

## January 2021

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

By now you have heard that COVID-19 vaccines are being distributed worldwide, including within Canada.

Currently two vaccines have been approved for use by Health Canada; the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine and the Moderna COVID-19 vaccine.

Without getting into the technical details, both vaccines require two doses to be deemed effective.

Pfizer-BioNTech requires a second dose to be given 21 days after the first dose, while Moderna is 28 days apart from the first dose.

The timing between the first dose and the second dose is important, given the limited supply of available vaccine

For example, at the beginning of this week British Columbia had received 54,625 doses combined of Pfizer-BioNTech and Moderna vaccine.

In turn 28,209 of these doses have now already been administered to those who fall under Stage 1 priority.

Who is Stage 1 priority here in BC?

A brief summary of this list includes “residents, staff and essential visitors to long-term care and assisted-living residences.”

In addition, “Individuals in hospital or community awaiting a long-term care placement” as well as “Health care workers providing care for COVID-19 patients in settings like ICU, emergency departments, medical/surgical units and paramedics”.

Remote and isolated Indigenous communities are also included in Stage 1.

Some have looked at the 54,625 doses of vaccine delivered to B.C. and questioned why only 28,209 doses have been administered to date, pointing out this vaccination rate is only around 51%.

Herein lies the challenge.

Since two doses are required per person, the 54,625 doses allows for 27,312 individuals to receive both shots of the vaccine.

BC has now administered over 28,000 doses.

That means that there is not enough vaccine supply available for all of those vaccinated individuals to receive their second dose.

The supply to give those required second doses has not yet arrived, here in BC.

This additional vaccine supply must first land in Canada, then is transported to BC and finally distributed to

various vaccination sites within our province to be available for those needing the required second dose within that 21-28 day window.

This illustrates the immense challenges that Provincial Health Authorities are dealing with given the very limited COVID supply that the Federal Government has managed to procure.

For some context, while BC has received 54,625 doses, nearby Washington State, with a population 2.6 million people more B.C., received over six times more doses at 358,025.

It is important to understand, with the limited supply of COVID vaccine here in BC, citizens must continue to take all precautions as a result.

To put it bluntly, it will be some time before the vaccine delivery will make a significant impact.

My question this week:

Are you satisfied with how the vaccine is being distributed in Canada?

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

This week Canada had some good news: the Prime Minister announced a new deal that will result in an additional 20 million doses of the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine coming to Canada.

Unfortunately, this additional vaccine supply will not make it to Canada until sometime between April or May.

This is very important because this week CBC reported that British Columbia has now “slowed its pace” administering the vaccine while the province awaits for more vaccine supply to arrive.

Another decision that B.C. has had to make, related to the lack of supply for the COVID vaccine, is that the required 2nd dose will now be administered 35 days after the first dose.

The reason for this is to ensure as many vulnerable citizens receive the first dose as possible and to maximize the limited supply.

The challenge with this is that Health Canada states the following:

“The vaccine is given by an injection (0.3 mL) into the muscle of the arm. For the vaccine to work best, you need to get 2 doses: a single dose and then a second dose 21 days later. Based on studies in about 44,000 participants, the Pfizer-BioNTech COVID-19 vaccine was 95% effective in preventing COVID-19 beginning 1 week after the second dose. This means that people may not be fully protected against COVID-19 until at least 7 days after the second dose.”

B.C. has indicated that extending the 2nd dose to 35 days is ‘approved’ by the World Health Organization as well as the Federal Government.

This is noteworthy as Health Canada is the regulatory agency that approves the use of any vaccine or drug based on its arms length, evidence based process.

However, some groups of B.C. Doctors have opposed this move suggesting it is potentially “unscientific, unsafe and unethical.”

The B.C. Nurses Union has also been reported as questioning this move stating that nurses “follow the other guidelines from the manufacturer around storage and handling of this vaccine,” pointing out that; “now we're going to deviate?”

It is unfortunate B.C. is in this situation.

It is well known that the Trudeau Liberal Government, for reasons unknown, made their first deal with the China based CanSino Biologics to deliver vaccine.

The Chinese Government ultimately blocked this vaccine from coming to Canada.

As a result of that deal collapsing, Canada did not secure the large quantities of vaccine it now has on order from other manufactures in as timely of a manner.

My question this week is not a political one.

If you received the first dose of the Pfizer vaccine (as some citizens now have, here in the Okanagan) do you believe it is a reasonable expectation to receive the second dose within the 21 day timeframe as set out by the manufacturer?

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

By the time you read this weeks report, newly sworn in United States President Joe Biden may well have signed an executive order rescinding the construction permit for the Keystone XL pipeline.

The Keystone XL pipeline is proposed to connect Hardisty, Alberta to Steele City, Nebraska over 1,947-kilometres to transport Canadian crude oil to US refineries.

The potential loss of the Keystone XL pipeline would have a significant impact for Canada, in particular Alberta, in terms of job losses and billions lost from corporate income taxes, carbon taxes as well as royalty payments.

The loss of the Keystone XL pipeline will also mean that US based refineries will have to increase importing crude oil from countries such as Saudi Arabia and Iraq, countries that have much weaker environmental and labour standards than here in Canada.

A potential increase of shipments of oil by rail between Canada and the United States is also a likely outcome with the loss of the Keystone XL pipeline.

This outcome is not only more costly; but it is less efficient and less safe.

For these reasons, the Keystone XL pipeline has been long supported by the Conservative Party both when in government and now in opposition.

It has also been long supported by Prime Minister Trudeau.

In fact, during his time in opposition, Justin Trudeau was clear that “one of the big things the Prime Minister needs to get right is getting our resources to market.”

Mr. Trudeau also stated that if a US President veto's Keystone XL “the Prime Minister has not fulfilled that responsibility.”

Justin Trudeau was clear that if the Keystone XL pipeline is blocked by the United States that the “Prime Minister take personal responsibility for this diplomatic failure”.

By Mr. Trudeau's own words this potential Keystone XL pipeline failure is one that he, as the Prime Minister today, must now take full responsibility for.

Those who follow this Prime Minister closely will know that he will not likely take any responsibility for this "diplomatic failure."

The reality is the Keystone XL pipeline has been a target of US Democratic Presidents for some time now, including under both President Obama and now President Biden.

This was just as true in 2013 as it is today.

From my perspective, blaming this solely on a Canadian Prime Minister would be just as unfair in 2021 as it was in 2014.

I mention this as an Opposition MP because I feel it is important that our criticisms as opposition should be fair and accurate to the government in power.

This was a courtesy that was not extended by the current Prime Minister when he served in the opposition and I recall having these same thoughts when I sat on the government side of the house during that time.

My question this week:

Do you support the Keystone XL pipeline being built?

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

On January 25th, documents tabled in the House of Commons from Global Affairs Canada revealed some troubling information.

Prime Minister Trudeau announced at a press conference on May 16, 2020 that his Government had made a deal with China based CanSino Biologics related to developing a COVID vaccine.

The documents produced this week reveal that just three days later, on May 19, 2020, the Trudeau Liberal Government was advised by Global Affairs Canada that “a shipment of Ad5-nCoV vaccine candidate seeds destined for Canada was being held by the General Administration of Customs of China at Beijing Capital International Airport”.

In other words, the Chinese State Government was refusing to issue the required approval allowing the export of this vaccine to Canada, effectively blocking the shipment.

While this information was known to the Prime Minister and his Cabinet, it was hidden from Canadians and not publicly disclosed until July 6, 2020.

48 days later.

Prime Minister Trudeau did almost daily new conferences throughout June from Rideau Cottage (while the House of Commons was not in session) and not once did the Prime Minister disclose this important information to Canadians.

Why not?

Despite knowing the China based CanSino vaccine virus was blocked on May 19, 2020, it would not be until the beginning of August that Procurement Minister Anita Anand finally announced a deal with Pfizer for vaccine supply.

By this point countries such as the United Kingdom, the United States and Japan had already made agreements with Pfizer for the COVID vaccine.

Why does this matter?

Because this week Canada will receive no Pfizer vaccine at all and over the next four weeks, Canada's Pfizer vaccine deliveries will be cut in half with up to 400,000 doses delayed.

Here in British Columbia, currently 85% of all received vaccine has now been administered.

As a result of the lack of supply, B.C. must now delay the required second dose to 42 days after the first dose.

For the record, Pfizer indicates the required 2nd dose is to be administered 21 days after the first dose.

In short B.C., much like the rest of Canada is now falling behind other countries.

In fact at the time of this week's report, in terms of total number of vaccination doses administered, Canada currently ranks in 13th behind such countries as India, Slovakia, Spain, Turkey, Italy and others.

For some added context, Washington State (population 7.6 million) has now administered 500,000 doses of vaccine and it currently stepping up vaccination rates.

By comparison B.C. (population 5.07 million), at of the time of this report, has administered 122,359 doses.

Unfortunately, with B.C. almost running out of current vaccine supply and with future supply shortages unique to Canada, this problem will only get worse.

Other countries with agreements with Pfizer have not been anywhere near as adversely impacted by this current supply shortage, as compared to Canada.

The Federal Government continues to maintain that Canada has the "most diverse portfolio of any country for vaccines" and that delivery will be on schedule.

My question this week:

Are you satisfied with the performance of the Federal Government in procuring COVID vaccine?

## **February 2021**

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

Here in Canada we have witnessed firsthand the challenges of COVID vaccine administration due to lack of procurement supply from the Trudeau Liberal government.

To put this in perspective, Washington State between January 25-29th went from having administered over 500,000 doses of COVID vaccine to 616,589 doses.

That is an increase of 116,589 doses in a matter of days.

Here in B.C., over the same time frame, we went from having administered 119,850 doses up 129,241 doses.

This is an increase of just 9,391 doses by comparison.

This is by no means a criticism of the Provincial Health Officer or any of the regional health authorities.

Simply put, provinces cannot vaccinate citizens without sufficient vaccine supply.

For these reasons Canada has now fallen to 15th place in terms of total doses of vaccine administered per country.

Canada drops even further behind if factoring in the total number of vaccination doses administered per 100 people in the population.

With that being said, for developing and third world countries, this situation is far more dire.

For this reason, the World Health Organization (WHO) partnered with GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance) to pool funds from wealthy countries to provide COVID vaccine for poor and developing countries.

This partnership is called the COVAX program.

In May of 2020, the Prime Minister announced a \$600 million contribution to this global effort.

Of this \$600 million, \$475 million will be spent in direct contributions and the \$125 million remainder to the International Finance Facility for Immunization (IFFI).

This week we learned that the Trudeau Liberal Government has made the decision to access vaccines from the COVAX program that is intended to help poor and developing countries.

Canada is the only G-7 country to do this.

This decision has raised serious concern.

The Globe and Mail has reported that the organization "Doctors Without Borders" has warned there is a danger that Canada's use of COVAX could contribute to global health inequities.

The vaccine in question is 1.9 million doses of the, yet to be approved in Canada, AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine.

My question this week:

Do you agree with the Trudeau Liberal Government to access vaccine from the COVAX program?

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

One interesting aspect about a minority government is the ability for the opposition parties to out vote the government in parliamentary committees.

In Ottawa, we are seeing many documents being released that relate to how the Trudeau Liberal government has been responding to the pandemic.

These documents were released because the opposition party members on the Parliamentary Health Committee were able to pass a motion that these documents would be made public, against the wishes of the Liberal members of the committee, who wanted to keep them secret.

This week we learned more.

One of these released documents, an email, was quite alarming.

A section of this email read:

*"The rationale here is to present a new metric to distract somewhat from unattractive delivery numbers being reported. Hajdu goes into QP with these numbers, updated weekly, so we're in safe territory."*

This email related to challenges the federal Government was encountering at the time with the procurement of personal protective equipment (PPE).

What's alarming is that knowing that media reports were not flattering, the response of the Liberal Government was to deliberately manipulate the data to create a distraction.

This Liberal plan involved sending manipulated numbers with the Health Minister into Question Period.

Global News has also obtained documents that they reported as:

*"Senior political staffers from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's office and the office of another federal Liberal cabinet minister privately discussed how to withhold information from Canadians about the government's response to the COVID-19 crisis last June, newly released emails show."*

From my perspective this is part of a reoccurring pattern.

Despite this Prime Minister promising to be “open by default”, we instead see a culture of secrecy within his government.

As the Opposition, it is our responsibility to hold the government accountable.

This is a fundamental part of democracy.

Canadians deserve to know how their money is being spent and what actions the federal government is undertaking on their behalf.

Even more alarming is a Liberal Government majority would have withheld this information and Canadians would be in the dark on what was really going on, aside from the Prime Ministers official announcements.

My question this week:

How important is it to you that government truly is “Open by default” with its citizens?

## **February 17<sup>th</sup>**

It was seven years ago that I had an opportunity to hand deliver a petition from over 15,000 concerned citizens of the Okanagan (15,258 to be exact) to former Conservative Justice Minister Steven Blaney opposing the parole release of Mr. David Ennis.

For those of you who may be unfamiliar, David Ennis (formerly David Shearing), is the mass murderer who brutally took the lives of the West Kelowna residing Johnson and Bentley family of 6, who were on a camping trip in August of 1982.

While this horrific and tragic act took place close to 40 years ago, Mr. Ennis may be again coming before the parole board in July of this year.

This painful event once again haunts the family and friends of the victims.

One of these family friends is West Kelowna resident Tammy Arishenkoff, who was a classmate of the Johnson girls.

Over the past decades, whenever Mr. Ennis has been before the parole board, Tammy has dutifully collected a petition from the thousands of citizens opposed to the release of David Ennis.

I would like to sincerely thank Tammy Arishenkoff for her efforts in this regard and also to recognize the many citizens who have participated in this petition process.

We must always remember the victims in acts of deplorable and senseless violence.

With the potential parole board hearing for Mr. Ennis in July of this year, Tammy Arishenkoff is once again leading the petition charge to gather together citizens opposed to the parole release of David Ennis.

The petition is located here:

<https://www.change.org/p/parole-board-of-canada-keep-david-ennis-aka-david-shearing-convicted-mass-murderer-behind-bars-deny-parole?redirect=false>



My question this week:

Will you sign this petition?

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

This week's report is about Bill C-21: "An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)".

For those with little interest in Canada's firearm laws this report may not be of concern.

For others it has become a bill of significant interest.

For some background, in May of last year Prime Minister Trudeau announced that "1,500 types of 'assault-style' firearms" were being banned and that a "buy back" plan was going to be introduced so owners of these newly restricted rifles would be able to "sell" them to the government at a yet to be determined rate.

At the time, this announcement from the Prime Minister led to some confusion as military assault rifles in Canada have long been illegal.

Further the term "assault style" has no legal definition within the Canada Firearms Act.

What is an "assault style weapon"?

The term "assault style" is a recently deployed piece of political rhetoric used to characterize eleven different types of semi-automatic rifles.

These can be ordered in up to 1,500 different variations from various manufacturers.

Why did the Prime Minister decide to ban these particular semi-automatic rifles?

In his words:

"These weapons were designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time," Trudeau said. "There is no use and no place for such weapons in Canada."

Bill C-21 is the legislation that further addresses these "assault style" rifles and proposes other firearms related measures as well.

What is most surprising about this bill is, contrary to commonly expressed opinion, it does not actually remove "assault style" weapons from within Canada.

Legal owners of these weapons can continue to own them however with new restrictions that include a ban on permitted use (none), no import, no further acquisition, no sale and no bequeathal.

Critics have questioned why, if the PM believes that there is "no place for such weapons in Canada.", is Bill C-21 proposing to allow these weapons to remain in Canada?

Another measure proposed in Bill C-21 is a measure that will allow municipalities to prohibit legal hand guns from being stored or transported anywhere within a municipality if a by-law to that effect is passed.

Critics of this by-law, including one local Mayor, have pointed out this is a form of downloading federal responsibilities onto municipalities.

From my own perspective, considering guns are illegally smuggled across the Canada/United States border, it is unclear why PM Trudeau believes that criminals with illegal firearms would view a municipal border any differently.

As far as illegal gun smuggling, Bill C-21 is largely silent as most of the measures are proposed against legal gun owners with one exception.

Bill C-21 proposed to extend the maximum term of imprisonment from 10 years to 14 years for those convicted of illegally smuggling guns into Canada.

My concern with this measure is that gun smuggling charges often occur well after the fact.

The need to be proactive and stop illegal guns from entering Canada should be a priority, not once again targeting legal gun owners.

While there are other measures in this bill, most building on already existing laws and regulations, this is a summary of the areas I have heard the majority of concern around.

My question this week:

Do you believe Bill C-21 will help stop illegal gun crime in Canada?

## **March 2021**

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

It was a little over one year ago, March 9, 2020, that Canada announced its first documented COVID-19 related death.

Today there are now over 22,000 COVID-19 related deaths.

On March 15, 2020, Canada wide lockdowns began to emerge in various provinces and territories.

Over the past year the Federal Government has introduced, revised, and updated many pandemic related support programs for Canadian families and businesses.

With many of these programs now being extended in various ways over the past year, Statistics Canada recently released a report that provides important analysis on how these support programs have impacted Canadians.

This is important information given that Canada has borrowed and spent more on COVID related programs than virtually any other developed nation.

Despite this spending, we now know that Canada's economy shrank 5.4% last year.

What is interesting about the data from Statistics Canada is, while it stated the obvious: "households did experience notable declines both in wages and salaries", the data also revealed that "the value of COVID-19 support measures provided by governments more than compensated for those losses."

The Stats Can data further reported that middle income households "on average they gained roughly \$2,500 more than they lost."

Further reporting that "young and middle-aged households gained around \$3,000 more through COVID-19 support measures than they lost in wages and salaries."

As Bloomberg reported on this Statistics Canada data: "Canadians received C\$20 in government transfers for every dollar of income lost..."

Ultimately the value of the federal government transfers to households increased by \$119 billion in 2020, compared to pre-pandemic 2019.

However, the total decline in income for 2020 was a loss of \$6 billion by comparison.

In other words, the spending on the various pandemic support programs has resulted in far more money going out the door over the measured decline in actual income.

Where is most of this emergency money ending up?

According to the data, into savings accounts.

In fact Canadian household savings as a percentage of nominal GDP are at the highest levels since the 1980s.

As with all data, it is important to recognize that not all households will be experiencing the impacts of COVID-19 and government support programs the same way.

Many are indeed struggling, in particular lower income households.

From a federal government perspective, this data does indicate serious challenges.

Despite spending record amounts of money, Canada is falling behind in both GDP growth as well as employment.

In addition, the current levels of support are financially unsustainable and further have seriously reduced Canada's fiscal capacity to respond to a future pandemic or other economic crises.

The Statistics Canada data has seen critics suggesting that the Federal Government overspent and achieved poor results in return.

The PM has insisted that the Federal Government "went into debt so Canadians wouldn't have to."

Aside from the fact that it will be future generations of Canadians who will have to pay for this debt, my

question this week is this:

Are you satisfied with the Government of Canada COVID support programs overall?

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

It was back in October of 2020 that I last referenced the proposed ban of some single use plastics announced by PM Trudeau at that time.

This proposed ban that the government proposes, by the end of 2021, includes grocery store bags, straws, coffee stir sticks, six-pack can holding rings, plastic cutlery and certain food takeout containers if they are made from hard-to-recycle plastics.

In my October MP Report, I also asked the question “What are your thoughts on this proposed ban of single use plastics?”

Most citizens I heard from were generally or enthusiastically supportive of this proposal.

Since October of last year, in my role as the Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change, I have also heard feedback on this proposal from a number of different stakeholders.

One of the primary concerns is that the proposed method to ban these single use plastics is to amend Schedule 1 of the Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) and add these plastics to the list of “toxic” items that are currently banned.

As critics point out, the challenge to this method is that the science does not support these plastics being on a list that includes toxic items such as asbestos, mercury, acetamide and lead, among other items.

The reason why this distinction is being made is to point out that the greater risk to plastic pollution is not to human health, but rather the inability to properly dispose of this plastic that often becomes an unacceptable form of pollution to our environment.

There are also other challenges.

Industry stakeholders have raised concerns that alternatives to single use plastics could significantly increase the load on local landfills by as much as 4 times current volumes.

There are also technical challenges, as single use plastics can significantly and economically extend the shelf life of food, as well as providing many important resources in healthcare particularly during a pandemic.

Syringes, PPE and other critically important items depend upon single use plastics.

In summary, the need for science and a thorough review, as well as detailed consultation will be of vital importance as we move forward on this subject.

However, one topic that we must act upon now is the importance to deal with plastic waste.

To that end I would like to commend Conservative MP Scot Davidson from York—Simcoe, who introduced

his private member's Bill C-204 into Parliament.

Bill C-204 proposed that the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, 1999 is amended to prohibit the export of certain types of plastic waste to foreign countries for final disposal.

As some may recall in 2019, Canadian taxpayers footed the bill for Canadian waste that was transported to the Philippines to be shipped back to Canada for proper disposal.

It cost \$1.14 million to ship sixty-nine shipping containers of garbage from the Philippines Port of Subic Bay to Vancouver, where it was properly disposed of.

Not all of this garbage was single use plastics, but this example underscores the need for Canadians to deal with our own garbage, much as Bill C-204 proposes, when it comes to plastic waste.

I am pleased to say that Bill C-204 passed in the House of Commons with 178 votes from the Conservatives, BLOC, NDP, Green and Independents all supporting it.

Only the Liberal Government members were opposed.

My question this week:

Do you support the principles of Bill C-204?

### **March 17<sup>th</sup>**

Last month I did a report on Bill C-21: "An Act to amend certain Acts and to make certain consequential amendments (firearms)".

This report touched on the Liberal Government's latest firearms bill that, among other measures, also places new restrictions on certain types of "assault style" semi-automatic rifles but has been criticized for not removing these same rifles from the public.

As former NDP official opposition leader Thomas Mulcair recently stated,

"Trudeau got pummeled, with longtime gun-control allies saying they felt "betrayed" and saying his government lied to them."

The reason for this criticism relates to the fact that previously PM Trudeau stated:

"These weapons were designed for one purpose and one purpose only: to kill the largest number of people in the shortest amount of time," Trudeau said. "There is no use and no place for such weapons in Canada."

As critics have pointed out, if PM Trudeau believes this to be true, why is his bill allowing these rifles to remain in Canada?

While there is often debate on targeting legal gun owners as opposed to criminals, one fact that data backs up is that the majority of gun crime in Canada is committed by guns that have been illegally smuggled into Canada.

The statistics show roughly 80% of Canadian gun crimes are committed with firearms illegally smuggled into Canada from the United States.

This raises another question – why not target illegal gun smuggling?

My Conservative colleague, MP Bob Saroya from Markham-Unionville (Ontario), recently tabled his private members bill C-238 to do precisely that.

Bill C-238 proposed to significantly increase the minimum sentences for illegally smuggling guns into Canada, as well as being found in possession of an illegally smuggled gun.

The minimum sentence would increase from one year to three years, or 5 years if it were a second conviction for illegally smuggling guns into Canada.

On January 27, 2021, Bill C-238 was defeated by just 21 votes.

116 Conservative MP's, along with 31 members of the BLOC, 2 Liberals and 1 Independent all supported this bill.

Opposed were 142 Liberals, 23 NDP, 3 Independent and the 3 Green MPs.

That brings me to this week's question –

Would you have supported Bill C-238 to increase the minimum sentences for smuggling or possessing guns illegally smuggled into Canada?

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

This week in the virtual House of Commons, the Conservative opposition party tabled an 'opposition day motion' that called for the Liberal government to introduce a data driven COVID re-opening plan within 20 days to support “gradually, safely and permanently lifting COVID-19 restrictions.”

As is often the case with opposition day motions, the Liberal government has offered up a litany of reasons that suggest they will oppose this motion that, at the time of this report, has not yet been voted on.

Why the need for a re-opening plan?

As Canadians know, vaccinations are now underway and regrettably Canada is currently significantly behind many countries, including the United States.

Already many local small businesses involved in tourism, as well as accommodation providers are receiving reservation requests from fully immunized American citizens for potential upcoming vacation stays.

For an industry that has been devastated by this pandemic, the opportunity for bookings and accompanying revenue is desperately needed.

Unfortunately, for this industry, and many others, they are unclear how and when to respond to these requests.

There are also remains a critically important question.

Many citizens are currently under various restrictions and requirements.

While the Prime Minister has promised that all citizens who are wanting to be immunized by the end of September will be, we do not know what vision the PM has following this time frame.

This relates to the obvious question.

For Canadian citizens who eventually are fully vaccinated, how will that potentially change federal restrictions for them on travel beyond Canadian borders?

Likewise, if other countries propose a requirement that fully vaccinated citizens produce vaccination verification documentation, how does this Government propose to respond to this?

Many Canadians want and deserve to know what the game plan is once vaccines in Canada have been fully administered.

The answers to these questions are also very badly needed by those in the travel and aviation sectors who have been decimated by this pandemic.

While the Liberal government MP's arguing against this motion have largely suggested that expectations for a re-opening plan is "too soon", it must be noted that USA President Joe Biden and British PM Boris Johnson have both released public plans for economic reopening.

We all know that COVID restrictions have had serious economic and mental health impacts on many Canadians.

It is important that we all have clarity on when and how the federal government believes regular economic and social life will be able to resume.

My question this week:

Do you believe it is a reasonable expectation that the Liberal government present a data driven, gradual re-opening plan much as the USA and UK have already done?

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

In November of 2015, newly elected Prime Minister Justin Trudeau wrote an open letter to Canadians.

In that letter among other promises the PM offered this:

*"...we committed to set a higher bar for openness and transparency in Ottawa. Government and its information must be open by default. Simply put, it is time to shine more light on government to make sure it remains focused on the people it was created to serve- you."*

I believe these words that the Prime Minister wrote to Canadians in 2015 are important and must be honoured.

As the Official Opposition, it is also our role to hold the Prime Minister and his Liberal Government accountable for these and other promises made to Canadians.

Accountability is vital.

It is why, in 2006, former Conservative Prime Minister Stephen Harper created the independent Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) to help hold your government accountable.

It should also be noted that the creation of the PBO was the result of a campaign promise made by former PM Harper to create more accountability in Ottawa, in response to the former Liberal government sponsorship scandal.

Why does this matter?

Because accountability and transparency are under threat in Ottawa.

In 2018, the Trudeau Liberal Government tabled a budget that included a \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan.

What's deeply troubling is when the PBO requested the documents to review this infrastructure spending plan, no documents were provided.

As a result, in March of 2018 the PBO publicly reported:

*"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."*

Fast forward to January of 2020 and now a minority government, we, as the Official Opposition, tabled an opposition day motion that is summarized as:

*"...given the PBO posted on March 15, 2018, that "Budget 2018 provides an incomplete account of the changes to the government's \$186.7 billion infrastructure spending plan" and that the "PBO requested the new plan but it does not exist", the House call on the Auditor General of Canada to immediately conduct an audit of the government's "Investing in Canada Plan".*

Although the Trudeau Liberal Government vigorously opposed this motion, it passed with 166 votes in favour and 152 opposed.

Now here we are now in March of 2021(almost April), three years after the PBO first raised the alarm bells, and the Auditor General recently released the audit (Report 9) of the "Investing in Canada" Infrastructure plan.

Unfortunately, the Auditor General also stated:

*"Overall, Infrastructure Canada—as the lead department for the Investing in Canada Plan—was unable to provide meaningful public reporting on the plan's overall progress toward its expected results."*

This relates to \$186.7 BILLION in spending.

My question this week:



Should this be acceptable conduct from your government?

## April 2021

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

If you have lived in the Okanagan long enough, chances are you may have come across the odd sign at a local business that reads:

“No shirt, no shoes, no service”.

Now imagine reading a sign that reads “No COVID vaccination passport, no business.”

While that may sound extreme, in New York City (as one example), there is a passport program being launched this month geared at allowing vaccinated individuals to attend sports, arts and entertainment venues.

In Israel there is a COVID-19 vaccine passport program called “Green Pass” that provides proof of vaccination via a QR code.

Individuals with a “Green Pass” are allowed to attend certain public places, including theatres and concerts.

The International Air Transport Association (IATA), IBM and others are in the process of developing apps that provide a similar vaccination verification service.

Many airlines are working with these app developers to put these vaccine verification app programs into use.

Regardless of what Canada decides on the topic of proof of vaccination, for many who travel for work or pleasure, it is likely those Canadians may require Canadian vaccination documentation in order to satisfy requirements, either from other countries, or travel related organizations like airlines.

Another example is the cruise ship industry.

Celebrity Cruises, Royal Caribbean, Crystal Cruises, Virgin Voyages, American Queen Steamboat Company and Victory Cruise Lines have all announced various vaccination verification requirements.

Currently our Federal Health Minister, Hon. Patty Hajdu, has met with health ministers from other G-7 countries to discuss the potential for proof-of-vaccine documents related to travelling.

My question this week is:

What are your views on the subject of vaccination passports?

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

Spoiler alert.

This weeks MP report will likely only be of interest to boaters.

More specifically boaters who operate motor driven boats and are currently required to hold a Transport Canada 'Operator Card for Pleasure Craft'.

For those of you who hold this 'Pleasure Craft Operators Card, chances are at some point in your past you wrote an exam that was administered by a third party operator and, if you passed, were issued a 'Pleasure Craft Operator Card'.

These cards are required to be carried by skippers at all times when operating a motorized vessel and in the majority of cases have no date of expiry.

The only exception to this requirement was for those who were renting a powerboat or personal watercraft such as a Sea-Doo or WaveRunner.

This exemption was based on the fact that it was not practical to be able to administer the test in such a short period of time and that boat rental agencies provide safety instructions for operators who are renting the boats in question.

The reason for my report this week is that Transport Canada is considering making significant changes to this program.

How will these changes potentially affect you if you currently hold this card?

For starters the cards may no longer become permanent.

There may be a new requirement to take a new course potentially every five years.

The courses themselves may also become considerably more expensive as Transport Canada has proposed that course operators pay a fee of \$5000 for a five-year term.

It is also proposed that there would be an additional fee payable to Transport Canada for each individual who passes the course and receives a new 'Pleasure Craft Operator Card'.

In addition, is a proposed elimination of the exemption for those who would rent a powerboat or personal watercraft.

This proposal has generated significant concern from local boat rental agencies as it is unclear how a test could be administered in a short period of time as well as the economics of the added costs to the boat rental industry, of which we have many here in the Okanagan.

I am not a boater however the comments I have heard from boaters are greatly concerned about these proposed changes.

As one boater shared with me – our local lakes are not serviced by the Canadian Coast Guard, for the most part the Okanagan does not have many of the costly to service navigation aides located in other bodies of

water, and it is proposed to remove VHS weather services that many boaters do use.

In other words, the concerns can be summarized that the federal government is offering less services to local boaters but wanting to take more money from them in return.

In fairness, Transport Canada they have indicated that the current program, as it exists, generates no revenue for the federal government but does carry costs.

The fees raised by these changes will contribute towards the costs of Transport Canada to administer this program.

My question this week is to boaters – Are you supportive of these changes?

Unfortunately, the window of time Transport Canada provided to comment on these proposals has expired but more information can be found here:

<https://letstalktransportation.ca/pcoc>

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

This week the Liberal Government tabled its first budget in over two years.

In her budget speech, the Finance Minister stated that we must build:

*“a more resilient Canada: better, more fair, more prosperous and more innovative.”*

This raises the obvious question.

Who has been governing Canada for the past five years to have made Canada so un-resilient, so un-fair, so unprosperous and lacking in innovation?

This is generally the pattern of Liberal budgets and this one is no exception.

By the numbers this budget promises a massive level of spending, all told some \$143 billion in new spending over the next six years.

Where is it all going?

Despite promises not to use omnibus budgets, this Liberal budget comes in at over 700 pages, so it is only possible to highlight some of the proposed spending areas.

\$30 billion has been earmarked for daycare and early learning over the next five years.

This will require partnerships with the provinces to fully implement.

Ultimately the goal is to provide \$10 per day daycare.

\$18 billion in promised spending over the next five years in an effort to close the gaps between Indigenous

and non-Indigenous people.

\$17 billion is promised to be spent in future years on the promotion of what the Liberals have termed the "green recovery effort".

There is also a \$12 billion promise to extend COVID business aid programs as well as other income support measures.

Another announcement is \$12 billion over five years to increase the OAS benefit that includes a one-time bonus payment of \$500 expected at some point later this year.

I should also add this is not a tax and spend budget.

Many speculated this budget would include a "wealth tax" or other significant tax increases.

From my read of this budget so far, while there have been some minor increases in places, there are no significant tax increases.

How does all this spending get paid for?

While there is no actual debt reduction plan, the Liberals indicate that the levels of spending will decrease over time as many support programs will be wound down and that, combined with economic growth, will offset this spending.

What is ignored in this budget?

Surprisingly there is no significant increase to Federal health transfers, when compared to what was requested by Provincial Premiers.

I say surprisingly as this is the most significant priority request from provincial governments with healthcare system under significant pressure right now.

For those hoping for a universal basic income or a national pharmacare program, these items are left out of the budget.

Also given that this budget takes Canada to a debt to GDP ratio of roughly 50%, there is limited fiscal capacity to potentially add these programs.

My question this week:

Based on what you have read here, and likely heard reported elsewhere, what are your thoughts on this budget?

## **April 28<sup>th</sup>**

I will begin this weeks report by sharing part of a conversation I once had with a now retired provincial cabinet minister.

The former Minister shared an observation that one of the challenges in government, when attempting to

try and resolve a problem, is the need to be very careful to ensure that the proposed solution does not create more new, unanticipated problems.

I am reminded of this as the Liberal Government has tabled, and recently amended, Bill C-10: "An Act to amend the Broadcasting Act and to make consequential amendments to other Acts".

Few would dispute that in an age of increased digital streaming, and various online media platforms, that the Broadcasting Act and the oversight regulation with the Canadian Radio-Television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) is badly in need of updating.

The challenge, as the now retired former cabinet minister would remind us, is how make these much-needed updates without inadvertently creating new problems?

Recently the Liberal Government removed a critical exemption to Bill C-10, that in my view and the view of many other experts and stakeholders, will create serious setbacks to our Charter protected right of free expression.

When Bill C-10 was first proposed it exempted 'unique user generated content' from the bill.

For example, if a Canadian created and posted their own video on YouTube, Facebook, Tik Tok or any other online social media platforms, their content was exempted by the changes proposed in Bill C-10.

However, during clause by clause examination of Bill C-10 in the Industry, Science and Technology committee, the Liberals removed this exemption.

Removing this exemption means that the unelected and unaccountable bureaucrats at the CRTC could have the power to regulate, remove and censor what Canadians post to their own social media.

This in turn can also limit what Canadians are able to see online in Canada.

Instead of Canadians having the choice, the choices could be limited based on a yet to be announced criteria set and enforced by the CRTC.

The Liberals so far defend this amendment stating that the intent is to limit the broadcast of unlicensed content online to protect copyright holders, who have lobbied for these changes.

That ultimately is the problem with the Liberal approach in Bill C-10.

Rather than resolving the unlicensed content issue through copyright law, the government proposes to cut it off at the broadcasting level, allowing Canadian's content to be sacrificed in the process.

In a statement on the bill's Charter compliance, justice officials argued that the original exemption, removed by the Liberals, alleviated potential concerns of breaching section 2 (b) of the Charter on free expression.

With the exemption's removal, many are speculating on what impacts this bill will have.

This approach by the Liberals, according to one of Canada's foremost law professors, who also holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law at the University of Ottawa, is a "shocking and likely unconstitutional speech regulation."

Professor Michael Geist further notes:

“We would never think of subjecting the content of the letters, emails or blog posts to CRTC regulation, yet Canadian Heritage Minister, Steven Guilbeault, and the Liberal government believe it is appropriate to regulate a new generation’s form of speech – TikTok videos, Instagram posts, Facebook feeds, and YouTube videos – as if they are the equivalent of broadcast programs.”

For the record I share the concerns of Professor Geist.

My question this week:

Do you support or oppose this amendment to Bill C-10?

## **May 2021**

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

In late November of 2016 a common media headline was “Trudeau kills Northern Gateway pipeline” after the PM announced his government would not continue with the project.

The announcement to kill the Northern Gateway project also honoured an election commitment from Prime Minister Trudeau, who had previously stated that “the Great Bear Rain Forest was no place for a pipeline.”

The decision to kill the Northern Gateway pipeline project was also politically popular with many who had supported the Prime Minister in the 2015 election.

As many will know, the Prime Minister also announced that he would be supporting and approving the Trans-Mountain pipeline project, a decision that outraged many of those who celebrated the demise of Northern Gateway.

Pipeline politics are indeed very much part of our democratic process as evidenced by the opposition to the Trans-Mountain pipeline from the BC Premier Horgan and his NDP Government, promising to use “every tool in the tool box “to try and stop it.

Why does this matter?

Because pipeline politics are also popular with certain politicians south of our Canada/United States border.

Many will know that President Biden, shortly after occupying the Oval Office, used the power of the Presidential Veto to officially end the Keystone XL pipeline project.

The Keystone XL pipeline was proposed to connect Hardisty, Alberta to Steele City, Nebraska over 1,947-kilometres to transport Canadian crude oil to US refineries.

Keystone XL is not the only pipeline being targeted by United States politicians.

The Line 5 pipeline, built in 1953, runs from Superior, Wisconsin and feeds oil refineries in Sarnia, Ontario.

Line 5 also carries natural gas and is considered a critical supply source of oil and gas to the Ontario and Quebec economies.

The challenge is a portion of Line 5 runs underwater where Lake Michigan meets Lake Huron at depths between 100 and 270 feet in the Straits of Mackinac.

The risk for environmental damage related to a potential spill of a pipeline that carries up to 540,000 barrels a day of oil and natural gas liquids has resulted in Michigan State Governor Gretchen Whitmer ordering the revocation of the easement for the pipeline and that it be shutdown.

Enbridge, the owner and operator of this pipeline, is exploring legal options as well as mediation to avoid the shut down that is currently set to come into effect next week.

This possible pipeline shutdown has also created considerable political tension as the Trudeau Liberal Government is said to be using all diplomatic channels in Washington and with President Biden to avoid this pipeline from being shut down.

I strongly support pipeline projects however this issue raises a question to those who oppose pipelines, that is seldom asked:

Considering PM Trudeau politically killed the Northern Gateway pipeline, much as President Biden did for Keystone XL, both citing risk and environmental reasons, why is Governor Gretchen Whitmer not entitled to follow their lead?

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

This week the Prime Minister created a bit of a stir in Ottawa when he announced his latest sound bite; that Canadians can enjoy a "one-dose summer".

The comment appears to be an admission that at best, those Canadians who want to be fully vaccinated with two doses of COVID vaccine, will only be able to receive one dose by summer.

The expectation is that every Canadian can be in this "one-dose" situation by the end of June.

The required second dose would occur at some point in the fall.

What does a "one dose" summer look like compared to a "two dose" summer as we now witnessing in the United States?

Unfortunately, the Prime Minister has not provided a clear definition of what a "one dose summer" really means.

In fairness much of health policy is provincial, however here in the Okanagan, we receive a considerable amount of business as a result from our proximity to the Canada /USA border.

Increasingly I am receiving questions from many in the tourism and hospitality sectors who are receiving

booking requests from fully vaccinated US citizens and they are unclear how far down the road they must continue to decline these requests, which in turn amounts to a significant loss of revenue.

I am also increasingly hearing from frustrated Canadians who would like more certainty on what will be the plan for the border re-opening so they can visit family and attend to other commitments.

On these points PM Trudeau continues to say Canada will "align policy on 'vaccine passports'" with other countries.

Unfortunately, this is not a clear answer on what his expectations will be for fully vaccinated US citizens desiring to do business here in Canada.

While this is an important question for many small businesses who depend on US visitors here in the summer months, it may or may not be a concern to other citizens.

That leads to my question this week:

When it comes to the Canada /USA border what are your thoughts on a potential re-opening?

## **May 19<sup>th</sup>**

At the time I write this weeks report, British Columbia has received just over 2.93 million doses of COVID-19 vaccine.

Of that, over 85% has already been administered, meaning approximately 2.5 million citizens have now received a single dose of vaccine.

Just over 130,000 have now received two doses of COVID-19 vaccine

With the population of slightly over 5 million B.C., this means we are not at a threshold where roughly 50% of our population has at least one dose of vaccine.

Canada wide, this number is not far behind, with 46% of the population now having received one dose of vaccine.

In other words, Canada is now roughly halfway finished vaccinating one half of our population.

The question that's increasingly being asked is, what comes next?

In the United States, the CDC has released guidelines that outlines many activities that are now considered safe and do not require mask wearing or social distancing.

In the UK there is now a four-stage roadmap that outlines the lifting of restrictions at each stage.

In stage 3, for example, most businesses will be able to fully re-open.

This week the UK intends to announce the country is now in Stage 3.



The EU is also in the process of creating a harmonized list of travel regulations and restrictions, as well as creating an electronic travel certificate.

Unfortunately, here in Canada we still do not have a detailed re-opening plan from our federal government.

The Public Health Agency of Canada has recently posted some information but not to the level of detail needed by many Canadians.

As a result of this, the Business Council of Canada has written an open letter to the Prime Minister requesting a plan to reopen the Canadian economy.

This letter offers advice to the Prime Minister:

*“Canadians also want to know when it will be safe to travel again to see friends and loved ones. To avoid rising levels of confusion and frustration, your government should collaborate with officials in the United States and other countries in setting benchmarks that would enable the easing of border restrictions and travel quarantines. A clear and predictable plan for a gradual and safe return to a more normal life would instill public confidence while demonstrating concern for the physical, mental and economic health of Canadians. As business and community leaders we stand ready to work with you to ensure a safe and sustainable recovery.”*

The intent of my report this week is not to criticize the federal government for a lack of a plan but rather to ask a question to the citizens of Central Okanagan, Similkameen and Nicola.

When it comes to re-opening our local and national economy what are the concerns you would like to see addressed?

## **May 26<sup>th</sup>**

It was roughly one month ago that I last wrote about Bill C-10.

For those unfamiliar with Bill C-10, it is the Liberal government bill that aims to, among other things, *“provide the CRTC with new powers to regulate online audio and audio-visual services, allowing the CRTC to create conditions of service and other regulatory requirements under which these online broadcasters would operate in Canada.”*

If you have been following Bill C-10 closely, you will know that critics of this bill have raised some very serious concerns.

I continue to receive a growing number of calls and emails from local citizens who are strongly opposed to Bill C-10.

The concerns I hear locally are different from the concerns heard in Ottawa, where industry and cultural groups have lined up, depending on whether they win or lose more control over their revenues.

The concerns I hear locally are largely around freedom of expression, however more and more I am also hearing about C-10's impact to 'net neutrality'.

For those of you unfamiliar, net neutrality is a principle that internet service providers should treat all

internet data equally.

In other words, certain internet content should not be sped up or slowed down, censored, or blocked, based on discretionary criteria.

It is an important principle and one that PM Trudeau defended in 2017: *“digital technology and use of the internet is the lever to create economic growth and opportunities for citizens right across this country, we need to continue to defend net neutrality and I will.”*

The concerns raised point to the fact that Bill C-10 enables unelected bureaucrats at the CRTC to have the power to regulate and force these online companies to put in place regimes or algorithms that may misplace or censor content posted online by Canadians.

The problem is much of the content on these social media sites is unique content created by Canadians, and posted to their social media accounts.

While the intent is to ensure Canadian content, the question is who decides these definitions for the CRTC?

Instead of you having the choice, your choices could be limited, based on a yet to be announced criteria set and enforced by the CRTC.

Further, if certain content is prioritized because it meets an arbitrary standard or other content is pushed so far back that it is difficult to find or censored, there is no question that would be in contrast with the principle of net neutrality.

This is the core concern that I am hearing from many local citizens.

People do not want unelected and accountable bureaucrats using an arbitrary process to decide what does and does not meet their objectives.

My question this week:

Do you want the CRTC to have the tools to regulate your internet content?

## **June 2021**

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

From time to time I receive requests to cover specific topics in my weekly reports to local citizens.

Recently my Summerland office received a request from an individual wanting to know how much employment has changed within the Federal Government of Canada during the pandemic.

Although the data for the current year of 2021 is not available, the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat does have this information available for 2020 that in turn can be compared to 2019.

In 2020 the total number of FTE (full time equivalent employees) working within the Public Service of

Canada was 300,450.

This is an increase of over 12,000 positions since 2019 where the total number of FTE positions was 287,983.

How do today's number compare to historical trends?

In 2010, the furthest date back this information is publicly posted there was 282,980 FTE positions.

Total FTE positions in the Public Service does not include paid consultants.

Recently the Financial Post reported the growth of paid consultants in Ottawa.

As the Globe and Mail reported the "costs for "professional and special services" are expected to hit \$16.4 billion by 2022".

In 2015, the year this current Government came to power, this amount was \$9.5 Billion.

Before I close this week's report, I would like to take a moment to share a few words that I believe the vast majority of citizens in the riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola share.

We are collectively shocked, saddened and outraged at the discovery of an unmarked gravesite for 215 children at a former Indigenous residential school in Kamloops.

This discovery is difficult to put into words.

While we have had an emergency debate in Ottawa on this horrific discovery, the Prime Minister has also stated:

"Canada will be there to support Indigenous communities as we discover the extent of this trauma and trying to give opportunities for families and communities to heal,"

For the record, I stand with the Prime Minister and as the Official Opposition we will be supporting the work of the Government, working in partnerships with Indigenous communities, to help ensure that they receive support and accountability for this dark part of our past.

I would in particular ask that we all think of the Tk'emlúps teSecwépemc First Nation who made this deeply disturbing discovery.

I would also ask that we remember many families in Indigenous communities throughout our region who had children in residential schools.

Many who did not return.

I have no weekly question this week.

## June 9<sup>th</sup>

Last week, in the House of Commons, the NDP used their Opposition Day to table a motion that in the words of South Okanagan - West Kootenay NDP MP Richard Cannings *“called on the government to take the Truth and Reconciliation Commission’s calls to action seriously. It asked the government to finally fund the investigations that are needed to let us all know the truth. And it asked the government to stop fighting indigenous children in court.”*

As MP Cannings went on to point out:

*“that motion was passed unanimously in the House of Commons, though shamefully a few cabinet ministers abstained and the rest of the Cabinet, including the Prime Minister, didn’t even show up to vote.”*

For the record I voted in support of this motion and participated in the emergency debate on this topic.

During the debate one of the concerns that I shared is that we must be careful in Ottawa to avoid repeating the mistakes of the past.

From the local Indigenous communities I have heard from, many are still in shock and others are holding community meetings. I am told there are many discussions underway.

I should also add that none of the Indigenous communities within my riding expressed support or opposition to this NDP motion, nor has other guidance been offered at this point.

This in my view raises a concern, when elected officials in Ottawa debate and vote on a motion with very little input or consultation with Indigenous leaders.

Some could rightfully call this an “Ottawa knows best approach”.

I believe we must recognize that this approach has historically not served our country well.

On balance I supported this NDP motion as I believe the intentions were sincere.

However, I also believe we must take great caution when moving on a motion without proper direction from those Indigenous communities who will be most impacted by decisions made in Ottawa.

“Meaning well” and being “well intentioned” does not mean actual outcomes will unfold as hoped or intended.

As Prime Minister Trudeau recently stated:

*“If it (true reconciliation) were only done by ministers, if it were only done by Ottawa, to solve these challenges, it might have been done long ago, but it would have been done wrong,”*

My question this week:

While this NDP motion was well intended, do you believe Parliament should take greater caution in the future to receive direction and input from communities that will be impacted?

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

By the time you read this, it is extremely likely that the Federal Government will have announced some sort of plan for a phased re-opening of the Canada/ USA border as well a plan for international travel at Canadian airports.

It is expected that the United States will announce a similar phased re-opening for the American border to Canadian residents.

While the details of either country's plans are not yet known, it has been widely speculated that entry to the United States may only be open to Canadian citizens who have been fully vaccinated.

For those unfamiliar with the term, 'fully vaccinated', it applies to citizens who have received two doses of an approved vaccine within a period of time where the vaccine is determined to be in effect.

What is unknown at this point are the expectations or criteria that Canada would have for US citizens crossing the border into Canada.

It should also be noted that the House of Commons is in session for roughly ten more days before it will rise for the summer recess.

This means when the details of the phased border re-opening are public, there will be a limited amount of time to address any concerns in Ottawa.

My question this week:

Given that an announcement on the US/Canada border is coming in the very near future, what concerns do you have that you would like to see addressed?

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

Today is the last day the House of Commons will sit before it recesses for the summer.

If you have been following media reports, you will also know that many are speculating this may well be the final sitting of Canada's 43rd Parliament as rumours abound that the Prime Minister will call an election before the House is scheduled to return in September.

Do I believe the election rumours?

Curiously the Liberal omnibus budget Bill C-30, that is scheduled to be passed later today, extends current pandemic related benefits into September.

There is no question that Prime Minister Trudeau will not want to head into an election without the pandemic benefits freely flowing as cutting off these benefits would be very unpopular politically.

So it is conceivable that the Prime Minister desires to have an election using the ongoing benefits for political purposes.

Although the Parliamentary Budget Officer has repeatedly stated that our current spending levels are not

sustainable, our Prime Minister and his Finance Minister have stated that as long as interest rates remain low, they believe this spending is “affordable”.

The Prime Minister has also recently used terms such as ‘toxicity’ and ‘obstructionism’ and has made claims that Parliament is “dysfunctional”.

Collectively many believe that all of this points to a pending potential summer election being called by the Prime Minister.

From my own perspective, I would be remiss if I did not point out that the Prime Minister and his Government were just found to be in contempt of Parliament by the Speaker.

A vote was held and passed to censure the Defence Minister for his failing to take action to prevent acts of sexual misconduct from occurring against women in our Canadian Armed Forces.

This week the Canadian Forces ombudsman released a scathing report in which he stated:

"When leaders turn a blind eye to our recommendations and concerns in order to advance political interests and their own self-preservation or career advancement, it is the members of the defence community that suffer the consequences,"

This was an obvious shot across the bow at the Prime Minister and the Defence Minister.

Is Parliament dysfunctional?

I was troubled that the Prime Minister made this allegation.

On Tuesday of this week, while other Party Leaders and MP's were physically in Question Period, there was only one single Liberal MP in the House.

The Prime Minister and all of his Ministers were all absent.

When one is not in the House of Commons, to suggest it is “dysfunctional” does a disservice to those who are there serving the interests of Canadians who we are elected to represent.

On the topic of a potential election, my question is a simple one.

Would you support a summer election?

With the House of Commons now adjourned for the summer, and possibly not returning in the fall in the event the Prime Minister Justin Trudeau calls an election, this means my annual summer listening tour can now begin.

Every year since I was first elected as a Member of Parliament, I have made a point of meeting with citizens in every region of my riding to hear thoughts, concerns, and ideas.

This has always been a very useful and helpful exercise as it guides the work that I do in Ottawa once the fall session gets underway.

One example of this is over this past year, with many students unable to secure jobs over the summer months due to the pandemic, it has increased student debt levels and that has also increased the anxiety many students with significant debt and interest payments.

So far this summer, while my listening tour has only just begun, I am also hearing from many small business owners who have never encountered more difficulty in hiring for vacant jobs.

In short, many report they are unable to fill vacant positions.

A big part of this can be attributed to the federal government, who has not yet implemented a plan to transition workers back into the work force as various Provinces ease pandemic restrictions.

It is my view this government would rather prioritize an election, and claim they need a majority, before any effort will be made to change current pandemic related benefit programs that are acting as a barrier to fill vacant job postings.

The purpose of my report this week is not to criticize these challenges but rather to propose a solution that may help students struggling with debt, as well as employers struggling to fill "help wanted" positions.

Before the House of Commons adjourned, I tabled my latest Private Members Bill -- Bill C-317.

My new bill proposes to amend the Income Tax Act.

Currently, if an employer wants to help an employee pay off their student loans, either with a bonus or as part of their salary, that assistance is taxed as regular income.

My bill would allow employers and employees to enter into voluntary arrangements where payments made by an employer to an employee, pursuant to a student loan assistance program, would be a non-taxable benefit.

This would help young people to pay down debt faster and start saving for the future.

For willing employers, this would help them attract talented workers and encourage employee retention as training costs are considerable.

From a governmental perspective, it would also help ensure that student loans are repaid faster.

I believe that when you say to someone that the challenge young people face is materially different than previous generations, many would agree with that.

Young people often share with me that graduating with thousands of dollars in student loans is a massive barrier to them planning for the future and is also a significant source of stress and anxiety.

I have proposed Bill C-317 as a means to help with the challenge's students and employers face.

My question this week -

Do you support Bill C-317?

## **July 2021**

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

As you may have heard, starting on July 5th, restrictions were slightly eased when crossing the border into Canada.

Unfortunately this has led to some misunderstanding in certain circumstances.

For example, while some restrictions have been eased, the requirement for U.S. and other citizens coming to Canada for only essential reasons has not been relaxed or otherwise changed.

U.S. and other non-Canadian citizens coming to Canada for non-essential reasons will still be turned away at the border.

This means that any potential tourists coming to vacation in Canada continues to be prohibited.

So what has changed?

The most significant change is that for Canadian citizens eligible for entry into Canada, there is now a process to potentially not be subject to mandatory 14 day quarantine, including the mandatory hotel stop over for air travel where applicable.

As of July 5th, an eligible citizen, who has been fully vaccinated with a vaccine approved for use in Canada, may be eligible to bypass quarantine under certain conditions.

The conditions to bypass the quarantine include providing proof of your vaccination, you must also provide proof of a negative COVID-19 test result that has been taken within 72 hours of your entry into Canada.

Proof of vaccination can be provided online via the ArriveCANweb portal or through the ArriveCAN app that can be found on both the Google Play Store and the App Store for iPhone.

The definition of “fully vaccinated” is:

*“To be considered fully vaccinated, a traveller must have received the full series of a vaccine – or combination of vaccines – accepted by the Government of Canada at least 14 days prior to entering Canada. Currently, those vaccines are manufactured by Pfizer, Moderna, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD, and Janssen (Johnson & Johnson).”*

For travellers who are not fully vaccinated, there are no changes to the existing restrictions and quarantine requirements.

My question this week:

Now that there is a Government of Canada app to provide proof of vaccination available for iOS, Android and online, how do you feel about that?



## July 14<sup>th</sup>

In the Okanagan, Similkameen and Nicola Valley's, we have many small family run farms and small business operations.

When it comes time for retirement, if a business owner decides to sell to another member of the family to pass the business along to the next generation, the difference between the sale price and the original purchase price is considered a dividend.

In the event the same family farm or small business is sold to a stranger the difference between the sale price and the original purchase price is considered a capital gain.

Both dividends and capital gains are taxable.

The difference is that generally capital gains are taxed at lower rate than dividends.

So, if you sell your family farm or related small business to a family member, you are in effect penalized for doing so, compared to selling to a non-family member who would pay lower taxes on the sale.

My Conservative colleague MP Larry Maguire from Brandon-Souris did not feel this tax approach was fair and tabled a Private Members Bill C-208 "An Act to amend the Income Tax Act (transfer of small business or family farm or fishing corporation)".

Bill C-208 proposes to amend the Income Tax Act so that the same tax rate should apply when selling an operation to a family member as would apply when selling to a third party.

Unfortunately PM Trudeau, the Finance Minister, the Liberal cabinet and majority of the Liberal caucus all voted against this bill that promotes taxation fairness to families.

Fortunately, all members of the Conservative, the NDP, Bloc Québécois, Green MPs and some backbench Liberals voted for this bill allowing it to pass third reading by a vote of Yeas: 199 - Nays: 128.

Bill C-208 received Royal Assent and was passed into law on June 29, 2021.

Despite this bill now becoming law, the government is refusing to immediately implement the bill and has indicated that:

"The government proposes to introduce legislation to clarify that these amendments would apply at the beginning of the next taxation year, starting on January 1, 2022."

The serious concern here is that the legislation has already been passed into law.

In spite of the fact that the current Liberal government doesn't support it.

This action undermines and disrespects the will of the people through an elected Parliament.

It is my view that the Prime Minister believes by delaying this bill until after a federal election, if the Liberal Government receives a majority, they can overturn it.

I believe this bill, that is now law, should be immediately implemented.

If a future majority government seeks to overturn these amendments to the Income Tax act, they could attempt to do so using the democratic process.

To use the bureaucracy to delay and basically block this bill is an arrogant affront to democracy.

My question this week: do you agree?

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

This week I will give Prime Minister Trudeau some well deserved credit.

On Monday the Federal Government announced:

*"August 9, 2021, Canada plans to begin allowing entry to American citizens and permanent residents, who are currently residing in the United States, and have been fully vaccinated at least 14 days prior to entering Canada for non-essential travel."*

These fully vaccinated travelers will also not have to quarantine upon arrival in Canada, provided they comply with the required pre-entry COVID-19 molecular test with a negative result.

The Federal Government also announced they intend to expand this relaxing of restrictions to fully vaccinated international visitors on September 7th, with the same criteria for pre-entry with a COVID-19 molecular test and a negative result.

Why do I commend the Prime Minister for this announcement?

It is not because it means the border will be re-opening.

The reason I commend the Prime Minister is that providing clear dates and criteria in turn helps create certainty.

Many small businesses here in the Okanagan, to some extent, depend on visits from US citizens.

Over the past months there has been a growing frustration as many receive calls for bookings, orders and/or reservations, leaving small business owners in a challenging situation of having to refuse business and not knowing when the situation might change.

The announcement from the Prime Minister fixes that and also provides an opportunity for families who have been separated by the border closure to be reunited.

However, it must also be pointed out that the announcement made by the Prime Minister only applies to US citizens coming to Canada.

Unfortunately, the Federal Government did not coordinate this re-opening with the United States, so Canadian citizens will not be in a situation to receive reciprocal approval for non-essential travel at the US border.

Strangely, when the Prime Minister was directly asked if he had contacted President Biden to advocate for

a reciprocal treatment for Canadians at the US border by a reporter at a news conference earlier this week, the PM refused to answer the question.

That leads to my question this week:

Should the border re-opening have been coordinated on a reciprocal basis or do you support the current approach by the Prime Minister?

## **July 28<sup>th</sup>**

As my summer listening tour continues around the riding of Central Okanagan Similkameen Nicola (COSN), one topic that I continue to hear being raised is regarding vaccine passports.

When I last wrote a weekly report on this subject, back in early April, the vast majority of the feedback I received was largely opposed to the idea of vaccine passports.

While I continue to hear opposition, I am also increasingly hearing from other citizens who are demanding the Federal Government announce a federal vaccine passport program.

This week CTV News reported that a similar questions were asked of Prime Minister Trudeau:

*"Prime Minister Justin Trudeau skirted around questions about when Canadians can expect to be equipped with formal proof of their COVID-19 vaccine status for travel abroad but vowed that the system will be both "simple and efficient."*

Based on the Prime Minister's response we know that a federal vaccine passport program is in the works.

What remains unknown is when this program will be formally announced.

I have also been receiving other concerns related to this subject.

Most have opposed the use of documents -- whether it is called a 'vaccination record' or 'passport' domestically.

For example, to attend an event or domestic travel for, what is deemed provincially, as a non essential purpose.

I should note that the decision to require citizens within Canada to use such documentation would be a provincial and not a federal one.

However, it becomes a federal matter when that travel is international.

I have heard of local citizens, in attempting to make travel arrangements, being denied entry to various countries on account of having been vaccinated here in Canada with one or both doses of the AstraZeneca vaccine.

In one case, a Canadian attempting to attend a family member's funeral was denied entry into another country.

It is a sovereign right of any country to establish under law who may enter their country and under what circumstances.

As a Member of Parliament, I believe Canada has the same sovereign right to admit or reject any admission under its own lawful authority and I believe Canadians strongly support that right.

It has been reported to me that some countries will only recognize mRNA vaccines manufactured by companies such as Pfizer and Moderna.

The Province of Quebec, to remedy this situation, has announced it will be offering an extra dose of an mRNA vaccine to those travelling to countries that only recognize mRNA vaccines.

If you are wondering what are the approved vaccines for US citizens to visit Canada for non-essential purposes beginning on August 9, 2021 the list includes:

Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, AstraZeneca/COVISHIELD and Janssen/Johnson & Johnson.

In other words, Canada will provide more flexibility on the list of approved vaccines to visitors than many other countries who have formerly announced guidelines to foreign visitors.

While a federal vaccine passport program has not yet been announced my question this week is as follows:

When there is a federal vaccine passport program here in Canada, will you access it?

## **August 2021**

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

If you follow the rumours out of Ottawa, it has been reported, as early as August 8th, the Prime Minister will request our new Governor General, Mary Simon, dissolve Parliament and call an election.

If that were the case this would be my final weekly MP report to you as it would be inappropriate to distribute weekly reports as a political candidate as opposed to being an elected official.

Will there be an election?

From my perspective I believe public safety must come first.

As many regions of Canada are reporting an increase in COVID outbreaks related to the Delta variant, an election call would carry serious risk for a sitting Prime Minister, even in a minority Parliament.

The leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, wrote to the Governor General to ask that a request to grant an election from the Prime Minister not be granted.

The leader of the NDP has further pointed out that the minority Liberal Government has never once failed a confidence vote in the House of Commons that would trigger an election.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau has argued that both the Conservative and NDP opposition parties have

routinely obstructed passage of his government's priority bills whenever asked by media if he will ask for an election.

From a factual point of view, it should be noted when the Prime Minister prorogued Parliament last summer, he did far more damage in delaying his government bills than any opposition party could possibly do.

It should also be noted that the NDP opposition has made offers to fast track and prioritize certain Liberal Government bills and the Prime Minister refused these gestures.

In short, the Prime Minister's argument is factually incorrect and unfair to the NDP.

It is true that the Conservative opposition has fought strongly against some of the Liberal Government "priority bills".

One example of a Liberal Government "priority bill" is Bill C-10, which has been panned by many critics as an internet censorship bill under the guise of a broadcast modernization.

Canada's foremost law professor, who also holds the Canada Research Chair in Internet and E-commerce Law at the University of Ottawa, has said Bill C-10 is a "shocking and likely unconstitutional speech regulation."

Experts like Professor Michael Geist as well as industry and civil liberties experts and stakeholders have continued to strongly advocate against this bill being passed, arguing it is also an assault on long-standing Canadian internet policy, such as violating net neutrality.

In the House of Commons, only the Conservative Opposition as well as Independent MP Jody-Wilson Raybould have fought against this bill being passed.

So, will there be an election?

Certainly, if the Prime Minister believes an election campaign suits his best interests and the interests of the Liberal Party of Canada, I suspect we will see an election in the near future.

However the purpose of, what could be my last report to you of this 43rd Parliament, is not to communicate what the Prime Minister wants, but rather to ask what you want.

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

In my report last week, I covered recent speculation out of Ottawa on reports of an election writ being dropped, potentially this week, creating an early fall election.

I also asked the question: "Do you want to see an election called in the immediate future?"

I sincerely appreciate the significant number of replies I have received in response to this question.

There is no question that many citizens in our region have very serious concerns of the future direction of Canada.

In the absence of the writ being dropped my summer listening tour continues.

One concern that I have heard from citizens in Merritt is the state of the local post office, who many have suggested has fallen into disrepair.

I raised these concerns directly with Canada Post in Ottawa and am pleased to report the some much needed maintenance work will soon be getting underway on this post office.

It was encouraging to hear Canada Post take these concerns seriously and commit to making improvements so that the Merritt Post Office reflects “the beauty and pride of the local community.”

The reason why I raise the Merritt post office is that it is a remainder on the importance of raising concerns with your elected official, be it an MP, MLA, Mayor, Councilor or Regional Director.

If elected officials are not made aware of challenges or concerns in a community, there is less chance of success in addressing them.

At the same time, holding elected officials to account is part of how a healthy democracy works.

As my summer listening tour continues, I invite you to contact me if you have a concern that relates to the Federal Government that you would like to share.

This also relates to my question for this week.

From a Federal Government perspective, what is your top concern that you would like to see action taken on?

## **October 2021**

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

Before I begin this week's report, I would like to confirm that my long-standing policy of not commenting on the personal decisions of other Members of Parliament remains.

Thus I will not be commenting on Prime Minister Trudeau's vacation trip to Tofino on the National Day for Truth and Reconciliation last week.

Instead, I will pass on the Prime Minister's comments:

“Travelling on September 30th was a mistake and I regret it” as the PM apologized for his actions in this matter.

Another announcement from Ottawa this week are further details and clarification on the Federal Government's mandatory vaccination plan for domestic air, sea and train travel.

Starting on October 30th, 2021, all travelers will be required to be fully vaccinated before boarding planes, trains or marine vessels that are federally regulated.

At this point in time, I am told this will not apply to BC Ferries.

Also all members of the federal public service, including organizations such as the RCMP, CBSA, Canada Post and others, will be expected to have similar mandatory vaccination policies in place.

The Prime Minister has indicated that criteria will be announced regarding exemptions for medical or religious reasons by the end of October.

At the time of my writing this report, both the House of Commons and Senate will be required to implement their own mandatory vaccination policies, although MPs and Senators will not be exempt from the travel restrictions without a valid exemption.

In the interests of full disclosure, I am fully vaccinated and encourage others to be fully vaccinated if they are not already.

My question this week:

Do you support these mandatory vaccination policies?

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

Normally the House of Commons is back in session during the third week in September, meaning we would be well into the fall session by now.

Obviously with Prime Minister Trudeau having called an election on September 20th, the normal Parliamentary cycle was delayed.

Recently I have been increasingly asked the question when will the new Parliament be up and running in Ottawa?

For some context, the 2015 general election that was held on Monday, Oct. 19th and just over two weeks later on November 4th, Prime Minister Trudeau announced his cabinet and the new Parliament resumed roughly one month after that on December 3rd with a Throne Speech being heard on December 4th.

We are now three weeks past the September 20th election and I would expect the PM to announce his cabinet within the next week, with Parliament likely returning with a Throne Speech sometime potentially as late as December.

It also should be noted that the first action of Parliament, once it returns, is to elect a new Speaker.

Opposition parties will also be announcing who their critics will be as well as their House administration officers such as the House Leader and Whip.

The reason why I am often asked when will the new Parliament begin sitting relates to another question I am also receiving frequently that relates to the Canadian Recovery Benefit (CRB) program that replaced the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) program.

Currently the CRB, much like Canadian Emergency Wage Subsidy (CEWS) and Canada's other pandemic relief benefit programs are set to expire on October 23, 2021.

Many Canadians are awaiting news as to what will become of these programs.

While there have been hints that discussions around extending these benefits are being held, no conclusive statement has emerged from the Trudeau Government.

From my perspective, I would expect the Prime Minister would have a new cabinet in place ASAP and the fate on the future of these programs would be a priority topic of discussion.

With Statistics Canada announcing that Canada's unemployment rate has now reached pre-pandemic levels, some are suggesting these programs should be wound down.

As the National Post recently reported on October 9th:

*"A chorus of business, academic and political voices wants an end to the CRB once and for all, claiming it's hindering productivity and worsening labour shortages..."*

My question this week:

What do you think should happen with Canada's pandemic recovery programs on October 23?

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

It was in an October of 2018 MP Report that I referenced serious concerns raised by residents on news that Statistics Canada was demanding access to certain Canadians' personal financial and banking information, including all transactions along with bank account balances, without their consent.

At that time, Prime Minister Trudeau made it clear that he supported Ottawa bureaucrats having access to this personal financial information.

The Prime Minister also stated that Statistics Canada was actively engaged with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner in that data gathering effort.

We later discovered that the Privacy Commissioner had no idea Statistics Canada wanted this data from 500,000 Canadian households.

The Privacy Commissioner further stated that Statistics Canada was falling "way short" of its stated objective of being transparent.

It was also revealed that the Minister at the time was not notified of this Stats Canada data gathering effort, as is required under legislation.

Fortunately, this plan was halted.

I bring this up because an Ottawa based journalism outlet "Blacklock's Reporter" has just revealed, through an access to information request, that the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) has recently been involved in a data gathering effort again involving your personal financial records.

According to Blacklock's "nearly nine million mortgage holders" had their "Data obtained without



borrowers' informed consent" including "personal income, municipal addresses, credit scores and household debts even for homeowners who were not CMHC customers."

The report further states that, once again, the Office of the Privacy Commissioner was never consulted on this data gathering effort.

When this similar situation occurred in 2018 with Stats Canada, Parliament was in session and we, as the Official Opposition, were able to ask questions of both the Minister and Prime Minister to hold the government accountable.

Unfortunately, we learned recently that the Prime Minister does not intend to recall Parliament until Monday, November 22nd.

Well over a month away from today and over two months since the September election.

This leads to my question for this week:

Do you believe two months to recall Parliament after an election is a reasonable period of time or should this occur within a shorter time frame?

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

This week Prime Minister Trudeau finally announced his new cabinet, after waiting over one month since the September election.

Not unlike what occurred under former Prime Minister Harper, the new cabinet announced yesterday by PM Trudeau is significantly larger with 39 members, one under 40 members, the largest that appointed by Prime Minister Harper in 2015.

For contrast, the first cabinet announced by Prime Minister Harper in 2006 was just 26 members, likewise Prime Minister Trudeau's first cabinet announced in 2015 was 31 members.

In total there are eight "rookies" in this new cabinet, and one former Minister returning, while two current Liberal MPs were dropped from the cabinet.

Unfortunately, we still must wait until November 22nd, 2021 before Prime Minister Trudeau recalls Parliament.

On a personal note, I am frustrated by the long wait for Parliament to return.

One reason for this relates to the expiry of Canada's pandemic response benefit programs that occurred on October 23rd, 2021.

By now you have likely heard that the Liberal Government will not be renewing these programs as they previously existed, but instead have announced new assistance programs that will be more targeted.

The Liberal Government has further announced that these new programs will be more focused on incentivizing a return to work.

For the record I fully support the stated goal of the Liberal Government in this regard, however I believe this same principle should apply to Parliament and getting MPs back to work in Ottawa as well.

As is often the case with Government programs reading the fine print is always the key to ensuring the programs are working as intended and are accessible to those in need.

In this case the details of many of these programs require clarification and proper Parliamentary scrutiny and oversight is an important part of this process.

Another challenge with Parliament not sitting is that it limits the ability to raise issues of concern within the House of Commons.

One example of this is the continued closure of direct to the Kelowna Airport (YLW) international flights, in particular from the United States.

Recently I have heard from several in the accommodation and tourism sector who are literally losing tens of thousands of dollars of revenue as frequent customers from US destinations who are instead booking direct trips to other Canadian airports that have had their international flight status restored.

As one small business owner recently vented in frustration – they do not want “government handouts” they simply want the opportunity to host their guests again.

They have also correctly pointed out this can save the government from providing expensive support programs.

My question this week:

Do you support the Kelowna Airport being re-opened to International flights as have been many other airports in Canada?

## **November 2021**

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

In last week's report I referenced the closure of the Kelowna International airport (YLW) to international flights and asked:

“Do you support the Kelowna Airport being re-opened to International flights as have been many other airports in Canada?”

I would like to thank all of those who took the time to respond and can state the responses were both overwhelming and almost unanimous in support of international flights returning to YLW.

Fortunately, we had some excellent news this week as Transport Canada announced eight more Canadian airports will, as of November 30th, 2021, again be open to international arrivals and departures.

The list of these eight airports St. John's, Hamilton, Waterloo, Regina, Saskatoon, Kelowna, Abbotsford and Victoria.

I would like to sincerely thank all of those who worked in support of this announcement.

On the topic of International travel, currently over 39,000 delegates have registered to attend the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland, making this the largest attended COP climate conference in history.

Blacklock's, a journalism organization out of Ottawa, reports that the official Canadian delegation at the COP26 conference is 277 delegates, 30 Environment Canada staff, 17 press aides as well as a videographer & speechwriter for the Prime Minister and 4 CBC reporters.

In the interests of full disclosure, members of the opposition also attend this conference.

I am attending on behalf of the Official Opposition as the Shadow Minister for Environment and Climate Change, as is the leader of the NDP, Jagmeet Singh, Bloc MP Kristina Michaud and Green Party MP's Elizabeth May and Mike Morrice.

Several government ministers including Prime Minister Trudeau are also attending this conference and the prime minister has made several announcements of behalf of Canada.

One of the more noteworthy announcements was a promise that "Canada will impose a hard cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector"

At the moment the exact details of this announcement are unknown however the goal is to get emissions to net zero by 2050 within this Canadian industry.

One of the challenges is that other countries who produce oil and gas are not following Canada in setting emissions caps, nor are they setting a "price on pollution" when it comes to oil and gas.

A further complication is that different regions of Canada use oil and gas that is imported from these countries, such as Saudi Arabia and the United States.

That leads to my question for this week:

How do you think the Government should deal with oil and gas imports from other countries that are not subject to these same types of policies?

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

This week it was the Leader of the Official Opposition's turn to announce his appointments of shadow cabinet critics in the new Parliament.

I was honoured to be returned to the role of Shadow Minister for Environment & Climate Change.

This news arrived to me as I was attending the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference in Glasgow, Scotland.

As I mentioned in my report last week, it was earlier at this conference where PM Trudeau announced that:

“Canada will impose a hard cap on emissions from the oil and gas sector”.

An announcement that provoked much discussion given that the exact details of this announcement to get emissions to net zero by 2050 within this Canadian industry remain unknown.

I also raised the concern that other countries such as Saudi Arabia and USA, who import oil & gas into Canada, are not following this policy of setting emissions caps or a “price on pollution”.

My weekly question was “How do you think the Government should deal with oil and gas imports from other countries that are not subject to these same types of policies?”.

There was a significant amount of well thought out responses to this question and I would like to sincerely thank those who took the time to share their ideas.

One other challenge has also since emerged.

Saskatchewan Premier Scott Moe has stated that at no time did the Prime Minister or the Minister for Environment & Climate Change ever pick up the phone to consult with, or otherwise communicate, about the policy promise to cap Canadian oil & gas emissions.

This is problematic because oil and gas regulation in Canada remains an area of provincial jurisdiction.

It is also my concern that actions to reduce our emissions here in Canada are important.

Likewise, the need for the federal government to work with the Provinces is critical.

Taking action on our environment should not be done divisively in a manner that pits regions of Canada against each other.

I believe strongly that the Prime Minister has an obligation to work with the Premiers and that includes consultation and communication on policies that are within Provincial jurisdiction.

My question this week is:

Do you agree?

## **November 17<sup>th</sup>**

There is a saying in social media...” I can’t un-see that”...often associated with online posts the depict some sort of rarely seen, almost impossible to comprehend act or event conveniently captured in a manner that generates “likes” for viewers.

Sadly, here in Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola, Fraser Valley and in parts of Vancouver Island this past week, we cannot and will not ever un-see the devastation and destruction caused by record levels of rainfall and resulting flooding.

Merritt, a community over 7,000 people strong, is currently evacuated.

Motorists are still stranded in various places throughout the central and southern regions of B.C.

Many grocery stores are running low on some basic groceries. Supply chains, for the moment, are stressed.

For the people in Merritt and Princeton, B.C. they are experiencing devastation on a level never before encountered.

Both of these communities have also suffered break downs in local infrastructure, with basic community services such as water and sewer being threatened.

As an added challenge, in Princeton, a natural gas line has been compromised and many residents are without heat with a predicted low forecast of -8 overnight.

At the time of writing this report this week from Ottawa, I have just concluded a meeting with our Federal Minister of Emergency Preparedness, Bill Blair and a number of my colleagues who represent ridings in the Fraser Valley that are also threatened with flooding and evacuation orders.

I would like to publicly thank Minister Blair who has consistently reached out and made himself available through this ongoing disaster.

We have had assurances, both from Minister Blair and the Prime Minister, that the Federal Government will stand by to assist regions of British Columbia severely impacted by these floods and related mud slides.

To the good people of Merritt and Princeton, as well as the surrounding areas, please know that federally we will do everything possible to assist in the days, weeks and months ahead.

My phone is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and every effort will be made to ensure you are called back as promptly as possible.

There is no question that our region has experienced a challenging six months, between wildfire threats and now serious flooding and mudslides.

The resulting damage is yet to be assessed but it will on a massive scale.

Aside from damage to homes, properties, community, and provincial infrastructure, there is also the serious toll on the people who call these areas home and the most impacted.

The reality is that as our climate increasingly changes, we are not as prepared as we need to be for these resulting disasters.

My question this week:

What solutions do you believe would most enhance our emergency preparedness?

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

This week, more than two months since the September federal election, finally the House of Commons is back in session again.

The first order of business is always to elect a new Speaker, which is a democratic process voted on by all Members of Parliament.

This year there were seven different candidates for Speaker before the MP from Nipissing—Timiskaming Ontario, Anthony Rota, was re-elected to this same role he had in the previous Parliament.

With the Speaker elected, the next order of business was the throne speech, that was for the first time since her appointment as Governor General, read by Mary Simon in three different languages.

The title of this year's throne speech was "Building a resilient economy" and contained many of the same promises that the Liberals made in the recent election.

Over the next week in the House there will be debate on the throne speech from both government and the opposition.

There are also some ongoing procedural debates occurring in Ottawa this week.

Topics such as how vaccination and medical exemptions are regulated within the House of Commons is one active topic of discussion.

Another is the ongoing debate between in person Parliament and a hybrid Parliament where MPs do not have to physically be in the House of Commons to participate in votes or debate.

The Liberal Government is also expected to be tabling some Government bills that they expect to be passed before the House rises in mid-December.

When these bills are tabled I will provide more information on them in future weekly reports.

Finally, this week I have joined with other opposition MPs from British Columbia and have requested an emergency debate regarding the disastrous flooding situation in parts of British Columbia including the communities of Merritt and Princeton in my riding.

At the time of writing my report this week I can announce that the request for the emergency debate has been granted and will occur during the evening hours of Wednesday, November 24<sup>th</sup>, 2021.

I have been in regular contact with elected leaders and members of both Princeton and Merritt and have serious concerns that adequate levels of provincial and federal government resources can be delivered in the manner requested and as needed.

This will be a topic I will raise both Provincially and Federally to ensure communities such as Merritt and Princeton receive the supports, they need.

My question this week relates to hybrid versus in person parliament. Is it your preference that MPs show up to work in Ottawa to participate in votes and debate or are you supportive of the hybrid model where debate and votes can occur with MPs back in their home riding?

## December

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

At the time of writing this week's report Merritt, Princeton and the surrounding areas, including Indigenous communities in these regions, are once again threatened by heavy rainfalls that has resulted in more evacuation orders being issued.

I am certain all Canadians join me in expressing our strong support to those have been severely impacted by these devastating floods.

Already, with some clean up underway, local governments in both Merritt and Princeton, as well as nearby Indigenous communities, have reported damage that is easily in the tens of millions.

Here in Canada, we have a federal program called the Disaster Financial Assistance Arrangements (DFAA).

It lays out the terms of federal assistance that is available to provincial and territorial governments in the event of a disaster.

As a rough guideline for a per capita expenditure up to \$3.27 per person there is no federal financial assistance available.

For per capital expenditures that exceed that amount, the first \$6.56 per capita will result in the federal cost share being raised to 50% while the next \$6.56 increases the federal share up to 75% and any amount over that is a 90% federal cost share.

The federal cost share will only apply to eligible expenditures.

The first challenge is that these federal funds can only be directly paid to provincial or territorial governments and cannot be paid directly to local governments.

Due to the federal program being limited to provincial or territorial governments, this results in a secondary provincial disaster program for local governments being required.

Here in B.C. the provincial program is called the "Disaster Financial Assistance for local communities".

This program works differently from the federal program in that once a disaster is declared that in turn makes it eligible for the program funding, each accepted claim has a maximum cost sharing limit of 80 percent of the total eligible damage, less the first \$1,000.

The issue for small communities like Merritt and Princeton is that, with damages in the tens of millions of dollars and a very small tax base, there is absolutely no ability to fund the required 20% of the critically required repairs and rebuilding of civic infrastructure.

This creates a situation where local Mayors and Council are facing extremely difficult decisions with bills piling up that are not in the budget and well beyond communities' abilities to pay for them.

This is one of the serious concerns that the Mayors of these communities have shared with me and in turn

I directly asked the Prime Minister about in the House of Commons earlier this week.

When I asked the Prime Minister about this, the answer I received was basically “the Federal Government will be there”.

What does this mean?

Statutorily, through legislation, the Federal Government is already obligated to “be there” to provide disaster assistance.

However, when it comes to municipalities, the unaffordable 20% funding requirement remains in effect.

Unless there is a new definition from the federal government to what “being there” of “having the backs” of these communities means the current disaster funding formula remains in effect and is insufficient.

Which brings me to my question for you this week:

Do you believe the Federal Government should address the 20% disaster funding requirement for local communities such as Merritt and Princeton, who have been devastated by these floods?

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

Earlier this week many saw the media headline “Trudeau announces Boycott of Beijing Olympics”

This early headline led to some confusion before subsequent media headlines clarified: “Canada announces diplomatic boycott of Beijing Olympics, athletes will still compete”.

There was only a brief period of time where some confusion existed, however what was interesting, is that when athletes were thought to be part of this boycott, many citizens had strong views and were keen to share them.

When it was later clarified the boycott was only diplomatic in nature and did not include athletes the comments quieted down significantly.

The few comments I have now heard back locally range from “what is a diplomatic boycott” to “why does anyone care if diplomats attend or not?”.

While this remains a significant topic of discussion in Ottawa it is not one I am hearing locally.

If anything, this serves as a reminder just how quickly the focus of Ottawa can change from day to day.

My focus remains back on communities like Princeton and Merritt as well as the surrounding rural and Indigenous communities.

With winter conditions now in effect, the clean up and rebuilding is much more challenging.

The impacts of flood damage to our highway system has resulted in significant commercial truck traffic on Highway 3, which in turn has led to more accidents on this highway which leads to additional emergency road closures.



At this time it is still unknown if regular traffic will be allowed on this route that is currently restricted to essential travelling only.

That is also having an impact on families as connected communities are no longer connected.

This is also not an ideal situation for truckers.

For many who could make a trip from the coast to the interior and return in a single shift, that is no longer possible.

Overnight trips are now normal in many cases and that can be increased if an accident results in further delays.

Those travelling via air, for a variety of different reasons, are finding higher fees as well as new and significant restrictions that are changing frequently and with little notice because of the new omicron covid variant.

To make this situation more challenging, the border staff are sometimes not up to speed on government policy changes resulting in many unfortunate and unfair incidents.

I appreciate the efforts of Ministers and their staff who have been assisting my office on behalf of local citizens who have found themselves in demanding circumstances.

I also know that there is anger out there.

As an elected official I hear frequently from citizens who are unhappy with how government services at different levels have responded to these various situations.

It is in my view it is appropriate that elected officials hear your concerns when government services are not meeting your expectations.

I mention this because it is critically important that frustration and anger should not be taken out on front line staff who are doing the best that they can in very challenging situations.

Let us not forget that many front-line service providers and emergency responders are also facing some of the very same challenges in their personal lives.

My question this week:

What is your greatest local concern at this time?

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

This week will be the last week the House of Commons sits before the winter break.

It is frustrating as the House of Commons only began sitting less than a month ago, on November 22. The House will resume on Monday, January 31st.

Much of the work that has been done over the past few weeks involved electing a new Speaker and establishing parliamentary committees, while only a limited number of government bills have come before the House.

However, one important event that did occur this week was a “fiscal update” from the government.

What is a “fiscal update”?

In the absence of a properly tabled budget, a fiscal update provides an opportunity for the government to reveal our fiscal status, as well as announce and introduce budgetary measures that were not in the previous budget.

By the numbers in the 2021/22 fiscal update, this year’s deficit is forecast to hit \$144.5 billion.

While that is an incredibly large number, it is actually down from the \$154.7 Billion forecast that was in the previous budget.

On the surface there is other positive news.

The fiscal update shows the deficit declining for the next five years being reduced to \$13.1 billion in 2026/27.

However, I mention “on the surface” because this fiscal update contained very few of the many Liberal election promises that are expected to be released in the upcoming budget in the spring of 2022.

There was also new spending measures announced in this fiscal update.

In total there is COVID related spending of roughly \$13 billion.

This includes \$3.3 billion that was just announced in this update to expand rapid tests and enact other measures such as border testing and tracking.

For British Columbia there has been \$5 billion set aside in this budget update to assist with clean up and rebuilding from the flooding.

There has also been \$4.5 billion allocated towards costs related toward the Omicron variant and a total of \$4 billion to provide support to indigenous communities.

From my perspective there are a few areas for concern.

Much of this forecast will be significantly changed once the Liberal budget is introduced where there will be newly announced spending measures.

There may also be newly announced taxation measures.

The challenge with any new taxation measures is that, with rising inflation (currently at 4.7% here in Canada), your net after tax income has less buying power.

If taxes are increased that further lowers your net income that combined with taxation means many households have less money to buy basic necessities.

For those on a fixed income, inflation is very challenging.

Another challenge this fiscal update illustrates is the cost of debt servicing.

The interest that we pay on our public debt for 2020/21 is \$20.4 billion.

By 2026/27 these interest costs are forecast to rise to \$40.9 Billion.

For context the Canada Health Transfer today is \$45.9 Billion and is forecast to rise to \$55.2 billion in 2026/27.

In other words, over the next five years the cost to service our debt is doubling and increasing at a rate faster than our health transfers are increasing.

My question this week:

Are you concerned about the rising costs of inflation?

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

Last week was the final sitting of the House of Commons before the winter break.

As is often the case, the government is typically in a hurry to pass certain bills before the House adjourns.

This year was no different as Bill C-3 “An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Canada Labour Code” was deemed a priority as it contained a provision to provide 10 days of paid sick leave in federally regulated workplaces.

In a majority situation, a sitting government always has parliamentary tools available such as “closure” and “time allocation” to essentially force a bill through Parliament.

However, in a minority Parliament where a sitting government can be outvoted by the opposition parties, it becomes trickier for the government to pass a bill.

This is often where backroom deals and agreements are made between the government and one or more opposition parties.

In the case of Bill C-3, in the effort to reach an agreement between the government and the official opposition, a different approach was used.

In this case my Conservative colleague, MP Scott Aitchison from Parry Sound-Muskoka, proposed amending Bill C-3 to include a proposed Conservative MPs private members bill that would provide bereavements benefits to parents who have lost a child.

This Private Members Bill was authored by MP Tom Kmiec from Calgary- Shepard who, in 2018 sadly experienced the loss of a child and proposed this bill to help other parents in this tragic situation.

For this proposal from MP Scott Aitchison to work, it required support from the Liberal Government. On

that note Liberal Labour Minister Seamus O'Regan from St. John's South-Mount Pearl, was the champion on moving this important proposal forward within the Liberal Government.

Ultimately this agreement reached between the government and the official opposition helped pave the way for Bill C-3 to have an expediated passage through Parliament.

Subsequently the Senate has also now passed Bill C-3 and this bill has received royal assent.

The reason I have shared this experience is because it is an important example of our Canadian Parliament working together to benefit Canadians.

As MP Aitchison pointed out "no parent should have to choose between going to work and mourning the loss of a child".

Thanks to the efforts of these Parliamentarians, this private member's bill is now part of a Government Bill that has become law.

These are some of the important things that can and do occur when Parliament is sitting (virtually or in person) when MPs are doing the work in the House that Canadians elected us to do.

Unfortunately, in the past few years because of prorogation and this early fall election and significant delay in recalling the House after our Parliament has not sat nearly as often as per the usual Parliamentary calendar.

Regular demonstrations of accountability such as debate on bills, Ministers presenting themselves and their policies open to scrutiny at committee and ultimately confidence votes are all fundamental to our system of responsible government- where a government must show maintains the confidence of the House.

I believe we need our Canadian Parliament to sit more frequently as has been the case in previous years but has deteriorated considerably under the current government

My question this week:

Are you concerned about our Parliament sitting less frequently