

January 2018

January 3rd

It is unusual to have Ottawa related political news occurring this time of year.

However, recently the unusual in politics has become the usual.

In late December, media were made aware of what they described as a "secret meeting" that occurred between Prime Minister Trudeau and Joshua Boyle. Joshua Boyle was recently freed after being held in captivity in Afghanistan for the previous five years.

Why media were suspicious of this particular meeting was due to the fact that the meeting, and the reasons for it, were not publicly disclosed by the Prime Minister's Office (PMO).

Journalists only discovered this meeting had occurred when members of the Boyle family circulated pictures on social media.

This week Ottawa police announced that Joshua Boyle was being charged with 15 different offences from alleged actions that include assault, sexual assault, unlawful confinement, uttering threats, public mischief and administering a noxious thing. These alleged offences are related to the period of time since Mr. Boyle returned to Canada in October 2017.

As a result of this situation there are serious questions being asked on why the Prime Minister requested a meeting with Mr. Boyle. By extension questions have been raised on security protocols that should protect the Prime Minister. The judgement of the advisers who represent Mr. Trudeau in allowing this meeting to go forward also come into focus.

The judgement of the advisers working in the PMO was also raised when the Prime Minister was recently found guilty of four counts of ethics violations. These violations were related to free luxury vacations the Prime Minister accepted from a registered lobbyist who receives millions in Government of Canada funding.

The judgement of advisers and political staff is a subject that is seldom raised outside of Ottawa.

For obvious reasons, it is being questioned currently.

I have also had some questions on this topic and I can report that the most recently audited expenses for what is called the "Trudeau PMO" were \$8.3 Million in the 2016-2017 fiscal period.

As a comparison this figure is higher than during any year in the previous Prime Minister's last term in office.

All elected officials have staff and in the case of politically appointed staff, they typically only work in their capacity until the writ period, when the election is called. At that point, the vast majority will become unemployed.

Rehiring depends on who is re-elected and if employment is again offered.

In the case of the Prime Minister, some are suggesting a staff shakeup is required. Others see this as unfairly throwing the staff under the bus.

Most agree that answers are needed on why Prime Minister Trudeau met with Joshua Boyle and why this meeting was kept confidential.

My question this week – Do you believe Canadians deserve an answer to why this meeting was held between Prime Minister Trudeau and Joshua Boyle?

I can be reached by email Dan.Albas@parl.g.ca or at 1-800-665-8711.

January 10th

I was asked recently what I thought would be one the most pressing political issues in 2018.

Although my list of possible answers to that question is a lengthy one ultimately I believe that the future of NAFTA, the North American Free Trade Agreement, may well be Canada's most pressing concerns. Even the Prime Minister is quoted as suggesting that the 'unpredictability' of NAFTA keeps him awake at night.

The concern is an understandable one.

NAFTA represents some big numbers. In 2015, Canada-U.S. trade in goods and services reached close to \$881 billion. The United States is the number one destination for Canadian merchandise exports. Close to 80% of all Canadian exports end up in the US.

Between 1993 and 2015 Canadian merchandise exports to USA increased annually at a rate of almost 4.6 percent. I could continue citing many significant numbers but more importantly we have to look beyond the numbers.

Ultimately these numbers relate to jobs. As part of my work as a Member of Parliament, I often visit with many small, medium and even large scale private employers. It is increasingly common to find goods and service providers that have found lucrative markets somewhere in the United States.

I mention private sector employers because we must never forget it is the private sector that pays for the public sector.

Recently at a public forum in Sackville, Nova Scotia, Prime Minister Trudeau called the United States an "unruly neighbor".

Also this week Canada initiated a WTO (World Trade Organization) complaint against the United States on the eve of the next round of NAFTA negotiations. In response the United States has called this WTO complaint a "broad and ill-advised attack".

These actions have led to significant amounts of speculation on the future of the NAFTA agreement.

One of the additional challenges has been the Prime Minister's insistence that trade deals should be based on "progressive trade" and include language around topics such as labour, gender and environmental rights.

This begs the question - would Canadians accept societal values from another country demanded upon us in order to accept a trade deal?

So far the USA, China and other TransPacific Partnership (TPP) member nations have either rejected outright or raised concerns about this approach to trade.

With Canada being unable to advance further trade relations in other markets, there is now greater pressure for success in the NAFTA negotiations.

My question this week- do you believe the Prime Minister should abandon the demand to include "progressive trade" language in trade negotiations or do you view this as something that Canada should be steadfast on?

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

January 17th

There has been some confusion and misunderstanding regarding changes to the *Canada Summer Jobs* program for students that are deserving of some clarification.

This confusion has arisen because the Trudeau Liberal Government inserted a mandatory values test into the application process.

Applicants must attest that their organization's core mandate supports values underlying the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

This seems like an innocent change however the Liberal Government also included a number of other rights to the list, including reproductive rights.

It is the demand to attest to reproductive rights that has created confusion and in some cases strong disagreement.

Why the confusion and disagreement?

Essentially because the Charter of Rights and Freedoms contains no language specifically related to reproductive rights.

The Supreme Court struck down laws around this area and in the absence of any new laws, created a legal vacuum.

That said, the Charter does protect freedom of conscience and religion.

Many faith groups, who hold pro-life views, feel that their charter rights are being discriminated against in these changes to the *Canada Summer Jobs* program for students.

To be fair to the changes to the *Canada Summer Job's* guidelines, there is a disclaimer that states "*an organization that is affiliated with a religion does not itself constitute ineligibility for this program.*"

I view this as a positive indicator, given that faith groups perform many valuable community services, such as running soup kitchens, youth programs, sponsoring private refugees and other community charity related activities that help our most vulnerable.

The challenge is that many organizations of faith who may not necessarily be excluded from the summer jobs program have expressed a reluctance of applying due to their belief that the new restrictions discriminate against those who have pro-life views.

Although I am clearly not a member of the Liberal Government, I believe these changes were more intended to prevent organizations that actively campaign for laws against the termination of a pregnancy from being eligible to receive summer student job funding.

Herein is another challenge because the right to oppose abortion is also protected by the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

The bottom line is the Trudeau Liberals have politicized the *Canada Summer Jobs* program for students jobs by deciding certain charter rights have priority over others.

These kinds of decisions often end up before our Supreme Court.

As I write this week's report, I believe a legal action against these changes may already be underway.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the changes to the *Canada Summer Jobs* program for students, that reinterprets the Charter in this way?

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

January 24th

In an early December MP report I covered the topic of "progressive trade" that has been frequently mentioned by the Trudeau Liberal Government.

In a more recent MP Report on the status of NAFTA discussions, I raised the topic of progressive trade and asked the question "Do you believe the prime minister should abandon the demand to include "progressive trade" language in trade negotiations or do you view this as something that

Canada should be steadfast on"?

I am thankful that each week my MP Reports generate a considerable amount of feedback and on this particular question the response was overwhelming.

The vast majority of the feedback I received was that the demand to include "progressive trade" language should be abandoned.

It appears even the Prime Minister had taken this advice as this week we learned that Canada will now be signing on to the TPP (Trans Pacific Partnership) deal that has since been renamed the Comprehensive and Progressive Agreement for Trans-Pacific Partnership.

The revised text that Canada agreed to contains no elements whatsoever related to the progressive trade values that had been previously demanded by the Liberal Government.

The Official Opposition supports this agreement and on a personal note I would like to publicly credit the Prime Minister for demonstrating some flexibility and dropping demands that other countries would not accept.

As I have previously pointed out most Canadians would not accept values from another country being imposed on Canada to accept a trade deal so it is an unrealistic expectation that other countries would adopt our values.

However, while I view most of this as a positive there is still another problem.

In a word competitiveness.

Here in Canada, we will have an increase to CPP Premiums that employers contribute to. In addition we will soon have a national carbon tax that will be coming into effect that some economists predict will become a \$30 Billion a year tax grab by the year 2022. Top income earners in many Canadian provinces are now facing a personal tax rate over 50% of what they earn.

The challenge is that all of these factors add costs to doing business here in Canada.

It should be noted that in many cases these same costs are NOT being imposed by other countries that Canada competes with.

Further a free trade agreements means that a company can set up an operation in another country to take advantage of these lower costs and then freely access the Canadian marketplace and thereby undermine certain interests in Canada in terms of jobs and business investment. In return there may be a decrease in cost to consumers and foreign imports that may help some industries, in addition to more market access for our industries- like wood, agriculture and specialized manufacturing in our riding.

This, in theory, is where "Progressive Trade" comes in.

If other countries were willing to adopt some of these labour and environmental policies that would correspondingly increase costs the international trade playing field would be more level and Canadian

interest would be better protected.

The challenge is that many other countries are well aware of this and are using a lower cost regulatory environment to be more competitive in attracting investment, not unlike what has just occurred with the United States significantly reducing business taxes.

As it stands Business investment peaked in 2014 under the former Conservative Government and since the Liberal Government has been in power has declined to the point where Canada now ranks 16th out of 17 OECD Countries in this category.

My question this week: are you concerned about the decline in business investment?

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

January 31st

I have in several of my previous weekly MP Reports covered the topic of single parents; most often single mothers, being unfairly denied Canada child benefit payments.

As a result of these reports I have received numerous pleas for assistance. I have also heard many disturbing situations having occurred as a result of often heavy handed and unfair actions by the Canada Revenue Agency.

In fact, when one includes the efforts by CRA to tax employee discounts and the challenges that many citizens encounter when attempting to call CRA, I would submit that in the past twelve months no single federal agency has resulted in more public anger directed to my office than the CRA.

I say anger as a recently released report from the Auditor General revealed that CRA actually blocks more than half the calls it receives at call centres, where people are looking for assistance. This is an entirely unacceptable situation.

To be clear, this is not the fault of front line staff who I have often found try to be helpful.

Ultimately I fault senior management and the Minister responsible.

I mention these things because I was shocked this week to learn that the Trudeau Liberal Government authorized senior executives at CRA to receive on average a \$35,000 bonus payment. On top of that, it was also revealed that in the first fiscal year of the Liberal Government, overall executive bonus payments were not only significantly increased, they were double the rate of inflation!

That is almost twice as much as was increased to the rest of the public service!

For many public servants, who have been adversely impacted by the Phoenix payroll system, this is a troubling situation.

By the numbers, CRA executive bonus pay increases authorized by the Liberals was 3.2%.

The pay increase for the majority of the public sector was 1.25% in comparison.

As some may recall last year, it was reported that the Liberals had also increased the number of bureaucrats in Ottawa to the highest level in almost a decade. An increase of 14,000 more staff in the Ottawa capital region alone.

For the 2017 fiscal year, the overall number of federal staff, Canada wide, increased by another 3700 bringing the total number to 262,696. For some added context, in the year 2000 there was a total of 211,925 federal staff across all departments.

My question this week relates to executive bonus payments within the Federal Government:

Are you concerned with CRA bonus payments being awarded by the Liberals at more than twice the rate of inflation?

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

February 2018

February 7th

As of today we have a trade war brewing between duelling NDP Provincial Governments in BC and Alberta.

Make no mistake this provincial trade dispute will have economic repercussions for our region if it is not quickly resolved.

As one example, within hours of the announcement from Premier Notley targeting BC wine, I heard from one small family run winery owner who now faces the challenge of what happens with the 6,000 cases of wine ordered in Alberta. Mortgages, payroll, taxes and utilities all must be paid for this winery to survive.

There are well over one hundred wineries that do business within the Province of Alberta and many of those wineries are located right here in the Okanagan as part of the roughly \$70 million Alberta wine market.

Why is this happening?

As many will know, despite the fact that energy projects such as pipelines are entirely under federal jurisdiction, BC NDP Premier John Horgan announced efforts to attempt to block or otherwise delay the federally approved Trans Mountain pipeline project. Prime Minister Justin Trudeau continues to insist this project is in Canada's national interest and must move forward.

For the record, I fully support the Prime Minister's decision on this. As I have previously stated, the Trans Mountain approval is subject to 157 binding conditions that are intended to address concerns ranging from First Nations, environment, 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. It should also be noted that this project replaces the existing Trans Mountain pipeline system between Edmonton, AB, and Burnaby, B.C. This existing pipeline is now over 50 years old.

Where I fault the Prime Minister, aside from continually voicing strong support for the Trans Mountain pipeline project, he has provided no further explanation on what actions his Government is prepared to invoke in order to see the pipeline project is constructed without political interference from the BC NDP Government.

In the absence of this firm directive from the Prime Minister, the Alberta NDP Government is now taking actions it believes are necessary to defend both the interests of Alberta and the national interest of Canada, as voiced by the Prime Minister.

Innocent small family run BC wineries will now face very serious economic circumstances beyond their control and that is entirely unacceptable.

If the Supreme Court of Canada rules in favour in the Comeau case and ensures interprovincial trade of Canadian products is a constitutional right, this situation could be very different.

However the motion I tabled in Ottawa to expedite the Comeau case, supported by the NDP and Green parties, was voted down by the Liberals.

What should happen?

We know that when Quebec based Bombardier was threatened in a trade dispute Prime Minister Trudeau cancelled an aircraft order with Boeing and released future military procurement policy that factors in Canada's economic interests.

In other words the Prime Minister stood up to defend Bombardier's interests.

In my view if Prime Minister Trudeau truly believes the Trans Mountain pipeline project is in Canada's national interests, he need to step up and ensure that project is built.

My question this week: Do you agree?

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

February 14th

In my report last week, I wrote about the trade war between BC and Alberta. This spat has resulted in many British Columbia wineries ending up as political pawns, currently shut out of the Alberta marketplace.

I find this completely unacceptable.

This situation was in no way created by the BC wine industry but rather a politically motivated campaign by two NDP Provincial Governments.

The greater challenge is the Trudeau Liberal Government has repeatedly stated the Trans Mountain pipeline project is in Canada's national interest and will get built.

However, missing from the Prime Minister's statements is when the Trans Mountain pipeline will be

built and what measures he is prepared to invoke in order to ensure that Federal jurisdiction is not impugned.

In the absence of any federal leadership on this file, BC and Alberta have been left alone to duke it out.

As the Official Opposition, we attempted to encourage the Liberals to show some leadership this week with a motion we tabled in the House of Commons.

The motion was as follows:

“That, given the Trans Mountain Expansion Project is in the national interest, will create jobs and provide provinces with access to global markets, the House call on the Prime Minister to prioritize the construction of the federally-approved Trans Mountain Expansion Project by taking immediate action, using all tools available; to establish certainty for the project, and to mitigate damage from the current interprovincial trade dispute, tabling his plan in the House no later than noon on Thursday, February 15, 2018.”

I participated in the debate over this motion and also voted in support of it.

Unfortunately the motion was defeated.

It was no surprise when the NDP opposed this motion. The NDP have consistently opposed pipeline projects in the House of Commons.

It was a surprise when, not only did the Liberals oppose this motion, they did so unanimously.

That means even Liberal Members of Parliament from British Columbia voted against a motion that would support their BC wine industry and direct the Prime Minister to do his job, show federal leadership and end this dispute that is causing serious harm to the BC wine industry.

This follows a similar pattern where last week, when Liberal MP's voted against a motion that directed any costs incurred to tax payers, as a result of a Member of Parliament receiving a gift or hospitality benefit found in a conflict of interest, be repaid by the Member in question.

We already know that if a single parent is declared not to be eligible for the Canada Child Benefit, any benefits paid can result in a bank account being seized or wages garnisheed to recover those benefit payments.

From my perspective it is not unreasonable to expect that a Member of Parliament receiving benefits they are not entitled to receive should also be repayable to taxpayers, if a cost is involved.

It is my opinion that the Liberals are demonstrating an attitude of being entitled to entitlements. However, the Liberals continue to point out there is no law that suggests benefits obtained through a conflict need to be repaid if a cost occurs to taxpayers.

My question this week:

If an elected official receives a benefit that is in a conflict of interest should any resulting costs to

taxpayer be repaid?

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

February 21st

This week Prime Minister Trudeau is visiting/vacationing in India, a fact that has drawn some criticism from a variety of different sources.

The first criticism of this trip occurred when the Prime Minister arrived in India and many suggested Canada was 'snubbed' on account of India PM Narendra Modi not personally welcoming the entourage.

Was this an intentional slight and if so, why?

Interestingly, many foreign media sources are reporting the reason is related to allegations that Prime Minister Trudeau and members of his cabinet are sympathetic to radicalized operatives who support the Khalistan separatist movement in India.

It is further alleged that some of these operatives have close Canadian ties.

This is a complicated situation however in my view Prime Minister Trudeau has attempted to refute these allegations and has stated Canada's long support for a united India.

Another announcement that has drawn criticism involved the subject of investment.

Earlier this week Prime Minister Trudeau announced that a \$1 Billion dollar trade deal between Canada and India was reached. This good news announcement immediately drew headlines throughout Canadian media.

Critics and those knowledgeable in this area immediately cast doubt and challenged the validity of this claim.

Eventually it would be revealed that the trade deal is actually \$750 Million of investment leaving Canada for India with \$250 Million coming back to Canada in return.

In other words this is a \$500 Million trade deficit for Canada.

As a result, the Prime Ministers office was forced to issue a correction that the Prime Minister 'misspoke' on the announcement.

My question this week:

Are you in favour of Canada pursuing a free trade agreement with India?

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

February 28th

This week the Liberal Government introduced the 2018 Budget. As is customary in Canadian democracy, it is the role of the Liberal government to promote what it views as the merits of their budget. As the Official Opposition, it is our job to illustrate the concerns we have with the budget.

On that note, I have a few.

It has become clear over this mandate, that the Prime Minister excels in making promises but often falls short on the delivery of said promises. For example, we were promised Electoral Reform, a National Housing Strategy, Infrastructure Investment, new fighter jets for our military...the list goes on.

This budget is no exception.

Mr. Trudeau distinctly promised Canadians that after a series of small deficits, his Government would return to a balanced budget in 2019. This budget demonstrates that the Liberals have no intention whatsoever of returning to balance in 2019. Budget 2018 calls for yet another deficit of \$18 Billion this year. Based on the current pace, Mr. Trudeau will add \$450 billion to Canada's national debt over the next 27 years.

Why is this a concern?

In short: because you and I, pay interest on that debt.

By the year 2022, which is only four short years away, it's estimated that Canadians will be making annual interest payments of 33 Billion dollars on that outstanding debt! To put that number in context, the amount of the annual transfer, that the Government of Canada provides the Provinces to deliver health care to Canadians, is currently \$36 Billion.

Another promise in this budget relates to a National Pharmacare Program, an idea that has long been championed by the NDP. What's interesting is there is no actual money allocated to pay for a National Pharmacare Program. Rather, the Liberals announced that they will create an advisory panel to further study the idea. This idea has already been studied in Ottawa for close to a decade. When it came to legalizing marijuana, the Liberals made a commitment to do so by July 1st of 2018. In my view, if the Liberals were serious about creating a National Pharmacare Program, they would have made similar timeline commitment and attached dollars in this budget to make it happen.

Regarding marijuana legalization, a seldom discussed proposal in this budget is a commitment to spend \$546M over five years to enforce Federal pot legislation. This appears to be an admission that the Liberals now realize that illegal marijuana may well be a serious threat to undercutting legal marijuana. I mention this because one of the arguments for legalization from Mr. Trudeau was that there would be less need for law enforcement.

While the budget proposes to spend \$546 Million to enforce marijuana legalization, it also proposes to spend less than half of that amount to fight opioid addiction. The budget calls for \$231 Million to be spent over the next five years to fight the opioid crisis. That said, it is unclear how this money will be divided up between the provinces and territories.

Things not in the budget?

For the most part infrastructure, military, daycare, housing affordability and poverty reduction were items that received no significant upgrades or mention. The Liberals promoted this as a gender based budget and in fact used the word "gender" 359 times in a budget document that is 367 pages long.

My question this week:

Will this budget do anything to help you or your family?

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

March 2018

March 7th

Last week, I wrote at length about Prime Minister Trudeau's recent trip to India and addressed some of the criticisms that had been levied.

For example, there were allegations that the Prime Minister, and members of his cabinet, are sympathetic to radicalized operatives who support the Khalistan separatist movement in India.

At the time I wrote the report, I defended the Prime Minister and stated that I believed that Mr. Trudeau had attempted to refute these allegations and stated Canada's long support for a united India.

The day after, it was revealed that the Prime Minister had a guest invited to an official event who was convicted of an "an act of terrorism" after a failed attempt to assassinate an Indian cabinet Minister visiting Vancouver Island back in 1986.

The presence of this individual created an international uproar that led to the Prime Minister's office engaging in damage control.

At one point Mr. Trudeau's own, handpicked, National Security Advisor was put forward in a confidential news conference. Quoting from a reporter at the news conference, this high ranking National Security Official was "peddling what must be one of the most bizarre conspiracy theories ever advanced by a Canadian government" suggesting "That the terrorist invited by the Liberals to Mumbai, may have been planted there by the Indian government or maybe by Indian security agencies or perhaps by factions in the Indian government."

Soon after this news conference, the Prime Minister and his office realized that the media were not buying into this unusual conspiracy so it was suggested that a lone Liberal MP from British Columbia was responsible for the invite. The Prime Minister solemnly assured Canadians that this MP would receive a stern talking to once back in Canada.

Subsequently, this MP apologized, took responsibility and resigned his chairmanship of the BC Pacific Liberal Caucus.

This appeared to be the end of this sad and embarrassing situation until the Prime Minister was asked about the validity of the conspiracy theory in Question Period.

To the surprise of many, Mr. Trudeau stated, while standing in the House of Commons, that when a National Security Official says something to Canadians, it's because they know it to be true.

In other words Mr. Trudeau doubled down and backed the conspiracy theory.

To date, the Liberal Government has provided no evidence to substantiate this serious international accusation.

In an almost unprecedented event, the Indian Government issued an official response denying the allegations in their entirety and by extension questioned the credibility of Prime Minister Trudeau.

Since that time, numerous pictures of the convicted terrorist have been circulating that show the individual and Mr. Trudeau together at various points in time.

Serious concerns remain, yet to be answered by Mr. Trudeau or his Public Safety Minister Ralph Goodale.

As a result, the Opposition tabled a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (known as SECU) to meet with Mr. Trudeau's National Security Adviser and learn more about this alleged conspiracy theory.

Unfortunately, the Liberal members of this committee used their majority to block this motion.

Given that the former head of the Canadian Security Intelligence Service has also cast doubt on Mr. Trudeau's conspiracy theory, many are deeply concerned over this lack of transparency that directly question the credibility of Prime Minister Trudeau.

My question this week:

How do you view the outcome of Mr. Trudeau's trip to India given these recent developments?

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

March 14th

This week's report is a reminder that in a little over a month, April 30th, the majority of Canadians need to complete and file their 2017 Canada Income Tax returns to avoid potential late penalties.

There are a few changes this year that may be of interest to you and your family.

For those who file paper returns, the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) will be mailing you a 2017 income tax return package. In the event you do not receive one or would like to obtain a paper copy you can call 1-855-330-3305 to request one be mailed to you.

Also, for those who need help preparing their Income Tax Return, CRA offers Income Tax Clinics for those with modest income and simple tax situations.

Please visit our website, www.danalbas.com, and click on '2018 Income Tax Clinics' for more information.

Some things to bear in mind as you begin the process; there are several former tax credits available in recent years that have been eliminated by the Liberal Government

Here is a list of the tax credit programs that no longer exist:

- Federal Education and Textbook
- Children's Fitness
- Children's Arts
- Public Transit

Although most of what has often been referred to as "boutique" tax credits were eliminated, the Government did introduce a new specialized tax credit that is available for this taxation year.

Called the "Teacher and Early Childhood Educator School Supply" tax credit. it is primarily for teachers when purchasing classroom materials.

There have also been what I believe, largely positive changes to existing credits.

For example, the Canada Caregiver tax credit now streamlines the former Family Caregiver tax credit, and some changes have also been implemented to the Disability Tax Credit (DTC) and the Medical Expense Tax Credit programs.

Actual income tax rates for the current year remain unchanged from last year.

As some will know, there have been studies to suggest Canadians are paying more in taxes as a result of the elimination of many family focused tax credits.

However, critics of those studies point out that Canada Child Benefit (CCB) program may potentially offset any taxation increases as a result of the elimination of the credits.

Who is correct?

In my view, it depends entirely on the situation.

As an example, someone who takes public transit with no children will be adversely impacted with the loss of the Public Transit tax credit. However, depending on their income, a family with three

young children, who are not active in sports or arts programs, could come out significantly ahead as a result of the enhanced CCB program

My question this week:

Do you feel further ahead this year because of these changes or behind?

Drop me a line and let me know.

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

March 21st

he week, the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) released an analysis of the most recent Liberal Government budget.

While sharp and measured non-partisan budget analysis is common from the PBO, one particular fact from the report has generated considerable attention on Parliament Hill.

The conclusion from the PBO was, and I quote it directly:

“Budget 2018 provides an incomplete account of the changes to the Government’s \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan. PBO requested the new plan but it does not exist. Roughly one-quarter of the funding allocated for infrastructure from 2016-17 to 2018-19 will lapse. Both legacy and new infrastructure programs are prone to large lapses.”

As I have mentioned in previous MP reports, it is not necessarily uncommon for some budgeted funds to lapse or to remain unspent for a variety of reasons.

What is unique in this situation, is the finding from the PBO that an appropriate infrastructure plan does not exist at all.

The Liberal Government has been subsequently asked about this in Question Period and to date has not provided any formal documented Infrastructure Plan.

This raises serious concerns on how \$186 Billion is proposed to be borrowed and spent without a proper plan or how those funds are best invested for maximum return over the next twelve years.

After promising an Infrastructure Plan during the 2015 election, how can there be no plan in place?

This is a question only the Liberal Government can answer.

A February 2018 analysis by the Globe & Mail newspaper indicated that Liberals may be playing old fashioned “pork barrel” type politics as 64% of infrastructure spending to date has been in areas of Canada where the Liberals are typically elected.

It would be interesting to submit an Freedom of Information (FOI) request to the Prime Minister's office for more analysis on the political involvement in the decision making process. However, despite the Prime Minister's election promise that his own office and any Minister's office would be fully subject to FOI/ATIP legislation, this has not occurred.

For the record, I am not suggesting the Liberals are playing favoritism with how and where they fund infrastructure projects. Although the data from the Globe & Mail reporting raises some serious questions, there may well be legitimate answers.

Where I do fault the Liberal Government is, without a proper and coherent Infrastructure Plan along with the ability to FOI supporting documents, Canadians are largely being left in the dark about this process and how it works.

Considering that it will be Canadians shouldering this \$186 billion of debt, in my view, more information is required.

My question this week is about transparency:

Do you believe this Liberal Government is living up to the transparency commitments they made during the election and does this concern you?

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

March 28th

There are many news events going on in Ottawa on a weekly basis, meaning that some events may be overlooked when the revelations of a Facebook data breach consume most media headlines.

One of the overlooked events this past week may have been the release of the "Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada" report.

This report basically audits and summarizes how well Canada is doing at meeting our goals of reducing greenhouse gas emissions. (GHG)

Before I go further, here's some background information on this topic summarized from my September 22nd, 2016 MP Report.

- Shortly after the 2015 Federal election our Prime Minister Trudeau sent the largest Canadian delegation in history to attend the Paris Climate Change Conference, at a cost in excess of \$1 million dollars.
- While at the Paris conference, the Liberal Government made several comments in support of increasing GHG reduction targets while criticizing the record of the former Conservative Government.
- Despite this criticism, the Liberal Government announced it would adopt the very same GHG reduction targets that were set by the previous Government under Prime Minister Stephen Harper.

For added context:

- In 1993, former Liberal Prime Minister Jean Chretien promised to reduce our GHG emissions to 20 per cent below 1988 levels by 2005. This promise was broken.
- In 1997, Chretien signed the Kyoto accord to reduce our emissions by a smaller amount of six per cent below 1990 levels that would be achieved by 2012.
- In 2006, when the Liberals were voted out of office, Canada was 30 per cent over that target and as a result, Mr. Harper eventually withdrew Canada from the Kyoto agreement that had set binding targets.
- In 2009, at the Copenhagen climate conference, Mr. Harper matched the U.S. target to cut GHG emissions by 17 per cent below 2005 levels by 2020 and 30 per cent by 2013 in what is a non-binding agreement.

These remain the exact targets being used the Trudeau Liberal Government.

This leads to the question how are we doing today?

A question that was looked at by the “Perspectives on Climate Change Action in Canada” audit report.

The answer?

From my perspective, not well.

To quote the report directly “Canada is not expected to meet its 2020 target for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.”

CBC also reported “As of 2015, the most recent year for which full statistics are available, Canada was nearly 200 million tonnes short of that goal, which is the equivalent of the emissions produced by about 44 million cars each year. That is twice the number of vehicles registered in Canada.”

The audit found that only five Provinces and one Territory even have a 2020 emission reduction target and of those, only Nova Scotia and New Brunswick were on track to meet those targets.

It should also be pointed out that these same two Provinces also had the lowest targets.

The report indicates that as much as this Liberal Government uses the talking point that “the environment and the economy go hand in hand”, in reality there are still trade-offs and Canada remains far from achieving our GHG emissions reduction targets.

My question this week:

What do you think it means to say “The Economy and the Environment go hand in hand”?

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

April 2018

April 4th

As members of Her Majesty's Official Opposition, it is part of our job to hold the Government to account.

As many who follow my weekly MP reports will know, this is a common theme of mine but I also believe it is just as important to propose alternative solutions to problems and to formulate creative ideas which could address many issues.

Frequently, these suggestions, alternatives and ideas come from articulate and well-meaning citizens in our region.

I also believe there are times when Government deserves credit for actions and decisions, or in this case reconsideration of a previous decision.

In an MP Report roughly one month ago, I explained the controversy around what is regarded as the Atwal incident that occurred on the Prime Minister's recent trip to India.

As a reminder of this incident, Mr. Trudeau's National Security Advisor was put forward in a confidential news conference.

Quoting from a reporter at the news conference, this high ranking National Security Official was "peddling what must be one of the most bizarre conspiracy theories ever advanced by a Canadian government" suggesting "That the terrorist invited by the Liberals to Mumbai, may have been planted there by the Indian government or maybe by Indian security agencies or perhaps by factions in the Indian government."

To add to the confusion the Liberals later suggested the Atwal invitation was authorized by a lone Liberal MP from British Columbia.

Due to the contradictions contained in these two explanations, the Opposition tabled a motion at the Standing Committee on Public Safety and National Security (known as SECU) to meet with Mr. Trudeau's National Security Advisor and learn more about this alleged conspiracy theory.

Unfortunately, the Liberal members of this committee used their majority to block this motion. Later a similar Opposition motion came before the House of Commons and when the Liberals used their majority to defeat that motion, an all-night filibuster was held in an effort to pressure the Liberals into allowing the National Security Adviser to appear before Parliament. This week I can report some encouraging news.

The Liberal Government has reversed the decision and will now allow the National Security Advisor to appear before interested parliamentarians. Why is this important?

Ultimately Members of Parliament are elected on behalf of citizens.

If Members of Parliament are blocked from holding public officials to account or if the Government

can use non-partisan civil servants without accountability, our democracy is ultimately threatened. This reversal is a positive step towards increasing both transparency and accountability in Ottawa and will optimistically be a trend that continues.

It is my hope that the Liberals will also reverse the decision to block faith organizations from the opportunity to participate in the summer jobs program without first accepting a values test that many feel is contrary to the Canadian Charter.

My question this week:

Are you concerned when Government imposes a values test in order to be eligible for a taxpayer funded program?

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

April 11th

Although the House of Commons is not in session this week, the return of Prime Minister Trudeau and his cabinet for an emergency meeting in Ottawa to discuss what many are describing as a “constitutional crisis” has been a subject of national attention.

What is the crisis?

As many will know, there has been an emerging conflict between the New Democrat led Provincial Governments of Alberta and British Columbia related to the Trans-Mountain Pipeline project. The BC NDP have threatened to use every tool possible to stop the project. In response, the Alberta NDP introduced provincial legislation this week that will enable cuts of Alberta fuel that is shipped to British Columbia.

Why is this a constitutional crisis?

When a pipeline project crosses a provincial or international boundary, it is regulated federally.

In this case, Prime Minister Trudeau has approved the pipeline, and has stated his strong support that the pipeline will be built.

From a constitutional perspective, many experts question if BC has the legal authority to block the Trans Mountain pipeline. Likewise the constitutional validity of Alberta’s intention to reduce gas shipments into B.C. is also being questioned.

Politics are also at play given that both NDP Premiers political survival relies heavily on advancing their respective positions.

To add further tension to this challenging issue, the proponent of the Trans-Mountain pipeline, citing opposition from the BC NDP Government, has set a deadline of May 31, 2018 for certainty on the project or it will be potentially abandoned.

Ultimately this falls onto the shoulders of Prime Minister Trudeau, who has declared this project to be in Canada’s national interest and has accused BC NDP Premier John Horgan of “trying to scuttle our national plan on fighting climate change,”.

For the Trudeau Liberal Government, who currently hold 18 seats in B.C., they are aware that many who oppose the Trans Mountain pipeline do not see building it as supporting the fight on climate change.

Many view it as the opposite, a point that Mr. Trudeau and his Environment Minister do not seem to reconcile.

The problem the Prime Minister now faces is that by declaring the Trans-Mountain pipeline to be in Canada's national interest, if the project does not get built under his leadership, both the Prime Minister and Canada as a confederation will have little credibility in establishing national policy if usurped by regional interests.

For this reason many are suggesting a constitutional crisis is at hand.

What will happen next?

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister is set to leave Canada again for yet another round of travel to Lima, Peru, the UK and France.

It could be assumed that his senior adviser and cabinet ministers will continue to explore a course of action ranging from withholding federal transfer funds from BC or potentially turning a blind eye in the event Alberta carries out the threat of reducing gasoline flow to B.C.

It is also conceivable that other courses of action may be identified.

From a financial standpoint the Federal, BC and Alberta Governments will lose close to \$47 Billion in royalties and taxes over the next 20 years should the project not move forward.

This amount does not include over \$400 million in agreements with in excess of 50 First Nations communities who do support the Trans-Mountain pipeline or \$922 Million to local government in BC. As I have previously stated, I believe the Prime Minister made the right decision to support the Trans-Mountain pipeline and I am hopeful that Mr. Trudeau will demonstrate federal leadership to ensure this project is built.

My question this week:

Do you think the Prime Minister is doing enough to ensure that this important energy infrastructure gets built?

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

April 18th

For those who follow Canadian politics closely, all eyes were focused on Ottawa last Sunday for a summit meeting hosted by Prime Minister Trudeau with Alberta and BC NDP Premiers Rachel Notley and John Horgan.

The topic of the meeting was the growing dispute between Ottawa, British Columbia and Alberta over the construction of Trans Mountain pipeline.

The media headlines that followed this meeting were candid.

"Trudeau has failed to resolve pipeline crises" and more recently

"Kinder Morgan project a test of Trudeau's competency, puts his 18 B.C. seats at risk, say pollsters".

While this is occurring, Prime Minister Trudeau has remained firm in his statement that the Trans Mountain pipeline will be built.

From my time on the Government side of the House, it is my opinion that media headlines are not

always fair to elected officials.

The expectation that Mr. Trudeau could resolve this pipeline stand off in a single meeting are overly optimistic and more so when you consider both provincial NDP Premiers politically benefit from their respective positions.

From a political perspective, the real challenge for the Prime Minister, who is in a situation of his own making, is whatever actions he ultimately makes will come at a steep political cost to the Liberals.

The Prime Minister is also well aware of this fact, and rather than take any decisive action, he has suggested he may ultimately work with the project proponent, Kinder Morgan, to mitigate investor risk in the Trans Mountain project.

Although no formal announcement has been made, I am already hearing strong opposition from some Canadians at the thought of throwing, and I will quote directly, “public money into the coffers of an oil giant”

Meanwhile, Alberta continues to move forward a bill in their provincial legislature that could limit the supply of Alberta gasoline to British Columbia.

A move that the Premier of Saskatchewan has also voiced support for.

In British Columbia, the NDP Government has called Alberta’s threat a “bluff” and remains committed that they will not change their position.

What happens next?

At this point, it is all speculation and rather than engage in 'what if' scenarios, I will provide a factual update when more information is available.

While the debate on potentially restricting oil flow between two provinces rages on, one subject that has my full attention is the upcoming decision by our Supreme Court on the Comeau case. This decision should be rendered later this week.

Many will know that for decades provinces have prohibited the inter-provincial direct consumer shipping of alcohol over provincial borders.

In fact, there are many items and even services that face similar restrictions that amount to inter-provincial trade protectionism.

In the last Parliament, I had a bill passed that removed the Federal Government from some of these restrictions but only a handful of provinces followed suit.

Ultimately this lead to the Comeau case that came before the Supreme Court of Canada (SCC).

The Comeau case argues in favour of section 121 of our Charter: “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”.

In the event the SCC rules in favour of this definition, it could potentially create significant new opportunities for many local industries and producers to access important new markets in Canada.

Something I believe most Canadians support.

My question this week:

Do you support the idea of open provincial borders and increased inter-provincial trade?

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

April 25th

This week the topic of illegal entry into Canada was again a major point of debate in the House of Commons.

As you may recall, last year Prime Minister Trudeau famously tweeted:

“To those fleeing persecution, terror & war Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada”

More recently in Ottawa, an access to information request by a National Post journalist revealed this tweet from the Prime Minister resulted in *“a spike in inquiries from would-be refugees to Canadian embassies abroad, and resulted in confusion within the federal government”*

As one communication from an immigration officer revealed:

“We are receiving an increasing number of enquiries from the public about requesting refugee status in Canada, and a number clearly having links with our Prime Minister’s tweet this weekend”.

Last year, the RCMP intercepted over 20,000 illegal entries into Canada.

In Ottawa, the Liberals refer to these incidents as “irregular entries”.

In addition, we have learned that 80 Immigration officials were transferred from other files to deal with this influx of illegal entries requesting refugee status.

As a result, I am seeing a trend where those who are attempting to legally come to Canada are having applications unfairly delayed or are being arbitrarily denied with little justification as to why.

From my perspective as an MP, it is deeply troubling when illegal immigration moves to the front of the line, over those who are following all of the rules to come to Canada legally.

Yesterday, the Official Opposition tabled a motion that proposed several measures but can be best summarized as requesting the Liberals to table: *“a plan to (i) stop the influx of people illegally entering Canada from the United States, (ii) take appropriate measures to handle those who have already claimed asylum”*

The motion also mentions the increased costs to provincial governments, who are providing social services and that this trend of illegal immigration is expected to increase given continued inaction from the Prime Minister.

In fact, so far this year there have been over 6,300 illegal entries into Canada.

The Prime Minister blames this recent problem on the former Conservative Government suggesting not enough funding was provided to the Canadian Border Services Agency.

That's an interesting claim given that the illegal entries are intentionally not made at the border in

order to avoid the Canada-U.S. Safe Third Country Agreement.

The 'Safe Third Country Agreement' states that refugee claimants are required to request refugee protection in the first safe country they arrive in. So if the USA was their first point of entry, their refugee claim is in the USA.

However a loophole to this agreement is entering Canada illegally through other points of entry that are not at an official border crossing.

Ultimately the Liberals and the NDP voted down the Conservative opposition motion.

However during Tuesday's Question Period, the Prime Minister was asked if he "thinks it is wrong to illegally enter the country. If so, can he unequivocally state so, here today?"

For the record the Prime Minister refused to answer the question.

This leads to my question today:

With over 20,000 illegal entries into Canada last year and so far over 6,300 illegal entries this year, do you believe that Prime Minister Trudeau is doing enough to come up with a solution for this problem?

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

May 2018

May 2nd

One of the concerns I am increasingly hearing about is high gasoline and diesel prices at local gas stations.

This is understandable concern given that in Vancouver, gas prices are now the highest in North America.

Recently it has been reported that BC NDP Premier John Horgan plead with the Federal Liberal Government to "do something about soaring Metro Vancouver gas prices".

In my view, this was an incredulous comment when one considers that on April 1st of this year, the BC NDP provincial government raised the carbon tax on gasoline and diesel, making it more expensive.

So, will the Federal Government intervene?

The short answer is no.

In Ottawa, the Trudeau Liberal Government is implementing a national carbon tax in Canada that will force all provinces to continue to raise carbon taxes across the board.

The only choice the provinces have is to either institute their own carbon tax/cap and trade system, or else the Federal Government will do so for them.

Ultimately the entire point of carbon taxes is to increase the costs to the point where consumers can no longer afford to burn carbon and will use less of it.

Supporters of carbon taxes believe this is the most effective way to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

Critics point out that carbon taxes unfairly penalize rural residents, who may not have alternatives such as public transit or availability of renewable energy in their area.

More recently, some believe that carbon taxes may disproportionately impact women and those who are on a fixed income.

So, the question to be asked is how much will a national carbon tax cost Canadians?

This is a question that we, as the Official Opposition, asked via a freedom of information request.

Unfortunately, the documents returned from the Department of Finance, on what the projected annual costs per household of the carbon tax would be, revealed nothing.

Why?

The actual amounts were all redacted by the Department of Finance and therefore hidden from Canadians.

Due to this highly questionable redaction, the Office of the Information Commissioner has now launched an official investigation to determine why the data about the financial costs of a carbon tax per household is not being released to Canadians.

As a result of this redaction, the Official Opposition tabled a motion in the House of Commons that read in part "given the Liberal government made a specific campaign promise to Canadians that "government data and information should be open by default, the House hereby order that all documents be produced in their original and uncensored form indicating how much the federal carbon tax proposed in Budget 2018 will cost Canadian families"

The motion, unfortunately, was defeated by the Trudeau Government, with assistance from the NDP.

In my opinion, if a Government is going to impose a tax on the citizens, there should be an obligation to be open and transparent on what the actual costs of the tax will be to Canadians.

This particular debate is not about should there be a carbon tax or not.

This debate is entirely about what the Department of Finance projects the cost to Canadians of a carbon tax to be.

My question this week is in two parts:

Do you believe Canadians are entitled to know what the Department of Finance projects the costs of this carbon tax will be?

Part two, why do you think the Trudeau Liberal Government is attempting to hide this data from Canadians?

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

May 9th

This week I would like to provide an update to my April 25th report on the growing problem of illegal immigration.

There have been over 20,000 illegal crossings over the Canadian border from the United States to apply for refugee status in Canada.

It has been reported that an unofficial RCMP station is being constructed near the location where most of the illegal border crossing occurs and that the Liberal government has issued a tender notice to construct a temporary refugee camp also near the Canada USA border.

As to the question if these border crossings are illegal or irregular, the Prime Minister has now commented on this matter in Question Period and stated "Crossing a border between official border crossings is illegal."

Both locally here in the Okanagan, and in Ottawa, Liberal MP's are increasingly feeling the heat from families of citizens trying to legally enter Canada, and finding more and more delays.

This heat is causing these same Liberal MP's to push back.

Apparently pointing out the growing illegal border entry problem is "stoking fears", according to one local Liberal MP.

While in Ottawa, the Public Safety Minister has stated that "coming across the border in a way that tries to circumvent the law, or defy proper procedure is not a free ticket to Canada,"

The Liberal Government provided statistics that stated that asylum seekers must go through a rigorous process and that they estimate that more than 90% of irregular migrants do not fit the criteria and will have to leave Canada.

Unfortunately for the Liberal Government, this week a media headline came out that stated that they have used misleading statistics.

The article, using information from the Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada (IRB), reported that “of the 2,552 irregular border crossers who had their claims finalized in 2017, nearly half, 1,360, were approved.”

Another problem not mentioned by the Liberal government is related to actual deportations.

The IRB data provides information on the total number of illegal entries referred to the agency, including the original country of origin.

The data is further broken down to how many claims are accepted, rejected, abandoned or withdrawn, including pending claims..

However data relating not just to deportation orders but successful deportations is missing.

The lack of successful deportations is a fundamental part of this problem.

Media sources have reported that only 1% of illegal border crossers have actually been physically deported from Canada.

To summarize this issue, we have the Liberal Government suggesting 90% of illegal border crossers will not qualify for status here in Canada, contrasted with the IRB’s own data that shows close to a 50% approval rate, while only 1% of those who are rejected have actually been deported from Canada.

While Liberal MP's can make accusations that they believe raising these concerns is “stoking fears on immigration”, I categorically reject that view.

From my perspective, supporting legal immigration to Canada is how we ensure fairness for those citizens who are making every effort to fully comply with Canadian law.

My question this week is:

Do you agree?

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

May 16th

If you have been following the subject of the Trans Mountain pipeline project this week, it has taken yet another confusing turn.

On Wednesday the Trudeau Liberal Government announced that it would use tax dollars to compensate Trans Mountain pipeline developer Kinder Morgan for financial losses which could result from B.C. NDP Premier John Horgan’s attempts to delay or obstruct the project.

As is often the case with an announcement from this Liberal Government, the potential cost of compensating Kinder Morgan is unknown.

Likewise the definition of costs related to these delays has also yet to be defined.

The project is expected to cost roughly \$7.4 Billion and the Liberal Government has also hinted that possibly if not Kinder Morgan, another company could be brought in to complete the construction.

In response, Kinder Morgan has indicated that the May 31, 2018 deadline for “clarity on a path forward” remains a priority as a result of the required construction window.

Kinder Morgan also stated that they are not in “alignment” with the Liberal Government on this announcement and that discussions are ongoing.

The Prime Minister has continued to state his strong support for the Trans-Mountain pipeline and that his Government has made a commitment that the pipeline will get built as it is in Canada’s national interest.

From my perspective, the pipeline subject is a polarizing one with many citizens either strongly opposed or strongly in favour.

For the record I support the Prime Minister in approving this project.

I have heard little support for this private project being publicly subsidized by taxpayers, largely because of continued inaction from the Federal Liberal Government.

My question this week:

Whether or not you are in favour of this project, do support the Prime Minister’s idea that taxpayers should compensate Kinder Morgan for losses which may result from delays?

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

May 23rd

When many Canadians think of Parliament Hill from a political perspective, one of the most common images is that of Question Period.

While Question Period is an important part of our democratic process, it is also the most adversarial and partisan activity within the House of Commons.

Question Period alone, does not reflect some of the other very important Parliamentary activities that occur.

One of those important Parliamentary activities occurs after a bill passes second reading and moves on to committee stage review.

Committee stage review is one of the most important parts of the process where a Parliamentary Committee representing members from all of the major political parties will scrutinize every aspect of a proposed bill on a clause by clause basis.

It is also during this committee review where expert witnesses and other affected individuals can provide input that may or may not lead to amendments to the proposed legislation before it returns to the House of Commons for third reading debate.

An example of the importance of Committee Stage review can be evidenced by a recent meeting of the Finance Committee that was scrutinizing the Liberal Governments Budget Implementation Act (BIA), Bill C-74.

Despite Prime Minister Trudeau's election promise to not use omnibus budget legislation, the Finance Committee has been studying a 560 plus page BIA that is, very clearly, another broken promise from the Prime Minister.

One controversial measure that was discovered by the Finance Committee was buried so deeply in this BIA bill, that even Liberal members on the Finance Committee were unaware it existed.

What was this measure?

It has been summarized as legislation that will ease penalties for corporate crime.

Division 20 of the bill proposes that prosecutors can suspend criminal charges against companies in certain cases of corporate wrongdoing.

Ultimately, as this clause proposes an amendment to the criminal code, many view it as a measure that has no business being in a budget related bill and is better suited to be examined by the Justice Committee, where more appropriate examination can occur.

So why propose these changes?

To date the Liberal Government has not indicated the reasons why this legislation has been hidden inside the BIA however other interests have suggested this approach to suspend criminal charges could encourage more companies to come forward to self-report corporate crimes.

My thoughts?

These are important proposed changes that on the surface are alarming and as a result deserve further scrutiny.

Because of this, I have encouraged all Parliamentarians at Finance Committee to support having this clause examined separately by the Justice Committee.

It is important to hear constructive arguments from both sides.

It can be argued that the opportunity to reach a remediation agreement may offer restitution to victims without litigation in cases where wrongdoing may have occurred but the chances of a successful conviction are slim.

However, critics believe this approach could actually increase corporate crime and undermine public confidence in the system.

I remain of the view that while this proposal involves important criminal code amendments, it does not belong within a budget implementation bill.

My question this week:

Should large scale criminal code amendments be restricted to bills that come before the Justice Committee or do you agree with the Liberal Government these can be part of a budget bill, as part of an overall plan?

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

May 30th

“While governments grant permits for resource development, only communities can grant permission.”

Many people believed this statement by Justin Trudeau and his promise to honour what he called “social licence” when it came to approving pipeline projects.

Perhaps this is why I have heard an unprecedented level of outrage on the announcement that the Trudeau Liberal Government is borrowing \$4.5 Billion to buy the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline this week.

The Liberal Government has claimed that purchasing the Kinder Morgan’s Trans-Mountain assets was necessary so that the Government can complete the estimated \$7.4 Billion Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion project. The Liberals have also claimed they will, in the immediate future, look for other buyers and investors and ultimately they will look to sell the pipeline expansion project once completed.

Critics have suggested that the Prime Minister is buying his way out of a problem of his own making, while activists have promised this news will only increase protests and further fuel anti-pipeline sentiment.

There is some validity to these sentiments as those who oppose the Trans-Mountain pipeline project, including the BC NDP Provincial Government, have indicated they will continue to oppose the project regardless of the change in ownership.

Likewise, for supporters of the project, many view this change in ownership as bringing the pipeline no closer to actually getting built.

My thoughts?

I believe it is true that the Prime Minister did largely create this problem.

The promise to honour “social license” created expectations that clearly the Prime Minister had no serious intention of observing.

Further, with the Prime Minister promising for many months that the project would get built without offering any details, he ultimately created a situation where Kinder Morgan imposed a May 31st deadline for certainty.

This deadline served as an ultimatum to the Liberal Government.

If Kinder Morgan withdrew from the project over a lack of certainty it would be viewed as a massive failure in federal leadership on the part of Prime Minister Trudeau given his promise the pipe line would get built.

The Prime Minister had other options.

For instance, rather than utilizing his political capital to work with Premiers Notley and Horgan to a mediated solution, we saw only a brief meeting recently where all three leaders could press for some political resolution.

The Prime Minister could have introduced or supported Independent Senator Doug Black’s Bill S-245, that would have further clarified the federal jurisdiction as he had previously publicly committed to do.

Buying the Kinder Morgan Trans Mountain pipeline does not ensure the expansion project is built.

Activists have vowed to use all means necessary to stop the construction and the change of ownership now makes these protests more politically motivated.

What Prime Minister Trudeau did achieve in buying the Trans Mountain pipeline with our money, is control of the projects timeline.

As there is no longer an ultimatum from Kinder Morgan, the Liberals can decide where they begin the construction and where they do not and of course when, if at all.

With an election on the horizon, I submit this purchase was more about controlling the political agenda than about seriously building a pipeline.

Perhaps I am wrong on this speculation but time will tell.

My question to you this week:

Do you believe the Prime Minister will enforce the rule of law and begin actively constructing the Trans Mountain expansion project or are the Liberals simply buying political time at our expense?

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

June 2018

June 6th

A trade war Canada will lose” has been a common theme in recent Canadian media headlines after the United States announced a tariff of 25% on Canadian steel and 10% on Canadian aluminum last week.

In response, Canada has announced targeted tariff increases on a broad range of United States manufactured goods that are imported into Canada.

Is this a full blown trade war?

At the moment it is a tariff related dispute designed to increase pressure on the NAFTA negotiations.

Having said that, I believe it is also important to be mindful of the year 2008 when the Canadian dollar not only reached parity with the US dollar, for a brief period of time it actually rose above the US dollar.

I mention that due to the fact that although the 25% tariff on steel is both punitive and in my view completely unfair to Canada, it ultimately negates the Canadian currency advantage that is currently around 23% between the United States and Canadian dollar.

This tariff approach follows a similar pattern from the United States where Canadian softwood lumber exports were hit with a tariff up to 24% essentially wiping out the currency advantage that historically works in Canada’s favour.

As I have previously commented, I believe it is also important to point out that our Prime Minister has largely shown restraint in not getting involved in USA domestic politics despite that it would be politically convenient to do so.

In fact to date, I believe most political pundits would agree that our Liberal Government has made considerable effort to work proactively with the United States administration in several areas and I believe these efforts will continue.

As the official opposition, we will continue to hold the Prime Minister to account for the failure thus far to conclude a successful new NAFTA deal with the United States.

Some in Ottawa do not like this fact however it should be pointed out that holding someone accountable to produce results for Canadians is not necessarily the same thing as assigning blame.

In this case, we have a US President who was elected in part with a promise to renegotiate trade deals such as NAFTA.

Here in Canada we have a Prime Minister who has expressed an agenda to also change trade deals and promote “progressive trade values” that to date other countries continue to strongly reject.

In my view, we should recognize that in the event our Canadian dollar returns to parity with the US dollar, either through natural market forces or through artificial means such as punitive tariffs, we will have to be able to compete.

On that note a national carbon tax and increased payroll taxes that the United States does not have will make Canada less competitive.

Recent comments from the International Monetary Fund highlights the lack of Canadian tax competitiveness compared to the USA.

I believe in the absence of a new NAFTA deal Canada needs to focus on measures that increase our international competitiveness.

To date, the Federal Government and many provinces, including British Columbia with an incoming new health employers tax, will achieve the opposite.

My question this week relates to NAFTA:

Do you believe Canada should show more flexibility to achieve a new NAFTA agreement or aggressively pursue the status quo?

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

June 13th

“I get into Air Force One, the televisions on, and I see a news conference being given by Trudeau,” Trump said of leaving the G-7 summit held in Canada this weekend. “And then he talked about how they won’t be bullied. And I said, ‘What’s this all about? He didn’t do that to my face, what’s this all about?’”

He added: “I actually like Justin, you know, I think he’s good, I like him, but he shouldn’t have done that. That was a mistake. That’s going to cost him a lot of money.” – USA President Donald Trump

These comments from the President of the United States have been the largest issue in Ottawa and elsewhere this past week.

It is deeply alarming that the President of the United States is threatening to financially punish Canada at the trade table, in large part because he disagrees with the comments of Prime Minister Trudeau at a news conference.

In my view this is completely unacceptable.

If this threat is carried out in any way, it could seriously compromise what has otherwise been an extremely successful relationship between two world leading countries.

If there is an upside, recently we also witnessed a historic event where President Trump concluded what many view as successful talks with North Korea that may denuclearize the Korean peninsula.

I mention this as it was not so many months ago that relations between the US President and the leader of North Korea were far more adversarial and most would agree considerable progress has made towards a more constructive relationship.

What can Canada do?

As I have stated in the past, if there is one area where I believe our Prime Minister and his administration have worked very proactively, it has been to maintain positive relations with the United States administration.

I believe this work will continue and some success will result from these efforts.

The greater challenge is that the United States administration is aggressively pursuing an economic agenda that has been successful in increasing investment and lowering unemployment to record lows.

US corporate taxes have been significantly reduced and resource development has been accelerated.

Here in Canada, costs of doing business have increased.

The carbon tax, that the USA does not have, continues to rise.

CPP, which is often referred to as an employment tax, is also steadily increasing.

Locally in provinces like British Columbia, a new health employer's tax will have a similar impact.

Upper income brackets have been increased both provincially and federally and many tax credits used by families and students have been eliminated.

All of these factors combined are making Canada less competitive compared to the United States.

Aside from those measures, Canada still does not have true inter-Provincial free trade.

For example, a winery in BC still cannot directly sell to consumers in many Canadian provinces.

A competing winery located in Washington State can directly ship to customers all across the United States.

Why do I mention all of these things?

With the current uncertainty over the NAFTA negotiations, there are plenty of other areas where the Federal Government can take a leadership role and actively work with provinces to lower costs instead of continuing to increase them, as has been the case to date.

My question this week:

Do you agree? In the absence of success at the NAFTA table should the Federal Liberal Government actively and aggressively take measures to increase Canadian competitiveness?

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

June 20th

If you have been following politics in Ottawa in the past week, you may have heard the term “Carbon Tax Cover Up”.

What is the “Carbon Tax Cover-Up”?

This question has resulted in considerable debate within the House of Commons including an all-night filibuster between the Liberal Government and the Official Opposition.

In my MP Report, May 2, I discussed how much the Liberal carbon tax being imposed by Prime Minister Trudeau would cost Canadians.

At least I attempted to.

Unfortunately, the Liberal Government continues to refuse to release a report that documents the estimate of these costs.

What does this report say?

Here is a direct quote: “This memo focuses on the potential impact of a carbon price on households’ consumption expenditures across the income distribution. Key findings are...”

The rest of the report after this sentence has been blacked out by the Liberals.

A further table in the report says “Original note based on preliminary projections from Environment Canada. Final projections have now been made available”

Once again the projections are not being made available because Mr. Trudeau’s Government has blacked them out as well.

Despite the fact that the Liberals continue to hide this information from Canadians, an Economics Professor at the University of Calgary and Director of Energy and Environmental Policy at its School of Public Policy has made some calculations of these costs.

It is important to recognize that the carbon tax rate on emissions under Prime Minister Trudeau's plan calls for the carbon tax rate to be continually increased per tonne of carbon.

I mention this point because previously a province, such as BC, had the ability to freeze the carbon tax at a certain level if there was economic harm or concerns over affordability for citizens.

It is reported that advisers to the Minister of the Environment believe that a price of \$100 per tonne is necessary for Canada to reduce our emissions to 30% below 2005 levels within the next two to four years.

According to the professor, here in British Columbia, that means citizens could be paying over \$1,200 a year just in higher carbon taxes alone.

The provincial government will have some ability to refund or partially credit this revenue or to spend it in other areas.

Will this actually reduce emissions?

The Liberal Government believes it will and has released a report from the Department of Environment and National Resources that concludes a carbon tax could eliminate up to 90 million tonnes of carbon dioxide by 2022.

The issue with this report is when you read the fine print, there is a disclaimer.

The disclaimer reads: "The scenario presented in this document is for illustrative purposes only. It is not intended to signal any expectations on the part of the Government of Canada as to where the federal system will apply"

In other words, it is a purely hypothetical scenario created to help the Liberal Government justify the carbon tax.

The challenge is that, in our riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola, there are still many rural areas where no public transit exists.

Some areas have even lost Greyhound as an option.

Healthcare has been increasingly consolidated to larger centres, meaning lengthy trips are required for even basic medical needs.

Smaller schools, in places like Hedley, no longer exist, creating longer commutes for students and families.

Ottawa of course, does not have these problems.

This is why I consistently speak out against the carbon tax and have demanded, at a minimum, that the Liberal Government come clean and disclose the costs from this report.

For citizens in rural communities like Hedley and Logan Lake, I do not believe potentially making them pay over \$1,100 a year or more will be helpful when there are lack of alternatives in those areas.

In essence the carbon tax has the potential to unfairly penalize those in rural communities the most.

My question this week:

Will the carbon tax unfairly target Canadians living in rural communities?

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

June 27th

The 1988 Canadian federal election was one of the most important in recent Canadian history.

At that time the Conservative Brian Mulroney Government had successfully negotiated our first free trade agreement with the United States.

It was not without controversy.

At the time, the Liberal Party led by John Turner, ran election attack ads on TV showing the Canada/USA border being erased and asked "Just how much are we giving away?" and concluded with the statement "This is more than an election -- this is your future".

Here in the Okanagan, there were media reports of some local vintners threatening to tear out entire vineyards fearing they could not compete with the massive California wine industry.

Today we know that not only can our local vintners compete, but they can thrive and produce some of the best wines in the world.

Many people from outside of Canada now know and visit the Okanagan not unlike how Napa Valley has been known for decades.

The US President now calls trade deals with countries such as Canada, the worst the United States has ever signed.

To date all efforts to successfully renegotiate NAFTA have failed and at an awkward Canada-USA news conference of NAFTA negotiators it was revealed there have been no talks for roughly two weeks now.

This week in Ottawa a number of business people in the Canadian aluminum and steel industries spoke in very blunt terms over the very real prospect of serious job losses.

On July 1st, Canada's retaliatory counter tariffs against a variety of USA imported and produced goods will be implemented that will make the USA produced goods more expensive for Canadians to buy.

This is not unlike how it was recently reported that the US tariff on Canadian softwood lumber has increased the price of an average new home built in the United States by roughly \$9,000.

The list of USA produced items that will be subject to a 10% increase on July 1st, 2018 as a result of the Liberals tariff counter-measures is extensive.

Items include yogurt, coffee, pizza, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, soups, dishwasher detergent, toilet paper, and some appliances.

Obviously many Canadians will face higher prices in grocery stores as a result of these tariff increases.

It has been suggested that the Liberals, where possible, have attempted to strategically implement these tariffs to maximize political impact on the home states where these items are produced.

Obviously after July 1st when these tariffs go into effect, check the country of origin on items you buy.

That may explain price changes.

Hopefully these retaliatory tariff changes do not encourage further retaliation from the United States against more Canadian produced goods as the US market remains Canada's largest trading partner.

One thing is for certain, consumers lose when tariffs are implemented.

As we approach Canada Day, I believe we should all stand united in the hope that we can soon see a return to the NAFTA table and a successful agreement.

My question this week:

Do you support increased retaliatory tariffs that also increase costs on US produced goods sold in Canada?

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

July 2018

July 4th

It is often said that time flies on the Government side of the house but moves much more slowly when in opposition.

I mention this as last week marked the six year anniversary since my first private members bill became law.

Bill C-311 removed prohibition era federal restrictions that blocked direct to consumer shipping of wine.

In the last Parliament, the Conservative Government used a similar mechanism to also include craft beer and artisan spirits, all in an effort to open up our borders to increased inter-provincial trade.

A private members bill or motion is one of many ways than an MP can introduce legislation to help benefit the riding we represent.

In the case of my former bill, many Okanagan wineries were frustrated at the inability to even be able to legally sell to citizens who visited their winery in person from other provinces as it was illegal to transport that wine home across a provincial border.

More recently, Credit Unions, of which we have many in our community, faced a threat from the Office of the Superintendent of Financial Institutions that would have banned Credit Unions from using terms such as bank, banking or banker.

After hearing of this problem, I wrote several MP reports on the subject and heard almost unanimous feedback. In some cases, even outrage at the thought of the long arm of Ottawa attacking Credit Unions in this way.

In response to this feedback, I tabled another private members bill, Bill C-379, that called for the Bank Act to be amended to ensure that Credit Unions could continue to use these terms without fear of reprisal from Ottawa.

I was particularly pleased when an Independent Senator, appointed by the Prime Minister, contacted me with an interest to potentially sponsor my bill in the Senate.

Fortunately, and full credit to the Liberal Government, they essentially included the spirit of my bill in their recent Budget Implementation Act.

This will ensure Credit Unions and Caisse Populaires (as they are known as in Quebec) will no longer face this threat.

Last week, before the House of Commons adjourned, I tabled my latest Private Members Bill.

Bill C-410 proposes to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act to protect Registered Education Savings Plans (RESP) and Registered Disability Savings Plans (RDSP) from seizure by creditors in the case of bankruptcy or insolvency.

RESPs and RDSPs are important saving tools for Canadians living with disabilities and for families saving for their children's education.

Currently a trustee in bankruptcy can permit creditors to seize the holdings of any RESP or RDSP in the event that the account owner files for bankruptcy.

By extension this can include accounts dedicated to provide care for severely disabled children. It can also include education accounts for children.

Bill C-410 will prevent this from happening in a similar way as how Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP) and Registered Retirement Income Funds (RRIF) are protected now.

I was honoured to hear that the Canadian Association of Social Workers has responded positively to Bill C-410, however as Parliament is currently adjourned, it is unclear if the Liberals and NDP will be supportive of my new bill.

I will continue to solicit input from industry, citizens and Parliamentarians over the summer recess.

To that end, my question this week:

Are you supportive of Bill-410, proposing to protect families dealing with the high costs of caring for a family member with disabilities and for parents who want the best possible education for their children?

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

July 11th

I have been asked by a number of citizens to comment on the re-emergence of an 18 year old editorial from a Creston, BC newspaper that was written by a reporter who at the time has stated she was groped by Justin Trudeau.

Many news organizations both inside and outside of Canada have now reported on this alleged incident and many have taken issue with the response from Mr. Trudeau.

The common criticism against our Prime Minister is that he has used a double standard by not holding himself to the same zero tolerance principle that he has held to other members of the Liberal caucus while facing similar circumstances.

From my perspective, I have had a long standing policy to not comment on the conduct of other members of Parliament past or present.

At this time I see no need to change my position on matters like these and will not comment further.

Instead this week I am going to focus on something the Liberal Government has done that I agree with and support.

In my June 26th MP report I referenced that on July 1st, Canada's retaliatory counter tariffs against a variety of USA imported and produced goods would be implemented that will make many USA produced goods more expensive for Canadians to buy.

The list of USA produced items that would be subject to a 10% tariff on July 1st, 2018 was extensive and included common grocery store items such as yogurt, coffee, pizza, ketchup, mustard, mayonnaise, soups, dishwasher detergent, toilet paper, and some appliances.

This week the Liberals announced that mustard made in the United States would be removed from the tariff list.

Why do I support this decision?

In short because Canada is the largest producer of mustard seed in the world.

As an example French's mustard, despite being made in the United States, is made from almost exclusively Canadian grown mustard seed.

Even French manufactured, Maille mustard, contains a significant percentage of Canadian grown mustard seed.

This example of mustard seed is effective in establishing the degree that the United States and Canadian economies have come to work together as a result of free trade.

By eliminating this tariff the Canadian mustard seed industry will remain competitive.

My question this week does not relate to mustard but rather to Greyhound.

As many citizens will now know this week Greyhound announced intentions to withdraw service from western Canada.

Greyhound has cited many factors for this decision but primarily it is an overall decline in ridership.

At this point it is unclear what role Government at all levels may do in response to this decision.

My question is:

Will you be affected by the loss of Greyhound service in British Columbia?

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

July 18th

This week Prime Minister Trudeau announced a cabinet shuffle, an event that typically creates a strong level of reaction among parliamentary media, political watchers and pundits along with other elected officials.

Cabinet shuffles by design are intended to send a message and are not uncommon when a government is one year out from an election and is looking to shore up either, geographical regions, or portfolio areas where the Government believes it could be vulnerable.

By the numbers, the new cabinet has grown from 30 Ministers up to 35 Ministers with 5 new Ministers coming on board. and a few existing Ministers changing portfolios.

The key is to look at some of the new Ministers to get an idea on the message the Prime Minister is sending.

One of the new Ministers is former Toronto police Chief Bill Blair, who will become the Minister of Border Security and Organized Crime Reduction.

This seems a clear message that Mr. Trudeau has heard the concerns of many Canadians, that have been voiced through the official opposition, on the need to take action to secure the border.

Normally this responsibility is with the Minister of Public Safety however it appears the Prime Minister believes that two Ministers are required to address problems in this area.

Another new Minister is MP Filomena Tassi, from Hamilton, now becoming the Minister for Seniors.

Previously the Liberals had drawn criticism for eliminating the Minister of Seniors position, that was a hallmark of the former Conservative Government.

Today's announcement, at least in theory, appears to be an effort to address those concerns.

Another curious change was the shuffle of Dominic LeBlanc from Fisheries and Oceans to Inter-Governmental Affairs, Northern Affairs and Internal Trade.

Previously Mr. Trudeau had appointed himself as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs so in effect he has fired himself from this position.

A factor for this change may be the changing provincial landscape. Particularly, the new Premiers in Saskatchewan and Ontario, who are less supportive of key Liberal issues such as the Trudeau carbon tax.

The movement of of Dominic LeBlanc from Fisheries and Oceans has created a potentially positive outcome for British Columbia as North Vancouver MP Jonathan Wilkinson becomes the Minister of Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Mr. Wilkinson is a well-respected individual and is widely viewed as a very capable and competent Member of Parliament.

I believe we all wish Mr. Wilkinson well in this challenging but very important new role.

Other changes include a three way swap where Jim Carr has moved from Natural Resources to International Trade that has opened the door for Amarjeet Sohi to move from Infrastructure to Natural Resources.

Moving in to fill the Infrastructure vacancy is François-Philippe Champagne formerly of International Trade.

Although there are other changes this summarizes some of the larger departmental changes.

Front bench Ministers not shuffled include Finance, Environment, Foreign Affairs, Defence, Justice, Transport and Immigration.

My question this week:

Did the shuffle go far enough or was it just right in how you view the current direction of this Liberal Government?

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

July 25th

This week I was asked by a local citizen what my views were on the idea that “constituency offices should be reimagined as civic hubs and outposts of Parliament, rather than service centres” and more to the point “to reduce the casework burden on MPs and their staff.”

These questions stem from a report that was produced by the non-profit organization *Samara Centre for Democracy* after conducting many exit interviews with outgoing or retiring Members of Parliament.

What is case work?

To summarize, case work often involves working directly with a citizen on a specific problem that they are having in accessing a federal Government of Canada provided service.

Some common examples in my riding can include challenges accessing Old Age Security (OAS), Canada Child Benefit, Immigration related concerns, veteran services and more.

Do I agree with the suggestion that an MP, and by extension the constituency office and staff, should do less case work?

I could not disagree more strongly with this statement and I will provide an example why.

Earlier this year, I heard directly from a number of single parents, typically single mothers, who were

unfairly having their Canada Child Benefit either placed on hold, or in some cases even held back for dubious and arbitrary reasons.

Most often because a former spouse refused to update postal and other records indicating they no longer resided at their former matrimonial address.

The burden of proof for a single mother to confirm they were separated or divorced was subject to arbitrary interpretation by Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) staff and in some cases single mothers were having their status changed back to married despite reasonable evidence to the contrary. In essence these single mothers were being treated as guilty and child benefits were withheld unless they could prove CRA was in error.

As I saw a clear pattern developing in my riding, I raised the issue with the Minister during Question Period in the House of Commons.

As a result of that question a few national media stories arose and before long I was contacted by single mothers across Canada all facing the same challenge.

Credit to the Minister and her staff who have reached out to my office and I can report that many of these cases, that were often causing supreme hardship, have now been resolved.

There are other examples, however I referenced this one because were it not for the fact that I personally handle case files with the assistance of staff, it is unlikely I would have been able to see a systemic problem occurring across the board so quickly.

Ultimately I believe that elected officials are sent to Ottawa for a variety of different reasons, however one of those reasons is ultimately to solve problems encountered by the citizens we represent.

By working case files, I gain a direct insight to challenges, which is useful in determining if an issue is unique to a specific situation or is becoming increasingly common as a result of a bureaucratic driven process.

In summary, I believe that handling case files provides a critical connection to how government services are provided, and when there are challenges, how they can best be addressed.

My question this week is, do you agree?

Should Members of Parliament continue to be actively involved in case files or should we work more towards becoming "civic hubs and outposts of Parliament"?

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

August 2018

August 1st

For three years now the national carbon tax has been one of the signature policies of the Trudeau Liberal Government in Ottawa.

However the Province of Saskatchewan has continued to be a hold out and is refusing to implement the federally imposed carbon tax.

More recently, the new Ontario Government also announced its intentions to reject what is often called the "Trudeau Carbon Tax" and has created the potential for a significant legal challenge.

This week the Office of Environment Minister Catherine McKenna announced that the Liberals will be doing some back peddling on the Liberal carbon tax policy.

The Liberal Government announced plans that, as the CBC reported, will reduce the carbon tax so "large polluters will be taxed on 10-20% of emissions rather than 30%" as was previously planned."

One well known Canadian columnist observed, these carbon tax changes amount to "a carbon tax that taxes you less the more carbon you emit."

Why are the Liberals making this change to reduce carbon tax on large scale polluters?

In short, over concerns related to competitiveness.

In my view these concerns are quite valid.

As for example, the United States does not have a national carbon tax nor do many of Canada's largest trading partners.

I believe this is a major policy change as it is the first time the Trudeau Liberal Government has publicly admitted that the costs of the carbon tax can place Canadian industry at a competitive disadvantage when compared to other countries that have no carbon tax whatsoever.

The bigger problem is that these carbon tax changes announced by the Liberals only apply to large scale polluters; unfortunately they do not apply to small business owners or hardworking Canadian families.

For the average family and small business owner there are no exemptions whatsoever.

In some Provinces there are rebates for certain citizens however they are not applied in the same manner as an across the board exemption that would benefit all taxpayers.

I believe this creates a challenge and also leads to my question for this week.

As the Liberals have now admitted that the carbon tax makes heavily polluting industry less competitive would it not also be fair to recognize the adverse impacts on small business owners and Canadian families who in comparison are not large scale polluters?

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

August 8th

Social media- in particular Twitter, has become an increasingly powerful force for political communication as we hear almost daily media reports on tweets from the President of the United States.

Last year, here in Canada, a tweet came from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau that stated:

"To those fleeing persecution, terror & war Canadians will welcome you, regardless of your faith. Diversity is our strength #WelcomeToCanada"

This tweet has been frequently referenced as a catalyst for a large increase in illegal immigration across Canada's borders

More recently a tweet from Foreign Affairs Minister Chrystia Freeland called out Saudi Arabia for imprisoning human rights activists resulting in a significant reaction from Saudi Arabia.

Within days of the tweet, Saudi Arabia announced intentions to withdraw roughly 16,000 students from Canadian post-secondary institutions, expelled the Canadian Ambassador from Saudi Arabia and withdrew the Saudi Arabian Ambassador from Canada.

In addition, Saudi Arabia placed a freeze on all new trade and investment transactions with Canada, suspended all flights to and from Toronto and Saudi Arabia and is transferring all Saudi nationals receiving paid medical treatment in Canada to hospitals in other countries.

It has also been reported that the Saudi Central Bank is in the process of selling off and divesting all Canadian related equities, bond, and cash holdings. There are also reports that Canadian agricultural products will no longer be purchased along with other actions

The total cost financially is unknown to date.

It is estimated that Saudi Arabia has invested close to \$6 Billion in Canada and that the loss of Saudi students may account for roughly \$500 million in lost revenue annually to Canadian post-secondary institutions.

It is difficult to comprehend that Canada's relations with Saudi Arabia could become so stressed over the use of social media and Twitter however Minister Freeland and the Liberal Government stands by the tweet calling out Saudi Arabia for serious human rights concerns.

Perhaps the most telling aspect of this situation is that to date none of our allies, including the United

States, have stood by Canada.

Countries such as Egypt and Jordan have stated they are siding with Saudi Arabia in what they view as an intrusion by Canada into domestic affairs.

My thoughts?

I do not believe the Liberal Government intended to provoke this reaction from Saudi Arabia, as very few could have predicted this level of response. Likewise I believe it is a long standing tradition of current and previous Canadian Governments to raise human rights concerns when and where they exist.

Where I will fault the Liberal Government is using Twitter as the tool to convey these concerns.

Canada has a long standing history of having a world class diplomatic sector and using the services of skilled diplomats offers many benefits.

There is a growing concern where the Liberal Government has used tweets that have helped to create situations that adversely impact others as this current situation with Saudi Arabia demonstrates.

My question this week;

Are you concerned with the growing reliance of using Twitter diplomacy as opposed to traditional diplomacy by the Liberal Government?

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

June 15th

In my weekly MP reports I often close with a question related to the subject of the report.

I do this for a number of different reasons, most importantly because I want to know what my constituents think.

On some issues there may be a strong consensus, however on other issues there might be vast differences of opinion.

In particular, I find citizens will often convey a perspective that might not be reflected in Ottawa.

If there was any one subject that provoked an extremely significant response, it was related to the Trudeau Liberal Government announcing that it would spend \$4.5 Billion to purchase the Trans-Mountain pipeline project from USA based Kinder Morgan.

The intent of this purchase was to spend an additional \$ 7.4 Billion to build the expanded Trans-Mountain pipeline.

The reaction I heard from this decision that the Government spend nearly \$12 Billion building a pipeline, was generally one of outrage, even from those who indicated they supported its construction.

I mention this because very recently the CBC reported on documents Kinder Morgan filed with the United States Security and Exchange Commission that show constructing the pipeline could increase costs a further \$1.9 Billion over and above what was formerly disclosed and take an additional year to construct.

Most troubling is the fact that Canadian journalists did not learn of this new information directly from the Liberal Government.

Without the filings from the US Security and Exchange Commission this information would likely still be hidden from Canadians.

Given that the CBC reports the cost to construct the Trans Mountain expansion pipeline may now top \$9.3 Billion, with a possible completion date of December 2021, my question this week is a simple one:

Have your views on the Trans-Mountain pipeline project changed in any way and do you believe the Trudeau Liberal Government can reliably manage this project?

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

June 21st

I have often said that the wheels of Ottawa tend to turn quite slowly.

One of the issues I worked on in the last Parliament was the need to establish a regulatory framework in Canada related to invasive species legislation.

This was and remains a serious concern locally given the growing threat of invasive freshwater mussels to our region.

After considerable delay and much prodding we were able to have the new regulations in place for the 2015 boating season however that was only the first of many steps required to protect the Okanagan and other freshwater lakes in British Columbia and Western Canada.

The concern now is funding.

Recently when the Prime Minister visited the Okanagan he and members of his caucus have been touting "\$500,000 in research, education and outreach to help prevent invasive mussels from reaching local waterways".

In turn I have recognized the Liberal Government for listening to our concerns and taking some action

on this file.

Unfortunately the funding announced recently is spread out over a 3-4 year time frame meaning the actual impact is roughly \$158,000 annually.

As my opposition colleague from North Okanagan—Shuswap, Mel Arnold pointed out, along with Okanagan Basin Water Board (OBWB), and more recently the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce, this funding is nowhere near adequate to prevent invasive mussels from reaching our local waterways.

Make no mistake, the risks are very real.

It is estimated that an invasive mussel infestation could create economic loss of \$42 million annually in direct costs and lost revenue to the Okanagan region.

More concerning is that invasive zebra and quaggamussels could destroy critically needed habitat that would further threaten or even destroy our local Pacific Salmon population.

The OBWB has issued a comprehensive multi-point plan that will better protect our region from invasive mussels. The annual operating cost of this plan is roughly \$2 million.

To put that number into perspective, the current Federal Government's annual Aquatic Invasive Species (AIS) funding is close to \$19 million. At the moment, 86% of the annual AIS funding is spent in Ontario. Here in the Okanagan, this recently announced funding from the Liberal Government is less than 1% of that.

I believe our Pacific Salmon habitat deserves more protection from the Liberals than less than 1% of the AIS funding.

My question this week:

Do you agree with me that the Federal Liberal Government should fully fund the request from the Okanagan Basin Water Board to better protect our region from invasive freshwater mussels?

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

August 28th

If you have been following Ottawa based politics recently you may have heard some speculation that Prime Minister Trudeau might prorogue the House of Commons, as the fall session is soon set to return.

This begs the more obvious question- what does that mean?

As I have written previously on this topic, prorogation is one of the more interesting Parliamentary procedures. In essence each "session" of Parliament is not unlike a chapter in a book.

As much as each chapter will have a beginning and an end, so too will a session of Parliament.

Prorogation is officially defined as the ending of a session of Parliament.

In this case the 1st session of this Parliament (the 42nd), would come to a close if it is officially prorogued by a proclamation of the Governor General at the request of the Prime Minister.

Why request prorogation?

There can be a number of different reasons however the most common is that the next session of Parliament would open with a throne-speech. Many consider this akin to hitting the reset button as it allows the sitting Government to outline a new or different direction.

Considering the next federal election is fast approaching, many believe there is political value in outlining a new agenda, hence the speculation that the House may be prorogued in the near future.

Is it unusual for the house to be prorogued?

Looking back at previous Parliaments including the last one, there have been only five Parliaments that did not have two or more sessions. In fact many Parliaments had 3 or more sessions with some having as many as 5, 6 and even 7 sessions within the duration of an elected Parliament.

Part of the reason for this is that prior to having a fixed calendar, prorogation was the only way the House could adjourn for a period of time. One other interesting aspect of prorogation is that it can be used at the discretion of Government without the consent of the opposition (that would normally be required to adjourn the House).

Because prorogation is a tool of government that does not require the consent of the opposition, it tends to be quite heavily opposed when it is used because it allows the Government to defer debate or change the channel onto a different subject.

I do not often engage in speculation however I believe this session of the House will likely end up being prorogued.

My question this week now that you know more about prorogation is, do you think it is an acceptable political tool for the Government to use?

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

September 2018

September 5th

Early last week the federal Minister of Natural Resources went on the record to state that his Liberal government had “done extensive consultation” and had “went beyond what the NEB (National Energy Board) has done. We took six months extra to consult with Indigenous communities and affected communities on the route.” - all in order to get the Trans-Mountain pipeline project approved.

In other words, the Trudeau Liberals were so confident that they spent \$4.5 Billion of tax payer money to buy the existing pipeline from USA based Kinder Morgan, to be followed by the much more expensive expansion project (estimated cost to be between \$7-9 Billion)

Late last week we heard the Federal Court of Appeal disagree with the Liberal Government by ruling that consultation had not been adequate.

This ruling, at least for now, has brought the Trans-Mountain project to a standstill and layoff notices for many crews working on different aspects of the project are expected shortly.

As a result of this Trudeau Government failure, the Alberta NDP government announced it would be withdrawing from the Liberal national carbon tax plan until such time that the Trans-Mountain pipeline project is completed.

These negative developments, along with ongoing NAFTA negotiations challenges that resulted in Mexico reaching its own agreement with the USA and Canada sitting on the sidelines, resulted in many media referring to this as “Trudeau’s horrible, no good, very bad week”.

So this week, during an emergency meeting of the Natural Resources Committee in Ottawa, a simple request was made to have the Finance Minister and Minister of Natural Resources appear before the committee and explain what the Liberal plan was to build the Trans Mountain pipeline, in light of the court ruling.

That request was blocked by the Liberal members of the committee.

To recap, the Liberal have spent \$4.5 Billion buying a pipeline that requires a further \$7 to 9 billion for an expansion and they refuse to disclose how they will actually complete it.

Many experts are suggesting that the Liberals have created a regulatory environment that not even they can successfully navigate.

From my perspective, whether you support the pipeline or not, a democratically elected government should be able to see projects deemed to be in the national interest completed.

Instead we have a situation where it appears that activists, some of whom are foreign funded, may usurp the will of a democratically elected government.

While some may view the prospect of foreign interference in our elections with skepticism, this is now a mainstream issue with the Liberal Government suggesting current federal election laws do not fully take these activities into account and suggesting some legislative fixes are warranted.

I suspect the reason why Mr. Trudeau refuses to disclose how he will break this self-created regulatory quagmire is due to the fact that an election is approaching and it is politically more convenient to “rag the puck” when it comes to a controversial subject such as building pipelines.

I hope that I am mistaken on that point and that the Prime Minister will reveal a concrete plan that supports a project he has defined as being in our national interest.

My question this week:

Given that the Trudeau Liberals define the Trans Mountain project as in Canada’s national interest, do you believe they will complete it?

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

September 12th

One of the local concerns I am hearing more about, is the growing frustration from those who are in the queue and waiting for applications to be processed related to citizenship and immigration and in particular, asylum claims.

Many families in this situation believe that they are being further delayed because those entering Canada illegally (currently over 30,000) are getting priority treatment over those who enter legally and follow all of the proper rules and procedures.

The Liberal Government has consistently denied this is occurring, stating that “asylum seekers are processed under a separate category neither ahead or behind applicants for immigration, permanent residence or citizenship.”

The Liberals have also stated that for unsuccessful applicants “there are no guarantees that you will be able to stay in Canada”.

This week the Globe & Mail published a report that indicates that the wait time for a refugee claim hearing in Canada has increased more than a third over the past two years and that the “the resulting backlog has created a growing queue for any and all asylum seekers.”

The Globe & Mail report is consistent with the growing concern and frustration that I am hearing locally.

Another troubling statistic from the Globe & Mail, and I quote directly, “a separate data set from the Canada Border Services Agency shows that only a handful of those who have been denied refugee status have been deported.”

The report states that of the 32,173 people who crossed into Canada illegally since April, 2017, only 398 have been deported.

Of those, 146 were sent back to the United States.

The remainder to 53 other countries including Haiti (53), Colombia (24), Turkey (19) and Iraq (15).

As the National Post has reported, under the previous Conservative Government in 2012/13, the number of failed claimants that were returned to their country of origin was 14,490.

In 2016/17, under the Liberal Government, that number has declined to just 3,892.

The Liberals like to suggest that pointing out this growing problem is “stoking fears on immigration,” an accusation I will continue to categorically reject.

As I have stated in the past - supporting legal immigration to Canada is how we ensure fairness for those citizens who are making every effort to fully comply with Canadian law.

My question this week:

Do you believe that those who make every effort to legally comply with our immigration system are being treated fairly as their application wait times continue to grow?

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

September 19th

I was recently honoured to be named as the Opposition Shadow Minister for Innovation, Science, Economic Development and Internal Trade.

This new role is one I take very seriously and I would like to briefly explain one of the reasons why.

In some ways Canada is at a cross roads.

We have a Prime Minister who believed that if we had a national carbon tax, it would buy social license to support getting a new pipeline to tidewater.

Today we know that plan is failing for a variety of different reasons.

The Prime Minister says he remains committed to getting the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion built, despite the fact that a growing number of provinces are rejecting his federally imposed carbon tax.

The important question here is “What are the alternatives?”

This is where innovation, science, economic development and internal trade come in to the picture.

Recently, I learned of a new high tech refinery being built in Alberta. As refineries go this is a small one producing roughly 500 barrels per day.

But what is exciting is this refinery is producing 'clean diesel'.

What is 'clean diesel'?

It is a synthetic sulphur-free diesel fuel that is made from a mixture of liquid gas, wood chips and bio solids that has near zero CO2 emissions.

Not only does this fuel meet the low carbon fuel standard target for 2020, the same technology can also be adapted to produce synthetic jet fuel for aviation applications.

Another important consideration is this synthetic fuel is fully compatible with existing engines and requires no costly retro fitting.

Synthetic diesel can also be used as a concentrate. As an example, mixing 20% synthetic diesel with 80% conventional diesel produces a diesel fuel that is well below current European and Californian emission standard levels.

There is also a local connection to this technology.

A company located in the South Okanagan is currently manufacturing some of the equipment to be used at the refinery in Alberta.

With some adaptation, the same technology can also be used to generate electricity.

With a fairly robust supply of wood waste in addition to many local governments struggling to find locations to deal with bio solids, there are opportunities to use these materials to generate electricity.

Currently, there are some exploratory efforts to identify possible locations for such a plant here in the Okanagan.

Synthetic fuels and energy production are obviously only one step in a complex problem but it does clearly illustrate the important role that innovation can play as we look to find lower carbon solutions in our future.

My question this week:

Should the Federal Government encourage development of innovation projects such as this one to reduce our CO2 emissions, instead of imposing carbon taxes?

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

September 26th

This week a somewhat unusual event occurred in the House of Commons. On Tuesday the Conservative Official Opposition tabled a motion:

"That, given the Prime Minister has told veterans that they are "asking for more than we are able to give", the House call on the Minister of Veterans Affairs to revoke the Veterans Affairs Canada benefits that have been extended to Chris Garnier, who is not a veteran, is incarcerated for second-degree murder and for interfering with the dead body of police officer Catherine Campbell, and is currently receiving benefits for a disability he sustained while committing his heinous crimes."

The unusual event?

After the debate on this motion, all opposition parties – the Conservatives, the NDP, the Bloc and the Green Party voted unanimously in support of stopping veterans benefits being provided to this convicted killer of a police officer.

The Trudeau Liberals used their majority to defeat this motion.

It is unusual for all opposition parties to vote together, however this issue crossed all partisan party lines. I have heard outrage from a significant number of people and in particular from members of our law enforcement community.

The Liberals, in support of their move to defeat the motion, have argued that because the convicted murderer's father is a veteran, there is justification to provide these benefits to his son.

There is some positive news related to this motion.

On the day this motion was being debated in the House of Commons, CBC reported that that "Veterans Affairs Canada will no longer pay for benefits for incarcerated relatives of veterans in the wake of the Christopher Garnier case."

This revised policy is one that I am already hearing strong support for, from many citizens in our region.

Despite this new policy, the Trudeau Liberals have decided it will not be applied retroactively, meaning that this convicted killer will continue to receive treatment for PTSD that he admitted was caused by events that occurred during his brutal act of violence against an off duty-police officer.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the Trudeau Liberals decision to continue to allow Veterans Affairs to pay the cost of PTSD treatment of the man convicted of murdering an off-duty police officer?

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

October 2018

October 3rd

This week Canadians learned that a draft agreement has been reached between the United States, Mexico and Canada with ongoing renegotiation of the NAFTA deal.

The new agreement, subject to ratification is called the United States, Mexico and Canada Agreement otherwise referred to as the USMCA.

This agreement involved a significant number of concessions from Canada from the previous NAFTA agreement.

Some of those concessions are listed down below.

Dairy: the United States received increased access to the Canadian dairy sector- roughly 3.6%. The Liberal Government has promised it will compensate Canadian dairy farmers for their losses.

Auto sector: Canada has agreed to a maximum number of vehicles that can be produced in Canada (2.6 Million) and be exported to the United States without duty. As well, to avoid duties, 75% of the parts used in the manufacture of the vehicles, must originate from USMCA partner countries.

Drugs: Canada has agreed to extend patent protections for biological pharmaceutical drugs to 10 years. This change is widely expected to increase the cost of some prescription drugs.

Copyright Laws: Canada has agreed to extend the terms of a copyright from 50 years up to 70 years. A change that many experts have called a "capitation on Canada's copyright policy".

De Minimis: this is a term that represents the amount of goods a person can bring across the border without being hit by duties. The basic exemption when crossing the border in person will increase to \$40 of US goods up from the current \$20. For online shipment (e-commerce) the level is increased to \$150 CAD.

Trade autonomy: one more alarming concession that has many concerned in Ottawa is language that may restrict Canada's ability to negotiate a trade deal with a "non-market" country, for example, China. This is an emerging topic requiring more clarification.

BC Wine: on a topic closer to home another concession is that BC Grocery stores current selling only BC wines will be required to also sell wines from the United States...a problem that many thought could occur and made their concerns known when this provincial program was first put into place.

What has not changed is that an independent arbitration panel will still be used in the event there is a trade dispute. Many view preserving this as one of the few key wins for Canada in this new agreement that shall have a 16 year expiry date with an option to renew for another 16 year term.

Things not addressed in the new USMCA:

United States tariffs on Canadian produced steel and aluminum remain in effect as do the punitive tariffs on Canadian

Softwood Lumber.

In addition the United States "Buy American" provisions also remain in effect.

Is this a good deal or a bad deal for Canada?

That is the question for Canadians to decide upon and will also serve as my question for this week:

Do you think the many concessions that the Liberal government made, went too far or is this simply the price to be paid for a new North American trade agreement?

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

October 10th

With so much Canadian media reporting on the recent appointment of a US Supreme Court Justice, many Canadian stories tend to get lost in the shuffle.

One of the stories that I suspect few have heard about is the progress of the Trudeau Liberals vaunted \$35 Billion Infrastructure Bank.

I first raised my concerns about this bank when it was introduced by the Liberals in 2016.

I questioned the move to develop yet another expensive federally funded agency where none was needed. In a subsequent MP report in 2017, I raised the concern that the Infrastructure Bank doesn't actually build any infrastructure.

The Liberal Government has stated that the purpose of the Infrastructure Bank is to attract international investors who would invest privately and ultimately build infrastructure here in Canada.

This raises the question as to where the Infrastructure Bank is today, in late 2018.

CBC recently reported the Infrastructure Bank has only been involved in one project since it was created.

The project in question is committing a \$1.28 billion loan to help build a \$6.3 billion transit project in Montreal.

What is interesting about this particular project in Montreal is that it in no way was instigated by the Infrastructure Bank.

This Montreal light rail project was already in progress before the Infrastructure Bank was created.

Another interesting aspect to the Montreal light rail project is that it is being constructed by a French construction firm with the rail cars being built in India.

That single project aside, my earlier concerns about the Infrastructure Bank being an expensive and unnecessary waste remain.

Access to information requests have revealed some staggering costs to run this new Infrastructure Bank.

Almost \$11.4 Million has been spent on salaries, compensation and other administration expenses while close to another \$ 1.4 million has been spent on capital expenses.

To recap, the Liberal Government has now spent close to \$12.8 million on the Infrastructure Bank.

That is \$12.8 million that could have been spent building actual infrastructure that is instead paying for expensive administration.

On a different note, earlier this week the Liberal Government announced it was providing \$1.44 million towards a “near net zero” private grocery store in an Liberal Cabinet Minister’s riding in Ontario.

This project was not funded through the Infrastructure Bank but rather through Natural Resources Canada.

My question this week is do you believe the Infrastructure Bank is a good investment of \$35 billion in tax dollars or is it an expensive, wasteful and unnecessary abuse of resources?

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

October 17th

Back in June of this year the National Energy Board reported that crude oil-by-rail exports from Canada set a new record of 204,558 barrels per day.

Industry analysts predict that by the end of this year, oil exports could increase to 300,000 barrels.

The International Energy Agency has predicted that by the end of 2019 Canadian oil by rail exports could hit 390,000 barrels a day with the potential to possibly hit peak levels of as much as 590,000 barrels.

For some added context, in 2012 the shipment of oil by rail was roughly 30,000 barrels of oil per day.

I mention these things because the efforts to block the Trans Mountain pipeline have been successful

to date and have only served to increased shipment by rail, a less environmentally efficient option.

At the same time the production of oil in Alberta continues to increase.

Currently oil production is on pace to hit 5.6 million barrels per day by 2035, an increase of over 30% to current production levels. In the absence of increased pipeline capacity it is clear why oil by rail exports will only continue to increase.

Aside from the logistical challenges, there is also the current inability to access new markets that are willing to pay more for Canadian oil than is currently the case with exporting to the United States.

Industry experts predict that roughly \$1 billion a month is being lost in potential increased revenue from accessing new markets.

As many will know the Federal Liberal Government has paid \$4.5 Billion to purchase the existing Trans Mountain pipeline and has repeatedly stated it will spend an additional \$7-9 billion to build the expanded project.

Currently the project remains at an impasse with no clear deadline being set by the Government for completion let alone construction.

What if there was another way?

Independent Senator Doug Black has tabled a private members bill in the Senate.

Bill S-245 "An Act to declare the Trans Mountain Pipeline Project and related works to be for the general advantage of Canada".

As many know, the BC NDP Government has been making efforts to block the Trans-Mountain pipeline.

Bill S-245 proposes that the authority of class 29 of section 91 and paragraph (c) of class 10 of section 92 of the Constitution Act, 1867 to be used to declare this project necessary for the general advantage of Canada.

This bill passed in the Senate and is before the House of Commons this week.

Given that the Prime Minister has repeatedly stated that the Trans-Mountain project is in Canada's national interests, it will be interesting to see if the Liberals support this Senate bill going forward.

My question this week:

Do you support Senate Bill S-245 and the intent to declare this project necessary for the general advantage of Canada?

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

October 24th

This week you may have seen or heard media reports regarding a carbon tax rebate plan announced by the Trudeau Liberal Government.

What is this new carbon tax rebate plan?

The Federal Liberal Government has mandated a national carbon tax to be implemented across Canada allowing individual Provinces and Territories some flexibility to set the parameters of how this carbon tax program will be implemented.

As an example, here in British Columbia, a carbon tax has been in place since 2008. The Provincial NDP Government has announced it will continue to increase this carbon tax to meet the federal standard set by Prime Minister Trudeau.

Other provinces, most notably Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick have either openly refused a carbon tax or have enacted other environmental policies that Mr. Trudeau has decided do not meet his carbon tax threshold.

In these four provinces (and these four provinces only) residents will soon be getting annual carbon tax rebates from the federal government.

In Manitoba the rebate is \$336, Ontario is \$300, NB is \$248 and Saskatchewan the yearly rebate is \$598.

In British Columbia the rebate is zero.

One local citizen recently shared with me that this Liberal carbon tax policy essentially rewards provinces who have rejected the Liberals carbon tax.

An interesting observation.

In my view, this Liberal rebate is an admission that their national carbon tax is not truly revenue neutral and that people will pay more in costs related to the carbon tax.

The intent in these four provinces, according to the Liberals, is to return a larger carbon tax rebate than what the Liberals calculate citizens in these provinces will pay in increased carbon taxes.

In other words, the Liberals are suggesting that if you live in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario or New Brunswick you will make money and come out ahead after paying a carbon tax.

This same carbon tax credit, that will be implemented through income tax returns, will also apply to the territories.

In August the Trudeau Liberals also lowered the amount of carbon tax that some of Canada's largest polluters will pay as a result of "competiveness" concerns as many of Canada's largest trading partners do not have a national carbon tax.

It should also be noted that the recently negotiated USMCA trade agreement between Canada, USA and Mexico is also silent on the subject of a North American carbon tax meaning that competitiveness concerns will remain.

My question this week:

Do you believe government claims that you will come out ahead financially after paying increased taxes?

I can be reached at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or at 1-800-665-8711.

October 31st

Recently I have been overwhelmed by citizens asking what can be summarized by the following question:

“Is it true that Statistics Canada is demanding access to certain Canadians personal financial and banking information, including all transactions along with bank account balances without citizens’ consent or even notification that this is going on?”.

When news of this potential sharing of your personal financial information with Ottawa bureaucrats first broke (full credit to Global News) the Official Opposition immediately began hearing very serious concerns, even outrage, from many Canadians.

This was similar to what occurred when it was announced the Liberal Government was going to claw back employee discounts and treat them as taxable benefits.

In that case when the Official Opposition raised these concerns, the Liberals announced it was a policy directive that was not signed off by the Minister and would not go forward.

Our hopeful expectation was this might be a similar situation.

Unfortunately in question period this week Prime Minister Trudeau has confirmed that he fully supports your personal banking information being shared with Ottawa bureaucrats without either your consent, or your knowledge.

The Prime Minister has stated that he believes your data will remain secure. The fact that you have not consented to your financial data being shared and that you will not be notified that your banking information has been taken is perfectly acceptable and is something he supports.

On Thursday my opposition colleague MP Candice Bergen presented over 800 pages of government documents showing hundreds of incidents of privacy breaches affecting thousands of citizens over the past 19 months.

Fortunately on October 31st, the Privacy Commissioner announced he will launch an formal investigation into these proposed actions from Statistics Canada.

In my view, this is not 1984. No government should be using Orwellian techniques to harvest your personal private banking information.

Your personal financial information belongs to you and you have a right to know when it is being accessed and for what purpose.

The Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer and our Official Opposition caucus do not support this Liberal supported assault on your personal financial privacy.

My question this week is a simple one:

Do you?

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

November 2018

November 7th

This week there was more attention than usual on US politics as many watched the results of the US mid-term elections.

Closer to home in Washington State there also was a vote to implement a state carbon tax.

This vote was Initiative No. 1631 which proposed a carbon tax of \$15/ton and was rejected with a majority 56% of roughly 2 million voters saying no.

This was the second time a Washington State carbon tax has been rejected by a majority of voters with the previous initiative being voted down in 2016.

Why does this matter to Canadians?

Here in BC, some of our industries compete with industries located in Washington State.

When an industry in a jurisdiction paying carbon taxes cannot compete with that same industry in another jurisdiction, not paying carbon taxes, there is a serious concern for economic harm and job losses.

This situation is called "carbon leakage".

Carbon leakage is even referenced in the current BC NDP Provincial budget document.

Here is how "carbon leakage" is defined in that budget document:

“Industries that compete with industry in countries that may have low or no carbon price:

If industry loses market share to more polluting competitors, known as carbon leakage, it affects our economy and does not reduce global greenhouse gas emissions.”

In Ottawa, the Trudeau Liberal Government has also acknowledged this same principle.

Liberal MP Sean Fraser, the Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Environment and Climate Change, recently admitted that when it comes to big industrial emitters in “trade-exposed industries”, the Liberal Government has recently softened carbon tax on big polluters because in the absence of carbon tax relief the carbon tax could potentially have jobs leave and it will do nothing for emissions.

In New Brunswick, the Trudeau Liberal Government has given a 95.5% percent exemption on carbon tax that applies to coal fired power.

Coal power is the second largest emitter of greenhouse gases in Atlantic Canada. The largest emitter is the Irving Oil refinery who imports oil from Countries that also do not have carbon taxes.

BC is also not immune from carbon tax exemptions.

As one example, despite the BC NDP Government signing onto the Trudeau national carbon tax, the new BC LNG investment will be exempt from the carbon tax increases called for in that agreement.

This is not an isolated incident where a polluting industry in BC has secured some form of carbon tax relief.

Why do I raise these points?

The challenge is that increasingly some of Canada’s largest polluters are being given exemptions from paying carbon tax.

These carbon tax exemptions seldom draw major national media headlines and many citizens are unaware they are occurring.

However for the average citizen and for small business owners there is no carbon tax relief.

Here in BC, more increases in carbon tax remain on the horizon.

My question this week is one of fairness.

With large scale polluters increasingly being given carbon tax relief, do you think it is fair that, here in BC, average citizens are being asked to pay more carbon tax?

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

November 14th

In my late October MP report, I referenced the serious concerns I was hearing from citizens on breaking news that Statistics Canada is demanding access to certain Canadians' personal financial and banking information, including all transactions along with bank account balances, without citizens' consent.

Since that time Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer and the Official Opposition have been able to ask Prime Minister Trudeau about these very serious concerns in the House of Commons.

In response the Prime Minister has made it clear that he strongly supports Ottawa bureaucrats having access to your personal financial information.

The Prime Minister has also stated that Statistics Canada is actively engaged with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner on this file.

There is a problem with that statement.

The Privacy Commissioner has publicly stated that he had no idea Statistics Canada wanted data on 500,000 households, until Global News published these details.

Further, the Privacy Commissioner has also stated that Statistics Canada is falling "way short" of its stated objective of being transparent.

Why does this matter?

Recently the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Industry, Science and Technology had an opportunity to question the head of Statistics Canada on this program and learned some troubling new information.

Although initial reports suggested that 500,000 Canadians would be targeted annually, the actual number is 500,000 households.

This means that everyone living within your family home would also be subject to having their personal financial information taken without their consent.

Statistics Canada also admitted that it is intentionally taking more information than it believes is necessary.

This means each year, 150,000 households more than necessary will have their financial data taken without consent.

Another troubling admission is that although Statistics Canada will "anonymize" your personal financial data, the agency also admitted that your original data, including your identity, will not be deleted and that if it is deemed necessary to reunify your data, Statistics Canada will retain the ability to do so.

When asked specifically why not delete this personal contact information, the agency did not provide an answer.

We also learned that Statistics Canada can charge fees to private corporations for providing them with neighbourhood by neighbourhood aggregated data, however Statistics Data insists that this is not “selling” your data, but is recovering fees for service.

I have had constituents share with me that they feel large companies, like Facebook and Amazon, already have a significant amount of private transactional and personal information as it is.

Currently Statistics Canada has claimed this pilot program to take your private financial data without your consent is on hold pending the investigation from the Privacy Commissioner.

This week the Globe and Mail reported that 74% of Canadians they surveyed are opposed to Statistics Canada taking their personal financial data without their consent.

Locally I am hearing even higher levels of opposition.

The Trudeau Liberal Government remains strongly supportive of your private financial information being taken without your consent and has claimed that citizens’ concerns that are raised by both the Conservative and NDP opposition is simply “fear mongering”.

My question this week:

Are you concerned about your financial information being taken without your consent and shared with Ottawa bureaucrats or do you believe this is all a case of fear mongering?

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

November 21st

Last Friday evening I hosted a community town hall in West Kelowna.

I host these forums so that citizens can hold me to account and so I can hear what concerns are on people’s minds.

Often concerns raised locally may be very different from the major subjects of debate in Ottawa.

One such local concern, raised from a number of people, was the United Nations (UN) Migration Compact.

This is a subject that has received very little, if any attention in Ottawa.

What is the UN Migration compact?

Technically it is called the “Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration”.

It is a 34 page agreement that contains 54 points under 23 stated objectives.

Created in July of 2018, it is scheduled for ratification from signatory countries, including Canada, in a meeting hosted by Morocco on December 10 and 11 of 2018.

Already this document has proven to be controversial.

Israeli PM Netanyahu asserted:

"Israel will not accede to, and will not sign, the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration. We are committed to guarding our borders against illegal migrants. This is what we have done and this is what we will continue to do."

It has been reported that the Austrian Vice-Chancellor Heinz-Christian Strache has said:

"Migration is not and cannot become a human right," and that Austria would not be a signatory to this agreement.

Countries such as Australia, Croatia, Hungary, Poland and the United States have also stated they will not be signing the agreement.

Our Conservative Immigration Shadow Minister, MP Michelle Rempel, stated:

"By allowing nearly 38,000 people to enter Canada illegally from the safety of upstate New York then claim asylum, Trudeau has undermined the integrity of Canada's borders. Canada's borders should not be compromised by abuses of our asylum system, and should not sign this compact."

The Liberal Minister for Immigration has co-authored a report that indicates Canada was actively involved in the drafting of the Compact and that "Canada is committed to the task of leading and encouraging other partners to realize its ambitious goals, to ensure that action breathes life into the words of the Compact."

Supporters of the compact on migration contend "The UN's global compact on refugees could be a game-changer—and Canada is well-placed to help make it a reality".

Critics are concerned that many countries, including Canada, currently have immigration systems that are not working well in dealing with illegal immigration and that the UN compact offers no technical solutions to this problem.

From my perspective it is worth noting that the UN compact on migration is a non-legally binding, cooperative framework of the signatory states.

For those who would like to read the agreement it can be found here:

https://refugeesmigrants.un.org/sites/default/files/180713_agreed_outcome_global_compact_for_migration.pdf

My question this week:

Considering this is a non-binding agreement, do you support or oppose Canada signing on to the UN Migration Compact?

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

November 28th

During the 2015 election campaign Justin Trudeau made a promise, and I quote directly, "In 2019/20, we will balance the budget".

Last Thursday the Liberal Government introduced a budget update that confirms this is yet another broken promise from Mr. Trudeau.

The Liberal fall fiscal update announced that the annual federal budget deficit is projected to increase by nearly \$2 billion to \$19.6 billion next year.

The debt to GDP ratio that Mr. Trudeau had promised, and again I quote directly, "In 2019/20, we will reduce the federal debt-to-GDP ratio to 27 percent" will actually hit 30.9%

Canada's federal debt is projected to hit \$688 billion in the current fiscal year and the most recent projections indicate that it will increase to \$765 billion by 2023-2024.

Depending on interest rates the cost of servicing that level of debt would be roughly \$34 billion a year.

To put \$34 billion in debt service fees into perspective, the Government of Canada transferred just over \$37 Billion to Canadian provinces and territories in fiscal 2017-18 to help provide for health care costs.

So where is the majority of this new spending going in the fall fiscal update?

As former Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page has commented "We're deficit-financing the corporate sector,".

The Liberals have introduced an accelerated tax write-off program allowing manufacturers to immediately recover the full cost of machinery and equipment.

The NDP have categorized this program as a \$14 Billion "giveaway for Canada's richest corporations, and offering nothing to Canadians who are struggling to make ends meet and facing record levels of household debt."

To be fair to the Liberal Government, there are other measures announced in the fall fiscal update not related to the accelerated machinery and equipment write off.

One of those is a new \$595 Million fund to subsidize some Canadian media organizations.

This particular announcement has raised serious concerns from many prominent journalists on the important role of journalistic independence from government.

The Liberals have indicated they will appoint a panel to decide who is and who is not eligible for funding under this program.

From my perspective this raises concerns.

If a media organization is denied funding what recourse does it have?

Should it change the style or tone of reporting?

Cover different stories?

Hire a lobbyist?

The fact that the Liberals introduced this media subsidy in an election year raises many more concerns.

My question this week:

Are you concerned by this government's introduction of an arbitrary media subsidy fund going into an election year?

I can be reached at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca or call toll free 1-888-665-8711.

December 2018

December 5th

There are unusual things happening in Canada right now.

This week we learned that a song written in 1944, "Baby It's Cold Outside", will no longer be played during the holiday season by broadcasters such as CBC, Rogers and Bell media.

Earlier this year, the City of Victoria removed the statue of John A. Macdonald in front of Victoria City Hall.

And soon I predict entering into Canada illegally from the United States to claim asylum will no longer be termed as "illegal".

It will instead become an "irregular entry".

Why?

In early October, CBC reported that our Liberal Government quietly changed the Canadian immigration department website.

Where it once read “illegal crossings into Canada” it now reads “irregular crossing into Canada”. The Liberal Government is also set to sign the UN Compact on Migration.

Part of the compact text, clause 33(c), reads: “educating media professionals on migration-related issues and terminology”.

In other words, this could be interpreted to mean reporting on irregular crossings into Canada is acceptable but reporting on “illegally crossing into Canada” may become unacceptable.

How would this be enforced?

The UN Migration Compact is a non-binding agreement, however in Mr. Trudeau’s recent budget update, a \$595 million media subsidy fund was announced.

This media subsidy will inevitably have some terms and conditions that will be required to be met.

Possibly compliance with UN agreements could be one of them.

Canadians have always strongly supported legal immigration into Canada.

Many Canadians have endured a lengthy process, often considered to be “waiting in line” fairly, and following all of the rules and regulations.

This is why crossing a border between official border crossings is illegal and not irregular.

While there are some provisions to ensure those in a life or death situation can cross a border, these cases are quite rare.

Currently Canada has over 38,000 people who have entered Canada illegally since January 2017 and this in turn has placed a huge backlog on the refugee process and taxes Provincial social services systems, such as is the case with Ontario and Quebec.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that illegal immigration, on average, costs taxpayers over \$14,000 for each individual case. It is estimated over \$340 million was spent in fiscal 2017-18 and the costs are expected to increase by another 400 million in the 2019-2020 fiscal year. The costs paid by Provinces is not included in these figures.

Quebec has recently announced that it will accept nearly 8,000 fewer immigrants and refugees in 2019 compared to 2018.

These types of announcements impact all citizens trying to legally come to Canada who might desire to live in Quebec.

From my perspective, supporting legal immigration is how one joins our Canadian family.

Suggesting that coming to Canada “irregularly” implies a very different meaning from entering illegally.

I strongly support legal immigration as I believe all Canadians do.
My question this week:

Do you believe that crossing a border between official border crossings is illegal or should it be termed as irregular?

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

December 12th

This is the final week the House of Commons will sit for 2018 before resuming in late January of 2019.

This week will also be the last time the current 42nd Parliament will sit in original House of Commons for at least 10 years.

How will this impact our Canadian Parliament?

First, a little background.

Although the House of Commons and the Peace Tower have become an internationally recognized landmark, there are actually three buildings on Parliament Hill.

What many Canadians refer to as the “House of Commons” is known as Centre Block.

It is called Centre Block because it is the centre building of the three large Victorian high gothic style buildings that form the core of the legislative precinct.

The East Block building is located to the immediate east of Centre Block and connected by underground tunnel was built in 1866 and contained the original office of Sir John A. Macdonald.

The West Block building, you guessed it, is located to the west of Centre Block. It was closed in 2011 to undergo a large scale refit and renovation.

Part of that renovation project included substantial modifications so that the House of Commons chamber could be relocated into West Block while the Centre Block building is renovated.

So when we return to Ottawa in January, we will call West Block home.

On a different subject, on December 18th, Canada’s new impaired driving laws will come into effect, creating significant changes from current regulations.

For example, police will be able to compel a driver provide an oral fluid sample on demand.

This test can be used to determine THC level per millilitre (ml) of blood, not unlike current assessment related to blood alcohol content.

There is also a new provision that will allow for mandatory roadside screening, even if an officer does not have a reasonable suspicion of drug or alcohol use.

Fines are also being increased to a \$1000 minimum up to \$2000 for first time offenders.

Repeat offenders can face jail time and possible prohibitions from driving. There are also legislative changes that can restrict some types of legal defence arguments for those facing impaired driver charges.

For the most part I have heard strong support for these changes.

However, some have stated opposition to mandatory roadside screening.

Our current laws indicate that an officer must first have reasonable suspicion before requesting any roadside screening.

That will be my question for this week.

Do you support the requirement of “reasonable suspicion” being removed, as roadside screening will now become a mandatory requirement?

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