

January 2016

January 6th

In roughly two weeks' time, the House of Commons will resume sitting and Canada's 42nd Parliament will get down to work. At this point the legislative agenda remains largely unknown as the Liberal Government is expected to table a series of Government Bills that ultimately will determine what matters will first come before the House for debate. In addition to Government Bills, the Private Member's Lottery has also now been held that determines in what order eligible MPs will see debate of their respective Private Member's Bill or Motion in the House of Commons. The majority of Parliamentary Standing Committees are still yet to be announced that review Bills after they have reached 2nd reading in the House of Commons. In summary the next few weeks will remain active in Ottawa in preparation for Monday, January 25- the first sitting day of 2016.

Some of the issues that are expected to feature prominently in Ottawa over this new Parliament include the Liberal Government budget, responding to the Supreme Court ruling on physician assisted suicide, change to Canada's current electoral system, a new process for appointing Canadian Senators, changes to Canada's current aerial campaign with our allies against the terror group ISIS and continued updates on efforts to resettle Syrian refugees. Amid these challenges it has been a priority of mine to also raise the need for our Liberal Government to immediately engage with the United States Government on prioritizing a new Softwood Lumber Agreement. Given the importance of the BC lumber industry to many regions of our Province including Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola this will be a matter of vital importance.

Aside from these issues it is also important to work with local communities in identifying infrastructure priorities to ensure we can continue to see many important projects moving forward. From my perspective I am excited at the opportunity to represent the citizens of Central Okanagan- Similkameen-Nicola on these important issues but also invite citizens to share your comments, concerns and questions with me. Over the past four years I found that input from citizens was of vital importance in helping to shape the direction of Government.

As one example, after my MP report on assisted suicide the amount of response I received was both heartfelt and overwhelming. While a large amount of important concerns were expressed, the majority of those I heard from were generally supportive of physician assisted suicide. This in turn was shared in Ottawa and as this topic arises again it will be important that the concerns I heard can be satisfied. Specifically that no person is in a situation to consider physician suicide reluctantly out of concerns of guilt on the burden they might place on care givers. It is also clear that we must actively and aggressively continue to expand and offer more palliative care options. As it is expected that the Liberal Government will at some point table legislation in response to the Supreme Court ruling, I will continue to provide updates and solicit feedback from constituents.

While I have only provided a few examples of some of the many subjects expected to come before the 42nd Parliament, I am enthusiastic about the importance of this work as we continually seek to build a stronger Canada. As has always been my commitment to citizens, I will continue to provide weekly reports on what is occurring in Ottawa and welcome your comments, concerns and

questions. Citizens deserve to be heard. On that note I would like to sincerely wish you all a Happy and prosperous 2016. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

January 13th

For a variety of different reasons the subject of international trade has been prominent in federal politics over this past week. One issue frequently raised of late is a deal between General Dynamics Land Systems, located in Ontario, to sell light armored vehicles (LAV's) to Saudi Arabia. This deal was supported by the former Conservative Government and is valued at \$ 15 Billion and will sustain 3,000 jobs over the next decade. The controversy over this deal has been re-ignited given the Government of Saudi Arabia recently and publicly executed a large number of individuals provoking international condemnation (including from Canada) in the process. Some have suggested this deal should be cancelled on account of the poor human rights record of the Saudi Arabia Government. To further complicate this subject, while the Liberals were also very critical of this sale when in opposition now as Government they have indicated the deal will not be cancelled. In a related political twist the official opposition critic has now called for the Liberal Government to justify the reasons for the sale.

On a similar theme the subject of human rights records has so far not dominated the discussion that the Liberal Government may seek to complete a free trade agreement with the Government of China. Currently Canada has a trade imbalance with China as we export roughly \$ 17 billion in largely resource products and in turn import just under \$60 Billion of mostly manufactured goods. That said a recent report from the Canada China business council estimates a free trade deal with China could see Canada increase our exports by close to \$8 billion over the next 15 years and also create upwards of 25,000 new jobs (as was reported by the National Post). It is expected the subject of a possible trade deal with China is one we will hear more about in the months ahead.

Finally this week Canada's Minister of International Trade, the Hon. Chrystia Freeland, has been making the rounds including a visit to Vancouver, to consult on the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) Trade agreement that has not been formally ratified in Parliament. To date the Liberal Government has not indicated if they will support the TPP agreement although President Obama publicly stated after meeting with Prime Minister Trudeau that Canada will be signing onto the TPP agreement. On a more local note I contemplated crashing the Trade Minister's Vancouver meetings to raise the importance of a new Canada USA Softwood lumber agreement (a subject I have also raised in Ottawa), however with the House returning in a few weeks I will again raise the issue in the months ahead.

Trade is not a subject I have heard much feedback on in our new riding of Central Okanagan Similkameen Nicola and as such I welcome your comments, questions and concerns. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at **1-800-665-8711**.

January 20th

This past week the world was horrified to learn of yet another terror attack, this time in Burkina Faso where roughly 30 citizens, including six Canadians from Quebec, were brutally murdered in a senseless act of violence.

What is particularly disturbing is that these Canadians were all serving in the region as humanitarian workers helping those who are less fortunate. This terror attack has again renewed calls on the Liberal Government to state a clear and coherent position on the allied campaign against terrorism. As many citizens will recall the Liberals made a promise to immediately withdrawal Canada's CF-18's from the allied aerial campaign against ISIS if they were elected. With the election over last October the Liberal Government has stated it will honour this promise however to date our CF-18's continue to be a valuable part of the coalition air campaign against ISIS.

This week there is a meeting of our allied Defence Ministers in Paris specifically on this subject where it has also been widely reported that Canada has not been invited. Although the Liberal Government has been clear it intends to withdrawal our CF-18 aircraft, the Government has also stated it will instead implement other measures that have yet to be announced. The Official Opposition believes that Canada should continue to stand with our allies in the war against terror as it has long been a Canadian tradition to stand with our allies to fight for those who are less fortunate or unable to stand against tyranny and oppression. This remains a challenging subject and one that can be divisive as I hear frequently from citizens who strongly support the mission but I also hear from those who are upset that our CF-18's are still actively bombing in spite of promises they would be withdrawn. I will continue to provide updates on this subject as they become available.

On an entirely different subject, late last week the Supreme Court announced that it will extend the deadline for Parliament to provide a legislative response to the assisted suicide ruling from last year. Although the Government requested a six month extension, the Supreme Court granted four months to reflect the time Parliament was dissolved as a result of the recent election. There is roughly twelve weeks the House of Commons will be sitting over the next four months so this will be a subject that will likely feature prominently once the House of Commons resumes sitting next week.

Although much of my time will be spent in Ottawa over the next few months I welcome your comments, questions and concerns. One of the highlights of my time in Ottawa is hearing directly from citizens throughout Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola on issues of importance to our local communities. In turn I am often able to share this information in member's statements, speeches and question within the House of Commons. I am truly excited for this next Parliament to get underway and to begin raising issues of concern in Ottawa. Ultimately this is how we help build a stronger Canada. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or by phone at **1-800-665-8711**.

January 27th

One of the buzz words emanating out of Ottawa this week is some talk of a national unity crisis. This discussion comes after Montreal Mayor Dennis Coderre announced strong opposition to the proposed Energy East pipeline project that is supported by the provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario and New Brunswick. The opposition from the Mayor of Montreal was particularly not well received within the Province of Alberta, who has for decades diligently paid into the Canadian

equalization program that annually pays out billions of dollars to Quebec and none to Alberta, or for that matter currently British Columbia or Saskatchewan. Even well-known CBC comedian Rick Mercer entered into the debate focusing a rant segment entirely in support of the Energy East project while lambasting the stance from Montreal Mayor Coderre.

As a result the subject of pipelines has featured prominently in Ottawa this week including on Wednesday when the Liberal Government will announce a new pipeline review process and then Thursday the Official Opposition Conservatives will table a motion calling on the Liberal Government to express support for the Energy East project along with a number of other conditions. At the time of my writing this week's MP report it is unknown what the new pipeline review process will be or what the outcome of the motion on Thursday is.

Also occurring this week is debate on the response to the Throne Speech, a debate that I was honoured to participate in. One of my reasons for speaking in response to the throne speech was to raise the importance of resource industries in rural communities. Here in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola there are multiple lumber mills and a number of mines that are large scale employers on a regional basis. I also raised the subject of civic infrastructure as well as the importance of a new softwood lumber agreement to our British Columbia economy including the need to focus on inter Provincial trade.

Before I close this week's report I would like to invite citizens to hold me to account at a public forum I will be hosting in West Kelowna on Saturday, January 30th at 6pm. Location is at the Westbank Lions Community Centre. There is no admission to attend or advance registration required. For those who cannot attend this forum I will be hosting more in other communities and as always I welcome your calls and emails. I can be reached via email at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or by phone at 1-800-65-8711.

February 2016

February 5th

The subject of pipelines has featured prominently in Ottawa including on Wednesday when the Liberal Government will announce a new pipeline review process and then Thursday the Official Opposition Conservatives will table a motion calling on the Liberal Government to express support for the Energy East project along with a number of other conditions. At the time of my writing this week's MP report it is unknown what the new pipeline review process will be or what the outcome of the motion on Thursday is."

I have included this reference from last week as I can start this report by updating on this information. The Liberal Government did announce a revised pipeline review process that contrary to promises of an entirely new process in effect takes much of the existing process and adds some new considerations. Some of these considerations include more public consultations in particular with First Nations as well upstream GHG (greenhouse gas emissions) will also now be assessed. The combined effect of these new measures also means the review process will be further delayed.

My thoughts on the new review policy? Having met with several groups and citizens who oppose new Canadian pipeline development the message often communicated is that new pipelines will not be supported under any circumstance. Thus lengthening the review process in my view is unlikely to sway those opposed to pipelines to support them, in fact within twenty four hours of the new review process announcement many prominent anti-pipeline organizations including some First Nations groups rejected the Liberal changes. Ultimately delaying the decision is an unhelpful measure. I do see value in tracking GHG emissions however on that same note all infrastructure projects have a GHG footprint and selectively tracking GHG emissions from some projects and not others seems counter-productive if the Liberal Government is truly serious about meeting reduced GHG emission targets.

This leads to the Opposition motion that reads:

“given this time of economic uncertainty, the House: (a) recognize the importance of the energy sector to the Canadian economy and support its development in an environmentally sustainable way; (b) agree that pipelines are the safest way to transport oil; (c) acknowledge the desire for the Energy East pipeline expressed by the provincial governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Ontario, and New Brunswick; and (d) express its support for the Energy East pipeline currently under consideration.”

Although this motion did not call for Energy East to be formerly approved it was still rejected by the Liberal Government in a whipped vote and was also opposed by the NDP in a similar manner. It is clear that the debate on Canadian pipelines is far from over.

Also being debated this week is a Government Bill C-4 from the Liberals that proposes a number of changes mostly related to Unions. Specifically the right for a worker to have a private ballot when voting on Unionization for a federally regulated work environment is being repealed under this Bill. Also being repealed is the union fiscal transparency act that would require unions to publicly disclose wages, benefits and other Union expenses that are taken from tax deductible union dues. Ironically on the same day the Liberals announced Bill C-4 Elections Canada reported the Liberal Party of Canada had taken an illegal union donation during the recent October election. As the Official opposition we believe in increased financial transparency and the right to a private ballot for workers and will oppose this Bill.

I welcome your comments, questions and concerns and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

February 10th

This week is a constituency week, when the House of Commons is not sitting after having been in session for the previous two weeks and the House will resume next week for a three week session until the next constituency week. For the sake of interest between now and the House adjourning on June 23rd for the summer recess there will be a total of six constituency weeks and thirteen sitting weeks remaining. What happens during a constituency week? Contrary to the opinion of some a constituency week is not a holiday for MPs or MLAs. Constituency weeks provide opportunities to meet with local citizens as well as other groups and organizations in a Member's home riding. Constituency weeks also provide opportunities for Government Ministers as well as Opposition

critics to travel into different regions of Canada to attend similar meetings and in some cases Government may also make announcements relevant to certain areas. As we also learned this week the Government may also choose to announce a major policy change during a constituency week as was the case when Prime Minister Trudeau finally announced a new policy on Canada's mission against the terror group ISIS.

As was promised by the Liberals during the election and also announced this week, our CF-18 fighters that have been part of the allied air coalition against ISIS will be withdrawn and returned to Canada. However these will be the only aircraft withdrawn as our Polaris refueling and Aurora surveillance aircraft will remain in the region to assist the continued bombing operations by our coalition partners. In addition the current 69 members of our Armed Forces who are on the ground providing training and assistance with bombing activities will be increased almost three fold to 230 soldiers. Another change is that small arms and related ammunition will also now be provided to Iraqi security forces along with the deployment of Canadian helicopters to provide medical evacuations. Over and above these changes, the current humanitarian aid being provided in the region will also be increased. The total cost of the new mission is estimated to increase as a result up to \$1.6 Billion in total over the next three years.

My thoughts? It is disappointing the Prime Minister did not make this announcement in the House of Commons where the original mission was announced on March 24th of 2015. An announcement in the House allows the Opposition to directly question the Government and an opportunity to respond while at the same time also ensures the Prime Minister's comments are on the official record. Why is this important? During his response speech to the current mission announced last year Justin Trudeau, then leader of the third opposition party stated (and I quote directly) "We can and we should provide that training far from the front lines." In reality, and as confirmed by Chief of Defence Staff Gen. Jonathan Vance, our training soldiers will be continue working near the front lines "painting targets" that in turn will be bombed by our allied coalition partners under the new Liberal announced plan.

This also raises another point of concern I have. The fact that Canada will continue to provide reconnaissance aircraft to locate targets, as well as to provide aerial tankers so allied bombers can reach those targets, and finally troops on the ground to paint the targets to be bombed demonstrates the critical importance of aerial bombing to this mission. Yet while Canada remains implicitly and actively involved in the bombing of ISIS the withdrawal of our CF-18s in essence suggests we support our allies doing this heavy lifting but no longer stand shoulder to shoulder carrying an equal load as has always been the Canadian way.

I welcome your thoughts, questions and comments on this or any subject before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

February 18th

Since my last report, we have now passed the first 100 days in office since the new Liberal Government was sworn into power. As is customary, this 100 day milestone is marked by close scrutiny of Government actions from a wide variety of media and pundits. One particular analysis that caught my attention was from journalist David Akin who examined the spending habits within the first 100 days of the current Liberal Government compared to the former Conservative Government.

By the numbers the former Conservative Government announced \$3.9 Billion in spending commitments within their first 100 days. In contrast the new Liberal Government has announced spending commitments totalling \$5.3 Billion in its first 100 days in office.

What is most interesting is that \$4.3 Billion of the total \$5.3 Billion that the Liberals have announced will be spent entirely outside of Canada, leaving just \$1 Billion to be spent on projects within Canada. By comparison of the \$3.9 Billion announced by the former Conservative Government in the first 100 days virtually all of it was for projects and programs within Canada; only \$211 million was spent outside of our borders. Obviously this different direction in spending priorities was part of the promised change that the Liberal Government was elected under. We will learn more about the future spending priorities of the Federal Government when the Minister of Finance tables his first budget on March 22, 2016.

Also occurring this week in the House of Commons this week will be debate and a vote on the recently announced Liberal mission changes related to the campaign against the terrorist group ISIS. For more information on these changes and the new mission please see my MP report from last week that can be found here:

www.danalbas.com/mp-report/the-changing-mission-in-iraq

Before I close this week I would like to thank those citizens who came out to attend my `Hold your MP to account` town hall in West Kelowna recently. The attendance was very encouraging and many good questions were asked by citizens who held me to account on a variety of different subjects. Given the success of this event I will also look to have similar accountability town halls in other communities in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola over the coming months. Also a reminder for those who cannot make these town halls I am always available for your comments, questions and concerns at: dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at [1-800-665-871](tel:1-800-665-871)

February 24th

Each week I am thankful to receive a significant amount of feedback on my weekly MP reports that often also contains suggestions on topics for future reports (for the record I welcome suggestions for future reports). One subject that has arisen a few times is questions on the differences between being a Government MP compared to an opposition MP. It is a good question. In many ways there are very few differences, particularly here in the riding where helping citizens with Federal Government issues remains a priority. Where the differences are more evident is in Ottawa.

From an Ottawa perspective obviously sitting on the opposition side of the House of Commons is a significant change as is the fact that in a majority Government most votes will be won by that Government and not the opposition. However one of the other major change is the fact that opposition has a job to criticize and oppose the Government as well as from time to time propose alternative policies and ideas.

Criticizing in opposition is obviously a new role for me however one aspect of being a critic that is also relevant is the fact that as opposition often you will share information that may not be popular with citizens. As an example in last week's report many citizens did not enjoy learning that of the \$5.3

Billion in spending commitments made by the new Liberal Government, \$4.3 Billion will be spent entirely outside of Canada. While some no doubt may have celebrated this news the vast majority of citizens I heard from were, to put it mildly, angry. From my perspective I try to compose reports in a non-partisan manner that does not provoke an angry reaction from citizens.

The reason why I raise this issue is to seek input on what format you would like to see in future MP reports. As an example more time could be spent explaining, or attempting to explain Government policy as opposed to relaying the facts of it for readers to decide upon. Conversely some have stated a preference for reports more critical of Government in areas that are often overlooked by the media. As always there is the option to continue my current approach that tends to vary based upon what events are occurring in Ottawa along with some reports based upon questions and or requests from citizens. Your input on this subject or any other before the House of Commons is greatly appreciated.

On an entirely different theme this week in Ottawa the Liberal Government has presented a fiscal update that indicates the Federal Government will soon be running a much larger deficit than what was promised during the last election. Part of this increased deficit is due to a slowing economy and the deterioration of oil prices and the remainder of the increased deficit will be related to increased Governmental spending. Until the Federal Budget is presented on March 22nd the exact increase of the rising deficit will be unknown. The Federal budget is a topic I will provide more information on as it becomes available.

I would also like to take a moment to congratulate Kelowna Lake Country MP Stephen Fuhr on being named as the Chair of the Select Standing Committee on National Defence. One of the priorities of this committee will be the replacement of Canada's CF-18 fighters, a subject that I believe Mr. Fuhr's experience in this field can be of benefit to all Canadians. As always I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711)

March 2016

March 2nd

It should never be forgotten that elected officials work for the public and should be accountable to the people we collectively serve. This was one of the reasons why in last week's MP report I asked citizens to share their input with me on these weekly reports and what changes and suggestions people would like to see for future reports, more so now given my role as an opposition MP. The response was significant and very encouraging. I would like to sincerely thank the many citizens who took the time to offer some very valuable suggestions and ideas that will be incorporated in future reports.

One comment I heard frequently was to spend less time on events widely covered in media and more time on issues that are less covered. Taking that feedback to heart this week I will mention a few topics that were not widely covered but may be of interest. One issue that was announced last week is that MP office budgets are being increased. Currently MP office budgets have been frozen since the 2009-2010 fiscal year. The increase announced last week is a 20% raise to MPs basic office budgets, a 5% increase to travel accounts and a 20% increase to House officer's budgets in Ottawa.

These budgets are intended to allow MPs to pay for increases in rent and staffing costs as well other expenses encountered when running several offices between the riding and Ottawa. I should also add that an increased budget does not necessarily in this case lead to increased spending. Any unused funds from an MP's annual office budget are returned to Ottawa each year with the exception of a 5% carryover that an MP can apply to their next fiscal year. All of these funds, when spent, are reported in a Member's annual financial report and in my case I also provide an annual accountability report to make this and other information easier to find and compare with previous years. To date since I was first elected as a Member of Parliament in 2011 I have never yet maximized my available budget spending and have returned unused funds to Ottawa. I expect this trend to continue.

Another change being contemplated in Ottawa is shortening the work week when the House of Commons is in session. Generally when MPs are in Ottawa the House of Commons will sit from Monday to Friday with the rare exception of a holiday creating a shorter week when the House will adjourn. For the majority of time the House sits it typically does so for two or three weeks in a row before adjourning for typically one or occasionally two constituency weeks. A Parliamentary committee is currently exploring that the House of Commons no longer sit on Fridays. The intent of this change is intended to help improve the family life balance for Members of Parliament.

My thoughts on this? Currently for a BC based MP travelling either to or from Ottawa the travel time takes the better part of a day so having a Friday strictly for travel would allow for more time back home. However as it stands now there is currently 24 Fridays the House is sitting in 2016 meaning the elimination of Fridays would mean over a loss of one month of House time. That is significant. It should also be pointed out the current obligations that include sitting 5 days a week when the House is in session were well known to all who put their names forward and were elected as MPs only a short time ago. As I believe it is important that elected MPs fulfill the obligations they were elected under I will be opposing these changes. I welcome your comments, question and concerns on this or any subject before the House of Commons.

I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

March 10th

From time to time some of the more significant issues that arise out of Ottawa do not originate from within the House of Commons. This is certainly the case this week as news reports from CBC regarding a compliance and enforcement decision by the Canadian Revenue Agency has created considerable reaction among many Canadians.

If you are unfamiliar with this specific issue it has been reported by CBC that a major Canadian accounting firm advised affluent Canadians to invest significant amounts of money outside of Canada for the purposes of either tax mitigation or outright tax avoidance. A further investigation revealed through internally leaked CRA documentation that an agreement between CRA and those involved resulted in an agreement to pay back taxes owed without further penalty, fines or prosecution. It has been further reported that the Canadian Revenue Agency also insisted on a confidentiality clause so this deal would not be publicly disclosed.

News of this confidential deal has created considerable reaction in large part as most Canadians who have encountered similar challenges with the Canadian Revenue Agency have faced fines with interest, prosecution and even in extreme cases garnishment, asset seizure and even foreclosure. The perception here is that a deal was offered by CRA that would not be available to most Canadians.

This situation in my view does raise serious concerns. Although elected officials do not make decisions related to compliance and enforcement by the Canada Revenue Agency there is an expectation of fairness and consistency to be applied equally to all Canadians. Federally elected officials can also expect accountability from public agencies such as Revenue Canada. In this specific case there is still information that is lacking. Who ultimately made this decision and the reasons why will need to be disclosed in a publicly transparent manner. It is critically important for taxpayers to have confidence in institutions such as the Canada Revenue Agency and the decision makers involved in compliance and enforcement actions. As I believe more information will be forthcoming on this subject I will provide further updates as they become available.

Also occurring this week is a rare State dinner at the White House in Washington DC where our Prime Minister will be a special guest. This dinner has created a significant amount of media interest in Ottawa as well as rampant speculation from political pundits. From a British Columbia perspective I am hoping that our Prime Minister will use this diplomatic opportunity to raise the critically important need for a new Canada United States softwood lumber deal. Communities in Central Okanagan Similkameen Nicola such as Princeton, Merritt and West Kelowna all have one or more lumber mills that are significant employers as well many surrounding communities such as Keremeos, Logan Lake and Summerland also have forestry dependent small business operations. As forestry is an important industry to our region I am hopeful that our Prime Minister has success in advancing causes important to British Columbia and Canada at this rare event.

I welcome your comments, questions and concerns and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

March 16th

This week is a constituency week meaning the House is not sitting as Members of Parliament are back in their ridings before returning to Ottawa next week for just four days until the House rises again for two more constituency weeks before resuming on Monday April 11th. Part of the reason why I oppose the idea of the House of Commons no longer sitting on Fridays is due to the fact that I believe there is an adequate number of constituency weeks to achieve a balance between time in Ottawa and our home ridings as is. I will also raise the concern that by cancelling Fridays, we will eventually see the productivity of Thursday sittings plummet as MPs try to use Thursday as a travel day in order to take advantage of Friday in their ridings. In essence, Thursday will become the new Friday- meaning less votes on Thursday, less regular attendance on Thursday committees and debate in the House of Commons.

For this week's MP report I would like to re-submit a portion of my MP report from February of 2015. While I seldom re- run a former report, in this instance the topic is one that I know all Canadians take very seriously; that is the subject of Doctor assisted suicide as it relates to a recent Supreme Court ruling. My reason for re-running a segment of my previous report is due to the fact

that the riding boundaries have since changed as have our Parliaments over the past year and I believe it is important to hear from citizens in our new riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola on this important subject that will soon be before the House. When I last raised this topic I received a large amount of very sincere and at times heartfelt comments and thoughts. One particular constituent shared a perspective that I believe raises unique and important concerns that I would like to share with citizens for added perspective. The following is an edited excerpt from my Feb. 2015 MP report:

The citizen in question suffers from a very severe physical disability and opposes the legalization of assisted suicide. The reason for this opposition is not based on faith, nor a previous encounter with suicide or hope that a miracle cure will be discovered. The concern from this particular disabled citizen is guilt. As a severely disabled individual, this person relies very heavily on family to serve as specialized care givers. As many will know, providing specialized and end of life care for a severely disabled loved one can be a challenging experience. In this case the constituent who contacted me shared a great love and appreciation for family members in making great sacrifices to help them live a better quality of life.

The concern of this severely disabled constituent is that legalized suicide would create an easy option for this person to end their own life with the assistance of a willing doctor. This person expressed a strong will to live. They have no desire to die. Where assisted suicide is a concern to this person is over a profound level of guilt. This guilt comes from the significant ongoing efforts of family members in providing specialized care. As legalized suicide could end the need for that care by not pursuing suicide, this individual would feel intense guilt that they are imposing on loved one's when another option is available. Suffice to say this was a difficult and emotional conversation and I apologize in advance that I am not relaying this concern in the manner it truly deserves.

I have shared this point again as it illustrates a situation of a severely disabled person who does not wish to die but has admitted the guilt of not pursuing suicide to relieve family members from serving as care givers could potentially result in a reluctant medically assisted suicide. As I commented then, I do not believe this is a situation any Canadian would welcome and is one we should be mindful of in this discussion. As I discovered when I last requested input on this subject, there are other situations and different perspectives in this conversation that are well deserving of consideration. I welcome your views, opinions and experiences. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711)

March 23rd

This week the Liberal Government tabled the first budget for the 42nd Parliament in Ottawa. As some may recall during the recent election the Liberals promised their first two budgets would have deficits capped at \$10 billion each year before returning to a balanced budget in 2019. The budget announced this week with a deficit of \$30 Billion adds more debt than what was promised over the entire term and does not forecast a return to being balanced in 2019. With such a large increase in deficit spending the obvious question is where is this borrowed money going to be spent?

While it is difficult to summarize a budget document in a single MP report I can list some of the areas that are targeted for increased spending. Public Transit will see spending of \$3.4 billion over the next three years. While public transit is not available in some parts of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola it will be helpful in others. Green infrastructure is another area in the budget targeted for \$5

billion in spending over the next 5 years.

Spending on First Nations will also be significantly increased in Budget 2016 with a commitment of \$8.4 Billion over five years. There are many First Nations communities within Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola and this funding can help ensure many much needed projects and programs are completed that are beneficial to the region.

In spite of such a large increase in deficit spending there are areas where spending will be decreased or other programs will be eliminated in this budget. One example of this is \$3.7 Billion in planned military equipment spending is being deferred down the road. In addition, expenditures such as the children's fitness and children's art credit are being phased out starting by reducing them in half for 2016 and eliminated in 2017.

On a more local note Budget 2016 does propose to re-open the Veterans Affairs office in Kelowna although one cannot not be certain if this means at the same location or nor does the budget specify an exact date. From a British Columbia perspective ferries built outside of Canada and imported to Provinces operating ferry fleets will no longer be subject to a 25% tariff. The 15% percent mineral exploration tax credit that was introduced by the former Government and was set to expire at the end of March will be extended for another year until March of 2017. Given the importance of mining to many regions within Central Okanagan- Similkameen-Nicola this continued program can be of benefit to local economies. Tourism will also see a \$50 million funding commitment however this is over two years and is Canada wide.

Missing from the budget? From my own perspective while the budget does mention the Canada-European Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA) and the Trans Pacific Partnership (TPP) international trade deals there is nothing significant on internal trade. A glaring oversight considering a new Agreement on Internal Trade is due this month and it appears to have fallen off the federal Government's radar screen. There is also no mention in the budget on a number of Liberal election promises such as restored door to door mail delivery, a reduction in the small business tax rate and of course no plan to return a balanced budget in 2019.

This is only a brief summary of a 269 page budget document and I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on Budget 2016 or any subject before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

March 23rd

As we were both members of the "Class of 2011" when we first elected to Parliament I soon found I was often in the company of Jim Hillyer. Jim was a quiet and unassuming man; that is until you engaged with him. Anyone who runs for public office often has a passion for ideas and Jim was certainly not lacking in this regard. He had strong views on how we could support communities, families and what the proper role of the state should be in defining those areas. Jim's views often leaned towards protecting individual rights and increasing liberty. He was a fresh thinker who was able to listen to other viewpoints and pushed a number of us not to simply accept the status quo.

Unknown too many was the fact that Jim's French was tres bien- (very good). Yet he seldom ever let on that he completely understood everything that was being said in Canada's other official language, which probably would have come as a shock to many. He studied French, he told me, because he enjoyed learning and wanted to get a better understanding of other perspectives. Learning for Jim

never stopped. He and I shared a love of reading, particularly by audiobook, and it was very common after a debate or caucus meeting, to see him moving to his next meeting with earphones on, listening to many works of history, both fiction and non fiction.

When we were first elected I remember Jim and I being part of what we proudly referred to as the “Conservative corner caucus” – sitting on the side of the House opposite of Government with the Opposition. We gave ourselves that name as it was more preferential than the more traditional term known as ‘the rump’ whereby the overflow of majority Government MPs go and sit on the opposition benches. While some within the corner caucus felt it was discouraging to sit apart from our majority caucus, Jim never complained pointing out we had some of the best seats in the House to view and keep track of what was going on.

Jim was one of those who quietly pushed the envelope, even if it rattled cages or made some uncomfortable in Ottawa. I can give no greater example of this than his motion 520, which Jim tabled on June 11, 2014 and breathed new life to the concept of asymmetrical federalism in Canada. By proposing an amendment to the Charter of Rights and Freedoms to include Property Rights which would only apply to his home province of Alberta, he offered a different view on how constitutional change could occur by a grassroots bottom up processes. This of course contrasted with the top heavy forms of constitutional changes that we are more accustomed to as observed in the Meech Lake and Charlottetown Accords.

It was Jim’s contention that if his motion was adopted by Parliament with a reciprocal motion passed by the Legislative Assembly of Alberta, that was all that would be necessary. In Jim’s mind this debate would be started by backbench MPs and MLAs and would come down to a vote on a simple proposal - in this case property rights subject to a yay or nay vote. If passed this obviously would have had all sorts of policy implications- well beyond just property rights. Potentially an issue that would touch all levels of Government and inevitably be subject to a constitutional challenge given this was a piecemeal attempt for amending the constitution in the most unconventional of ways.

The motion never did end up being debated in the House of Commons and eventually Jim proceeded on with another piece of legislation, his point having been made to challenge the status quo by offering a different perspective on how constitutional reform could occur.

Due to multiple surgeries from an initial skiing accident, the last few years of his service Jim carried out his Parliamentary duties by electric scooter and crutches; yet I never heard Jim once complain or express remorse for his situation. I would imagine the long nature of the 2015 election posed problems for Jim, but I doubt he would ever raise them. He was quiet and relentless in this regard.

One subject we only talked about a few times was in the area of family and his religion. While our conversations were often interrupted by votes and points of order, I know he was a proud husband, a loving father and a person of profound faith.

To some Jim will only be known as someone who was once accused of making hand gestures in the House of Commons. From my perspective Jim was much more than that. While we shared a love for reading I cannot help but reflect that much as a book cannot be judged by the cover there was indeed much more to this quiet unassuming man from Alberta who I was proud to call my friend: Jim Hillyer. God bless the Hillyer family at this most difficult time.

March 30th

When any level of Government releases an annual budget often the focus tends to be largely and understandably on what programs and projects an elected government will increase or decrease funding on. Seldom is there much of a discussion on the long term impacts of a budget on future generations of citizens. In the case of the recent Federal budget introduced by the Liberal Government last week there are a number of important questions to be asked that I believe all Canadians should be mindful of, one of them I will summarize in this week's report. Recently the TD Bank issued a forecast report predicting that the cumulated debt by increased deficit spending of the Liberal Government will reach \$150 Billion over the next five years. Astute political watchers will know this is very close to the \$154 Billion in debt that was added under the former Conservative Government before it returned to balance. This raises the question if both Governments are increasing similar amounts of debt, why is this now a concern? There are a number of reasons why I raise this issue. In the case of the former Government, this \$ 154 Billion in new debt was added over a 10 year period with many of those years experiencing a worldwide economic recession not seen in decades. In the case of the \$150 Billion in new debt from the Liberal Government this is being proposed in just half the number of years (only five) and at a time when Canada is not in a recession but rather a period of slow but positive economic growth.

The question to be raised is that if Government is increasing debt during a recession and still increasing debt when not in a recession but during a period of slow economic growth and aging demographics – at what point does a Federal Government ever pay off debt?

Why is this concern? The challenge with increasing debt is that there is ever increasing interest on that debt that must be maintained – not unlike paying the minimum balance on a credit card each month. In the case of Canada for the 2013/14 fiscal year over \$28 billion was spent just on debt servicing. To put that number into context the total amount of health transfers from the Federal Government to the Provinces and Territories in the same fiscal year was \$32 Billion. In other words from a Federal Government perspective we spend almost as much money servicing debt as we do helping to fund healthcare. As another comparison the National Defence budget for the same fiscal year was \$21.5 billion, meaning we spend more on debt than we do on National Defence. From a percentage standpoint currently 10% of the entire federal budget is spent servicing debt and this is before another \$150 billion in new debt from the Liberal Government is added.

Some view Government debt as being solely an ideological or partisan concern. The intent of this week's report is to illustrate that increasing debt imposes real costs that must be paid. Ultimately as debt and interest on debt increases so will the debt servicing costs and money that could otherwise be spent funding more important government programs or services is instead diverted towards debt servicing. The fact that fiscal capacity is being lost to debt is seldom a focal point in budgetary discussion however it is an increasing problem that future generations of Canadians will be left to deal with.

From my perspective few citizens raise the concern of increasing Government debt and my primary purpose in raising this topic is to ask citizens if debt and having a balanced budget are concerns you view as important. Obviously increasing spending is far easier for elected officials to do than to decrease spending however at some point fiscal capacity will be diminished to the

extent that future generations will have serious problems, particularly with our aging demographics, a topic I will cover in a future report. More so as most Canadian Provinces are also heavily in debt and some taxpayers are now paying in excess of 50% in combined income taxes not counting consumption taxes. I welcome your view on this subject. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free 1-800-665-8711.

April 2016

April 6th

Last week's report raised concerns that Government budgets, such as the recent [Liberal Federal budget](#), often focus too much on short term thinking and ignore the long term impacts on many subjects that will impact future generations of Canadians. This week the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer issued a [report](#) that also criticized that recent Liberal budget noting that the time horizon for consideration of cost impacts has been significantly shortened by the Liberals. The PBO further went on to report that overall the changes made by the Liberals in this budget "have made it more difficult for parliamentarians to scrutinize public finances." – for partisan readers of my report please note these are the words of the PBO and not my own. Last week I provided specific examples on how Canadians now spend 10% of our entire federal budget just on debt repayment that will only further increase now that the Liberals have ignored their electoral commitment to return to balanced budgets in 2019. In this week's report I would like to discuss another long term challenge that in my view has also been ignored in the federal Liberal budget and that is our aging demographics.

In 2012 the former Prime Minister announced that starting in the year 2023 the age of eligibility for OAS benefits would be increased from 65 up to 67 to be fully implemented by the year 2030. In Budget 2016 these proposed OAS changes were cancelled. I will leave out the politics and instead provide some information that relates to this subject.

When OAS was first created in 1952 the age of eligibility was 70. At that time the average life expectancy was 66 for men and 71 for women. In 1965 the OAS qualifying age was lowered from 70 to 65. Today the average life expectancy is 79 for men and 83 for women, meaning citizens are collecting OAS benefits for much longer. There is also another consideration.

Currently seniors are the fastest growing demographic in our society. In fact over the next two decades we know that the amount of Canadian citizens over the age of 65 will basically double from roughly 4.7 million seniors today to over 9.3 million by 2030.

Why does this matter? Today OAS spending costs \$36 billion a year and based on the aging demographics of our society is expected to rise to \$108 billion by the year 2030. On the surface this may not seem like a challenge until you consider that currently for every one retired citizen receiving OAS benefits there is a ratio of four working Canadians not receiving OAS benefits helping to fund them. By 2030 this ratio will be again be cut in half with just two working Canadians not receiving OAS benefits paying for twice as many citizens who are eligible. In other words there will be significantly more citizens who receive OAS benefits and significantly less citizens not receiving OAS benefits who will be attempting to pay for the costs of that. For added context in 1975 there was a ratio of 7 working taxpayers for every citizen over 65.

Why does the ratio of fewer working taxpayers to those over 65 matter? The simple answer is income tax. Nearly 50% of all federal revenue comes from income tax compared to GST that generates roughly 10% of revenue. Fewer working Canadians will result in significantly decreased income tax revenue while aging population demographics result in significantly higher costs for programs such as OAS. Keep in mind these are not partisan concerns, these are the realities of our demographics. While many may not have agreed with raising the age of OAS eligibility, it was one proposed solution to this pending fiscal challenge. Budget 2016 eliminated this proposed solution and offers no long term solution to deal with the problem. Make no mistake today's youth will be the ones facing this challenge and is part of the reason they have become known as "generation squeezed".

I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this or any subject before the House of Commons and can be reached at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

April 20th

In two previous MP reports I have requested feedback from citizens on the subject of medically assisted dying in response to the Supreme Court decision that in effect has legalized this action pending legislation from Parliament. Recently the Liberal Government introduced that legislation and as this has been a subject that has generated a significant amount of feedback from citizens I would like to summarize Government Bill C-14 technically known as "[An Act to amend the Criminal Code and to make related amendments to other Acts \(medical assistance in dying\)](#)".

The goal of this act is to enable doctors as well as nurse practitioners and those who assist them to help eligible citizens end their lives without facing criminal charges for doing so. This naturally raises the question who is deemed to be an "eligible citizen" for the purposes of this legislation. The criteria includes a number of factors: A citizen must be at least 18 years old who has made a voluntary request with informed consent to be considered eligible for medically assisted dying. In addition this same citizen must have a serious and incurable disease or disability that is in an advanced state and is considered irreversible. It would also need to be demonstrated that the disease or disability in question was at a stage causing intolerable suffering with death being the most reasonably foreseeable outcome.

How would this work in practice? A citizen who believes they meet the criteria above can make a written request to receive medical assistance in dying provided this request is signed by two independent witnesses. If a citizen is unable to write this request because of a disability a representative can do so on that persons behalf provided two independent witnesses verify the request. Once the request has been submitted two independent doctors or nurse practitioners would then evaluate the request for eligibility. During this time a mandatory 15 day reflection period would be in effect unless death or a loss of capacity was imminent. Understandably a citizen could withdraw this request at any time during this 15 day period.

It is also proposed that Provincial health authorities would maintain confidential lists of doctors and nurse practitioners who are willing to participate with assisted suicide that would be made available to citizens seeking this assistance. The bill does not propose any mandatory language as it recognizes that there are medical professionals who do not support medical assistance in dying and may decide not to offer these services. It is further proposed that the Federal Government will collect and

analyze data on the use of this program although it is unclear what information would be made public.

My thoughts? The bill clearly would enable medical assistance in dying as directed by the ruling from the Supreme Court. While there are some safeguards proposed ultimately the bill makes certain assumptions that an individual requesting medically assisted suicide is not coerced or otherwise requesting this assistance out of guilt or obligation solely based upon two individuals witnessing the request. This process is somewhat concerning as there is little consideration shown for those who may be suffering from an undiagnosed mental health condition such as depression.

Although I have other concerns ultimately our Supreme Court has made this ruling and to date the majority of the feedback that I have received from citizens has been supportive. My vote on Bill C-14 will be guided by the input that I receive from the citizens of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola on this topic. Given that the consensus so far has been largely supportive this is the direction that I am following while I continue to actively consult with local citizens. I welcome your comments, questions or concerns on this or any matter before the House of Commons and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

April 27th

This week is a "constituency week" meaning the House of Commons is adjourned while Members of Parliament are back in our home ridings. For 2016 there will be roughly 26 break weeks and 26 sitting weeks depending on when the House adjourns in June. From my perspective this is an effective balance on time spent equally between Ottawa and our home ridings and is why I remain opposed to efforts in Ottawa to further decrease the House of Commons work week.

Why is time in Ottawa important? Obviously debates, scrutiny of bills and legislations and passing or amending (and in some cases repealing) new and existing laws is critically important. Likewise passing of the federal budget, policy discussion and implementation as well as Parliamentary committee study are also much needed aspects for our legislative process. However one overlooked item is problem solving. It is common for citizens to provide input and seek assistance from MPs on a variety of different issues. Over time in some cases a pattern may present that raises the question can a new and more effective way of doing something be identified? Often these answers must be found and resolved in Ottawa. Researching through the Library of Parliament, meeting and consulting with civil servants, Officers of Parliament and Ministers along with senior department management may all play a role in how a particular problem on a local level is solved.

As an example one concern I have been working on recently involves Old Age Security (OAS). Although most citizens have little difficulty obtaining OAS benefits they are entitled to in some cases citizens may have difficulty accessing OAS in spite of having worked and paid taxes in Canada for decades. They may from a bureaucratic perspective, due to having resided in another country or having immigrated at a young age have to provide evidence of their residency in so far as being eligible to receive the OAS benefits they are entitled to. More often than not these situations can be resolved as other departments within the Federal Government may have the missing and necessary information however the onus is on the individual to first locate, then obtain and ultimately provide the information from one federal Government agency to another. This process is not only administratively complex it is also slow and can delay a person in need from receiving benefits in a timely manner. In addition for some citizens who may have physical or mental difficulties they may

lack the ability or capacity to obtain and share this information and end up falling through the cracks.

This raises the question is there a better way to help people in this situation? If various departments within the Federal Government already have this information why not electronically share the information between them to help citizens in an easier and timelier way? The reason why this currently does not occur is ultimately related to personal privacy - currently in many situations Government departments are prohibited from sharing personal information. For the record I am not proposing to eliminate the prohibition on personal information sharing within Government departments however I am researching the possibility of departments having the ability to share specific information if the citizen in question provides written permission to do so in advance.

As we have many seniors in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola who have encountered this challenge I believe this will be an effective solution to provide assistance however I would also like to hear from citizens your thoughts on this proposal. Personal privacy is a subject that all citizens and elected officials should take seriously and that is why I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this proposal or any other matter before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

May 2016

May 4th

Our thoughts and prayers this week are with our neighbors in Alberta from the community of Fort McMurray who have been devastated by a raging wildfire that has caused immense loss of property but fortunately to date no reported loss of life. Citizens in the Okanagan know firsthand the impacts of forest fires and I know all citizens in our region are in support of the many first responders who are working tirelessly to regain control of the situation. In Ottawa the Federal Government will be providing military support to assist with the firefighting efforts and the Prime Minister has indicated other supports may be available as this situation unfolds. I would also like to thank those citizens who have donated to the Canadian Red Cross relief effort for victims who have lost homes in this tragedy.

In Ottawa this week debate has been largely focused on Bill C-14 (Medical Assistance in Dying) with daily sittings extended into the late evening as the Liberals also prepare to shut down debate using an upcoming vote to enact time allocation. After my recent MP reports on this subject the overwhelming response I have heard back on this bill is largely supportive however with concerns as well as constructive suggestions on how the bill might be further improved with additional safeguards. One additional challenge to this Bill is that the Supreme Court has established a June 2016 deadline for the bill to be passed. This Supreme Court imposed deadline ultimately limits not only the debate but also what amendments and other criteria might be added to further ensure that the bill does not adversely impact those who are most vulnerable. As an example of this currently Bill C-14 proposes that a written request for medical assistance in dying is independently assessed by two doctors or nurse practitioners.

One suggestion I received is that this two person requirement could be expanded to also include a social worker, a medical ethicist, a palliative care expert and possibly someone with mental health

experience. This is only one example of potential amendments that could better strengthen this legislation.

One other update I would like to provide stems from my April 13th MP report on the Bank ``bail in`` legislation contained in the new Liberal Budget Implementation Act. At the time of that report it was unclear if the bank bail in provisions would specifically exclude the deposits from everyday bank customers. I can now confirm that the Bank bail in provisions would exclude, and thereby protect, consumer bank deposits from this legislation. As a result I now believe that the Bank bail in provisions will further strengthen our Canadian banking system while also adding increased accountability with less taxpayer risk. For a refresher on this topic my April 13th MP report can be viewed here: www.danalbas.com/mp-report/bail-in-or-bail-out

On a final note I would like to announce that my primary West Kelowna Constituency office has made a small move and is now located at 2562-B, Main Street, in West Kelowna. The new location has ample parking and I invite citizens to drop in if you require assistance or would like to arrange an appointment. For seven of the next eight weeks I will be in Ottawa as the House is now in the spring session that is the busiest of the year until the anticipated June 24th summer adjournment. This summer, as in previous years, I will also be conducting my annual summer listening tour as I look forward to visiting all communities and regions within Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. As always your comments, questions and concerns are welcome and I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

May 12th

Ottawa has once again been a busy week as a number of debates have been occurring while Bills progress through the House and in some cases assisted by the Liberal Government through invoking time allocation to limit debate and force votes. In addition to time allocation Bills such as the Medical Assistance in Dying legislation, is being fast tracked through committee stage review where a Government dominated committee is consistently refusing the vast majority of amendments from opposition parties in order to force this legislation through onto third reading before it will hit the Senate. In other words our new Liberal Government is using precisely the same tactics as the previous Conservative Government used in order to advance Government legislation through the House. The primary difference I have noticed is that in the past when these tactics were used pundits often applied terms such as "anti-democratic" or "dictatorship" whereas the same tactics used today by a different Government are referred to as legitimate tools of democracy.

Why do I raise this point? In reality Parliamentary tools such as time allocation, prorogation and closure were created so that majority governments can ultimately implement the mandate they were given by voters. Few Governments could implement policy effectively if the legislative agenda could always be derailed or otherwise usurped by the opposition. In the last Parliament when I sat on the Government side of the House I always found it deeply disappointing and at times troubling how often pundits and some media would refer to the legitimate use of parliamentary tools as somehow being anti-democratic. While I feel it is fair game in opposition to point out that Liberals promised not to use similar tactics, it must also be pointed out that the tactics themselves are fair game and are part of decades old Parliamentary procedure.

What is time allocation and why is it used? Time allocation is sometimes confused with closure which is a different Parliamentary procedure. Time allocation sets a fixed period of time that is available in the House of Commons to debate a specific stage of debate during a Bill. Closure is different in that it ends the debate on a Bill or motion and then calls for a vote. Why does a Government use time allocation?

There are a variety of different reasons that time allocation is invoked by government however the most common reason is that Government will have a number of bills to move through the House and into the Senate. If too much time is spent debating a particular bill it will bog down the House and delay the passage of other legislation. Typically government and the official opposition house leaders will try to work together to agree on time limits for each debate on a specific bill however when there is disagreement more often than not time allocation may be used.

In some cases there might also be bills that may be embarrassing or otherwise politically awkward for the government so the government may use time allocation to advance a bill very quickly through the house. A good example of this was Bill C-10 that essentially removed a restriction on Air Canada that would allow it to eliminate maintenance jobs here in Canada and potentially move those jobs into other countries with lower wages. Obviously the Government in this case did not desire to spend a considerable amount of time debating a Government bill that potentially eliminates Canadian jobs- thus time allocation was used. As I have now reached the 550 word allocation of my weekly report I must also conclude with an invitation for citizens to contact me directly with comments or questions at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

May 19th

Seldom will a week go by while the House of Commons is in session without hearing the all too familiar suggestion that "democracy is under attack". As I pointed out in last week's MP report whenever time allocation or another legitimate parliamentary procedural tool is used by Government this is a re-occurring accusation used by many different interests in response. In my view that challenge that occurs with the frequent use of the "democracy is under attack" theme is that eventually it is tuned out and ignored as the usual noise that comes from Ottawa. Democracy is a way of life that we as Canadians value dearly and have protected this principle for almost 150 years and at times with great sacrifice. Thus allegations of democracy being under attack must always be taken seriously.

The reason I raise this is that the Liberal Government recently announced the creation of a parliamentary committee for democratic reform. What is democratic reform in this context? During the last election one of the promises made by Justin Trudeau and the Liberals was to change Canada's current first-past-the-post process to elect Members of Parliament and in turn Government to instead use a different electoral system. The type of electoral system to be used was not specified by the Liberals hence the creation of a parliamentary committee to make a recommendation to the Liberal Government for a new means of electing MPs.

The concern expressed by many is the Liberals in turn announced a 12 person democratic reform committee that has a composition of 6 Liberals, 3 Conservative, 1 NDP, 1 Member from the Bloc Quebecois and Elizabeth May, the sole MP from the Green Party. Not only does this committee have

a larger Liberal majority than what the Liberals were actually elected under, they have denied Elizabeth May and the Bloc Quebecois the right to a vote- in other words it will actually be the Liberals who will decide the next voting system for Canadians.

Why is this problem? Obviously for the Liberals it is not a problem however for other political parties different electoral system can have a significant impact. As an example for both the Green Party and the NDP, typically far more Canadians vote for them compared to the number of seats they will win in the House of Commons. For this reason they favour proportional representation as it would increase the number of seats they have in the House of Commons. For the Liberals, who often tend to be either the first or second choice for many voters, it has been suggested that the ranked ballot system could all but guarantee Liberal Governments for the foreseeable future. Obviously for the Conservative Party different systems that better advantage other parties will in turn be a disadvantage for them.

What is the best electoral system? In reality every electoral system has advantages and disadvantages. From my perspective there is no perfect system and that any potential changes should not be rushed as Canada has a unique federation, wide geography and diverse population. From the perspective of individual political parties, obviously some electoral systems will be far more desirable than others creating a clear conflict of self-interest. The question that should be asked is what is the best electoral system is for Canadians? It is my opinion that it is not for political parties to decide on. Ultimately this is a question for Canadians to decide on through a democratic referendum. Canadian democracy does not belong to politicians; it belongs to the people of Canada who should have the democratic opportunity to decide our electoral future. I welcome your views on this or any subject before the House of Commons. I can be reached via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

May 25th

This week is the final constituency week where MPs are back in their home ridings before returning to Ottawa on Monday, May 28th for what will be the longest uninterrupted sitting for this year as debate will likely be extended well into the late evening hours with possibly more sitting days to be added. The reason for extended debate and possibly more sitting days is to get bills through the House and into the Senate prior to the summer recess. After that all eyes will be on the Senate for more reasons than usual.

If you have been following our Canadian Senate you may know that a recent effort has been underway by the Liberal Government to appoint Senators who are considered "Independent" as they are not political members of the Government's Liberal caucus. More recently Senators have also been appointed by the Prime Minister with the benefit of being selected by a panel of appointees who in theory are selecting citizens without political considerations being part of the criteria. These recent Senate reform efforts have also resulted in a number of Senators who were formerly affiliated with party caucuses to resign and also sit as Independent members of the Senate. The end result is that there are now more independent senators and a different structure in place from a political perspective than had existed previously.

Why is this relevant? To give an example one of the most controversial bills in recent Parliamentary

history is Bill C-14 “Medical Assistance in dying”. This is the bill that the Government has been using parliamentary tools such as time allocation in order to limit debate and fast track through the House of Commons. It should be noted that Supreme Court imposed an early June deadline for the passage of this Bill and at the same time many Parliamentarians, including many who support the bill, feel that the language of the bill is fundamentally flawed and should not be rushed as a result. Currently it does not appear that the Liberal Government will significantly extend debate nor accept amendments from the opposition benches. Thus in the very near future Bill C-14 will likely receive third reading in the House of Commons and end up in the Canadian Senate.

The Senate, as many will know, is often referred to as the chamber of “sober second thought”. As many believe that the Senate should be abolished, this is one of those occasions where Senate supporters can legitimately argue that the existence of the Senate is precisely for situations such as these where a bill with potentially flawed language that has been rushed through the House of Commons can be addressed prior to receiving Royal Assent and becoming law. The question to be asked by Canadians is what will happen to Bill C-14 once it hits the Senate?

By all accounts the efforts of Senate reform to move towards a more independent of Government institution will be fully tested with this bill. If the Government is able to have Bill C-14 move swiftly through the Senate unchanged many will likely suggest the reform efforts have failed. However if a more independent Senate defies the Government and significantly delays or amends Bill C-14, this could have significant effects on governance given that Members of Parliament are elected and Senators remain appointed and un-elected with the power to potentially delay or amend a bill passed by a democratically elected House. In the event this occurred the bill would then be sent back to the House of Commons to either find consent or continued disagreement.

For as much attention as the recent elbowing incident from the Prime Minister received in reality how the Senate responds to Bill C-14 is a far more important subject that Canadians should be paying attention to. This is a topic I will be providing an update on and I welcome your comments and questions at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

June 2016

June 1st

On Monday morning of this week in my capacity as the Official Opposition critic for interprovincial trade I held a news conference with Opposition Deputy Leader Dennis Lebel to announce a new “Free the Beer” campaign. Since that time I have heard overwhelming support from citizens all across Canada strongly in support of this campaign.

Most people regardless of political persuasion support the concept of “Free the Beer” not unlike what I discovered with my “Free my Grapes” private members bill that was unanimously supported in the House of Commons when it passed third reading. So why is “Free the Beer” important and more so for our Canadian economy?

First some background on this subject. Since my private member`s bill to “Free The Grapes” that

removed a prohibition era amendment on the inter-provincial movement of wine was passed into law only Manitoba, British Columbia and Nova Scotia have embraced the spirit that free trade in Canadian wine should not be a crime. After my bill was passed the former Conservative Government also amended the Importation of Intoxicating Liquors Act to add craft beers and artisan spirits to the list. However, recently the Province of New Brunswick charged a citizen, Gerard Comeau for personally importing beer and some spirits across a Provincial border.

It is clear that many Provinces remain stuck in the dark ages of protectionism, using regulatory red tape to create trade barriers. Fortunately for Mr. Comeau, our Canadian Constitution clearly states in Section 121 that “All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall, from and after the Union, be admitted free into each of the other Provinces.” A New Brunswick judge agreed with section 121 of our Constitution and Mr. Comeau was found not guilty. Regrettably last week the Province of New Brunswick announced they will be appealing this ruling and that is the basis for my announcement this week.

Simply put, “Free the Beer” means asking that the Liberal Government elevate the Comeau case to the Supreme Court for constitutional clarification. This not only has the potential to free the beer for Canadians but more importantly it could open up our internal economy for all Canadian producers of other products. This obviously includes farmers and other agricultural producers. People want to “Buy Canadian” and it should not be easier for a winery in BC to directly sell into Asia than Ontario as is the case today.

It is difficult to assess the impact internal trade barriers have on our economy but one study has the value at \$14 Billion annually. I believe that anything we can do to help create jobs and grow our economy without adding more debt should be a priority of any Government. I welcome your comments and question on this topic. Do you support “Free the Beer” and removing Inter-Provincial trade barriers?

On a different note, my staff and I have been reviewing suggestions from some of the town halls we have held since the last election and we are pleased to announce that we will start offering a Mobile Constituency service in Merritt, at the municipal hall on June 7, 2016 from 9am-12pm and after that on the first Tuesday of each month thereafter. As we will be adding additional mobile office service throughout the riding, or more information please go to my website: www.danalbas.com/mobileoffice

If you have any questions or comments on these or other subjects, I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

June 8th

In my May 25th MP report I speculated on how recent efforts to reform the Senate to become more politically independent could result in the Senate causing significant delays to Government bills that could in turn have the effect of slowing down Parliament. As was speculated Bill C-14, the medical assistance in dying bill, left the House of Commons and it now appears that potentially significant delays could occur to this legislation in the Red Chamber. At issue is that the Senate is in the process of amending the bill while at the same time the Government has indicated its belief that the bill is fine as is, setting the stage for a potential stand-off.

As these stand-offs are somewhat uncommon there is an emerging debate from those who believe that unelected Senators should not be able to derail the legislation of democratically elected Members of Parliament while others point out that the Senate is simply fulfilling its role to provide “sober second thought” to legislation. From my perspective a more independent Senate may well continue to produce more of these types of stand-offs to the extent that the Government may want to further refine its current approach to Senate reform.

Ultimately there is no Parliamentary procedure that exists where Government can force the Senate to pass a bill that is not supported. It is for this reason that historically a Prime Minister will appoint Senators who are members of the Government caucus to help ensure that a democratically elected Government is able to achieve the mandate voters elected them on. In this instance there may be an official conference between the House of Commons and the Senate to try and reach an agreement between the two chambers on Bill C-14. It has been reported that a conference of this type has not been hosted in Parliament for roughly 70 years.

My thoughts on this current impasse? Given the magnitude and importance of a Bill like C-14 it is critically important this legislation receives extensive scrutiny between the two chambers in the hopes the bill can encompass more of the concerns expressed by the public to both Parliamentarians and Senators alike. Ultimately Bills, once passed into law will also be subject to scrutiny from our Supreme Court and many have suggested that Bill C-14 may well be headed in this direction. For the record I supported Bill C-14 after extensive consultations with constituents through my MP reports, several town halls and hearing lots of direct comments and concerns from the citizens of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. Although not everyone was supportive of this Bill, I committed that I would listen to constituents and the vast majority I heard from were in support of the bill in recognizing the decision of the Supreme Court to legalize medical assistance in dying.

Finally, a reminder that I am now operating a Mobile Constituency service in Merritt, at the municipal hall on the first Tuesday of each month. As I will be adding additional mobile office service throughout our riding for information please go to my website: www.danalbas.com/mobileoffice . I welcome your comments and concerns and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

June 15th

In my June 1st MP report I referenced the opposition #FreeTheBeer campaign that ultimately means asking that the Liberal Government elevate the Comeau case to the Supreme Court for constitutional clarification. For a quick refresher the “Comeau case” was where the Province of New Brunswick charged a citizen, Gerard Comeau, for personally importing beer and some spirits across a Provincial border from Quebec. What is unique about this case was that a New Brunswick judge found Mr. Comeau was not guilty on account that our Canadian Constitution clearly states in Section 121 that “All Articles of the Growth, Produce, or Manufacture of any one of the Provinces shall, from and after the Union, be admitted free into each of the other Provinces.” Regrettably a few weeks ago the Province of New Brunswick announced they will be appealing this ruling.

Elevating this ruling to the Supreme Court for constitutional clarification has the potential to open up our internal economy for all Canadian producers of other products aside from just beer, wine or

spirits. This obviously includes farmers and other agricultural producers. This week the motion I wrote on elevating the Comeau case to the Supreme Court was the subject of the Opposition day debate in the House of Commons – this was a first in my time as an opposition MP and I am pleased to report that both the NDP and Elizabeth May of the Green party joined with our Conservative opposition in support of this motion. It was only a whipped vote from the Liberal majority government that defeated the motion after some very good debate from all sides. I am reasonably confident had this not been a whipped Government vote it may well have passed.

Also occurring this week in Ottawa, and as I have reported in previous MP reports, is that Bill C-14, the physician assisted dying legislation, is now in the Red Chamber (as the Senate is often referred to) where the Bill has received some seven different amendments. As I reported last week the Liberal government has indicated that it will not be accepting of any amendments to this bill so a potential standoff between the House and the Senate seems inevitable at this point. Members of the Senate have also indicated they may reject the bill outright in the event the Government does not entertain some of the proposed Senate amendments. As this is a relatively rare and uncharted situation it is difficult to speculate on what will occur next however I will provide updates in my future reports.

On a local note I can now confirm that due to the popularity of the new mobile constituency service my office has offered in Merritt on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 9am until noon at the Merritt City Hall I will now be expanding this service to Princeton and Keremeos. Mobile constituency services will now be available on the 2nd Wednesday of each month in Princeton from 9am until noon at the Princeton Town Hall. Also on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 1pm until 4 pm the service will be offered in Keremeos at the Village Hall. For further information please contact me at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

June 22nd

The House of Commons was scheduled to sit for three days this week before adjourning for the summer recess, however, the vote to adjourn took place last Friday. This allows all MPs to return to their Ridings and spend the summer working locally and being in touch with their constituents. As this was the first full spring session of the 42nd Parliament I thought I would take the opportunity to provide some statistics as they pertain to the work Parliament has done in the last 6 months.

By the numbers, the Government has now introduced 23 Bills. Of those 23, 4 have gone through the House and the Senate and are awaiting Royal Assent while 7 more are currently in the Senate, meaning there are still 12 Government Bills remaining in the House when debate resumes on September 19th.

As for Private Members Bills there are already 99 what we call PMB's, that have received at least 1st reading in the House. Of these 99 only one bill, Bill C-210 "An Act to amend the National Anthem Act" (for gender) has passed through the house onto the Senate while just 4 bills have reached 2nd reading.

Meanwhile in the Senate there are currently just two Senate sponsored bills and a further 25 Senate Private Member Bills. In total there are currently almost 150 different legislative bills proposed to date between the Senate and the House of Commons.

I often like to mention the volume of Bills being brought forward because I believe it is an important

factor when discussing any proposed reduction of the amount of sitting time in Ottawa.

Few take note that less time in Ottawa will result in fewer bills being scrutinized and debated.

It should also be pointed out that Opposition Day Debate and Motions, as well as Parliamentary Committee review and other events such as Question Period also consume our time in Ottawa in addition to time spent debating various bills. It is for these reasons that I continue to remain opposed to a shortened work week or any reduction to the amount of sitting time in the House of Commons. Later this month the House will reconvene back in Ottawa to hear a speech from our special guest, President Obama before Members of Parliament return to their home ridings.

For many MPs, and certainly in my case with a geographically large riding, the summer months provide an excellent opportunity to travel to all parts of Central Okanagan Similkameen Nicola to meet with citizens and groups to hear concerns and ideas first hand. In some situations problems may be very specific and localized but in other cases I have found citizens often have good ideas that can be shared and in several cases even incorporated into government policy. This is part of what I consider "Democracy In Action" where citizens can directly share ideas that can be taken to Ottawa through a variety of different means.

It is extremely important and very much appreciated that citizens take the time to sit down and meet with their locally elected representative, and this applies to all levels of government. Getting information and feedback from constituents is an essential part of democratic representation. On that note I would encourage citizens to contact me directly so that I can hear your concerns and hopefully meet you in person over these next few months. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711

June 28th

One of the things that I have discovered during my time in Ottawa is how frequently any debate on crime related legislation often overlooks the devastating impact that serious crime has on the victims and their families. Recently many citizens have contacted me to express outrage that a man who committed a brutal and senseless act of unprovoked murder on a Kelowna City bus will again be free to roam the streets in just four and a half years. For the family of the victim, Caesar Rosales, this sentence is a slap in the face and an injustice to the memory of a loved one. What can citizens do? It is important for people to reach out to elected officials – in this case both MP's and MLA's to express outrage over this tragedy. Although our justice system is by design intended to be free of political interference, laws both in Victoria and Ottawa can be changed, something that our former Government in Ottawa tried frequently to do in the last Parliament.

As this was a decision in a BC Provincial Court, the Provincial Crown Prosecutor can appeal this sentence, the criteria is as follows:

1. Appeal Against Sentence to the Court of Appeal
2. No appeal against sentence will be approved unless:
 1. the sentence imposed in the trial court is either illegal or unfit; and
 2. (a) the proposed appeal involves a serious offence or relates to an offender who constitutes a

serious threat to the community;

2. (b) the proposed appeal raises an important question of general application concerning the principles of sentencing; or

In this case I believe that there is adequate evidence that due to the serious and violent nature of this crime, both in terms of public safety and interest, that the Crown should appeal this decision immediately. In my view it is important to publicly speak out against these disturbing acts of random violence in the hopes that an appeal will be submitted. While the Criminal Code is put in place by the Federal Parliament, the administration of Justice is delegated to the provinces and I am hopeful that local MLAs will also denounce this act and support an appeal.

For more information on the Crown's policy to appeal:

<http://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/law-crime-and-justice/criminal-justice/prosecution-service/crown-counsel-policy-manual/app-1-appeals-by-crown-to-ca-and-scc.pdf>

As my summer listening tour is now underway I welcome the opportunity to meet with you. Please contact me directly at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

July 2016

July 6th

Recently the federal Government announced a tentative deal with the majority of Canadian Provinces to increase the size of CPP contributions and as a result increase the benefit payments upon retirement. I am finding that because this announcement was made when many other events were occurring on Parliament Hill some of the details of this CPP increase were not as well communicated to citizens as they could have been. As a result I would like to share some of the details of this CPP increase.

Currently both an employer and an employee pay 4.95% of a worker's salary into CPP up to a maximum income level of \$ 54,900. Over time this current CPP contribution, if at the maximum level, would result in total benefit payments of just over \$ 13,000 per year. The recent CPP changes announced are intended to achieve two goals. The first is to increase the total maximum benefit payable upon retirement and the second goal is to increase the income level so that a worker with a higher income will still have the ability to earn CPP benefits. To put these changes into context I will provide a few examples. Currently a worker at the maximum income level of \$ 54,900 can earn a total yearly benefit of \$ 13,110 a year. That same worker with the same income level (once the CPP changes are fully phased in) would be eligible to receive a total benefit of \$ 17,500 a year (in today's dollars) thus an increase of \$4,390 per year in total or a \$ 365 monthly increase upon retirement.

The second change is the increase so that more wealthy workers can collect CPP benefits. As I mentioned previously, currently the maximum income level for CPP is \$54,900. Once the proposed changes are fully phased in by the year 2025 this amount would be increased up to \$82,700 per

year. As a result of these changes a retiring worker with an income level of \$ 82,700 would be eligible for maximum annual CPP benefits of up to \$19,900 a year, again expressed in today's dollars.

Keep in mind these proposed increases also carry increased costs to your CPP contributions that will be deducted from your pay check. While the exact cost details will vary per worker it is expected that a worker with an annual salary of \$54,900 will see a CPP increase of \$ 108 a year in 2019 as 2019 is the first year the CPP increase changes would begin to take effect. Once the CPP increases are fully implemented in 2025 the increased costs to a worker would be just over \$ 500 per year. Keep in mind all of these same increased costs will also have to be absorbed by employers. As a result the Canadian Federation of Independent Business has expressed concerns that imposing what amounts to billions in increases on labour costs over time will have a detrimental impact on job creation and be potentially harmful to many small businesses. The Federal Government will also be introducing a partial tax credit for employee contributions however the overall impact on small business is unknown.

While the increased CPP changes will cost employers and employees more in contributions what has also been overlooked is that these changes may actually provide some financial relief to the federal Government in the future. Increasing CPP benefits may result in less pressure and eligibility on programs such as the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) and Old Age Security (OAS) that are not directly supported by contributions from employers and employees as is the case with CPP. If you have any further comments, questions or concerns on increased CPP or any matter before the Federal Government do not hesitate to contact me at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-800-665-8711

July 13th

Internet censorship and net neutrality are not subjects that tend be top of mind for most citizens in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola, however that does not mean they are not important concerns deserving of attention. While most are familiar with the concept of internet censorship, the principle of net neutrality is one that some citizens are less familiar with. The concept of net neutrality is that government and internet service providers should make every reasonable effort to treat internet data and related content in an equal matter free from arbitrary discrimination.

The reason I raise the subject of net neutrality is due to the fact that the Province of Quebec has passed a law earlier this year that raises serious concerns. Bill 74 allows the Quebec Government to force Canadian internet service providers to attempt to block online gaming websites outside of Quebec from Quebec residents. The reason why I suggest the law attempts to block online gaming sites is due to technical concerns raised within the wireless industry that indicate in some cases it may not be technically possible to fully comply with this new legislation. In spite of these concerns the Province of Quebec has indicated they intend to proceed with these measures potentially in the near future.

Aside from increasing costs on the respective wireless and internet service industries there is also the concern over jurisdiction. Currently communication related policy is under federal jurisdiction as mandated through the Canadian Radio and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) and if one Province can attempt to usurp this jurisdiction in an attempt to protect a provincial monopoly, in this case Lotto-Quebec, it is highly conceivable other Provinces could follow suit. In fact, the Finance Minister for Quebec confirmed at the legislative committee studying Bill 74 that he believed that

other provinces would follow the lead of Quebec. This would not only subject Canadians to a patchwork system of different rules but could compromise international agreements that Canada is a signatory to. Up until this point, the Federal Government has ensured any censorship of the internet has been justified for public safety reasons such as shutting down terrorist recruitment websites via the Criminal Code and not for financial reasons as is the case of Quebec.

To date I have been the only Member of Parliament to raise this particular concern in the House of Commons and the response from the Liberal Government was that the government supports net neutrality however it is unclear beyond that what efforts, if any, will be undertaken to protect the online rights of Canadians against these practices. My question for citizens today is what are your thoughts on net neutrality? Do you support net neutrality or do you think it is reasonable for a provincial government to create online restrictions in this area in an effort to continue to protect revenue sources.

If you have comments or concerns on this or any federal matter please do not hesitate to contact me via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1 (800) 665-8711.

July 14th

Accountability from elected officials is one of the reasons why I first ran as City councillor after finding as a small business owner many of my calls to City hall went unanswered by both public servants and elected leaders of the day. People deserve to be heard and in my view that includes a timely response as much as possible. I mention accountability because recently some may recall reports of a local Canadian woman who encountered some difficulty at the United States Roosville, Montana border crossing. The encounter, as reported by the citizen in question, resulted in some very serious and disturbing allegations against several male members of the United States border staff who work at this particular border crossing.

Whenever serious allegations of this nature are raised it is critically important that there be a full investigation – this is part of the process of accountability and also offers protection to both sides to help ascertain factually what occurred and why. This situation was challenging as the citizen in question to the best of my knowledge is not one of my constituents and as a Canadian elected representative of the Federal Government I have no official standing with the United States Customs and Border Protection Service. None the less that did not deter my determination to see this citizen receive full and proper attention from the relevant US authorities. I can now provide an update on this situation.

Recently I received a letter on this matter from no less than the United States Ambassador to Canada, Mr. Bruce Heyman. For those who may be less familiar with International protocol to receive a letter directly on this matter from the US Ambassador is an indication that the United States Government is taking these allegations extremely seriously.

Ambassador Heyman assures me that the US Customs and Border Protection Agency has very strict policies against these types of situations and is currently in the process of actively investigating this incident and will conduct a full and thorough investigation. Although I do not at this time know the outcome of this investigation or the expected completion date I do appreciate that Ambassador Heyman, on behalf of the United States Government, has taken the time to respond with an update on what actions are currently being undertaken as a result of this complaint.

I will provide further updates on this subject as they become available.

Original KelownaNow article:

https://www.kelownanow.com/watercooler/news/news/Kelowna/16/05/27/Local_MP_offers_support_to_Kelowna_woman_after_border_incident/

July 20th

Last week's report covering internet censorship and net neutrality generated a significant amount of feedback with an overwhelming consensus strongly in support of net neutrality. I would like to thank the many citizens who took the time to share their support for this topic and in many cases also providing unique insight on the reasons why.

This week the largest concern I am hearing to date is reaction to an announcement from the Prime Minister that the Liberal government may impose a national carbon tax on Canadians. Already CBC is reporting that the President of WestJet airlines has warned such a tax has the potential to cause serious harm to the aviation industry. Ultimately this will be a topic for discussion at the Premier's conference occurring in Whitehorse this week.

My thoughts on a National Carbon tax? Without details on how much such a tax could cost Canadians or how it might be implemented and administered it is difficult to fairly assess the impact on taxpayers. For example in British Columbia revenues raised from the BC carbon tax are used to lower taxes in other areas – thus for those who can take advantage by implementing a lower carbon lifestyle they can save both on paying less in carbon taxes and may also benefit from reduced income taxes as the BC carbon tax is revenue neutral. However in Alberta the proposed carbon tax will selectively benefit some citizens and at the same time the Alberta Government will also retain the discretionary ability to spend carbon tax revenues on Government select pet projects and initiatives. In other words the Alberta carbon tax will increase the Alberta Governments ability to spend more revenues and is not revenue neutral in the same manner as is the case in British Columbia.

Another concern about a federally imposed national carbon tax is a lack of consistency in policy application. Regular readers of my MP reports will know that many interprovincial trade barriers remain that the vast majority of Canadians I have heard from would like to see eliminated. Buying Canadian should truly mean buying Canadian with open Provincial borders. In Ottawa even though the Conservative, NDP and Green party all recently voted in support of my motion to potentially help open up inter-Provincial trade, the majority Liberal Government opposed this motion arguing a preference for Provincial agreement on eliminating trade barriers. Strangely when it comes to potentially imposing a national carbon tax the Prime Minister takes a different view suggesting agreement between the Provinces may not necessarily be in favour of an Ottawa imposed tax increase.

My final concern on a national carbon tax is one that is rarely mentioned in media circles and that is the fact that the Liberal Government in 1995 introduced a 10 cents a litre federal excise tax on automotive fuel. Add on top of that the federal GST, not to mention various Provincial levies that are also buried into the price of gas that continues to increase costs onto Canadians. My question today

to the citizens of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola is what are your views on a National Carbon tax? Is this something you would support and if so would you have a preference in what manner such a tax would be implemented?

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on matters before the House of Commons. I can be reached via email at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

July 27th

I was asked recently why I write a weekly MP report given some other MPs do not submit weekly reports. There are a few answers to this question. The first reason is due to the fact the federal Government is so vast in size there is no shortage of policies, bills and legislation to try and inform citizens about. The second reason is my favourite, and that is the fact that my weekly reports provide an opportunity for citizens to share comments, questions and concerns on specific topics that are raised. Why this is so valuable from my perspective is because often topics that are of great concern to local citizens may not be the same topics that dominate media headlines. In other words having a weekly MP report creates a good opportunity to take the pulse of how citizens in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola feel about a wide variety of subjects.

In last week's report I asked for input on the idea of a Federal Government imposed national carbon tax. The response to this report was not only overwhelming but almost all of the feedback I received was strongly opposed. There were also a significant number of citizens who took the time to share the reasons why they opposed a national carbon tax. Although many of the reasons varied the most common was that many citizens are paying more attention to the relationship between their gross income and their net take home pay after income taxes. At the same time their net take home pay is increasingly being subject to a growing number of consumption based taxes and fees that further reduce the household buying power. Many expressed a point of view that they cannot afford more taxation and as a result oppose another tax on something like gasoline that as many pointed out, is already heavily taxed.

Another point made by many was that government services and government could not function without burning carbon. Flights by politicians to Ottawa or Victoria being one example, emergency service vehicles, transportation trucks that carry essential supplies and services were more examples and that a national carbon tax would increase the cost of Government. Another point made by some citizens was that while income taxes can be variable in a way to help those with lower incomes, often consumption based taxes apply equally regardless of income and some felt there was an element of unfairness in that. Often various Governments use rebate programs and/or direct payment subsidies such as the recently changed direct child care subsidy to help offset these increased costs but as another citizen pointed out these programs often only help certain families and not those who are low income who have adult children with severe challenges who cannot work, no children or are single. In summary there was no lack of different reasons why a national carbon tax was overwhelmingly opposed to the extent that only a handful of citizens voiced any support for the idea.

From my perspective this feedback was all very helpful and in the event the Liberal Government continues to try and force a national carbon tax in Ottawa it will be a taxation increase, I will share many of the reasons that were provided to me over this past week opposing a national carbon

tax. Citizens deserve to be heard and the feedback from my weekly reports is part of what I will be sharing in September once the House of Commons is back in session. In my view this is an important part of our democratic process in Canada.

Want to have a say in my upcoming MP reports? Is there a particular subject you would like to see covered in a future MP report? Let me know an area of Federal concern and while I may not be able to accommodate every request the most common topics that are raised will be mentioned in upcoming MP reports from now until September. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

August 2016

August 3^d

This week the Liberal Government announced a new means of appointing judges to our Supreme Court that I believe all Canadians should take an active interest in. As is often the case whenever a new process is announced by a sitting government it will be rightfully subject to scrutiny and criticism from opposition Members of Parliament. Often the very same process will receive praise from those who are friends and supporters of the Government, or who may benefit from this change of policy. For this reason it is always interesting to observe what groups come out publicly in favour of a change of process or policy.

This new process for appointing a Supreme Court Justice somewhat parallels how the Liberals changed the process to appoint a Senator. In both cases the Liberal Government will first politically appoint a panel of individuals who in turn will then recommend the appointments to sit as either a Senator or in this case a Supreme Court judge. In other words those who are appointed will in turn do the appointing. Critics often describe this appointment arrangement as “by the elites for the elites” while the Government and supporters will claim it is a more non-partisan process free from political influence.

Who is correct? While it is unfair to label an appointed panel of citizens as elitist, it must not be overlooked that the Government will first politically appoint the panel members in question and as such maintains political control of the composition of the panel membership.

The greater concern that I have with this arrangement is that the public may not easily discern who is ultimately responsible if the process of selecting a Justice doesn't yield its intended purpose- a high quality candidate that helps the highest Court function as intended. Should citizens point their finger at un-elected people who are politically appointed who now have the ability to recommend Senators and Supreme Court judges with no democratic accountability or the Prime Minister that appointed them? In my experience, joint accountability often leads to little or no accountability. For example if an MLA or an MP appoints a person to a position of service, ultimately that MLA or MP in question can be held accountable for that appointment by the people who elected him or her by either re-electing them or voting them out of public office. Having appointed panels in effect creates a buffer that in my opinion reduces democratic accountability. There is also a concern that elected officials are subject to public disclosure with respect to conflict and finances that appointed individuals are

exempt from.

I will provide another example of this. As many citizens will know the Liberal Government has indicated it would like to change how Members of Parliament are elected. The Liberals have further stated that this change should not be done with a democratic referendum but rather through a series of consultations and with input from “experts” in Ottawa. One of these experts told the committee that, and I quote directly: “Middle-class people often don’t know anything more than poorer working class people, but they have a stronger sense of entitlement”. The expert then went further to say “Poor people and working class people tend to shy away from situations where their ignorance will be exposed”. In other words, the view from this expert is that many Canadians are essentially not intelligent enough to have their say on how our democratic system that helped build Canada should be changed. These comments are completely unacceptable and are precisely why a referendum is required because our democracy belongs to all Canadians, regardless of income level and expert opinion.

In the case of Supreme Court judges we know that our Supreme Court is increasingly making decisions in place of elected officials. As an example the recent ruling on legalizing medically assisted dying that reversed a previous Supreme Court ruling was done in a manner that was rushed with little consideration for the fact that an election was set to occur. Ultimately elected Members of Parliament have no ability to participate in this selection process while politically appointed but unelected panels will now have a tremendous amount of power and influence in potentially shaping Canadian society. Considering the scope of these changes and the fact that the Government seems to want to consult on almost every other aspect of public policy, this unilateral decision without broad discussion is concerning. In my view this diminishes democratic participation however this is a matter that I greatly welcome your views on. As always I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

August 10th

During the last Federal election I made a point of attending almost every public all candidate forums that my schedule would allow. By the end of the writ period I believe I missed only two forums, one of which was not even located within my riding. At one particular forum the former Government, of which I was a member, it was accused of being at “war” against federal scientists.

When I attempted to explain that I had met with several scientists over the previous term of Government and never had this point communicated directly to me, many in the crowd expressed disbelief. After all it seemed the official narrative was that our Government had waged a war against scientists and the Liberals under Justin Trudeau were promising to do things differently.

I mention this because this week it has been reported in Ottawa just how differently the Liberal Government is treating scientists employed by the Federal Government. In fact it has now been reported that the Liberal Government will preside over, and I quote directly “the biggest ever recorded cut to the number of federal environmental scientists”. According to forecasts from Statistics Canada there will be a loss of roughly 400 jobs that represents a 10% cut compared to the final year under the former Government. As the Liberal Government is disputing the forecast provided by Statistics Canada I will provide a follow up on this subject as it becomes available.

On the same theme related to scientists many will recall allegations the former Government “muzzled” federal scientists, yet another promise the Liberal Government claimed it would rectify. However recently released data has revealed that in fact federal scientists were not muzzled in the manner as often described in the media. In fact for the final year of the former government close to 1500 media interviews were provided by federal scientists. Recently the Union representing federal government scientists reported that many federal scientists are currently being prevented from participating in conferences and that science related communications policies are unevenly applied across the federal public service.

Before I go any further I would like to credit Ottawa journalist David Akin who factually documented these details and disclosed them to the public. Not surprisingly news of the Liberal Government “war on science” was not broadcast in most major media networks who seem often more concerned covering our new Prime Minister on vacation, often found in many beautiful locations across Canada (including the Okanagan) and at times shirtless. You likely also did not hear that Statistics Canada recently reported the over 30,000 jobs were lost across Canada in the latest July release. These job losses are among the worst recorded in roughly five years. The one positive is that here in British Columbia we are currently leading all Canadian provinces with the lowest unemployment rate for July at 5.6%.

As the official opposition it is our role to report on details that are of national concern to Canadians and more so at a time when many media organization favour the Prime Ministers vacation coverage to documenting serious concerns related to jobs and employment. From my perspective the biggest concern I see is the new Government has reduced the sized of TFSA contributions and also has not followed up on promised small business tax cuts. This in addition to increasing delays on major project approvals have all combined and reduced the flow of investment needing to help enhance job creation.

This is a subject I will continue to raise in Ottawa along with the need to eliminate internal trade barriers that could also help jump start our Canadian economy. Yet another measure that Liberal Government opposed in Ottawa despite my putting forward a motion that even the NDP and Green Party were in full support of. When Canada’s unemployment rate starts to rise as dramatically as it has in July I do not believe we can sit back and be complacent. Action is needed to get the results that keep Canadians working.

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or contact me toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

August 18th

I was once told that it is important to recognize that each day globally there is roughly 100,000 scheduled flights that will take off and land without drawing any media attention. It is those flights that do not successfully take off and land that will become the focus of media stories and often speculation very quickly. The context of this analogy was that in public office it is often the scandals and failures that tend to receive far more media attention then projects or policy that work effectively as intended. I mention this as this week it was particularly rewarding to participate in a

media event profiling some of the more positive local initiatives for public engagement.

CPAC, who many often believe is the taxpayer funded Canadian Parliamentary Access Channel, is actually a privately owned Canadian Public Access Channel that is owned and funded by Canada's private broadcasters. CPAC was in our riding of Central Okanagan Similkameen Nicola earlier this week to profile among other events the Summerland pilot project that involves my shared constituency office with local area MLA Dan Ashton. Aside from considerable cost savings this shared office also better serves local residents who are often unaware of what services are Provincial or Federal and as such are not bounced between two different offices that may be located in different communities. As much as it makes sense to share an office between an MLA and an MP this pilot project is to date the only identified shared office of this kind in Canada hence the interest from CPAC in profiling this unique arrangement. Hopefully this shared office will catch on in other regions and the added exposure of our beautiful region on CPAC will also draw a few new visitors to experience our riding.

On the theme of shared offices I would also like to publicly thank the Mayor and Council in Princeton, Merritt and Keremeos for also making space available so that local citizens in these respective communities can have access to their Member of Parliament on a monthly basis to assist in matters of concern. Operating budgets do not allow for an MP or an MLA to open an office in every community in a geographically large riding however when different levels of government work together to find efficiencies services can become available on a more economical basis. Citizens deserve to be heard and the ability to meet face to face with elected representatives is critically important.

Before I close this week's report I would like to thank the many citizens who have taken the time to stop in and attend the mobile constituency offices as well as my regular office to provide input and ask questions. This information is very valuable to take back to Ottawa in late September when the house resumes. Just a reminder that the mobile constituency office schedule is as follows - Merritt City Hall on the 1st Tuesday of each month from 9am to 12pm, Princeton Town Hall on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 9am to 12pm and Keremeos Village Hall on the 2nd Wednesday of each month from 1pm to 4pm. To schedule an appointment or share your comments or concerns with me I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-800-665-8711

August 25th

This week much of the news coming out of Ottawa has been focused on extravagant and wasteful spending involving Liberal cabinet ministers. The spending in question relates to thousands of dollars spent on luxury limousine service, paid access to an elite airport lounges, and revelations of an expensive personal photographer being hired to self-promote the Minister of the Environment. Although the sums of money involved are not in the millions the intense media focus serves as a reminder of the need for elected officials to always be vigilant whenever spending tax dollars and rightfully so. At the same time we should also not overlook that when the media is largely focused on a single issue; other issues of importance may be overlooked.

One particular issue that has received little attention (with the exception of Huffington Post reporter Althia Raj) relates to the ongoing discussions, which in reality is negotiations, between the Federal Government and the Provinces for a new Canada health accord. The negotiations are going so poorly

that the Quebec Minister of Health is quoted as suggesting the discussions are currently stuck in a Mexican standoff like situation. At the core of the issue is, as is often the case with any Government provided service, is money. As B.C. Health Minister Terry Lake is quoted "We don't think that \$3 billion over three or four years is nearly enough to reflect the growing need of the older Canadians, particularly in British Columbia,"

Considering the capital budget alone for the new Penticton Hospital Care tower expansion now exceeds \$300 million it is easy to understand why Canada's Provincial Health Ministers are concerned given our aging demographics. For some history on the Canada Health Accord in 2004 former Prime Minister Paul Martin announced a 10 year agreement that increased funding by a rate of 6% per year. In 2014 former Prime Minister Steven Harper extended this agreement until the 2016/107 fiscal year. After that the increases were set to rise at a minimum rate of 3% a year or greater in the event GDP growth exceeded this rate. So far the new Liberal Government has not announced any changes to the current 3% funding elevator that is tied to potential GDP increases. The Provinces believe this annual increase in funding will not be sufficient to cover constantly rising health care costs.

By the numbers the Canada Health Transfer from the federal government to Canadian provinces has gone from roughly \$ 20 Billion annually a decade ago to over \$ 34 Billion a year today. For some provincial perspective on this the BC health care budget in the year 2000 was under \$ 10 billion annually and is forecast to hit over \$19 Billion by the 2018/2019 fiscal year. This rate of increased provincial health spending means that providing health care now consumes a greater percentage of the overall BC budget and that in turn leaves less revenue for other important services. Based on these facts it is easy to understand why Canadian Health Ministers are extremely concerned over long term funding and rising health care costs.

At the same time we must not overlook that over the next two decades the number of Canadian citizens over the age of 65 will basically double from roughly 4.7 million citizens today to over 9.3 million by 2030. This will seriously increase long term health care costs. It should also be recognized that the ratio of workers still in the workforce is declining over the same time frame. I mention these facts because increased debt today carries rising interest costs that also eat into future budgets and likewise decisions to restore the age of OAS eligibility from 67 to 65 will add significant costs pressures at a time when scarce health care dollars will be even more in demand. Ultimately I believe more long term strategic budgeting is essential and necessary to protect the sustainability of our Canadian health care system. While restoring the age of OAS was politically popular the Prime Minister has yet to provide a plan to address the long term needs of our aging population and required health care funding.

The current "Mexican Standoff" over our new Canada Health Accord is a serious concern and I welcome your views on this subject. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free at 1-800-665-8711

August 31st

This week I was saddened to learn of the passing of former World War II veteran and retired Member of Parliament Fred King of Kaleden, B.C. Fred King was a kind, caring man who gave back greatly to

his community in many different ways that extended well beyond his time in Ottawa. Although I considered Fred a close personal friend, he was also a mentor who offered support and sage advice on many issues around our region. From his time spent as a Member of Parliament Fred had many accomplishments although he was most proud of the work he performed securing federally owned lands that could be used for Okanagan College's Penticton campus. Some have pointed out to me before that if it were not for MP King's intervention, the Penticton campus may have been placed in a far less convenient location nor without considerable extra costs. Fred was a strong believer and supporter in our youth and the importance of upgrading skills and education. As some will know Fred continued to quietly provide support and assistance for many individuals in hopes they would have a better future.

What I most admired about Fred King was his sincere willingness to always help others, many who were complete strangers never asking anything in return only a desire to try and bring happiness and help to those who were in need. It is a privilege to consider Mr. King my friend and to recognize his contributions and his service for the betterment of others.

Another former Member of Parliament I would like to pay tribute to is our former Prime Minister, the Right Honourable Stephen Harper, who recently announced he will be retiring from Parliament, effective immediately. From my own personal experience Mr. Harper was perhaps one of the most misunderstood elected officials I have yet met who endured significant personal and public attacks that were at odds with my interactions with him during my time in the previous Parliament. In my experience Mr. Harper was someone who cared deeply about Canadian families and encouraged policies that promoted prosperity and employment. As my colleague MP Pierre Poilievre recently observed, under Mr. Harper's term as PM the number of Canadians living in poverty declined down to a record low of 4.2% while middle class incomes rose by 11% and as we know Canadian middle class prosperity actually surpassed that of the United States for the first time in 2014; all while managing to balance the budget in the final year of the previous Parliament.

On a personal level as Prime Minister Mr. Harper also eliminated retroactively a gold plated pension perk that paid every former Canadian PM 66% of the PM salary on retirement. Eliminating this perk alone personally cost Mr. Harper (and saved taxpayers) between \$1.5 million and \$2 million in future retirement benefits. Mr. Harper also brought fairness to the formerly "gold plated" MP pension plan and to the public sector pension plan by ensuring that these plans were funded equally on a 50/50 contribution rate. These changes alone are estimated to save Canadian taxpayers close to \$2.6 Billion over the next 5 years. What I most admired about our former PM was that he was not afraid to make difficult and unpopular decisions that were necessary for Canada's long term prosperity. It should also be noted that his electoral rivals tried to paint him as someone who would try to dismantle our health care system by cutting federal transfer payments to provinces as the former Liberal Government had done to balance its budget woes. Mr. Harper consistently raised federal transfers each and every year while in office and insisted that his Ministers support these year over year increases while finding efficiencies in their departments and staying focused on growing the economy. While I appreciate some may see my comments as partisan I have met few people who believe reducing federal funding for important priorities like health care or that forcing MPs to pay more into their pension plan was a bad one. Ultimately leadership means taking principled positions and making at times difficult decisions and for that I would like to recognize Mr. Harper's service to Canadians.

If you have a comment, question or concern about this week's report or any federal matter I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or contacted toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

September 2016

September 7th

Recently Statistics Canada released the GDP, income and expenditure report for Canada's second quarter revealing some troubling indicators. Real GDP growth decreased .4% and while that may not seem like a significant drop, it is the largest quarterly decline since 2009. Another area of concern is business investment that has continued to decline for the last several quarters. Looking at the numbers from a sector by sector perspective construction has declined while the public sector has increased in size. Fortunately there are some promising indicators with some growth in manufacturing output along with an increase in mining along with oil and gas extraction.

For many of these reason the Bank of Canada announced the key interest rate will remain at .5% with a forecast for increased GDP growth in the next fiscal quarter. I mention some of Canada's fiscal indicators in this week's report as I believe it is critically important that fiscal policy is not overlooked in this coming Parliament that will resume in a few weeks on Monday, September 19th. We should not overlook that much of the Governments debt forecasts that already show a significant increase in debt are also depending on positive economic growth to help offset significant increases in spending. In the case of the 2013/14 fiscal year over \$28 billion was spent just on debt servicing alone. To put that number into context the total amount of health transfers from the Federal Government to the Provinces and Territories in the same fiscal year was \$32 Billion. If the Liberal Government continues to dramatically increase debt as is currently forecast and economic growth does not increase as is anticipated a serious fiscal crunch will emerge that will impact federal Government finances at a time when the population is significantly aging with health care costs expected to increase dramatically.

The intent of this week's report is not to cast doom and gloom as overall at the moment Canada is relatively strong compared to other G-7 nations. However the current direction away from balanced budgets and into increased spending while ignoring policies and projects that create investment, employment and increased economic growth is a concern. In June I tabled a motion to immediately elevate the Comeau decision to the Supreme Court for constitutional clarification that could potentially significantly increase internal trade between Canadian Provinces. Despite having the support of the Conservative, NDP and Green Party MPs, something that rarely occurs in the House of Commons, even this modest economic motion was opposed by the Liberal Government.

I have received a great deal of positive comments from constituents on reducing interprovincial trade barriers as well as other suggestions to help grow our economy over my summer listening tour. In this regard my summer listening tour has been successful as I believe that the best ideas come from those closest to challenges or opportunities and why it's critical for elected officials to hear those ideas and suggestions first hand. It is important to me to propose and not just oppose while in Opposition and I will continue to bring motions forward that can increase internal trade and help local producers to have unrestricted access to all Canadian Provinces. I welcome your comments, questions and

concerns on this or any matter related to the Federal Government and can be reached via email at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

September 16th

As many will recall, in 2014 Canada Post announced it would be ending door to door mail delivery service for the roughly 1/3 of Canadians who still received the service. During the 2015 federal election this became a political topic as the now Liberal Government promised to halt the door to door mail delivery service elimination and instead maintain door to door delivery. More recently the Liberal Government has released an independent review of Canada Post that will be used for further scrutiny by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Government Operations and Estimates. This committee will ultimately make recommendations that point to potential changes that the Liberal Government is considering with respect to how Canada Post operates. While it is unclear at this point what changes might occur some of the reviews findings do indicate the challenges being faced by Canada Post that may be of interest to many citizens in our region.

Overall the ongoing challenge at Canada Post remains declining mail volume, as an example in 2015 Canada Post delivered 8.8 billion pieces of mail; a number that is down almost 3 billion since 2007. At the same time Canada Post is adding roughly 170,00 addresses per year- in other words there are more addresses being created Canada wide and at the same time there is less mail. This results in increased delivery costs with steadily declining revenues.

Another long term challenge for Canada Post is that while revenues decline and costs continue to increase the employee pension plan is currently underfunded by just over \$8 Billion. This means that more revenues must at some point be directed to fill the pension solvency gap that exists to eliminate this liability.

What are some of the possible solutions? The report suggests that the single largest potential for cost savings is to continue with the elimination of door to door mail delivery in favour of community mail boxes; this alone would yield savings in excess of \$400 million. Further conversion of Canada Post run postal outlets to franchise operations is estimated to save \$177 Million while further streamlining of processing operations would provide savings of \$66 million. The report also looked at ways to increase revenue that included selling advertising, estimated to raise close to \$20 million. Another potential revenue source raised in the report is the potential revenue from distributing marijuana if and or when it becomes legalized. Postal Banking was thoroughly examined although it was not recommended as an option.

Ultimately the report concludes that Canada Post costs are increasing at a rate faster than revenues and as a result Canada Post is not operating in a long term sustainable manner. The report concludes that significant changes and a new business model will need to be developed in order to allow Canada Post to be better positioned for new and emerging trends in the marketplace.

This will be a topic I will continue to follow once it reaches the Committee review and welcome your comments, questions and concerns on Canada Post or any matter before the House of Commons. I can be reached via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or at 1-800-665-8711.

September 21st

This week the House of Commons is back in session after the summer recess and it did not take long for the usual Ottawa dynamic to get back into full swing. One of the major media stories occurring this week is revelations that the Prime Minister's office & various Ministers have billed taxpayers over \$1 million to move political staff to Ottawa. While Government does sometimes cover these types of expenses in this case claims as high as \$126,000 for an individual political staff member to move from Toronto to Ottawa have resulted in demands for more transparency on providing details that substantiate these amounts.

On a local level I have already heard several concerns from citizens who have reported to moving much farther distances for considerably smaller amounts of money. Although some will argue one million dollars may be a small amount of money as part of the overall Federal Government budget it is also important for taxpayers to have confidence that every dollar is spent wisely and it is extremely difficult to comprehend how a move from Toronto to Ottawa can cost well over \$100,000. As opposition this will be a subject that we will demand further information on.

Another interesting subject occurring this week in Ottawa relates to Canada's climate change targets, more specifically known as targets for reducing industrial greenhouse gas emissions (GHG). Many citizens may recall shortly after the 2015 Federal election our Prime Minister sent the largest Canadian delegation in history to attend the Paris climate change conference at a cost in excess of \$1 million dollars to do so. While at the Paris conference the Liberal Government made several comments in support of increasing GHG reduction targets while at the same time criticizing the record of the former Conservative Government in this area. For this reason many in Ottawa were surprised this week when the Liberal Government announced that it would adopt the very same GHG reduction targets that were set by the previous Government under Prime Minister Harper. Yes, these would be the very same GHG reduction targets the Liberals formerly had criticized when in opposition.

For some history on Canada's GHG reduction targets in 1993 former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien promised to reduce our GHG emissions to 20% below 1988 levels by 2005. This promise was broken. In 1997 Prime Minister Chretien signed on to the Kyoto accord to reduce our emissions by a smaller amount of 6% below 1990 levels that would be achieved by 2012. In 2006 when the Liberals were voted out of office Canada was actually 30% over that target and as a result Prime Minister Harper eventually withdrew Canada from the Kyoto agreement that had set binding targets. In 2009 at the Copenhagen climate conference former Prime Minister Harper matched the USA target to cut GHG emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020 and 30% by 2013 in what is a non-binding agreement. These target levels are the same the Liberals will now use as they prepare to ratify the Paris climate conference agreement going forward, a move that has angered some in the environmental movement and in particular the Green Party and leader Elizabeth May.

Somewhat related to this announcement is news this week that the Liberal Government also intends to force a carbon tax onto Canadian Provinces. From my perspective it is important to also point out that at this point no details are known how this might work and it should also be recognized that Provinces such as BC already have a Carbon tax so it remains unknown how such a federally imposed tax would impact British Columbia. I will continue to provide further information on the Liberal proposed Carbon Tax as the details become available. If you have any comments, questions or

concerns on this or any matter before the House of Commons I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or contacted toll-free at 1(800) 665-8711.

September 28th

When I was re-elected as an MP and became a member of the Official Opposition I made a few commitments publicly that were important to me. One of them was not just to oppose but also to propose ideas and solutions that can be of benefit to our region and elsewhere. Another commitment was to communicate Government policy as clearly as possible in spite of the fact that said policy may be strongly opposed by the opposition. This commitment is a very important one to me as one of my frustrations having sat on the Government side of the house was how government policy was frequently intentionally misinterpreted and distorted by the opposition. I believe misstating Government policy does a disservice to all involved and is why I have made every effort to avoid doing so in my weekly reports. This all leads me to the Liberal Government's announcement yesterday to approve the Pacific Northwest Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) project.

Let me state for the record I commend the Liberal Government for making what is a difficult political decision that I am already hearing is very unpopular with many citizens who voted for the Liberals in the last election. A few points on this. The decision to approve the Pacific Northwest LNG project also comes with 190 conditions, many of them environmentally related, that must be met for the project to go forward. This is not unlike the approval for the Northern Gateway pipeline project that had 209 environmentally related conditions that must be met. (for more information view my June 19, 2014 MP Report on this subject <http://www.danalbas.com/mp-report/discussing-gateway>).

Aside from these conditions the Liberal Government has also noted that the Pacific Northwest LNG project will create significant economic opportunities for not just BC, but also for Canada. This project represents a total capital investment of \$36 Billion and will create 4500 jobs during the construction process along with 630 direct and indirect permanent jobs after completion. Aside from these benefits the BC LNG project will contribute an estimated \$2.5 billion in annual tax revenue to Government along with an increase of \$3 billion per year to Canada's GDP growth. These are important considerations given that increases in health transfer funding is now linked to GDP growth.

Having heard the many positive aspects of this project as opposition I must also share some of the concerns voiced from those who strongly oppose this development. As much as the Liberal Government likes to use the talking point that the environment and the economy go hand in hand the reality is they do not. This project will generate 4.3 million tonnes of carbon dioxide per year not including an estimated 6.5 million to 8.7 million tonnes required for natural gas collection and transportation. As a result the project would become one of the largest GHG emitters in Canada and given that many climate experts already believe Canada will not meet the targets the Liberal Government has committed to in Paris is a concern frequently raised by opponents.

From my own perspective, one other aspect on this project that is often overlooked is the fact that relatively clean burning BC LNG can be used in countries such as China as an alternative to coal fired power plants. This not only significantly reduces GHG emissions on a global scale; it also greatly improves local air quality that is an important factor for human health in these regions. While all projects have environmental considerations on balance I believe the Liberal Government has made

the right decision in approving Pacific Northwest LNG project. However I also believe the Liberal Government does a disservice by making commitments at the Paris climate conference that are at odds with our ability to meet them, not unlike what occurred when a former Liberal Government committed to the Kyoto agreement. I welcome your views on this or any subject before the House of Commons and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711)

October 2016

October 5th

The buzz out of Ottawa this week relates to an announcement from Prime Minister Trudeau that the Liberal Government will enforce a national carbon tax onto Canadian Provinces and Territories that do not implement a Provincial Carbon tax or a cap and trade system by 2018. The carbon tax was announced by Prime Minister Trudeau at the same time Provincial Environment Ministers were meeting to discuss the same topic. This resulted in Saskatchewan, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland storming out of the conference and with some engaging in a war of words with the Prime Minister. In particular Premier Brad Wall of Saskatchewan pointed out that during the 2015 federal election, Prime Minister Trudeau stated the federal government imposing a climate change plan on provinces would be 'nonsensical' and demanded that the Prime Minister keep his word.

While this back and forth continues it is also worth noting that British Columbia already has a carbon tax in place with rates set already well above the entry carbon tax rate proposed by Ottawa. While the national carbon tax announcement captured most of the media attention, there was another policy change quietly made by the Government that may well have far more troubling implications on middle class Canadians attempting to buy a home. The Liberal Government intends to make changes with respect to mortgage qualifications that even the Department of Finance projects could lower home sales across Canada by close to 10% in the first year.

The changes to mortgage qualifications from my perspective are concerning for a number of different reasons. While there is little debate that housing prices in Toronto and Vancouver have reached concerning levels, recent policy changes enacted by the BC Government appear to be already having an impact and the changes announced by the Federal Liberal Government will penalize middle class home buyers in all regions of Canada. More troubling is rather than try to encourage housing supply through measures such as possibly increasing the threshold for the GST rebate on new home construction that would also help affordability and generate economic growth, these measures in effect make housing less affordable as fewer families will be able to qualify for a mortgage.

In defense of these policy changes the Liberal Government argues they are concerned about rising Canadian debt levels. However as the opposition would point out, adding billions of dollars of debt through increased federal deficit government spending as is currently the case creates the same problem only without generating any equity as can be created through home ownership. In my view allowing Provinces to take action in specific hot spot regions such as the British Columbia government has done recently may be a more effective policy than a national change that will adversely impact many regions of Canada solely for the benefit of a few.

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on any matter before the House of Commons and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

October 11th

One of the things I enjoy the most about representing the riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola is the diversity of the region that ranges from rural unincorporated areas to more densely populated urban centres. As much as there are many different challenges because of this diversity, there are also some common themes. One of those is that most citizens have a strong connection with local media that in many regions of Canada, including here, are also struggling to survive. Princeton and Merritt have both seen community papers close their doors permanently while others have dropped their publication from twice a week to one.

Elsewhere many newsrooms have laid off staff as media organizations struggle with changing market dynamics and declining advertising revenues. As I have previously stated on several occasions and in Ottawa, local media is a critically important facet of life in our communities.

Fortunately for many citizens there continues to be local live and recorded programming broadcast by the CBC throughout our region. Although I generally hear support for the CBC, one common complaint that I do receive from time to time is that many citizens would prefer it if the CBC was entirely commercial free. This suggestion is also circulating in Ottawa as many struggling media organizations resent the fact that they are losing much needed ad revenue to a national public broadcaster that is funded with tax dollars. The debate is an understandable one as CBC is essentially immune to the same market forces that other media organizations are forced to adapt to.

This leads me to the question for this week's MP report. For those of you who do listen to or watch CBC on a regular basis- would you support a commercial free CBC?

Key to this conversation would be recognizing that this could mean a loss of revenue to the CBC if Government did not make up a revenue shortfall created by the loss of advertising revenue. On that note I should also add that the Liberal Government is currently increasing funding to the CBC, which now receives in excess of one billion tax dollars per year.

A commercial free CBC would not in my view substantially help our struggling local media organizations however it is one measure that many national media organizations have voiced their support; this is in addition to the many local citizens who have expressed support to me for a commercial free CBC. I welcome your comments on the idea of a commercial free CBC or any other matter before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free 1-800-665-8711.

October 19th

It has been suggested that if you are an elected representative, the worst day in Government is still preferable than the best day in opposition. Although I am still relatively new to the role of being a member of the official opposition I believe it is always important to focus on the fact that both sides of the house are important in a properly functioning democracy. I also believe that as opposition we can also aim higher and raise the bar in how we hold the Government to account and in that process ultimately influence the shaping of Government policy.

If you have been following the Prime Minister's efforts to change how Supreme Court Justices are appointed in Canada, you may be aware that part of these changes aimed to end the unbroken convention of respecting regional representation from different parts of Canada on the Supreme Court. As Atlantic Canada was the first to be adversely impacted by these changes, it was only natural that it became a very unpopular proposal there. Unfortunately for Atlantic Canada as there were no opposition MPs from the region, it was up to the official opposition to raise this unpopular issue in Ottawa.

In order to force the Government and its members to address these concerns the Official Opposition tabled a motion in the House of Commons to respect the convention of regional representation when making appointments to our Supreme Court. To the surprise of many in Ottawa, the Liberal Government ultimately voted in support of this Conservative Opposition motion and subsequently passed. As a result this week it was announced that Malcolm Rowe from Newfoundland is our newest Judge to sit on the Supreme Court Bench.

This example of maintaining regional representation on the Supreme Court illustrates that despite being in Opposition, well intended proposals can become part of Government policy. It is for this reason that I have maintained my position as a member of the Opposition will always include the importance of proposing alternatives from time to time as opposed to exclusively opposing. On a related note earlier this week I was also honoured to be named as the Deputy Critic for Finance and by extension also a member of the Finance Committee. This is an opportunity that I greatly welcome and one of the reasons why pertains to input I am hearing from many local credit unions who are frustrated with changes that increasingly force administratively costly one size fits all policies onto them. As many in our riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola will know credit unions provide an important community based alternative to the larger financial institutions. Unfortunately for credit unions they simply do not have the clout and lobbying power of the big banks who are increasingly shaping Liberal Government policy as was evidenced by recent changes to mortgage rules that benefit banks over independent mortgage finance companies.

As the Deputy Critic for Finance these are some of the local community related issues that I will raise with my work in this area. It is also my intention as critic from time to time to mention those actions that I believe are potentially beneficial to Canadians. As an example I have heard large concern from home builders and those involved in construction at recent significant increases in tariffs, in some cases as high as 276% on dry wall that will make housing even more expensive. I have heard this may attach an extra \$5000 or more to a new home. I have raised this issue in the House of Commons appealing both publicly and privately to Liberal Government members. Although I am disappointed that the Finance Minister has not supported the Canadian Home Builders Association suggestion to suspend the new tariffs, I am pleased to report that the Finance Minister has announced that this tariff policy will be formerly reviewed. This is an issue I will continue to press the Government on as

every effort from Ottawa should make housing more affordable, not more costly.

I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this issue or any other matter before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

October 26th

Back in my July 6th MP report I discussed the many proposed changes by the Liberal Government to increase Canada's CPP system; that report can be found at: <http://www.danalbas.com/mp-report/changes-in-cpp> This week debate on expanded CPP, known as Bill C-26, is currently before the House of Commons where I voiced opposition. As I believe in being accountable to citizens I would like to share some of the reasons why I believe now is not the ideal time to expand CPP.

One of the concerns I heard loudly from small business owners after my July MP report on this subject was the obvious fact that expanded CPP will increase the costs of not only hiring new workers, but also increases payroll costs for existing workers. It is for this reason that expanded CPP is often referred to as a payroll tax. While no small business owners shared with me they would eliminate existing staff due to increased costs many said future wage increases might instead be directed into covering the CPP increases or that plans of hiring additional workers may be put on hold. Given that Canada's job numbers are weak right now and economic growth forecasts are being downgraded in my view now is not the ideal time to increase employment costs to small business owners.

Another reason why I oppose expanded CPP is due to the fact that in my view it is not an ideal retirement asset. For those citizens who do not live to reach 65 or only live a few years beyond 65, a lifetime of contributions paid to CPP are of no significant benefit to a spouse of family in that the full value of the contributions cannot be transferred through an estate. Conversely a TFSA is fully transferable to your family through an estate and does not adversely impact small business job creators. Ironically the Liberal Government reduced TFSA contribution levels arguing they were worried Canadians would be saving too much before turning around to announce plans to increase CPP over concerns citizens were not saving enough thus Government would do it for them.

One of the lesser known criticisms of CPP and one I raised in Ottawa this week was the fact that increasingly your CPP contributions are being consumed by significantly rising administration costs. As well-known national media columnist Andrew Coyne has also pointed out staffing has increased at the CPP Investment board from 5 in 1999 to around 1,200 today. Likewise operating costs went from \$ 3 million in the year 2000 to \$ 803 Million in 2015 not to mention that external management fees have risen from \$ 36 million in 2006 to \$ 1.25 Billion in 2015. These are significant administration increases and more so when one considers that the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions in the August 2014 report assessing the sustainability of the CPP through actuarial balance sheets reported that although sustainable currently the CPP has an unfunded liability of \$ 9 Billion using open group methodology.

Given that increased CPP adversely impacts small business job creators at a time when the economy is sluggish this is a serious concern. On top of that concern is the limited financial transportability of CPP. When you consider that you and your employers lifetime contributions to your CPP is very

limited in being able to be transferred to your spouse or family in an estate I believe that the Liberal Government should have spent more time exploring other options. When one also considers the significantly growing administration costs combined with the fact that there is currently an unfunded liability of the existing CPP plan I spoke against expanding this program at the present time.

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this or any topic. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711

November 2016

November 3rd

In last week's MP report I outlined the concerns I had with expanding CPP at the present time that resulted in my opposing this measure in Ottawa. Since my report was written CBC has uncovered and released internal documents from the Finance Department that parallel my concerns. In fact internal finance projections reveal that expanded CPP will be a drag on our Canadian economy until the year 2030 and worse are also expected to adversely impact employment until the year 2035. In other words the Liberal Government is knowingly committing to a policy that will harm jobs and our economy for the next 15-20 years. This in my review remains a serious concern.

This week the Liberal Government also announced an economic update that is intended to reverse the current trend of declining economic growth projections and lack of any net new jobs being created in our Canadian economy. The key announcement was the Liberal Government intends to borrow more money and increase deficit spending by an additional \$31.8 Billion over the next five years. This means the total amount of Liberal deficit spending will now exceed \$114 Billion over the Liberals term meaning the promises to run "modest" \$10 billion a year deficits and return to a balanced budget in the 2019/2020 fiscal year will not be met.

One curious announcement that is part of the Liberal's fiscal update is plans to borrow \$35 Billion to create a new Federal Infrastructure Bank that in turn will also see the creation of a new branch of Government or Government agency that will have a mandate to attract private investment into the Infrastructure Bank. The NDP has already expressed strong opposition to this plan suggesting it will result in the wholesale privatization of Canadian infrastructure. From my own perspective I question the need to develop yet another federal agency as well an expensive new federally run bank.

My concerns around this \$35 Billion Infrastructure Bank are as follows: while I am not ideologically opposed to public-private partnerships in infrastructure in this case one of the advantages of Government borrowing money is that it can do so at rates much lower than the private sector can. In order for the Infrastructure Bank to gain any private sector investors, the bank will need to pay competitive rates of return- these interest rates will of course be higher than the rates that the Government can borrow at so in effect this new Infrastructure Bank could ultimately end up subsidizing private investors who would enjoy lucrative and guaranteed rates of return - this in my view is not the role of Government.

My other concern with the Federal Infrastructure bank is that like any bank it will carry administrative

costs- wages, leases, leasehold improvements, legal, etc. – all of these costs will mean ultimately that less money is available to be spent on infrastructure as these overhead costs will come out of the bottom line. Currently federal Infrastructure funds are paid directly to Provinces and Municipalities and are not filtered through an expensive administrative process like this one being proposed by the Liberals. My final concern over an Infrastructure Bank is who is ultimately accountable for the projects that are approved and rejected. Currently elected officials are held to account however if this becomes unelected and appointed bankers potentially chosen from Bay Street in Toronto what input would there be for British Columbia and Western Canada?

I welcome your views on the idea of a Federal Infrastructure Bank and any other subject before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free 1-800-665-8711.

November 10th

This week Canadians woke up to the generally unexpected and surprising news that President elect Donald Trump will soon occupy the White House. On top of this, the Republican Party also remains in control of both the United States Senate & the House of Representatives suggesting at first glance President elect Trump may well have a clear path to implement much of his agenda. The single largest question and concern I am hearing this week is “What does this all mean for Canada”?

The answer to this question is of course unknown at this point, however some early speculation and concern does point to several possibilities. Possibly the most obvious is that President elect Trump, much like many of the elected Republican leaders in the US Government, have long stated support for approving the Keystone XL pipeline project. It should not be forgotten that Justin Trudeau has also been a strong supporter of this particular pipeline and in fact has past travelled to Washington, DC in support of this pipeline getting built. While some in Canada will see this is a positive economic development other Canadians will certainly be in opposition.

Related to the Keystone XL pipeline is environmental concerns, specifically that it is widely expected President elect Trump will not implement a mandatory Carbon Tax in the United States much less ratify the Paris Accord as the Liberal Government is currently doing in Canada. As a result this will make Canada less competitive as a manufacturing jurisdiction in some sectors and given President Trump’s often demonstrated projectionist views opposing trade this may be an area of concern.

Obviously given that the United States is Canada’s largest trading partner any changes that discourage or diminish trade relations may have serious economic consequences on our side of the border. As an example currently Canada has a critical need for a new softwood lumber deal with the United States and it remains unclear what, if any, progress our Liberal Government has made on this file.

Trade issues aside, President elect Trump has also indicated that the United States will have a greater expectation of increased contributions from NATO members such as Canada. While it is unclear what type of increase may be contemplated given Canada’s current fiscal state of significantly rising deficit budgets with no return to balance any increased financial pressure will not be welcome. Having voiced several concerns I also believe that the United States cannot become completely isolationist meaning it is unlikely the strong trading relationship between Canada and the United

States will not be fiscally severed.

Likewise if the United States is reluctant to enter into trade and investment agreements with other nations this may well open other opportunities for Canada to step into.

My final point is one of cautious optimism given that Prime Minister Trudeau repeatedly and wisely avoided entering into commenting on the US election and as such I would expect should receive an open welcome to sit down with President elect Trump. The United States, like all nations, will need allies and there is no question that the Canada-United States relationship has been one of the strongest and most successful in the world. I believe it is in the national interest of both of our nations to ensure this relationship continues.

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this or any issue before the House of Commons. I can be reached at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free 1-800-665-8711.

November 15th

This week in Ottawa I had a second opportunity to speak in opposition to the Liberal Government's budget implementation bill. Aside from the fact that thus far the Liberal plan has resulted in economic downgrades and we've seen none of the 40,000 net new jobs that was promised in Budget 2016, I also raised the uncomfortable issue of debt. As it stands today looking at the 2013/2014 fiscal year the Federal Government spent just over \$28 Billion a year servicing debt.

To put that number into perspective that is currently almost as much money as is spent on the Canadian Health Transfers to provinces that was just over \$30 Billion in that same year. In other words the Federal Government is currently spending almost as much money on servicing debt as it is spending on healthcare and this Liberal budget increases debt by another \$25 Billion this year alone and is on track to add \$113 billion in new debt by the 2020-21 fiscal year.

There is also no longer any plan to return to a balanced budget. Given that debt is rising at the same time health care funding increases are being reduced the Federal Government will soon spend more on debt interest than healthcare, a fact I believe many will find troubling.

However as I have also pointed out in Ottawa, it is easy to be a critic. Part of my commitment to citizens in our region as an opposition MP is to not just oppose but also from time to time propose alternative ideas that can build a stronger and more prosperous Canada. What did I propose the Liberal budget should do instead?

First I made it clear that I do not believe that MP's and other citizens earning up to \$199,000 per year need an income tax cut as the Liberals are proposing in this budget. Recently as many potential home owners have discovered, the Liberals are making changes to the mortgage rules that are so severe by the departments own internal projections our Canadian housing market may lose 10% of all sales this year. This will adversely impact many families not just in our region but all across Canada. What is more frustrating is that these mortgage changes, largely intended to combat the rising house prices in the Liberal strongholds of Toronto and Vancouver, will adversely impact the rest of Canada. This is why I frequently speak out against one-size fits all Ottawa imposed "solutions"

So what is the answer? In my view the Federal Government should not be penalizing future homeowners as a means to try and lower housing prices. How about instead creating incentives to increase the supply of new housing?

Increasing the new housing supply would have several benefits for Canadians. Primarily increased housing supply will help to meet demand and in turn lower prices. Further, if more Canadians can move into home ownership and out of rentals that in turn will free up capacity for always in demand rental housing. An increased supply of rental housing can also help lower rental rates and hopefully increase affordability.

Another added benefit to increasing new home supply is that it will create jobs and help support many local economies across Canada given how many sectors are involved in the construction industry. As an added benefit much of Canada's home building industry is supplied almost exclusively by Canadian value added wood products who would benefit from the increased activity at a time when the Federal Government has made no progress on the softwood lumber deal.

These are only a few of the many benefits of such a policy that could be enhanced if Ottawa considered raising the threshold for the GST rebate on new housing. In my view promoting instead of penalizing new home owners is an important economic alternative proposal that could be explored in this Liberal budget.

As always I welcome your views on this or any topic before the House of Commons and can be reached at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

November 23rd

Generally speaking Canadians tend not to hear much in the media about our Canadian Senate unless it involves a Senator spending scandal. I mention this because this week a group of Conservative Senators on the Senate Finance committee made the rare and unusual decision to amend a Government spending bill in a way that may be of some interest to citizens.

As many will recall during the last election one of the Liberal promises was a plan to reduce income taxes on the middle class that ultimately would be revenue neutral as a result of income taxes being increased on citizens who earn over \$200,000 per year. Credit to the Liberal Government as they have been in the process of enacting some of their electoral promises however it has been done in a manner that some take disagreement with that ultimately has resulted in the Senator amendment in question.

One challenge in enacting tax cuts for the middle class is defining who exactly is the "middle class" from the perspective of the Liberal Government. In this case many were surprised that the proposed tax cuts for the middle class did not apply to most in need Canadians earning below \$45,000 per year. More surprising was that the same middle class tax cuts also applied to citizens earning between \$100,000 up to \$199,000 per year. I have yet to hear any citizens supporting a tax cut for citizens earning close to \$200,000 annually. As it turns out, when citizens in the \$100,000 to \$199,000 income level are included in the 'middle class' tax cut it turns out the plan is not in fact revenue neutral as was promised. Overall the cost of the Liberal middle class tax results in an annual deficit

ranging between \$1.2 Billion and possibly as high as \$1.7 Billion each year. As the annual budget is currently forecasting deficits for the duration of the Liberal Government term these tax cuts are in fact unsustainable– this is where the Conservative Senator`s amendment comes in.

Ultimately the amendment from Senator Larry Smith proposes to eliminate the tax cut for citizens earning above \$ 90,000 so in that respect those earning between \$100,000 up to \$199,000 would no longer see an income tax cut if the amendment was adopted. The amendment further proposes to increase the tax cut for those earning between \$45,000 up to \$53,000 and would keep the existing tax cut for those earning between \$53,000 up to \$90,000. It should also be noted that this amendment is also revenue neutral meaning that it would not add an additional \$1.2 to \$1.7 Billion in new debt annually.

At this point it remains unclear if the Senate will support this amendment however it will provide a test for those newly appointed non-partisan Senators to see if they blindly vote against this amendment in favour of the original Government Bill or not. In the event the Senate does pass this amendment it would return to the House of Commons for a vote from elected MPs. My question to citizens is what are your thoughts on this amendment? Does it make sense to increase the income tax cut for lower income citizens and eliminate the income tax cut for those earning between \$90,000 up to \$190,000 and eliminate the deficit created by this in the process? Or should un-elected Senators oppose the amendment and support the Liberals tax cut as is, given that it was a campaign promise that provided a mandate for these changes, despite not being revenue neutral as was promised.

As always I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on this subject or any other before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free 1-800-665-8711.

November 29th

Most of the noise in Ottawa this week has been focused on varying degrees of outrage related to a statement from Prime Minister Trudeau on the passing of Cuban dictator Fidel Castro. The Prime Minister`s statement and comments on his death has been widely criticized internationally for not referencing the numerous human rights violations that have occurred in Cuba under the Castro regime. From my perspective while I believe the statement could have been worded in a manner more reflective of these human rights violations it is also important to not allow issues such as this one to overshadow other important concerns, one of these is the Liberals pending new “Infrastructure Bank”.

In my November 3rd MP report I shared several concerns about the Liberals promised new \$35 Billion Federal Infrastructure Bank. In that report I questioned the need to develop yet another federal agency as well an expensive new federally run bank. I also pointed out one of the advantages of Government borrowing money is that Government can do so at rates much lower than the private sector can. In order for the Infrastructure Bank to gain any private sector investors, the bank will need to pay competitive rates of return– these interest rates will of course be higher than the rates that the Government can borrow at so in effect this new Infrastructure Bank could ultimately end up subsidizing private investors who would enjoy lucrative and guaranteed rates of return – this in my view is not the role of Government.

This is in stark contrast to what the Liberals proposed in their election platform. Originally they said it would be set up to help all Canadian municipalities to access lower cost borrowing rates and would be largely used to finance social housing.

Since writing that report the Liberals have now announced further details on the Infrastructure Bank that in my view should be of very serious concern to citizens in our region. The most troubling aspect of the mandate for the Infrastructure Bank is that it will only fund projects with a price tag of \$100 Million or more. While major cities such as the Liberal strongholds of Toronto and Vancouver have projects within this price range, for smaller and rural municipalities these types of projects are completely un-affordable. As the Canadian Press recently reported the Finance Minister has admitted that global investors will only invest in "large transformational projects" that produce enough revenue from which they can earn a high rate of return on their investment. In other words the Liberal Government is borrowing money it does not have at reduced rates so that Canadian taxpayers can finance and subsidize high rates of return for private international investors.

What is more disappointing about this scheme is that taxpayers in rural, smaller and even mid-size municipalities will be taking on this debt, will help pay for the high interest paid to private investors and will not even be eligible or able to afford the projects in question because of the pricey \$100 Million minimum price tag. Worse is that the roughly \$32 Billion the Liberals are borrowing to use as seed money for the creation of the Investment Bank is money that could but will not be spent on building infrastructure in the very same municipalities that will not be able to participate in this expensive program. This Infrastructure Bank in my view will be detrimental to not just our region but many regions across Canada.

As it is my practice to not just oppose but also propose I have a different idea. Instead of paying lucrative returns to private global investment firms the Liberal Government could instead increase the rate of return on Canada Savings Bonds so that everyday Canadians could benefit and at the same time lower the \$100 Million project minimum so that the majority of Canadian municipalities can participate. As always I welcome your views on this or any subject before the House of Commons. I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free 1-800-665-8711.

December 2016

December 7th

As an opposition MP I am always mindful of an old quote that suggests "Any fool can criticize, condemn, and complain- and most fools do" it is one of the reasons why I often make a point to propose alternatives to Government policy in place of constant opposition. At the same time I think it is also important to credit the Government on those measures that on balance can help to build a stronger Canada. Last week the Liberal Government announced that it would be approving both the Enbridge Line 3 and the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline projects while cancelling the Enbridge Northern Gateway pipeline.

Here in British Columbia the approval of the Trans-Mountain pipeline in particular is a subject of considerable debate and opposition in many areas of the Province. The Trans Mountain approval is

subject to 157 binding conditions that are intended to address concerns ranging from First Nations, environmental, project engineering as well as safety and emergency response. The value of this project is just under \$7-billion and will create 15,000 new jobs during construction. This pipeline will also generate \$4.5 billion in federal and provincial government revenues. While I realize my agreement with this Liberal government decision will come as a disappointment to some it should be noted that this project essentially replaces the existing Trans Mountain pipeline system between Edmonton, Alberta, and Burnaby, British Columbia that is now over 50 years old. The new pipeline will also be twinned to increase capacity. In my view I agree with the Government that this pipeline is ultimately in our Canadian national interest.

The Enbridge Line 3 approval is also a pipeline replacement project, subject to 37 binding conditions addressing similar concerns to the Trans-Mountain approval. Line 3 is valued at just under \$ 5 billion to replace slightly over 1,000 kilometres of existing pipeline from Hardisty, Alberta, to Gretna, Manitoba and will create roughly 7,000 new jobs during construction. Revenues to the Federal and Provincial Government will exceed \$500 million.

While many oppose Canadian oil resources being exported at the same time there is little protest against oil imports to Canada, in particular Eastern Canada, where Oil is imported from countries such as Saudi Arabia, Algeria, Angola and Nigeria among others. It should also not be overlooked that these offshore countries do not have carbon tax or other environmental regulations in effect similar to Canada. It is for this reason that many support the Energy East pipeline project as it could greatly eliminate the need to import foreign oil and also take capacity from Western Canada oil producers thus reducing demand to export. In both of these scenarios tanker traffic would also be greatly reduced that in turn also lessens dependence on oil by rail.

While there is no perfect solution the recent pipeline approvals by the Prime Minister has the potential to increase employment and generate more revenues for the Federal and several Provincial Governments. Overall I believe the Government made the right decision in granting these approvals, more so when one considers both of these projects are replacing existing pipeline infrastructure with newer and safer technologies. I welcome your comments, questions and concerns on the recent pipeline approvals or any other topic before the House of Commons.

I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or toll-free at 1-800-665-8711.

December 15th

“2015 will be the last federal election conducted under the first-past-the-post voting system”. Many may or may not recall this election promise from now Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that continues to be a topic of serious debate and discussion both here in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola and in Ottawa. As the Minister responsible for Electoral Reform continues to stumble along in this file many are questioning if this will end up being yet another broken promise from the Trudeau Liberal Government.

For the record the input I have heard from citizens in our region has been overwhelming in support of a referendum on electoral reform. My fall mail out which asked if constituents desired a referendum before any Government sought to make whole scale changes- such as moving from the current system proposed in the Liberal election promise. The volume of responses was the largest I have seen

since becoming a MP with 86% in favour of a referendum. In my town halls I heard both calls for retaining the current system or to move to a proportional system. In fact many calls and comments I have heard recently is frustration and sometimes outrage from citizens who have received the Government's latest attempt at consultation with an electoral reform postcard via mail or participated in the widely mocked online electoral reform survey and have not been given the direct opportunity to voice support for either proportional representation or the right to a democratic referendum.

In Ottawa the Liberals continue to insist that Prime Minister Trudeau's promise to Canadians will be met however it is becoming increasingly unclear as to how that will occur. As some may be aware that the special Parliamentary Committee on Electoral Reform, after conducting Canada wide consultations, recommended that a referendum on democratic reform was important to Canadians and that those who do support reform tend to strongly favour proportional representation. Regrettably the Minister responsible for Electoral Reform dismissed the committee report and made disparaging comments about the work of the committee and was eventually forced to apologize after even Liberal members took issue with the Minister for dismissing the views of so many Canadians.

While this has been occurring the Privacy Commissioner has recently come out and opened an investigation into the online democratic reform survey, given that invasive questions based on household income are required in order to be included in the collected data. The outcome of this investigation remains unknown.

Will the Liberals provide the opportunity for a democratic referendum that includes proportional representation? At this point the answer is unknown however many Liberal MPs have been circulating talking points that a referendum is "too complicated" or "takes too much time" or that the law would need to be changed to have one. I find these comments unacceptable for a number of reasons. From the citizens I have heard from in favour of proportional representation make well-reasoned arguments in support of their position and do not seem unable to grasp the concept as many Liberal MPs are wrongly suggesting. As far as "changing the law" this is a non-issue given the Liberals hurriedly amended the law to rush through gender neutral changes to O Canada, much as they did to abolish financial disclosure for unions. The fact that Liberals who have a majority in the House of Commons try to suggest they cannot change the law in a timely way suggests this is a tactic to potentially deny Canadians the right to a referendum they deserve.

My thoughts? Ultimately I am on the record stating that I believe Canadian democracy belongs to Canadians and not to any political party. This means that Canadians deserve a democratic referendum and that should include the right to vote for proportional representation as one of the options. As Elections Canada has repeatedly warned the Government that a significant amount of time is required to implement any electoral change in time for the next election the longer the Liberals take to bring forward a position the greater the chances it will not and cannot be implemented in time. In Ottawa that is often called "talking out the clock" and with Electoral Reform, the time is fast running out.

I welcome your comments and concerns on democratic reform or any matter before the House of Commons and can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or 1-800-665-8711.