartbreaking.

As the official opposition we have raised this concern in Ottawa.

While the Government continues to insist it is “following the science” it has shown no such documentation to support the continued enforcement of this exclusionary policy.

For the record, I am fully vaccinated and have supported vaccination throughout the pandemic.

My question this week:

Do you believe it is time for the federal government to lift the vaccination requirement for train and air travel or is this something you would like to see remain in place?

## **May 25<sup>th</sup>**

This week is a non-sitting week for the House of Commons allowing MPs to be back in their ridings to meet with and hear the concerns of local citizens.

One of the challenges in public office is, while some concerns may fall exclusively under the jurisdiction of either local, provincial or the federal government, other concerns overlap and fall under several jurisdictions.

I raise this point because one serious concern that I am hearing about from many communities in our region is prolific criminals and what many are calling our “catch and release” justice system.

Mayor of Kelowna, Colin Basran, as well as Kelowna-West MLA Ben Stewart, have met with me to share information and convey concerns, as have many citizens who are seeking answers to what remains a thorny issue.

In almost every community, there is a small but very well-known group of offenders that commit serious crimes on a habitual basis.

A recent news article from one community summarizes this situation well:

“A judge granted a prolific offender bail in court on Wednesday afternoon, giving him one more chance to abide by his conditions after being arrested multiple times for allegedly failing to meet them.”

The offender in question is reported to already have 60 convictions over the past decade.

The police are also extremely frustrated. In some situations, these criminals will again commit crimes within hours of being released while they await trial.

When you hear from victims, it is devastating.

One mobility challenged senior had her motorized scooter stolen from a secure underground garage. It was uninsured and she cannot afford to replace it. This senior has now become literally house bound and her quality of life has deteriorated immensely.

The criminal responsible was caught, charged, and immediately released and is again committing crimes within the community.

At the provincial level the NDP Government has admitted they are aware this is a serious problem but have no ideas how to resolve it.

NDP Attorney General David Eby has announced they will hire “two experts” to come up with ideas on

how to take action on this serious problem.

Fortunately in our Conservative Opposition caucus, we have an new Member of Parliament with significant experience in this area.

Frank Caputo, the MP for Kamloops-Thompson-Cariboo, is a former Crown Prosecutor with experience in corrections who also served as a Law Professor at Thompson Rivers University.

MP Caputo recently tabled Private Members Bill C-274.

When he introduced this legislation, MP Caputo noted that roughly 5% of offenders commit 90% of the crimes occupying police resources. Many of these criminals are committing these crimes while awaiting trial for other crimes.

Bill C-274 propose to create a “presumptive detention” for those criminals accused of three or more indictable offences with a maximum penalty of five years or more.

This is not a mandatory requirement however it would allow judges more discretion to keep serious criminals in jail where they cannot continue to re-offend.

If a judge felt there was an exceptional reason or circumstance for a habitual offender to be released, they would still have the discretion to do so.

This bill will not resolve all of the challenges our local communities face with crime, however it most certainly could assist local law enforcement in dealing with serious, re-offending criminals.

I was proud to second Bill C-274 from MP Frank Caputo.

My question this week: do you support this proposed legislation?

## June 2022

### **June 1<sup>st</sup>**

Sometimes Parliament resembles the movie “Groundhog Day”.

When I last wrote about proposed amendments to Canada’s firearm laws (introduced in the previous Parliament by the Liberals) it was in Bill C-21.

Fast forward to the current Parliament, once again the Liberals Government have introduced “An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)” under another Bill C-21.

First, let's recap what the previous Bill C-21 proposed.

The former bill reflected PM Trudeau’s promise that “1,500 types of 'assault-style' firearms” were being banned and that a “buy back” plan was going to be introduced so owners of these newly restricted rifles would be able to “sell” them to the government at a yet to be determined amount.

As I wrote at that time, this announcement from the Prime Minister led to some confusion as military assault rifles in Canada have long been illegal in Canada.

Further the term “assault style” had no legal definition within the Canada Firearms Act.

What is an “assault style weapon”?

The term “assault style” is a political term used to characterize certain semi-automatic rifles that often are manufactured to look like an assault rifle.

Critics were quick to point out that the former Bill C-21 penalized legal gun owners for owning certain semi-automatic rifles based solely on their appearance and it did not remove any of these rifles from the streets.

Now let's review what's occurred since former Bill C-21 was tabled.

It has now been over two years and the critics have been proven correct as none of these semi-automatic rifles have been removed from streets and the Liberal Government has still not implemented a buyback program or determined how such a program would work.

This week, Prime Minister Trudeau announced another Bill C-21.

This time most notably proposing to “freeze” handgun sales.

Perhaps sensitive to the criticism that his former Bill C-21 targeted legal gun owners and not criminals using smuggled guns, Prime Minister Trudeau has been steadfast to point out that this new Bill C-21 does not target legal handgun owners.

In other words, he is suggesting that nothing changes for all existing legal handgun owners here in Canada.

The proposed new law would only apply to potential new handgun owners or those looking to purchase an additional handgun.

Critics are again pointing out that this new proposed law does not take any handguns off the streets and once again ignores the real gun problem that is criminals using smuggled, illegal handguns.

As I pointed out in my recent report from early May, in Bill C-5, the Trudeau Liberal Government is also proposing to eliminate some minimum mandatory sentences for several crimes that involve firearms.

From my own perspective the evidence shows that illegal handgun crime has risen in Canada under the Trudeau Liberal Government.

The overwhelming majority of the handguns involved in these crimes are illegally smuggled across the Canada/United States border.

I believe the priority must be targeted enforcement to stop illegal guns from entering Canada.

Neither the former nor current Bill C-21 propose major comprehensive action on that front, although they do generate significant media headlines.

My question this week:

Do you believe this new Bill C-21 will make your community safer?

## **June 8<sup>th</sup>**

Almost daily I hear serious concerns from local citizens about the significant impact the current gas and diesel prices are having on many families.

As I reminded our Liberal Government in Ottawa recently, during debate on the Budget Implementation Act (BIA), in many parts of our region driving a vehicle is the only way some citizens can access healthcare and medical appointments or the nearest school.

The high gas and diesel prices also have another negative impact.

As I have also heard from many small and mid-sized business owners, the shipping and transport costs to receive goods has also increased significantly.

This in turn means prices must be increased at a time when groceries and other items are already under cost pressures due to high inflation rates.

Ultimately high gasoline and diesel prices are having a negative impact on Canadian households and as well are causing economic harm.

This is why literally every other G-7 nations have governments that are actively implementing measures to try and provide cost relief to citizens on fuel prices as a way to help increase affordability and mitigate inflation.

Unfortunately, here in Canada, our Liberal Government, propped up by the NDP, refuses to take similar action to help citizens facing these devastating fuel prices.

This week, as the Official Opposition, we tabled a motion in the House of Commons that proposed the following measures:

- Temporarily suspending the GST collected on gasoline and diesel
- Suspending the carbon tax
- Eliminating tariffs on fertilizer
- Enabling the free flow of goods across the Canadian border
- Supporting the recovery of the tourism sector
- Protecting the jobs of federally regulated employees by immediately removing all federal COVID restrictions
- Curbing speculation in the housing market by immediately launching a national public inquiry into money laundering.

This motion proposed measures to help increase affordability and help combat inflation, much like other G7 nations are doing

Unfortunately, the Liberal government voted this motion down with the support of the NDP.

I say unfortunately as it is estimated that inflation alone will cost the average Canadian an extra \$2000 this year.

While these proposed measures would not address all of that additional cost, they would be a step in the right direction to ensure that citizens keep more of the money they earn in their household by sending less to Ottawa.

My question this week:

Do you believe the federal government should be playing a greater role in trying to increase affordability and at the same time make greater efforts to mitigate inflation?

## **June 15<sup>th</sup>**

One of the more alarming bills the Liberal/NDP partnership is trying to push through Parliament is Bill C-11, "An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make related and consequential amendments to other Acts", also known as the "Online Streaming Act".

The intent of this bill is to amend the Broadcasting Act so that it will also have jurisdiction to regulate online streaming service content.

In practice this sounds simple enough, however in reality defining what is and what is not subject to this bill has raised significant concern.

Industry stakeholders, those who generate online internet content that is both audio and visual in nature, legal and academic experts and many Canadians have all pointed out quite correctly that almost anything online that has audio and video content could be subject to these new regulations if the bill is passed.

So, what are the proposed rules?

One of the concerns is that legacy broadcasters have long been required to provide a certain amount of content that is deemed "Canadian" by the CRTC.

This is often referred to as "CanCon" and does not currently apply to online service providers.

These new proposed regulations in Bill C-11 would change that.

This of course raises a secondary question what is "Canadian content"?

It's a complicated points system is used to determine the answer to this question.

For example in a CanCon production, the producer must be Canadian and is responsible for monitoring and making decisions pertaining to the program; at least one of either the director or screenwriter positions and at least one of the two lead performers must be Canadian; a minimum of 75% of program expenses and 75% of post-production expenses are paid for services provided by Canadians or Canadian companies.

There is a points scoring system related to all of this and it is important to note that many Hollywood movies and Netflix productions that you see filmed in various parts of Canada do not qualify.

Forcing online streaming services to comply with the CanCon requirements could obviously have a severe impact on the BC and Canadian film industry.

At the same time Bill C-11 does not end there.

It also proposes to include online streaming services such as YouTube and TikTok as well as the content posted on these online streaming sites.

As many have pointed out, this is content often posted by Canadians and many feel strongly it should not be part of this act.

Alarming the Heritage Minister, responsible for tabling Bill C-11, has denied that this is the case.

However, the CRTC has confirmed section 4.4 of the bill is clear that it allows them to “prescribe by regulation user uploaded content subject to very explicit criteria.”

In other words, this bill gives the CRTC the power to regulate, and potentially censor, online programs or streaming services as well as social media posts by Canadian users

For example, a Facebook post or YouTube video may not be featured prominently or discoverable at all under the potential government policy that will be enforced by the CRTC.

These CanCon requirements will be forced onto platforms and online streaming apps. In response these platforms will thus reorganize their algorithms, which then will prioritize how content appears on your streaming app.

What shows up on your feed will not be necessarily based on what you like or what your service thinks you will be interested in, but what the CanCon requirements decide is best for you.

This concept of the government, through the CRTC, telling your streaming app what is best for you and how content is displayed has many Canadians concerned.

This is why this bill has been strongly opposed by many online content creators and others as it's unknown how these new rules will impact their audience's ability to view their content and how it will affect their bottom line.

It's not just platforms and Canadian creators that will be affected.

The Chair of the CRTC has publicly acknowledged that individual Canadians' social media posts would be included under the new rules.

A resulting algorithm may change how Canadians share their political views or advance social causes.

Worse, not only are the Liberals using time allocation, which severely limits debate of this legislation in the House of Commons, the NDP have voted for them to do it.

I am reminded of a BC based NDP MP who two years ago said “It's profoundly undemocratic and not really showing respect for Parliament” when the Liberals used these tactics that are now being supported by the NDP.



For the record, I and the Conservative Opposition strongly oppose Bill C-11.

My question this week:

Do you support or oppose Bill C-11 and why?

## **June 22<sup>nd</sup>**

On Wednesday morning of this week many citizens awoke to breaking news that the "Top Mountie denies claim she interfered in N.S. shooting investigation".

This, by many accounts, is an alarming news story.

Currently in Nova Scotia the "Mass Casualty Commission" is independently reviewing the events related to the horrific mass shooting in 2020 that claimed the lives of 22 people.

As documents are now being released, a particularly noteworthy disclosure was from a Nova Scotia RCMP Superintendent that has been reported by the Halifax Examiner as:

"RCMP Commissioner Brenda Lucki "made a promise" to Public Safety Minister Bill Blair and the Prime Minister's Office to leverage the mass murders of April 18/19, 2020 to get a gun control law passed."

This is a very serious allegation that has already resulted in denials from the former Minister of Public Safety, Bill Blair, as well as the RCMP Superintendent Brenda Lucki.

Unfortunately, these denials do not explain how that RCMP Superintendent would have otherwise been aware that the Trudeau Liberal Government was indeed working on such a political announcement, that was subsequently released ten days later, using information that was not publicly available at that time.

What is also interesting is, while the RCMP Commissioner denies "interfering" in the investigation, she does not deny that the conversation occurred, nor that she confided to her RCMP colleagues in having made such a promise to the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and Minister of Public Safety.

This raises the obvious questions how this promise came to be and why does this matter?

It matters because the police must always be independent of government to secure the public trust.

It is critically important that law enforcement cannot be manipulated politically or used in a manner to achieve the political agenda of the Prime Minister.

In this case, it is not a secret that Prime Minister Trudeau did campaign on changing Canada's gun laws.

The RCMP Commissioner does not deny requesting confidential information at the time (information being withheld to protect the integrity of the investigation) that ultimately appears to have been used by PM Trudeau within 10 days of these troubling events.

I believe this raises some serious questions and concerns and deserves further investigation so Canadians can learn the truth of what happened here.

My question this week:

Is this something that concerns you or do you believe Opposition should move on and focus on other pressing concerns such as the lack of affordability and rising inflation here in Canada?

That is not to suggest that Opposition parties cannot focus on different topics but rather how seriously do you see this situation.

## **June 29<sup>th</sup>**

With the House of Commons adjourned until late September, I will once again be starting one of my favorite activities of the year, my summer listening tour.

This is an extremely important process for me as our Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola riding is geographically large with a diverse population.

Travelling to all areas within this riding and hearing the concerns from local citizens is critically important to the work that I do as a Member of Parliament.

One request that I have heard recently was for an update on the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project.

Since that time, I have had a few other citizens express similar requests and as a result I will share that update.

As you may recall, PM Trudeau announced that his Liberal Government had purchased the Trans Mountain Pipeline in 2016 for \$4.5 billion from USA based Kinder Morgan.

The reason for this purchase was to spend an additional \$ 7.4 billion to build the expanded Trans Mountain Pipeline.

The decision was controversial, however aside from the economic benefits and job creation, PM Trudeau also promised that “every dollar the federal government earns from this project will be invested in Canada’s clean energy transition.”

Since then, the project has faced several challenges and the construction costs, as well as the estimated timeline for completion, have increased significantly.

How significant?

Recently our Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) reviewed this project and found that the construction budget has now ballooned to \$21.4 billion, and the estimated completion date is not until late in 2023.

The more alarming conclusion from the PBO is, due to the significant increase in costs and increased construction timeline, the Trans Mountain Pipeline is no longer expected to produce any profit to the Government of Canada.

In fact, the PBO forecasts that Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project has a net current value of negative \$600 million.

In other words, this investment is forecast to lose money for Canadian taxpayers.

It also means that the promise from PM Trudeau that “every dollar the federal government earns from this project will be invested in Canada’s clean energy transition.” will not generate those dollars to fund those projects.

It will have the opposite effect as fewer tax dollars will be available.

My question this week is:

Are you satisfied with how the Trudeau Liberal government has been handling the Trans Mountain Pipeline expansion project?

## July 2022

### July 6<sup>th</sup>

With my annual summer listening tour underway, I have already heard concerns from many citizens in different parts of our region.

One of the largest concerns is about high gas prices.

For many citizens who must commute to work, the added prices can be devastating.

Likewise for seniors on a fixed income having to travel for medical appointments, the added costs cannot be recovered.

I have heard from many contract drivers who are not able to charge more despite having significantly increased costs.

Small business owners are receiving goods with significantly higher freight bills that must in turn be passed on to customers.

For many this situation is causing serious financial hardship.

However, for those who strongly support carbon taxes on fuel, these higher gas prices are exactly what a carbon tax is designed to do.

When the Federal Finance Minister was recently asked about higher gas prices and the crippling effect they are having on many Canadians as well as the Canadian trucking industry, her response was clear:

“This price increase in fuel costs is a reminder of why climate action is so important” – Deputy Prime-Minister and Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland.

The challenge with this statement is that many countries, including our largest trading partner, the United States, do not have carbon taxes.

Further, other G-7 countries, including the United States, are actively taking measures to reduce the price at the gas pumps recognizing that higher gas prices have a compounding effect in significantly driving up inflation.

This Trudeau Liberal Government remains alone in the G-7 in taking no significant actions to reduce gas prices at the pumps.

Often members of this Liberal Government will talk about “carbon tax rebates”, arguing that some people come out further ahead.

The finance minister, who lives in Toronto, has publicly stated that her family does not own a car.

Certainly, for someone who lives in Toronto and does not own a vehicle, I have no doubt they would benefit from carbon tax rebates.

However, how about someone who lives in Hedley, B.C.?

In Hedley, there are no local supermarkets, no local primary care clinics, no local high school, and extremely limited public transit options, and so one is forced to commute long distances for basic services.

There are many communities in our region that are forced to commute for services that are not locally available and paying heavily right now.

My question this week:

Are you being adversely impacted by higher gas prices?

## **July 13<sup>th</sup>**

It was early in March when I wrote about Canada’s response to the illegal attack on Ukraine by Russia.

As many will know PM Trudeau announced some strong Canadian sanctions against Russia.

At the time I stated that I believed “the Prime Minister and the Deputy Prime Minister have been doing an effective job given that one country, such as Canada, can only do so much to impact a country like Russia that we have limited trade with.”

I also committed my support for continued actions “against Russian and standing with the Ukraine as it fights off this Putin provoked military invasion”.

As it turns out, I was incorrect when I stated that “Canada, can only do so much to impact a country like Russia that we have limited trade with.”

Recently it was revealed that, here in Canada, some critical Russian pipeline infrastructure, (natural gas turbines) were being serviced in Montreal.

Under the trade export sanctions announced by PM Trudeau, these turbines would not be permitted to be sent back to Russia.

If the pipeline cannot be fully operational, it cannot raise peak revenues that Putin uses to finance his Russian war against Ukraine.

This is the very reason why the sanctions were announced.

However, the pipeline in question feeds natural gas to Germany and due to Germany's efforts to decrease its domestic emissions it has increasingly relied upon Russian oil and gas.

As a result, Germany requested that Canada release the turbines so that they will be returned to Russia, and the pipeline can resume full operations and by extension supply Russian gas to Germany.

Prime Minister Trudeau approved a one-time permit to return these turbines.

While this is satisfying news to Germany, it has been met with outrage by Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky as well as many Canadians who strongly support Ukraine and understand full well what this pipeline revenue results in for Russia's war machine against the Ukrainian people.

As President Zelensky stated "If a terrorist state can squeeze out such an exception to sanctions, what exceptions will it want tomorrow or the day after tomorrow? This question is very dangerous," and further adding "Moreover, it is dangerous not only for Ukraine, but also for all countries of the democratic world."

While President Zelensky has called on PM Trudeau to reverse his decision allowing these turbines to be returned to Russia, thus far the Liberal government has refused citing the need to protect "German livelihoods".

Currently the Nord Stream One pipeline that supplies natural gas to Germany from Russia is said to be running at 40 per cent of its capacity without these turbines.

My question this week:

Do you support PM Trudeau's decision to return these turbines (first to Germany) who will in turn return them to Russia?

## **July 20<sup>th</sup>**

This week the Prime Minister made a rare, largely unannounced surprise visit to the Okanagan.

Normally an official visit by a Prime Minister occurs to make an announcement, participate in meetings or events like a caucus gathering and of course, to campaign in an election.

By in large this visit from the Prime Minister did not seem to involve any of these functions, including no party fundraiser (disclosure of which is required by law).

This appearance resulted in queries to my office as to why was the Prime Minister even here?

Compared to previous visits to the Okanagan, where the PM (Prime Minister) had participated in a BC Day celebration in Penticton or a 'town hall' event at UBC-O, this was a far more managed affair.

As the Daily Courier reported, reporters were "invited to take pictures and videos but forbidden in

advance to ask any questions. Any shouted queries would result in police-assisted eviction from the various premises.”

From my perspective threatening to use the police to evict journalists from asking questions raises serious concerns in a free and democratic country.

In this case by refusing to answer questions from journalists at various events it also means these events are intended to be used strictly as photo-ops.

Photo-ops at considerable expense to taxpayers given the use of the Government private challenger aircraft that even flew the small distance between Kelowna and Penticton to assist with this visit.

This last part raises another subject.

Many have pointed to the extravagance and excess of flying the short distance between Kelowna and Penticton, that was not only extremely costly to taxpayers, it also generates significant emissions from a Prime Minister demanding everyone else drive less and reduce their carbon footprint.

However, I am speculating the reason why the Challenger jet flew from Kelowna to Penticton is because the alternative would have required the PM and his entourage to drive back to Kelowna from the south Okanagan during peak rush hour traffic when the commuting time can be well over an hour and half- or at peak summer times- even two hours.

Obviously, the Prime Minister's office would prefer the PM not be tied up in traffic for that length of time.

Unfortunately, as many citizens who reside and commute in the Okanagan will know, this can be a daily reality for everyone else.

Local Penticton MLA Dan Ashton has been calling for improved alternate routes to highway 97, that become even more necessary when a serious accident causes significant delays that can shut down sections of this highway for many hours at a time.

While transportation infrastructure such as Highway 97 is provincial in jurisdiction, previous partnerships with the federal government resulted in the four-lane widening between Summerland and Peachland, as well as significant widening and creating 4 lane sections between Princeton and Hope.

My question this week:

How serious of a challenge do you see the highway 97 corridor through the South and Central Okanagan?

## **July 27<sup>th</sup>**

If you follow online news sources, you may have run across a few headlines this week on the theme of “Trudeau pushes ahead with fertilizer cut as farmers and provinces cry foul”.

Already a few inquiries have come into my office as farming is an active concern in many of the rural areas in our region.

What do these headlines mean?

Currently the Trudeau Liberal government has indicated that it intends to attempt to reduce fertilizer emissions in agriculture as part of the Liberals plan to reduce emissions by 30% in the year 2030.

This announcement has resulted in serious backlash, not just from farmers but several provincial governments as well.

The primary concern is that the potential reduction in the use of fertilizer will in turn decrease crop output which will result in lost revenue for farmers as well as higher prices for Canadians consumers in grocery stores.

If you follow international news, similar measures recently announced in the Netherlands have resulted in massive protests by farmers that have shut down many parts of the Dutch economy including some key infrastructure.

The farmers I have already heard from point out that fertilizer is expensive and is only used sparingly when and where needed.

They are seriously concerned that having unelected bureaucrats in Ottawa, with little to no experience in farming, picking arbitrary limits on fertilizer use that will have disastrous results for them, as well as Canadian consumers.

The Trudeau Liberal government has stated that their intent is not to reduce the use of fertilizer but rather to encourage "research and innovation" so that hopefully "better practices" will be found through technology.

Another concern that has been raised is that for those countries who do not implement climate related restrictions on fertilizer use, they may end up with a competitive advantage yielding more crops at less cost over Canadian farmers.

This is a valid worry given that Canada, in 2021, exported roughly \$82.2 billion in agriculture and food products.

This works out roughly just under 7% of our annual gross domestic product.

Any trade related losses will have serious repercussions to many Canadian farmers.

As we are also in an inflationary period and the hike in groceries has been repeatedly raised on my summer listening tour, in every part of our riding, we must also consider that if basic inputs like fertilizer are more expensive -- costs of production get passed onto consumers -- in this case in in higher grocery prices.

More and more people have told me that they want to support local and will search out for Canadian produce wherever they can, yet new, costlier policies make that more difficult.

My question this week:

Are you concerned with PM Trudeau's intention to potentially impose this 30% reduction in fertilizer emissions in Canada by 2030?

## August 2022

### **August 3<sup>rd</sup>**

Since I was first elected I have used the summer months, generally passing on speaking opportunities, and embarking on a listening tour -- throughout the riding -- to hear the concerns of local citizens.

One of the greatest things about this riding is the vast diversity of the people who live in our various communities. Some within more densely populated urban areas -- others in smaller towns and there are those in unincorporated rural areas.

In turn each fall when the House resumes, I share the concerns raised in Ottawa.

This year, unlike any other, there is a different tone to what I am hearing.

Affordability, given record high inflation and the direction of our governments at all levels has been a concern in many communities.

Healthcare, such as the inability to get a doctor or having to travel significant distances for a health care related services, are ongoing challenges.

Many citizens have talked about the sheer frustration of trying to drive in and out of Kelowna either via Highway 97 or the Coquihalla and the ensuing traffic gridlock adds stress and anxiety that some have said left them unwilling to make the trek.

Overall, there is a sense that various governments are failing to provide basic core services and are more focused on other areas that many view as non-essential.

There is also a concern of increased government secrecy and in inability to get simple, clear answers why services are delayed and when they will be restored and/or available locally.

From my own perspective there is no question that, even as an elected official, it has become more challenging to obtain information from the federal government departments and agencies that I often deal with.

Likewise, I have heard of similar challenges from citizens attempting to obtain information from Interior Health.

From a traffic standpoint, aside from the flood related damage to the Coquihalla that is currently under repair, that last major Federal/Provincial partnership projects to decrease traffic congestion within this region was the widening between Summerland and Peachland as well as significant widening of portions of Hwy. 3 between Princeton and Hope.

Both projects were completed prior to 2015 and there has been significant growth since.

The intent of this week's report is not to pick on any one level of government or agency/department related to government but rather to ask a simple question.

How satisfied are you with the current state of government service delivery in your community?



## **August 10<sup>th</sup>**

As my summer listening tour continues throughout our region, another concern that I continue to hear about is the Trudeau Liberal Government's ongoing requirement that the ArriveCan app be used to enter Canada.

Many in the tourism and accommodation sectors of our economy have raised the challenge of lost revenue, as many regular visitors from outside of Canada refuse to visit Canada citing concerns with the requirement to use the ArriveCan app.

For many border towns across Canada, there has been almost unanimous opposition against the app due to lost economic opportunities as many USA citizens are refusing to cross the border due to ArriveCan.

I have also heard from citizens, often seniors, who will no longer travel to the United States, either because they do not have a smart phone capable of downloading the app, or because they oppose the app on principle.

Recently Global News reported that a glitch in the ArriveCan app created a situation where 10,000 fully vaccinated Canadians were falsely instructed to quarantine themselves for 14 days solely because of an error.

Worse, it took the Government of Canada twelve days to become aware of the error and report this information to the citizens involved.

While the Government refuses to disclose exactly what was the cause of this error, it has been reported that these 10,000 quarantine orders were sent out automatically and electronically by the ArriveCan app through an automated decision-making process.

Likewise, if you received a false quarantine order, the Trudeau Liberal Government has not set up any type of an appeal or resolution process to have an error rectified.

In other words, you can be electronically ordered to quarantine without any recourse.

The cost of the ArriveCan app is reported to be close to \$24.7 million and was developed through an untendered partnership that involved five private sector companies.

Although the ArriveCan app was introduced as a temporary pandemic related requirement, the Trudeau Liberal Government refuses to announce, either a proposed withdrawal date or a clarification if they intend to try and make this app a permanent requirement for entry into Canada, as has been floated in the media.

My question this week:

What are your thoughts on the ArriveCan app and would you like to see its use terminated or continued as a permanent requirement to enter Canada?

## August 17<sup>th</sup>

For most Canadians identity theft is a concern however, unless you have personally been a victim of identity theft, most are unaware how serious the consequences can be and how challenging they are to rectify.

In 2010 identity theft in Canada impacted just over 2 individuals per 100,000, however in 2020 that rate has increased significantly to 20 individuals per 100,000 people.

In terms of actual numbers, since the COVID pandemic, reported identity theft incidents have increased to over 17,000 in 2020 and, while the data is not yet in for 2021, it is widely expected to have doubled.

One of the reasons for this significant increase in identity thefts relates to CERB (the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit).

CERB was a program that had very few safeguards against identity theft, and worse, made it a profitable activity among criminals and other unsavoury individuals.

Currently there are Canadians shocked to be told they must repay CERB benefits they never received, as they discover they have been a victim of identity fraud.

For those who have been victimized it is a very challenging situation to rectify as many institutions operate under a reverse onus environment where a victim of identity theft must prove they were not in any way responsible for the situation in question.

Many in frustration turn to the media and no doubt you have likely heard about identity theft as a result of media stories on this subject.

In my view governments at all levels are not doing much to combat this growing problem.

I would like to share the following idea with citizens for feedback.

If you are a user of "Google" online, you will know that if your account is accessed, or there is an attempt to access your account from a new location, you will receive a verification text or email asking you to confirm the login or attempted login details.

This is often called 'two step verification'.

Google of course is not the only online company using two or multi step verification, many other social media platforms have done this, as have a growing number of banks and credit unions, to verify one's identity when accessing online services.

Even logging into your account remotely with CRA now involved a 2-step verification process.

Unfortunately, when it comes to your credit rating, there is no credit rating organization that I could identify that uses a verification process or alert as Google does when someone accesses your credit file.

Giving how far technology has come in terms of accessibility and scale, I don't think it's unreasonable that someone could sign up so that every time there is an inquiry on their credit rating, that they should be contacted by the credit rating agency in question by a text or email and informed who is making the

inquiry.

The intent of this idea is to help cut down on identity theft and as consumers give more awareness over who is accessing your credit rating records.

I am sure the credit agencies in question would argue that their credit files are exactly that- their files on your credit score - and that any new requirement would make their system and those who rely on them slower.

However as these credit scores impact the ability for citizens to get a loan or mortgage, or in some cases rent a property, and making sure that credit scores are being used correctly with companies that you have decided to transact with and not nefariously by fraudsters is a legitimate counterpoint.

The costs of such an alert system have come down and it's in everyone's interests to minimize fraud.

I have done some research on this idea through the Library of Parliament and unfortunately due to how some financial services, like credit bureau's, are regulated provincially throughout Canada, through consumer protection laws, it is not something that could be addressed through a private member's bill otherwise I would consider tabling such a bill.

My question this week.

Would you support credit rating agencies advising you when there is an inquiry on your credit rating file?

## **August 24<sup>th</sup>**

This week there was, on the surface at least, exciting news report by CTV that a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been signed between the Government of Canada and Mercedes Benz as well as Volkswagen to “secure access to Canadian raw materials for batteries in electric vehicles.”

As a Member of Parliament with active mining operations in my riding, I can state firsthand on the significant importance of well-paying jobs as well as the considerable spin off economic benefits not just to the local community but the entire region.

It is also worth noting that, while Canada currently does not have an active lithium mining and processing industry, we are ranked number six for having the world's largest lithium reserves behind countries such as Chile, Australia, Argentina, China and the United States.

For those of you unfamiliar with lithium, it is a highly reactive metal that is used in rechargeable batteries for electric vehicles and other electronic products such as laptops and cell phones, as well as a growing list of other consumer goods.

As the world increasingly relies on electric battery powered vehicles and devices, this will result in increased lithium demand.

With this announcement I also have some concerns.

As many in the mining industry will know, back in 2014, Ottawa rejected the New Prosperity Mine that

would have been located west of Williams Lake.

In August of 2021 Ottawa again rejected another mine, the proposed “Grassy Mountain” mine, that would have been located in the southwest of Alberta.

Both rejections occurred under different federal governments, but for the same reason, due to potential adverse impacts on the local environment.

Since the Trudeau Liberal Government has come to power, they have also expanded the scope of impact assessment to include considerations such as “Gender-based Analysis Plus” to the scope of criteria that must be met.

For some context there is a 16-page federal document to explain how this impact assessment process is intended to function.

Aside from these types of regulatory requirements and environmental concerns, proponents must also consult with local Indigenous communities.

However, if a local Indigenous community is strongly in support of a project, Ottawa may still reject the proposal for other reasons.

On a related note, a recent C.D. Howe Institute Report found that “business investment in Canada is about half what it is in the United States and is lower than in other OECD nations”.

One of the stated reasons for our declining investment and productivity is related to “regulatory uncertainty” here in Canada.

There is a growing list of projects that have been cancelled in Canada, not just for environmental reasons, but also for political reasons.

I mention this because if there is to be a sudden “boom” in new lithium mines, it raises the question where does the Federal Government prefer these mines are located?

There is also the question of water use, as it has been reported that the production of lithium through evaporation ponds uses a lot of water. Approximately 2.2 million litres of water is needed to produce one ton of lithium.

During the 2019 election the Trudeau Government had promised to create a new water regulator and has been dropping hints that it will be proceeding with such an agency.

It isn't known whether its mandate will inevitably conflict and act as another potential hurdle for new mines to navigate.

Likewise, given the uncertainty of our current regulatory process, what changes is the Federal Government prepared to make that will accelerate the approval process of new lithium mines?

Currently the Trudeau Liberal Government has been silent on these details.

My question this week:

What are your thoughts on the future of lithium mining here in Canada?

## **August 31<sup>st</sup>**

Since the partnership between the Liberals and NDP was formed back in late March of this year, one of the joint political messages has been “tax the rich”.

In terms of policy decisions, this translated into a new federal luxury tax on vehicles and aircraft priced over \$100,000 and boats priced over \$250,000.

The tax rate is either 10% of the total post-tax purchase price, or 20% of value over a certain threshold, whichever is lesser.

For the purpose of this report, we will focus on boats.

The justification for this tax, from the Trudeau Liberal government, is anyone who can afford a boat costing \$250,000 can afford to pay more in tax.

Some readers are probably already wondering why even bother to mention a tax that only an incredibly small percentage of the population will need to be concerned with.

I'm not writing to advocate for potential new boat owners but rather to explain the policy ramifications involved with taxation competitiveness.

When the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) looked at the fiscal implications of the luxury tax, he concluded the luxury tax will generate government revenues of up to \$760 million.

While this sounds positive, the downside is that the PBO also calculates there will be a sales decline of \$2.9 billion.

The PBO estimates that 75% of that loss – or \$2.1bn – will be incurred by the recreational boat industry here in Canada.

In other words, this tax creates a loss of revenue.

As we heard from representatives of the Canadian marine industry, this tax is expected to create job losses and other economic hardships.

As many will know, Champion Marine, an iconic made in Kelowna boat manufacturer, recently closed their doors creating the loss of roughly 100 well-paying jobs, as well as the loss of other economic contributions important to our regional and national economy.

It must be acknowledged that there is already a provincial luxury tax in BC, and an additional federal luxury tax will hit BC harder than other parts of Canada.

The provincial and federal luxury taxes would be applied to boat purchases -- before GST would be applied.

That means the GST is also ultimately applicable to the provincial and federal luxury taxes- which creates an even higher final sale amount on the boat in question.

These added costs create a larger incentive for buyers wanting to avoid paying these taxes and have the means to go to other jurisdictions where the taxes aren't an issue.

I am not suggesting the luxury tax was the sole reason for the closure of Campion in Kelowna, as most of the boats Campion built would not have been impacted by this luxury tax.

However, it does point out a pattern that we as Canadians should take note of.

Global Okanagan News has reported that Campion will be moving production to Texas and Mexico.

In Texas, Campion would pay no luxury tax, no carbon taxes, nor would it pay higher payroll taxes on EI and CPP as well as the Provincial Employers Health Tax.

In other words, as these new extra costs make Canadian made products and services more expensive -- it makes the cost of doing business outside of Canada more attractive.

For example, citizens may remember the Bombardier C-Series jet.

Despite Canadian taxpayers having invested roughly \$1 billion into the development of this commercial jet, it is now built in Alabama and not Canada.

On another different but local note while Tolko industries has closed local lumber mills in communities of Kelowna and Merritt .

Tolko invested in several new lumber mills in places like Ackerman, Mississippi as well as Urania, Louisiana and Ruston, Louisiana.

This is not a problem that lands solely at the feet of the Federal Government.

Many Provincial Government policies also contribute to the lack of competitiveness and, in some cases, local government plays a role as well.

My question this week:

Are you concerned about the growing number of well-paying mill and manufacturing jobs moving from Canada into the United States?

## **September 2022**

### **September 7<sup>th</sup>**

Canadians woke up to news this week that the Bank of Canada has once again increased its benchmark interest rate (also called the 'overnight rate'), a further 75 basis points from 2.5% up to 3.25%.

Since March the rate has increased by 300 basis points, which is the largest increase in roughly 30 years.

For many Canadian households, how this increase in the benchmark interest rate will impact your household budget will depend on a number of factors.

For those who have a mortgage that is locked in or have a 'fixed payment' this may be of little concern.

For others who have a variable payment that rises with the cost of increased interest, this may be a very serious concern.

Some may have a variable rate mortgage where their costs simply go up or down with the prime rate (plus or minus any negotiated discount) which tracks the Bank of Canada benchmark rate.

Others with variable rate mortgages with a 'trigger rate' may be contacted by their bank or lending institution, advising them that because rates have risen significantly, their scheduled payment amount must be higher as the interest portion on their mortgage is now higher than the principal payment.

As we have had historic low interest rates for an extended period of time, these 'trigger rate' increases are not common and those with this kind of mortgage will likely have some 'sticker shock' when they see the revised payment amount.

Conversely for those with an interest only line of credit or other forms of debt such as credit cards, there may also be a significant increased payment because of this interest rate increase.

One of the challenges when trying to assess the impact to family households of these types of increases, on debt related interest payments, is a lack of region-specific information.

In addition, with many mortgage lenders in the marketplace, the impact on some borrowers may be very different from others as a result of contrasting lending practices.

While there is an Ottawa imposed "stress test" that is applied uniformly across the mortgage industry, as some citizens have pointed out, it does not take into account the increase in local property taxes that in many cases are also well above inflation.

In addition, for those who live in strata properties, insurance costs have also gone up with premium increases significantly beyond the rate of inflation.

For those that are impacted by higher interest rates, let us recognize that -- with less disposable income -- there is less money to put into our local economy.

My purpose in raising these concerns related to the increase in the interest rate is to ask you if this is something that will impact your household to the point of serious concern?

If your household has, or will be adversely impacted by these increased interest rates, or even if you are in a situation where you are not impacted, I would appreciate hearing from you.

## **September 14<sup>th</sup>**

In my last report I referenced the recent news that the Bank of Canada had once again increased its benchmark interest rate (also called the 'overnight rate') a further 75 basis points from 2.5% up to 3.25%.

Since March of this year, the rate has increased by 300 basis points, which is the largest increase in roughly 30 years.

I closed off my report asking If your household “has, or will be adversely impacted by these increased interest rates, or even if you are in a situation where you are not impacted, I would appreciate hearing from you.”

Over the past seven days I have received a strong level of response to that question, and I would like to thank the many people who took the time to get back to me on this issue.

After hearing from so many, a clear pattern began to emerge.

For those who are wealthier, typically they were concerned about rising interest rates and the possibility of a recession but were otherwise not personally impacted.

Some even reported that were earning more money because of higher interest on certain investments.

However, for many working families struggling to pay bills and having some outstanding debt, many were severally impacted.

Several people took the time to share, in detail, just how hard financially, in terms of actual dollars, they were attempting to mitigate and absorb.

The anxiety and stress that is being caused as the Bank of Canada continues to raise interest rates is causing serious hardship for some Okanagan families.

It is fair to say that some family households are carrying a far larger burden than others as interest rates continue to rise.

Many asked when will the increases end?

This is a fair question without a simple answer.

Last week our Federal Finance Minister, while in Vancouver, stated: "We also understand right now that our government has a real responsibility to be fiscally responsible".

Flash forward to this week and our same Finance Minister, with the Prime Minister while in New Brunswick, announced \$4.5 billion in spending for “inflationary relief”.

Why does this matter?

Many economists and major Canadian Banks are warning Prime Minister Trudeau that the relentless spending by his government is part of what is driving up inflation, making the problem worse.

Bank of Nova Scotia economist Derek Holt, in response to this week's \$4.5 billion spending announcement, stated:

“It seems sensible to assume that this will add to pressures on measures of core inflation,” and further stated “Any belief that it will ease inflationary pressures must have studied different economics



textbooks.”

As reported by Bloomberg, the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce, Bank of Montreal and Bank of Nova Scotia, have all released reports expressing concerns over using revenue windfalls for additional spending.

I have two concerns: one,

1) My Conservative caucus and I have raised inflation and cost of living concerns formally with the government for months.

After a summer of silence, to now hear that some planned help for some families is welcome, although it is clearly not designed to be broad based enough to help the general population with the cost of living increases.

In addition, due to new legislation being required, it is an open question when these supports will be forthcoming.

2) These supports are new spending which, as indicated earlier, will have inflationary results.

Conservatives have been proposing a 'pay as you go' rule where government departments should find an equal amount of savings before proposing new spending.

In Budget 2022 the government argues that it will have a 'policy review' where it anticipates it can find savings in its existing budget. Had it paired these new spending supports with savings elsewhere, the inflationary concerns would in many cases be offset or lessened.

My question this week:

Are you concerned about the ongoing spending by PM Trudeau, or do you believe it is necessary in these challenging times of inflation and higher interest rates?

## **September 21<sup>st</sup>**

This week the House of Commons is back in session in Ottawa.

The government has introduced two bills intended to provide relief for some Canadian families struggling with higher interest rates and inflation.

The two bills are C-30 “An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (temporary enhancement to the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax credit)” and Bill C-31 “An Act respecting cost of living relief measures related to dental care and rental housing”.

Bill C-30 proposes to raise the GST rebate to a low-income earner by 50% of what they normally would receive on their GST rebate.

This one-time measure, over the proposed 6-month time frame, will cost the treasury \$2.5 billion.

What would the increase in the GST credit look like?

Here are a few hypothetical situations:

A low-income senior couple with a combined annual income of \$45,000 would receive an additional \$353.30.

A single student who makes \$25,000 would receive an additional \$612.

A single parent with one child and \$45,000 in net income would receive an additional \$257.15 .If they earned \$50,000, that additional payment would go down to \$132.15.

However, if that single parent earned above \$55,000 in net income, they would receive no payment.

Similarly, a couple with two children and \$45,000 in net family income would receive a reduced extra payment of \$337.65 (compared to \$467 at \$35,000 in net income), would receive \$87.65 at \$55,000 net family income.

The GST credit increase is completely phased out at a net income of \$58,500 or above.

Bill C-31 proposes a two-year dental benefit for children under 12 that would provide a maximum of \$650 a year per child, for two years, for families earning less than \$70,390 a year.

Families that have an income between \$70,390 and \$90,000 would see the benefit reduced to somewhere between \$390 down to \$260, depending on the income cutoff.

What is interesting is that thus far the Liberals are proposing that this dental benefit would be “provided upfront, before the child sees the dentist, and parents won’t have to automatically submit receipts or return any unused money...” as reported by the National Post.

It should be noted that dental care programs for low-income children already exist in all provinces and territories except Manitoba and the Northwest Territories and almost 70 per cent of Canadians have dental coverage.

This creates two challenges.

Without any type of verification process the program could be open to abuse and fraud.

Secondly, without any verification or billing information being required, there is no opportunity for the government to compile data that can be used to assess and monitor how well this program is actually working.

The Canadian Dental Association has stated that “the federal government can best ensure funding will quickly and efficiently benefit those Canadians who need it most: namely, by collaborating with provinces and territories to stabilize and enhance existing provincial and territorial dental care programs.”

While this advice is reasonable the Trudeau Liberal Government has not followed it.

Scotiabank has also said that these new spending announcements will increase the likelihood the Bank of Canada will need to raise interest rates above 4%.

If that occurs, it will financially punish many citizens who will not benefit from these proposed new

programs.

My question this week:

Are you supportive of Bill C-30 and C-31?

## September 28<sup>th</sup>

With the House of Common back in session, Opposition Day is back. Opposition days, also known as 'supply days' are where the opposition parties can table a motion for debate in the House.

For the Official Conservative Opposition, the motion we tabled this week read as follows:

**“That, in the opinion of the House, given that the government’s tax increases on gas, home heating and, indirectly, groceries, will fuel inflation, and that the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported the carbon tax costs 60% of households more than they get back, the government must eliminate its plan to triple the carbon tax.”**

Triple the carbon tax?

I have found that many Canadians are unaware that the Trudeau Liberal Government plans to raise the carbon tax from the current level of \$50 a tonne to \$170 a tonne by 2030, with increases each and every year.

This breaks the promise the Trudeau Liberals made in 2019 when they stated that “The plan is not to increase the price(carbon tax) post-2022”.

This new rate will also apply to carbon taxes created under provincial law, such as British Columbia.

Should a provincial government refuse to increase their carbon tax in step with the federal government, the Supreme Court of Canada has confirmed that the federal government can impose its own carbon tax as a backstop.

Why does the Official Opposition believe this is a problem?

As we have watched 40-year high inflation take hold in Canada, one of the key drivers of inflation is the high price of gasoline.

Higher gas prices not only harm household budgets, but they also increase transportation costs and in turn raise prices on groceries and other consumer goods – all increasing inflation.

Earlier this year the Bank of Canada was asked to calculate the cost of the carbon tax ,at current levels, and how that affects inflation here in Canada.

The answer from the Bank of Canada was alarming: **“if the charge (carbon tax) were to be removed from the three main fuel components of the consumer price index (gasoline, natural gas and fuel oil) it would reduce the inflation rate by 0.4 percentage points. In other words, if that policy had come into effect at the start of the year, January’s inflation rate would have been 4.7% instead of 5.1%.”**

Defenders of the carbon tax will often reference that there are rebates.

Unfortunately, rebates do not fairly reflect the differences in services available here in Canada.

For someone in Toronto who does not own a car they will likely come out ahead under any carbon tax.

However, for someone living in a rural community, like Hedley B.C., where there is no high school, no middle school, no hospital, no major grocery stores, and very limited transportation options, they are forced to drive to communities such as Princeton and Keremeos and are much more severely impacted by the carbon tax as a result.

There is also a larger problem that our major trading partners, the United States and Mexico, do not have a carbon tax which means that producers located in those countries can undercut Canadian producers and at the same time there is no actual emission being reduced.

Finally, we must also recognize that not every factor that drives inflation is within the control of the Canadian Government.

International supply chain factors and Putin's war against the Ukraine are all outside of the control of the Bank of Canada, when the Bank raises interest rates.

This leaves the question what can the Government of Canada do to help increase affordability and reduce inflation?

As the Bank of Canada has confirmed the carbon tax is inflationary, the Official Opposition is calling on the Trudeau Liberal government to stop its planned tripling of the carbon tax.

My question this week:

Do you agree?

## **October 2022**

### **October 5<sup>th</sup>**

During the years of the Conservative majority government, lead by the Rt. Honourable Stephen Harper, I was fortunate to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary to Treasury Board.

Once I was appointed and sworn in, I was advised of the increased rules and regulations that applied to this position, that did not apply to a regular Member of Parliament.

These new rules and regulations existed because, as a Parliamentary Secretary, you represent the Crown.

As a Parliamentary Secretary, you cannot write letters of support on behalf of individuals and organizations to independent judicial or quasi-judicial processes of government, to avoid the appearance that you are attempting to unduly influence those processes.

This is an area quite heavily scrutinized and enforced by the ethics commissioner.

Unfortunately in 2013, my colleague at the time, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, Hon. John Duncan, forgot this requirement and made a honest mistake.

John wrote a letter on behalf of a constituent to the Canada Revenue Service (CRA) tax court.

The letter, although well intended, resulted in a weeks' worth of significant negative media stories and ultimately Minister Duncan did the honourable thing and tendered his resignation to Prime Minister Harper, who accepted it.

I raise this issue is because this week it was revealed a similar situation occurred last month.

This time, Liberal MP Greg Fergus, who serves as the Parliamentary Secretary to the Prime Minister and to the President of the Treasury Board, also wrote a letter – in this case to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) to advocate for a television channel's application to the CRTC for lucrative mandatory carriage with Canadian broadcasters.

This of course directly contravenes the federal guidelines that specifically prohibit parliamentary secretaries from making such interventions.

Much as with the situation with John Duncan, Liberal MP Greg Fergus stated it was an “honest mistake” however, unlike the situation with John Duncan, no resignation has yet been offered.

Likewise, chances are if you had not read about this letter in my report this week, you may not have heard about it through most Canadian media, as this letter did not receive anywhere near as much media attention as it did in 2013.

Why is that?

How is it that what once was an ethical lapse considered deserving of a resignation is now a non-issue?

I am not suggesting a media bias or that there is a double standard, only that the ethical standards that Ministers of the Crown, and by extension Parliamentary Secretaries, were once held to have greatly diminished under Prime Minister Trudeau.

My question to you this week:

Is this something that concerns you or is this also something you view as a non-issue?

## **October 12<sup>th</sup>**

At the top this week, I would like to congratulate Kelowna-Lake Country MP Tracy Gray in her new Shadow Cabinet role as the critic for Employment, Future Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

As the labour market tightens, wait lists for skilled immigration grow and economic winds blow, this will be a key portfolio and I wish her well.

I would also like to congratulate North-Okanagan Shuswap MP Mel Arnold in his continued role as the

Associate critic for Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

His work on aquatic invasive species is near and dear to many of us that want to protect freshwater lakes like the Okanagan.

If you follow Canadian politics closely you may have heard that the Leader of His Majesty's Official Opposition, the Honourable Pierre Poilievre, announced his new shadow cabinet on Wednesday.

While it has been a great honour to serve in a variety of different portfolios in the opposition shadow cabinet, I will not be part of this shadow cabinet and as someone who long believed in accountability and transparency, I would like to share the reason why.

A member of my family was diagnosed with an illness and so I asked to be withdrawn from consideration for a role in the upcoming shadow cabinet.

This decision will allow for more time to be spent on issues unique to our riding and also more time for my family, as being in shadow cabinet is a serious time commitment.

As far as issues unique to the riding, we have one very important one. Local government elections.

In every community across British Columbia, many good people have put their name forward to serve.

In some cases, they may be running for re-election for the first time.

In all these situations we are fortunate that people have come forward with a passion and dedication to potentially serve as elected officials.

Local Government is important as it provides many of the day-to-day services families rely upon.

Increasingly, as our climate changes, we also see many local mayors and councils facing extreme situations never thought possible.

I can state firsthand that Federal and Provincial disaster assistance programs are not meeting the demands of communities facing these situations.

Who you elect to represent you and your community is critically important.

I encourage all citizens to scrutinize your local candidates closely, ask tough questions and more importantly make sure you get out and vote.

My question this week:

Do you plan on voting in the October 15 local government election?

## **October 19<sup>th</sup>**

Canadians awoke to news this week that Canada's rate of inflation means that prices will continue to rise at a rate of 6.9%.

The “upside” ,according to some media headlines, is that inflation rate increase of 6.9% is not accelerating as quickly as the 7% rate as it had last month.

Unfortunately for grocery prices, it is even worse as the rate of food inflation is currently at 11.4%.

This is the fastest increase since 1981 and is causing considerable discomfort for constituents I have spoken with, particularly those with low or fixed incomes who are feeling triple squeezed by higher gas, groceries and housing costs.

On the subject of food inflation, this week the House of Commons voted unanimously for an NDP motion that proposes a number of measures to closely examine the profits of Canada’s largest grocery stores.

I should add that several economists and other experts in this area have reported that they believe the data will show excess profiteering is not the cause of rapidly rising grocery prices.

From my perspective I believe it is important that this area is properly scrutinized and that grocery stores are accountable to elected officials to explain their pricing structures.

Also occurring in Ottawa is the ongoing Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) that is hearing testimony from a variety of sources as it probes whether the Trudeau Liberal government met the standard for invoking emergency powers found in the Emergencies Act as required by law.

While not a court of law, the Commission has several powers to call for evidence and to hear testimony and has expressed that it would like for the public to submit their views on this matter.

For those wishing to share a submission or email on this subject directly with the Commission, please go to the following link:

[publicorderemergencycommission.ca/share-your-views/](https://publicorderemergencycommission.ca/share-your-views/)

Before I close this week, I would like to take a moment to express my sincere condolences to the family, friends and colleagues of fallen RCMP officer Constable Shaelyn Yang, who was fatally stabbed while checking on a homeless individual camping in a Burnaby park.

Constable Yang was an RCMP mental health and homeless outreach officer.

This indirectly leads to my question for this week.

Now that our civic elections are complete and many new mayors and councillors were elected, often at the expense of incumbents, it has been suggested by some that one drive for change was public safety.

My question this week:

How concerned are you about how well all levels of government combined are addressing public safety concerns?

## October 26<sup>th</sup>

Early this week I was contacted by a local journalist for reaction to reports that the government delegation headed by PM Trudeau to attend the Queens funeral in London had cost \$397,000 for the 5-night stay.

One room was reported to have cost \$6,000 per night and included a private butler.

The Trudeau Liberal government so far refuses to disclose who stayed in that room.

For the record, this was a non-partisan delegation that included past Liberal and Conservative Prime Ministers as well as other dignitaries and elected officials.

When I was asked for my reaction, I was taken back to ten years ago when it was revealed a former Conservative cabinet minister had charged taxpayers \$16 for a glass of orange juice, ironically also while travelling in London at an expensive hotel.

My reaction is the same then as it is now.

It is totally unacceptable there is not greater respect for the spending of tax dollars.

In the case of former Minister Bev Oda, the Minister did the honourable thing and resigned after her expenses were reported. She also repaid the expenses out of her own pocket.

In this case the Trudeau Liberal Government will not even tell us who should be held accountable for staying in a \$6,000 a night hotel room.

That is totally unacceptable.

Also announced this week is the Bank of Canada is once again raising the overnight interest rate to 3.75%.

This is another increase from the previously announced increase of 3.25%

I am hearing from many families who are seriously struggling financially, as the increased payments on household debt have become unsustainable for them.

As one family recently shared, they are now coping with the extra payments solely through their line of credit however, the interest of the line of credit is also increasing, and they have calculated they can make two more months of payments before they max out their line of credit.

Many have also expressed concerns that if there is a cold winter having high heating bills on top of everything else will be the "straw that broke the camel's back".

Unfortunately, as the Official Conservative Opposition, every effort we have made to have carbon tax increases delayed or GST removed from fuel have been opposed by the Liberal/NDP partnership.

With the Bank of Canada now confirming that carbon taxes increase inflation, this would be one measure the Trudeau Liberal Government could undertake to help many struggling Canadians and yet they refuse.

At a time when many are struggling, the Liberals do not have any concern with renting a \$6,000 a night hotel room,



I am seriously concerned PM Trudeau does not appreciate or understand just how real the financial challenges that some Canadians are facing.

I should also add that many that I hear from, in this challenging fiscal situation, have good jobs and as a result do not qualify for many of the rebate and assistance programs that are available.

This Liberal government once promised to help the middle class and yet everyday I hear from more middle-class families who cannot afford to make ends meet.

My question this week:

Do you think Canadians that heat their homes with natural gas or propane should be punished with a carbon tax for attempting to stay warm in the cold winter months?

## **November 2022**

### **November 2<sup>nd</sup>**

Ottawa is a very busy place this week with many different topics dominating media stories.

The ongoing inquiry into the invoking of the Emergency Act continues and many surprising details are being revealed to the public.

This will be a topic for a future report.

Also occurring this week is a request to the Speaker from the NDP asking for an emergency debate in the House of Commons over the Province of Ontario's pre-emptive use of the notwithstanding clause to impose a contract on CUPE workers in the Ontario public education system.

As this is a Provincial matter, it is unknown at this point if the Speaker will agree to a request for this emergency debate.

Somewhat overlooked in many media reports this week was the Bank of Canada coming out and stating that they have "not ruled out another oversized interest rate hike to fight sky-high inflation".

With many families seriously struggling to pay increased interest on debt in mortgages, lines of credits and elsewhere, these comments will be of very serious concern.

However, it is not just individual households that will be seriously impacted by a further increase in interest on debt.

As many will know, for every year since being elected, the Trudeau Liberal Government has deliberately run deficit budgets that have significantly increased Canada's debt.

For those who have been following closely, they will know the Trudeau Liberal government has consistently defended their deficit budgets by stating this spending is "affordable due to low interest rates"

Back in my criticism of the Liberal budget early last year, I warned about rising interest will mean rising payments on that debt, a term known as “debt servicing”.

In fact, I pointed out that the interest that we paid on our public debt for 2020/21 was \$20.4 billion.

I also pointed out that by 2026/27 these debt servicing costs were forecast to rise to \$40.9 Billion.

For context I gave the example that the Canada Health Transfer that was \$45.9 Billion (at the time) was forecast to rise to \$55.2 billion in 2026/27.

I did this to raise the issue that over the next five years the cost to service our debt is doubling and increasing at a rate faster than our health transfers are increasing.

I viewed this as a very serious concern and many local citizens agreed.

Flash forward to this week and Desjardins (from Quebec) has forecast that Canada’s debt servicing costs will hit \$49.8 billion next year.

To put \$49.8 billion in debt servicing charges into perspective, the total of the Canada Health Transfer (CHT) for 2022/23 is expected to rise to \$45.2 Billion.

In other words, the situation that I was worried about has now occurred over a much shorter period.

With Canada’s debt servicing now forecast to see us spending more money on debt servicing than we are spending in funding the entire Canada health transfer to the Provinces and Territories, here is my question for you this week:

What actions would you like to see from the Federal Government in response to this situation?

## **November 9<sup>th</sup>**

Late last week the Trudeau Liberal government released a Fall Economic Statement, promoted as a “mini-budget”.

Why? One can assume that it was a clever play on words suggesting this fiscal announcement was small when in reality it proposes to significantly increase more deficit spending.

First some context.

You may recall that PM Trudeau was elected in 2015 with a promise to run several “small” deficits before he made what he called a “cast in stone” promise to return to a balanced budget in 2019.

The promises at that time were “small deficits” of \$ 9.9 billion in 2016, \$9.5 billion in 2017, \$5.7 billion in 2018 and a return to a \$1 billion surplus in 2019.

How did those promises turn out? They didn't.

In reality the size of these deficits were much larger.

A \$17.8 billion deficit in 2016, a \$19 billion deficit in 2017, a \$14 billion deficit in 2018 and a \$39.4 billion deficit in 2019.

Keep in mind that all of this was before the pandemic.

Fast forward to what the Trudeau Liberal Government announced in their mini-budget last week.

A deficit this year of \$36.4 billion, followed by a \$30.6 billion deficit in 2023, another \$25.4 billion deficit in 2024, with a further deficit of \$14.5 billion in 2025 that will lower to a \$3.4 billion deficit in 2026 and finally a \$4.5 billion surplus in 2027.

Aside from the obvious that this Liberal Government has never established itself as being able to come even close to meeting the fiscal promises it makes, there is another challenge.

Once again we are in a situation where these are all deficit forecasts, meaning the actual deficits could be much higher, as has been the case in the past with this particular Liberal government.

In fact, even within this “mini-budget” the government also includes a “downside scenario” in which the federal deficit this year could be as high as \$49.1 billion, followed by \$52.4 billion in 2023 and \$42.3 billion in 2024.

In this downside scenario, instead of a small surplus in 2027, there would still be a deficit of \$8.3 billion.

There is also one more alarming trend.

As prices rise with inflation, so do the taxes on all those goods and services that now cost more, meaning the government actually receives more tax money from struggling consumers trying to pay the bills.

As an example of this, the actual federal government revenue received was actually \$19 billion higher in this “mini-budget” than was forecast in last April’s budget.

In other words, at a time when the federal government is receiving increased tax revenues, at your expense -- due to higher prices -- it is taking this extra revenue and still spending it while creating deficits significantly larger than what they first campaigned on back in 2015.

As I mentioned last week, Desjardins (from Quebec) now forecasting that Canada’s debt servicing costs will hit \$49.8 billion next year and we could be spending more money servicing debt than the total of the Canada Health Transfer spending for 2022/23, that is expected to rise to \$45.2 billion.

My question this week:

Do you find this “mini-budget” credible?

## **November 16<sup>th</sup>**

I have been increasingly hearing about from parents with young children concerned about a serious shortage of children’s pain relief medicine at local pharmacies and grocery stores.

Recently a citizen from Kelowna, returning from a trip to Washington State, sent me pictures from some USA based grocery stores and asked why the same problem was not occurring in the United States.

He asked what Prime Minister Trudeau was doing to resolve this problem.

While it is true that the United States does not have this problem to the same extent than Canada, it is less clear as to the reasons why.

Fortunately, early this week, Health Canada issued a statement that may help resolve this critical shortage.

Health Canada indicated that the agency has “secured foreign supply of children’s acetaminophen that will be available in retail stores and pharmacies in the coming weeks.”

Now the reason why I suggest this may help resolve this critical shortage is because Health Canada is refusing to reveal precisely how much supply they have “secured” nor will they reveal exactly where in Canada it will be distributed.

After two years of very detailed drug procurement and distribution information from Health Canada, during the pandemic, this sudden refusal to disclose these same basic details and the lack of transparency raises serious questions and concerns.

Why would this information be withheld from Canadians?

On an unrelated note, this week a continued investigation into how the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) managed to spend \$54 million on the “ArriveCan app” after it was originally budgeted to cost \$80,000.

The ArriveCan app is no longer mandatory for those travelling into Canada.

CBSA was to turn over documentation related to this boondoggle to the House of Commons standing committee on government operations and estimates this week, to meet a pre-established production order and deadline.

So far CBSA has declined to reveal exactly where the money went and who ended up with it.

When a committee or the House itself passes a production order- as was the case here - that order is equivalent to a court order, and government, elected to serve the House, must respond.

While these two situations are not directly related, they do point to a disturbing pattern. Citizens elect Members of Parliament to represent them at the federal government level in Ottawa.

Parents wondering about what actions are being taken to rectify the critical shortage of children’s pain medication deserve to know what is being done, with significant details.

Likewise, when a federal department somehow manages to spend \$54 million on an app, Canadians deserve to know where that money went and who profited from it.

These should not be considered partisan questions and Canadians deserve to have answers to these questions.

Instead, we see stonewalling, excuses, and a complete and total disregard for Canadians right to know

basic information on how and where their money is being spent.

My question this week:

Are you concerned by this growing lack of transparency, or do you view this as the official opposition sweating what you consider small and insignificant details?

## **November 23<sup>rd</sup>**

In late April I wrote about Trudeau Liberal government invoking the Emergencies Act.

I pointed out that many of the reasons that the majority of Liberal and NDP MPs had cited to justify voting for invoking the Emergencies Act had since been proven as false and untrue.

For example, there was no “act of attempted arson” on behalf of the protestors nor were any guns found in Ottawa during the protest.

I further pointed out that the law governing the use of the Emergencies Act also requires that an independent review must occur after the act is invoked.

For the past 28 days now the Public Order Emergency Commission (POEC) has been conducting hearings into the invoking of the Emergencies Act.

This week took a very interesting turn as cabinet ministers took the stand.

While direct questions to the ministers have yielded little useful information as to how the Trudeau Liberal government believed that the legal threshold had been met to invoke the Emergencies Act, the normally confidential and private messages shared between ministers has been far more of interest.

One text message exchanged between the Minister of Public Safety, Minister Marco Mendicino and the Minister of Justice, Minister David Lametti read as follows:

“Police have all of the legal authority they need to enforce the law they just need to exercise and do their job”

This was the statement from Minister of Public Safety.

This is particularly relevant as the legal standard to invoke the Emergencies Act is clear.

As the Canadian Civil Liberties Association describes it:

“The Emergencies Act can only be invoked when a situation 'seriously threatens the ability of the Government of Canada to preserve the sovereignty, security and territorial integrity of Canada' and when the situation 'cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada.'”

The last part is key “when the situation 'cannot be effectively dealt with under any other law of Canada'”.

This was precisely the argument that the official opposition, a few Liberal MP's and other academics and legal scholars opposed to invoking the Emergencies Act all referenced.

To hear the Minister of Public Safety state, privately in a text message to the Justice Minister, that “Police have all of the legal authority they need to enforce the law they just need to exercise and do their job” is a candid admission that they knew this situation could be dealt with under existing Canadian laws.

If you are following the PEOC in the news, you may have heard that the Director of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service (CSIS) David Vigneault confirmed that CSIS did not believe the legal standard had been met to invoke the Emergency Act (as is required under law).

You may have also heard that, in spite of this fact, the CSIS Director still advised PM Trudeau to invoke the Emergency Act.

Why would Mr. Vigneault advise that, given that the legal standard had not been met?

The Commission has been told by the CSIS Director his recommendation was based on a new legal opinion from Justice Canada.

The obvious question is, what was this legal opinion?

Unfortunately, the Trudeau Liberal Government is claiming privilege and refuses to reveal this legal opinion.

My question this week:

Considering this new information, do you believe the use of the Emergencies Act was justified?

## **November 30<sup>th</sup>**

When I first was elected as a Member of Parliament, I fast discovered it was not uncommon for citizens to share personal documents with me on issues they were finding to be challenging to deal with when it comes to the federal government.

While that fact has not changed, what has surprised me is the extent to how much the list of challenges has grown.

Some examples:

Many citizens can no longer receive a passport within a reasonable period of time.

Immigration backlogs have never been worse and some citizens, to their shock and dismay, discover supporting documents to their application have literally disappeared from their file.

Air travelers who experience immense frustration from travel cancellations have discovered the air passenger bill of rights is not helping them.

Many citizens in rural areas still cannot receive broadband internet despite promises to the contrary over the past five years.

Increasingly I receive winter gas bills from citizens who can no longer afford their home heating.

On that note one recent home heating bill caught my attention.

The person who sent the bill to me pointed out that they had to go on the “equal payment plan” in order to afford the cold winter months.

For this individual that means 12 equal payments of \$170 a month for a total of \$2,040 for the year.

They also pointed out that close to a quarter of that bill \$473 (23% actually) was solely paying for the carbon tax.

As this individual is not eligible for the BC climate action rebate, (In B.C. individuals earning \$79,376 or more are not eligible for this credit) the question was asked how much higher the carbon tax would be next year.

This is a good question as on one hand that carbon tax in B.C. is provincial and yet on the other hand when BC signed onto the federal Pan-Canadian Climate Strategy they agreed to the guidelines will called for the carbon tax in BC to rise to \$50 per tonne as of April 1, 2022.

\$50/tonne is the current rate.

So what happens next?

Prime Minister Trudeau wants to triple the carbon tax here Canada at the following rate schedule:

The minimum Carbon Pollution Price (\$ CAD/tonne CO<sub>2</sub>e) for 2023 is \$65.

In the following years:

2024 \$80

2025 \$95

2026 \$110

2027 \$125

2028 \$140

2029 \$155

2030 \$170

As the Canadian Climate Strategy was only in effect until the end of 2022, it is unknown if the BC NDP government will continue to follow the Trudeau Liberal government in this direction.

If it does, as you can see for 2023, this would be a 30% increase over the current carbon tax rate.

It is easy to understand why the Bank of Canada has confirmed that the carbon tax does help to increase inflation here in Canada.

My question this week:

Do you support B.C. continuing to follow the federal Liberal government in tripling the carbon tax by the year 2030 to \$170/tonne?

## December 2022

### **December 7<sup>th</sup>**

This week Canada's Auditor General, Karen Hogan, released Audits 9 and 10 that focused on the federal government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Report 9 focused on vaccines. While the audit notes that Canada secured a sufficient supply of vaccine doses, it was also critical over significant levels of vaccine waste.

The auditor notes that there are approximately 32.5 million doses worth an estimated value of \$1 billion that will have end up wasted due to not being administered or redistributed elsewhere prior to the expiry date.

Report 10 focused on COVID benefit payments. Here the Auditor General found several areas of serious concern. For example, she found there have been \$4.6 billion of benefit payments paid to ineligible individuals.

The AG further estimates that a minimum of \$27.4 billion in other benefit payments must be further investigated to determine proper eligibility.

The AG's audit also found concerns with subsidy programs that were targeted to businesses.

As one example, the AG stated that potentially as many as 50,000 businesses may have received emergency wage subsidy payments (CEWS) in total value of \$9.87 billion. These businesses may have also been ineligible.

Previously some media organizations have published stories of publicly traded companies that continued to pay executive bonuses, while at the same time collecting CEWS support from taxpayers.

Overall, the Auditor General notes that the government using "attestation" from businesses and individuals resulted in many situations where benefits were paid to those who were ineligible.

While the Government conceded this would be a foreseeable problem at the time, it also committed to doing a more thorough review and vetting of applicants after the fact.

Here the Auditor General has been critical and notes the Government has presented no formal plan of action on this 'thorough review and vetting'.

This raises the question how much of this potentially misspent money will ever be repaid to taxpayers.

Currently the Government of Canada has reported that it has collected just \$2.3 billion from those who did not qualify for the benefits.

How much more will be collected remains unknown.

There is also the added challenge that the Trudeau Liberal Government has thus far not accepted the findings of the Auditor General's report as is commonly the response from government.

In Question Period this week the Minister of National Revenue, Diane Lebouthillier, stated that: "the CRA



does not agree with the Auditor General's calculations concerning recipients who were not eligible for the wage subsidy. The CRA's actual audits indicate that compliance with the subsidies was high and that the Auditor General's figure is exaggerated. This is not the Auditor General's fault. We all know that she was pressured by the opposition to produce this report.”

For the record none of the opposition parties have any influence or involvement over how the Auditor General conducts an audit or what the findings may or may not be.

There was a time when citizens were not supportive or even outraged if the government was not careful and prudent in the spending of tax dollars.

However, in this case, by allowing for attestation instead of verification, the Trudeau Liberal Government was taking applicants at their word that they were eligible for funding.

My question this week:

What are your thoughts on the government's use of an attestation in delivering timely support programs?

## **December 14<sup>th</sup>**

Last week I wrote about the recent Auditor General's (AG) report on COVID related pandemic benefit payment programs to both individuals and businesses.

In this report it was suggested that as much as \$27.4 billion in benefit payments must be further investigated to determine if there was proper eligibility.

The AG mentioned that much of this situation has arisen due to the Federal Government allowing “self-attestation” from businesses and individuals as sufficient proof of eligibility to receive the benefits, despite potentially not actually meeting the eligibility criteria.

I asked the question “What are your thoughts on the government's use of an attestation in delivering timely support programs?”

Over the past week I have heard a significant amount of feedback from local citizens on this topic.

I raise this point again because the federal government is going to use attestation in the delivery of a new support program that is not pandemic related.

Recently the Trudeau Liberal Government announced the “Canada Dental Benefit” program (that was a result of its partnership with the NDP) where we once again see attestation being used as the criteria to determine eligibility.

In this program, estimated to cost between \$1.3 - \$1.5 billion annually, there is no direct payment to a dentist as most dental care plans require.

Instead, this program (as it is currently structured) sends funds directly to qualifying parents with children below 12.

What is interesting about this approach is how it differs from the Trudeau Liberal government approach to funding healthcare here in Canada.

As some will be aware, the federal government has a program known as the “Canada Health Transfer” (CHT) that transfers a portion of the federal taxes you send to Ottawa back to provinces and territories to help cover the costs of providing healthcare.

Currently the CHT is forecast to be roughly \$45.2 Billion for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

Provinces throughout Canada, including here in B.C., are currently facing many healthcare related challenges.

Lack of staff, staff burnout, lack of capacity and poor service delivery are all challenges faced in hospitals across Canada.

The Premiers have all been united and clear that the federal government must increase the CHT to help solve these critical healthcare challenges given that healthcare is a provincially provided service.

Unfortunately for these Premiers, when it comes to healthcare, there is no attestation for an increase in the Canada Health Transfer.

Instead, as the PM stated in question period that he believes any funding increase must have strings attached, in other words not a “blank cheque”.

This 'Ottawa knows best' approach is commonly used with this Liberal government and will often include studies and consultation that ultimately means there is no immediate increase in funding for the Canada Health Transfer.

Contrast that with the Premiers, who regardless of political stripe, are all unanimous that this is a crisis situation and federal health care funding (without strings attached) must occur ASAP.

My question this week:

Do you support the Canada Health Transfer being increased immediately, or do you agree with PM Trudeau that Ottawa imposed conditions should be attached before increasing any funding?

## **December 21<sup>st</sup>**

Canadians awoke this week to media headlines that “Canada’s inflation rate fell to 6.8% in November”.

Unfortunately, this headline does not tell the entire story.

While the CPI did come down slightly core inflation in other areas increased.

As an example, food inflation increased by 11.4% year over year in November, a fact that will not come as a surprise for anyone who has visited a grocery store recently.

Likewise, for those facing mortgage interest rate increases, Statistics Canada reports a 14.5% increase.

This is an averaged rate, as many with variable rate mortgages have been experiencing increases well beyond this amount.

One of the many challenges with inflation is that items such as groceries and paying your mortgage, rent or line of credit all come from your household net income after you have already paid income taxes.

This higher inflation means you have less purchasing power, as your income does not keep pace with the rise in your cost of living.

Unfortunately, on January 1st of 2023, another round of payroll deductions from the federal government is increasing – in this case increased EI and CPP premiums -- meaning your net take home pay is going to be less.

This also affect employers.

As the Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) reports: “on January 1, (EI) premiums for employers are set to increase by as much as 5.2% per employee. Altogether, the increases in CPP and EI could cost business owners up to \$325 more per employee – a 6.7% increase from 2022.”

These increased payroll costs are passed on to consumers and this only further helps to fuel inflation.

For the record, the Conservative Official Opposition did request the Trudeau Liberal government delay the increase to the EI premiums (something the Federal Government has done previously) however in this case PM Trudeau refused to do so.

On April 1st there will be another round of tax increases related to the elevator excise tax on alcohol, that automatically increases each year thanks to the Trudeau Liberal government.

Additionally, on April 1st carbon taxes are slated to increase by \$15/ a ton, from the current \$50 to \$65 a ton.

So 2023 is going to be a more expensive year for many Canadians and, as the Official Opposition, we will continue to make the point that many Canadians can no longer afford to take home less.

Before I close this week my final report for the year, I would like to sincerely wish all citizens Happy Holidays and a very Merry Christmas!

I would also like to sincerely thank all first responders, our military personnel and those in public service work that means they will not be home with their families this Christmas.

Finally this week's question:

What would you most like to see from your federal government in 2023?