

January 2019

January 3rd

It was not long into the new year when a citizen shared with me an email they received from their employer stating Statutory Canada Pension Plan (CPP) "deductions are reset for the new year so you will notice a decrease in your net take home pay starting in January".

The citizen asked if this information was correct and if so, what are the reasons for it?

As I reported back in July and October of 2016, the Trudeau Liberal government raised CPP premium rates.

The changes mean that beginning this year and for every year until 2023, the mandatory CPP contribution rate will be gradually increase from the former rate of 4.95% up to 5.95% in 2023.

It is true that in most situations your net take home pay will be less because of this CPP increase.

Likewise, for an employer the costs of making payroll will also correspondingly increase.

The intent of these CPP changes is to increase the total annual CPP benefit (assuming an individual reaches age 65).

As an example, the current maximum CPP benefit is \$13,110 a year.

This CPP maximum benefit would increase by \$4,390 per year up to a new maximum of \$ 17,500 annually.

Keep in mind the maximum benefit figures only apply to those who contribute the maximum CPP contribution for roughly 40 years.

For most workers, the rates will vary.

One of the downsides to the CPP program is that it is not a transportable retirement investment.

For citizens who do not live to reach 65 or only live a few years beyond 65, a lifetime of contributions paid to CPP are of no significant benefit to a spouse or family in that the full value of the contributions cannot be transferred through to an estate.

So where would those unused CPP contributions end up?

One of the lesser known criticisms of CPP is the fact that your CPP contributions are being consumed by significantly rising administration costs.

Operating costs went from \$3 million in the year 2000 to \$803 Million in 2015, not to mention external management fees that have risen from \$36 million in 2006 to \$1.25 Billion in 2015.

These are serious administration increases.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB) released a poll indicating that 70% of business owners have indicated that the costs of the CPP premium increase will create cost pressures to freeze or

cut salaries.

While an increased CPP benefit may appear to help younger people the most, perversely higher payroll taxes can discourage hiring of youth, who already face significantly higher unemployment rates due to a lack of experience.

For some, finding that first job will be tougher.

In response to these increased costs the Trudeau Liberal budget for 2019 will lower the small business tax rate to 9%.

This was the same small business tax cut that was originally legislated by the former Conservative government, cancelled by the Trudeau government in Budget 2016 and was only reinstated after significant political pressure.

My concern is with reduced take home pay, courtesy of the increased CPP deductions, coupled with recent provincial announcements to increase ICBC rates, as well as many local governments increasing property taxes at rates beyond inflation, citizens are being collectively squeezed from all levels of government.

From my perspective it should never be overlooked that there is only one taxpayer and when the Prime Minister refers to the concept of a balanced budget as being an “austerity” measure, this points to a road of future tax increases to pay for deficit spending.

My question this week is a simple one:

Are you concerned by having your net take home pay reduced by increased CPP premiums?

January 9th

In last week's report I referenced higher CPP premiums, that will increase from 4.95% up to 5.95% gradually between 2019 and 2023, resulting in lower take home pay for many Canadians.

If you have been watching television, it is possible that you may have even come across commercials from the CPP Investment Board that state “you started saving for retirement with your first paycheque.”

I have received complaints over the fact that a true savings account is one that citizens can voluntarily withdraw from, whereas CPP contributions do not offer this flexibility.

I have also received enquiries and comments about CPP and other federal government retirement programs.

For those who may be unaware, here is a summary about the different programs that the Federal Government administers.

These include the Canada Pension Plan (CPP), Old Age Security (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).

CPP is generally funded equally by you and your employer during your working years.

CPP can provide benefits for loss of income created by disability or retirement. The benefits are ultimately calculated by how much you have contributed and over what length of time.

You can start collecting CPP as early as 60 or as late as 70, however different rates would apply.

In contrast, OAS provides a modest pension to most Canadians at age 65, if you have lived in Canada for at least 10 years.

The maximum OAS payment is for individuals with 40 years or more of residency after their eighteenth birthday.

Seniors with earnings in excess of roughly \$77,580 per year will gradually receive a lesser OAS benefit that ultimately is eliminated for an income in excess of \$ 125,696 a year.

The GIS is specifically for lower income seniors 65 and older with an income of roughly \$18,239 annually or less.

If you have questions for any of the above programs you can contact Service Canada toll free at 1-800-622-6232 for further information.

I have heard many comments over the recent increase in CPP premiums.

One common complaint is that if a person does not live to 65, or not long after, the amount that can be transferred to spouse, after a lifetime of CPP contributions, is comparatively quite limited.

My question this week:

Would you support more equitable options to transfer your lifetime CPP contributions to your estate or to another investment program?

January 16th

As many accountants and tax professionals will know, January of each year is the opening of “income tax season” – the period of time up until April 30th when in this case your 2018 income taxes must be filed with the Canada Revenue Agency.

If you follow political discussions you will likely have heard claims that income taxes have gone up as well as counter claims that they have gone down.

For this week’s report I wanted to review federal income tax changes over the past 18 years for more context on this subject.

Going back to the year 2000, at that time there were just three federal income tax brackets, your first \$30,004 was taxed at a rate of 17%, the next \$30,004 up to \$60,009 was taxed at a rate of 25% and all income over \$60,009 was taxed at 29%.

In 2013, there were some significant changes.

A fourth income tax bracket on your income up to \$43,561, that would be taxed at a lower rate of 15%.

The second tax bracket was adjusted so that income between \$43,562 up to \$87,123 was taxed at a rate of 22%, while the third tax bracket on income over \$87,123 up to \$135,054 was taxed at a rate of 26%.

Income over \$135,054 was taxed at 29%

The net effect of these tax changes was that lower income workers earning up to \$43,561 paid 2% less tax.

On income in the other tax brackets there were also tax breaks of 3% with the exception of the highest tax bracket.

In the 2016 tax year there were again further changes to the tax brackets including the addition of a 5th tax bracket.

For the lowest income earners up to \$45,202 there was no change and the income tax rate remained at 15%.

On the next tax bracket from \$45,202 up to \$90,563, taxes were reduced from 22% in 2015 down to 20.5%.

Income between \$90,563 up to \$140,388 remained unchanged at 26% and income over \$140,388 up to \$200,000 was taxed at the same 2015 tax rate of 29%.

The new 5th tax bracket on income over \$200,000 was taxed at 33%.

The net effect of these tax 2016 changes was that lower income citizens did not receive a tax break but those in the middle did.

Higher income earners were taxed either at the same rate or more.

For this current 2018 tax year the income tax brackets remain unchanged at 15%, 20.5%, 26%, 29% and 33% respectively.

This comparison does not include the elimination of many income tax credits that have occurred since 2016 nor does it account for the lowering of the GST.

It also does not include the Working Income Tax Benefit that is now referred to the Canada Workers Benefit or to the Canada Child Benefit (CCB).

Depending on your income tax situation, you may be paying more or less since the year 2000.

Given the scale of tax reduction to many income tax brackets in 2013, combined with the middle income tax bracket reduction in 2016, many Canadians are likely paying less federal income tax today.

Although there have been tax reduction efforts federally, most will know that income taxes in many provinces have risen in addition to increases in property taxes.

My question this week:

Are you satisfied with the total amount of tax that you pay for the services and programs you receive?

January 23rd

This week, the newly updated Canada Food Guide was released

The previous guide had been unchanged for 12 years.

The new food guide takes a very different approach than the previous versions did.

Foods are no longer categorized into groups such as 'dairy' or 'meat' and terms such as 'beef' have been replaced by the term 'protein'.

Suggested serving sizes have also been eliminated and instead the guide advises "notice when you are hungry and when you are full."

The new guide also recommends more plant based food consumption including an effort to avoid saturated fat, sugars and sodium where possible.

Although some disagree with the approach, overall I believe this promotes healthier eating habits.

What is new is that guide also makes recommendations on how you should eat and provides some other interesting suggestions.

"Grow, harvest, fish, hunt and prepare food in traditional ways." is one such recommendation that may be more challenging for those living in urban centres.

There is also the recommendation to drink more water.

The food guide even provides helpful information that you can drink water "hot or cold" and that you can "drink water with your meals", in the event you were unaware of that tidbit.

If you are shopping, the guide recommends you "shop for sales" and "check out flyers and coupons" because this can make food shopping more affordable, also in the event you were unaware of that fact.

Other recommendations are to cook more meals at home and to be aware of "food marketing". The guide suggests that being aware of food marketing can help you "question why you want to purchase a certain food or drink".

Overall, while I believe the new food guide is well intended and promotes a healthier diet, I do question if Canadians need to be advised on how to eat, shop and interpret food marketing.

My question this week:

Do you prefer a food guide the focuses on nutrition, portion sizes and diet or do you prefer the new direction with advice on how to eat, shop and more?

January 30th

If you follow virtually any Canadian news source you have likely heard about the Chinese telecommunications company Huawei.

Recently I was asked why there was so much media reporting about Huawei.

The answer is not a simple one.

Huawei is a world leading technology company that among other activities produces hardware such as servers and other technologies that enable 5G wireless networks.

5G networks enable autonomous vehicles and other automated machinery to operate and is widely considered to be essential for the emerging new digital economy.

Although Huawei is not the only company that manufactures 5G devices, it is the most controversial.

Currently many of Canada's allies including the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Japan have all banned Huawei citing security concerns.

Currently other countries, including Canada, are reviewing the status of Huawei.

One of the concerns is that a new law in China requires any domestic firm to assist the Chinese government when requested to do so.

Another concern is allegations that Huawei has circumvented trade sanctions against countries such as Iran and North Korea.

It is based on these types of allegations that the United States has requested that Canada arrest Huawei CFO Meng Wanzhou in Vancouver for extradition to the United States where she will face charges such as bank fraud, obstruction of justice and theft of technology from the United States Justice Department.

In a response that many believe is related to this action several Canadians in China have now been imprisoned in some cases under very questionable circumstances.

The situation has become very complicated diplomatically as Prime Minister Trudeau was forced to fire John McCallum, the former Liberal cabinet Minister that Mr. Trudeau had appointed to be Canada's Ambassador to China.

It should be noted that Huawei denies accusations of corporate espionage and spying; that said the Polish government recently arrested a Huawei employee on spying charges.

The Czech government has also warned their citizens against using Huawei equipment for security reasons.

China has also warned Canada that there will be consequences to Canada if Huawei is banned.

Conservatives believe that Canada, as a member of the “Five Eyes” intelligence network, should stand with our allies in banning Huawei from participating in our 5G rollout in Canada.

To date the Liberal Government continues to state that it is reviewing this situation with no decision yet being made.

My question this week:

Do you agree that Huawei should be banned from participating in the 5G network in Canada?

February 2019

February 6th

This week my Summerland office was visited by an individual living on a fixed income who is very concerned about being unable to afford the monthly gas bill.

This individual also questioned why the carbon tax on the monthly gas bill was higher than the actual commodity cost of the gas used.

It was also asked, with the temperatures dropping below freezing this week throughout the Okanagan, “why was the (Provincial) NDP Government punishing citizens and cashing in on extra carbon tax revenue while people try to keep the pipes from freezing and try to stay warm”.

Fair questions.

Part of the answer to this question is due to the federal Liberal Government carbon tax plan.

British Columbia, signed onto this Trudeau Liberal plan, that calls for an annual increase of carbon taxes to \$50 a tonne by 2022.

In B.C. there is a “Climate Action Tax Credit” meant to help offset these costs however the maximum payable to an individual is only \$11.25 a month and the income threshold is \$35,000 before a 2% penalty deduction is taken from that \$11.25 a month.

In this case the individual’s monthly carbon tax on gas alone is higher than the climate rebate and with a net income of just over \$41,000, the monthly climate rebate is reduced to just 54 cents.

Meanwhile in the House of Commons on Tuesday, during question period, Prime Minister Trudeau stated, and I quote: “low-income families do not benefit from tax breaks because they do not pay taxes.”

This was a remarkably untrue statement from the Prime Minister.

Currently a Canadian earning over \$12,000 or more is, as we all know, paying federal income tax.

In fact the current federal income tax rate for citizens earning up to \$46,505 is taxed at a rate of 15%.

Also a fact, when the Liberal Government came into power in 2015, the low income tax rate was left

unchanged.

It was citizens earning currently between \$46,605 up to \$93,208 that received the 1.5% tax cut.

In addition to paying income tax, low income citizens also pay GST, PST here in BC, carbon tax, provincial income taxes (after a certain threshold) as well as other government fees and charges and property taxes, if they own a residence.

The suggestion by the Prime Minister that lower income citizens do not pay taxes is patently false and I am hopeful the Prime Minister will clarify that and apologize to those lower income taxpayers who deserve to be acknowledged for paying their fair share.

My question this week relates to the carbon tax.

Does it seem fair that government carbon tax revenues will increase solely due to sub-zero temperatures, because citizens are forced to increase their use of energy to keep warm?

February 13th

If you have followed any Canadian media reports this week you have likely heard the growing controversy occurring within the Trudeau Liberal government.

In particular, the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) and the subsequent fallout over the resignation of former Justice & current Veteran Affairs Minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould from the Trudeau cabinet.

What started this controversy?

Last week, the Globe and Mail reported that the former Justice Minister was pressured, by Trudeau's senior officials working within the PMO, into offering a deferred prosecution agreement(DPA) in a criminal case to large Canadian corporation, SNC Lavalin, in lieu of a criminal trial.

It has been suggested that when Ms. Wilson-Raybould did not end the criminal proceedings in favour of a DPA, she was shuffled, by the Prime Minister, from the Justice portfolio and a Montreal based Justice Minister was appointed.

The new Justice Minister has since indicated that he will not rule out entering into a DPA with SNC-Lavalin.

A deferred prosecution agreement allows a major corporate entity, like SNC Lavalin, to plead guilty and pay a fine instead of facing criminal charges that may lead to jail or other severe consequences.

In this case, the consequence of a criminal conviction would be a ban from being able to bid on federal contracts for ten years.

Many consider a DPA to be a "slap on the wrist" only offered to well-connected insiders and is a controversial topic as it this was only recently created in Canada, buried deep within a Liberal omnibus budget implementation bill.

It has been implied that this option of a DPA was created specifically to benefit SNC Lavalin, currently facing criminal charges related to bribery and fraud.

Where this situation becomes murkier is that the lobbyist registry reveals that since 2016, SNC-Lavalin has lobbied the Trudeau Liberal government more than 80 times on the subject of "justice and law enforcement".

In 2016 it was also revealed that SNC Lavalin had illegally donated close to \$118,000 to various political parties.

Of this \$118,000, close to \$110,000 was donated to the Liberal Party of Canada or various Liberal riding associations or candidates.

The remainder went to the Conservative party of Canada or various Conservative candidates. None was reported donated to the NDP.

The Prime Minister has steadfastly refused that he directed the former Justice Minister in any way over the SNC-Lavalin prosecution, however he has refused to comment on the allegations that Wilson-Raybould may have been pressured.

A serious concern, that many suggest, amounts to potential judicial interference.

On Monday evening, Ms. Wilson-Raybould resigned from cabinet in a letter stating that she has hired legal counsel to determine what she can say in response to the allegations without interfering with solicitor client privilege that Mr. Trudeau has thus far refused to waive.

My question this week:

Do you believe this situation is deserving of further investigation or should Mr. Trudeau be taken at his word that there was no potential judicial interference?

February 20th

In my MP Report from last week I summarized the developing situation regarding the details, or in this case lack thereof, surrounding the resignation of Jody Wilson-Raybould from Mr. Trudeau's cabinet.

There are growing questions around the criminal prosecution case against SNC-Lavalin and allegations of pressure from the Prime Minister's office to enter into a deferred prosecution agreement instead.

Since that time some significant new details have emerged.

Later last week, Liberals on the parliamentary Justice Committee blocked Ms. Wilson-Raybould and staff from the Prime Minister's office from appearing at the committee to answer questions.

Over the recent Family Day long weekend we learned that Gerald Butts, Mr. Trudeau's most trusted adviser, was resigning claiming he did not want to become a distraction in this growing controversy.

This week, Liberals on the Justice Committee have done a flip flop and now will support Ms. Wilson-

Raybould to appear at the Justice Committee, although it is unclear what questions she will be able to answer as Mr. Trudeau has thus far refused to waive client/solicitor privilege.

To date, the reasons why Ms. Wilson-Raybould resigned remain unknown.

As Mr. Trudeau continues to refuse to waive privilege and has ducked questions about calling an inquiry, Canadians remain in the dark.

From my perspective, this is quite alarming considering that Mrs. Wilson-Raybould and now Mr. Butts have both resigned over an issue that Mr. Trudeau continues to hide behind privilege to avoid the truth from coming out.

The reason I use the term “hide” is to make a comparison to the fact that when the Senator Duffy investigation was underway, former Prime Minister Harper waived client/ solicitor privilege to assist the investigation in a transparent and accountable manner.

My question this week does not involve this situation but rather pertains to a recent funding announcement made by the Liberal Government.

Last week the Liberals announced \$40 million in funding to Blackberry to help develop autonomous vehicle technology.

Full credit to CBC who covered the event and then asked the CEO of Blackberry “if his company needed the government subsidy”. The answer was a candid NO.

In other words \$40 Million was just given away by Mr.Trudeau to a company that did not require the subsidy.

More recently we learned that the Liberal Government has appointed a retired Radio Canada journalist to be the director of the two debates for the upcoming federal election.

The leadership debates, one to be in English and the other French for upcoming October 2019 election is a part time position with a term that expires in March of 2020 and a reported salary between \$124,000 and \$187,000.

My question this week:

Do you believe these types of spending decisions are an appropriate use of your tax dollars?

February 27th

As I sit down to write my weekly report I must admit to being at a loss for words.

Earlier today on Parliament Hill, the former Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould shared her details related to the emerging situation with SNC Lavalin.

To be candid this testimony was shocking and has left Ottawa reeling.

Ms. Wilson-Raybould stated on the record that she was the target of a “consistent and sustained” effort

by Prime Minister Trudeau and his most senior staff to politically interfere in the criminal case against SNC-Lavalin.

The testimony included references allegedly quoted from Mr. Trudeau's Principal Secretary, stating that there would be (political) interference, that there was no solution without some interference.

In addition, Mr. Trudeau's Chief of Staff, Katie Telford, allegedly said they were "sick of legalities".

Other comments included statements such as "we need to get re-elected." and that if the former Justice Minister changed her mind that they would line-up people to write op-eds claiming everything was legal.

The testimony from Ms. Wilson-Raybould ultimately referenced the Prime Minister, Clerk of the Privy Councillor, former principal secretary to the Prime Minister, Finance Minister and the Chief of Staff to the Finance Minister.

In total 11 people were raised in a series over 10 calls and 10 meetings.

Ultimately Ms. Wilson-Raybould was told "He's (Mr. Trudeau) going to find a way to do it one way or another".

The testimony later revealed that the former Justice Minister's deputy minister was allegedly informed by the Clerk that there would soon be a "new (Justice) Minister and that the first thing the deputy should do with the new minister is have a discussion about SNC (Lavalin) and the DPA (deferred prosecution agreement).

I will share some of the final words in her prepared statement from Ms. Wilson-Raybould:

"I hope and expect that the facts speak for themselves. I imagine Canadians now fully understand that in my view, these events constituted pressure to intervene in a matter, and that this pressure or this political interference to intervene was not appropriate."

My question this week relates to this statement:

Do you believe that Mr. Trudeau and his inner circle attempted to pressure the former Justice Minister to politically interfere in the criminal case against SNC- Lavalin?

March 2019

March 6th

Although the House of Commons is not sitting until Monday, March 18 much attention remains focused on Parliament Hill as the Justice Committee is meeting this week and hearing more details on the growing fallout of allegations of political interference coming from the highest levels of the Trudeau Liberal government.

This ongoing situation also recently saw the former Liberal President of the Treasury Board, Jane Philpott, announcing her resignation from Mr. Trudeau's cabinet referencing a loss of confidence in how the government has handled the situation with SNC Lavalin.

My intent in this week's report is not to further discuss the ongoing SNC Lavalin details but rather another recent Government policy announcement that was announced but largely overlooked as a result of the SNC-Lavalin situation occurring in Ottawa.

Last week the federal government announced marijuana pardon legislation for those individuals who have a previous conviction for the simple possession of cannabis.

The Liberal Government describes Bill C-93 as "An Act to provide no-cost, expedited record suspensions for simple possession of cannabis."

The Liberals have stated they would like to see the law passed by the summer of 2019.

The stated goal of the bill is to break down barriers for those individuals with a criminal record related to cannabis possession now that legalization has occurred.

Currently there is a \$631 fee for a pardon along with a waiting period that are both proposed to be waived under this bill.

Estimates from Ottawa indicate this bill could apply to as many as 400,000 Canadians although it is unknown how many will actually apply.

Total costs for this bill with the processing of pardons could be in excess of \$300 million.

It should also be noted that a pardon is not the same thing as an expungement that formally removes all records related to the offence in question.

This is an important distinction because there can be situations when a pardon is not recognized at the border of another country resulting in a refusal of entry.

My concern with this bill is one of cost and fairness.

While I support the principle of issuing a pardon, I do not believe it is fair that Canadians without criminal records are paying for a program that requires no financial contribution from those who will access this program.

My question this week asks the same question.

Do you support Bill C-93 being fully funded by taxpayers?

March 13th

Although this is a constituency week with the House of Commons recessed, much attention remains on Parliament Hill for a few important reasons.

Public safety was a primary concern, as Transport Minister Marc Garneau made the decision to ground the use of the Boeing 737 Max 8 aircraft in Canada.

This decision is following the recent tragic crash of a similar 737 Max 8 aircraft flown by Ethiopian Airlines

that resulted in the devastating loss of all passengers and crew on board, including 18 Canadians, with several from B.C.

At the present time there is no schedule on when this order will be lifted.

Air Canada, WestJet and Sun Wing Vacations are all working, in support of this decision, to resolve the many impacts on Canadian travelers who will be affected by this order.

While on the topic of airlines, recently I met with Air Canada over the potential loss of flights at the Penticton airport.

Although Penticton is no longer in my riding, many citizens in communities that I do represent will be adversely impacted by this proposed new schedule as Penticton is their closest regional airport.

Air Canada is aware of the concerns and has made a commitment to look at how potential scheduling changes could be incorporated to help mitigate this situation.

Currently, the last flight in to Penticton results in the aircraft and crew staying in overnight before becoming the first flight out in the morning.

Any potential solution must bear this in mind as the new schedule no longer has the aircraft and crew overnighing in Penticton, which complicates the ability to schedule the early morning flight the next day.

We will look forward to what Air Canada comes up with in response to the concerns that were raised.

The other issue in Ottawa this week was the surprise move by the Liberals on the Justice Committee to use their majority to adjourn the meeting before any debate or discussions could occur over recalling former Justice Minister Jody Wilson-Raybould.

This discussion arises from recent statements provide to the Justice Committee by the Prime Minister's former Principal Secretary, Gerald Butts and the Clerk of the Privy Council, Michael Wernick.

These statements, that the Liberals also blocked from being given under oath, had some inconsistencies with the previous testimony from Ms. Wilson-Raybould.

Both opposition parties agree that in order to clarify these inconsistencies, Ms. Wilson-Raybould should be given the opportunity to respond.

To date, the Liberals have used their majority to block this from happening.

This action by the Liberals is leading some, including the opposition, to raise concerns over a possible cover-up.

My question this week:

Do you believe that Ms. Wilson-Raybould should have the opportunity to appear before the Justice Committee for a second time to respond to these recent statements?

March 20th

The Liberal 2015 campaign promise was to deliver three years of “modest” \$10 billion dollar deficits with a return to a balanced budget in 2019.

This week the Liberals presented the 2019 budget that clearly reveals Mr.Trudeau not only broke his “very cast in stone” promise to return to a balanced budget but also that he made no effort to do so.

The 2019/20 deficit forecast is set at close to \$19.8 billion.

This is on top of the \$60 billion in deficits added in the first three Liberal budgets.

The current budget indicates there is no path to balance until at least the year 2040, by that point racking up an additional \$271 Billion in new debt.

So where is all of the money going?

Program spending is a significant part with an increase of \$22.8 billion in spending over the next five years.

A brief summary of some of that from the 2019 Budget:

A new job retraining program for eligible workers aged between 25-64 that will provide up to \$250 per year to a career maximum of \$5000.

An increase to the maximum a first time home owner can borrow from their RRSP from 25,000 that will now be increased to a limit of \$35,000.

A new shared equity home ownership plan where CHMC will provide a shared matching contribution between 5-10% towards the down payment on a new or existing home. Citizens with a household income under \$120,000 may qualify. This will be limited to a purchase price that cannot exceed more than four times the annual household income

Those who can afford to purchase a new electrical vehicle may now be eligible for up to a \$5,000 federal credit on the purchase.

There is also a commitment to spend \$35 million over 4 years to create a new federal Canadian drug agency, assumedly in Ottawa, that can work towards bulk buying drugs on a national scale.

Aboriginal communities will also receive \$1.4 billion over 7 years to forgive outstanding legal fees resulting from treaty and land negotiations. Indigenous groups that have already paid these fees can be eligible to have them repaid under this program.

Interest rates on Canada Student Loans will be lowered to prime and will be interest-free for 6 months after graduation.

\$553 million has been budgeted over the next 3 years to attempt to fix the failed Phoenix pay system.

There will also be changes to the GIS income earning threshold so that a working senior may claim more income without affecting the GIS support levels.

This is only a brief summary of some of the measures contained in the 2019 federal budget.

Many critics have largely labelled it a “political goodies budget” specially targeting certain voting demographics that the Liberals hope will translate to votes in the October election.

I will reserve my own thoughts in an upcoming MP report.

My question this week:

Do you like what you see in the 2019 Budget so far?

March 27th

In last week's report I provided some highlights on the recent 2019 budget and asked citizens if they liked what they saw in the budget so far.

I also made a commitment to share my own thoughts on this budget as an opposition Member of Parliament.

Most critics have labelled this budget as an 'election year goodies' budget that targets certain voting demographics that the Liberals hope will translate to votes in the October election.

While I do not disagree with that sentiment, I would submit that most every sitting government in an election year tables a budget that it believes will be politically popular.

My concern with this budget is somewhat different.

As you may have heard, household debt levels here in Canada are at an all-time high.

Household debt as a percentage of gross income in 2016 was 166%.

In January of 2019 that has now increased to 176%.

Why do I mention that in the context of this budget?

The new “Canada Training Benefit” on the surface sounds like a good program encouraging job skills retraining.

However when you read the fine print only \$250 is available per year up to a career maximum of \$5,000.

The challenge that I am already hearing is the majority of training programs cost well in excess of that amount.

Many skills training programs are literally thousands of dollars or more.

For many workers to benefit from this \$250 training credit it will mean borrowing thousands and increasing household debt.

Similarly, to access the credit of \$5,000 towards the purchase of a new electric car for most would mean borrowing up to the maximum for the program amount of \$45,000.

This again results in more household debt for anyone borrowing for a new vehicle purchase.

A similar situation is created with the new home buyers program.

Rather than eliminate the GST on affordable new housing (as has been done with the PST provincially), this budget only offers more options that encourage borrowing.

Borrowing \$10,000 more from your RRSP, up to maximum of \$35,000, is an option that few new home buyers can access.

The new first time home buyers incentive on the surface sounds helpful.

The program can help provide between 5-10% of the down payment towards a maximum CMHC insurable mortgage up to \$480,000, not counting the total down payment.

The challenge with this program is also in the fine print.

The maximum \$480,000 mortgage value is also based on the programs maximum allowable household income level of \$120,000 annually.

In a community where the average household income is \$70,000, the maximum value under this program is set at 4 times the income, meaning a CMHC insurable mortgage limit of just \$280,000. A significant difference.

These are just a few examples that all point towards increased household debt in order to access the benefits of these programs that ironically are themselves being offered by a \$19.8 billion deficit budget.

My question this week:

At this current rate of spending, by 2040, an additional \$271 billion in new debt will have accumulated, not factoring in household debt levels.

Are you concerned about this?

April 2019

April 3rd

The last seven days have not been like any that I have experienced in my time on Parliament Hill.

The release of an audio recording of a conversation between the former Justice Minister and the former Clerk of the Privy Council is unprecedented.

The content of this recorded conversation was also disturbing as it verified and confirmed that indeed the former Justice Minister was being pressured to authorize a deferred prosecution agreement (DPA) to SNC

Lavalin.

This pressure was being applied despite the fact that an independent prosecutorial decision had already been made that SNC Lavalin did not meet the criteria for using a DPA.

The recorded conversation also confirmed that the Prime Minister was “going to find a way to get it done, one way or another.”

The release of this recording led to a series of events that ultimately resulted in Mr. Trudeau removing Ms. Wilson-Raybould and Ms. Jane Philpott from the Liberal caucus.

Ms. Wilson-Raybould has also been denied the right to run again as a Liberal Party candidate.

This decision by Mr. Trudeau has outraged many Canadians including first nation’s leaders such as Grand Chief Stewart Phillip who has called this Liberal caucus expulsion of these two women a “witch hunt”.

My thoughts?

To me this issue is about credibility.

Throughout this entire situation the details provided by Ms. Wilson-Raybould have been verified as being factual and accurate.

In contrast, Mr. Trudeau first denied that this situation even occurred and has since provided differing versions of events, many of which do not reconcile.

Although the Prime Minister did issue a waiver, it has a restriction that prevents the former Justice Minister from discussing meetings that occurred after the period she was no longer the Justice Minister.

To this day it remains unknown if Mr. Trudeau’s newly appointed Justice Minister and Attorney General David Lametti will grant a DPA to SNC Lavalin or not.

Closer to home here in BC, Mr. Louis De Jaeger who is the vice-president of the Chilliwack-Hope federal Liberal riding association has resigned in support of Jody Wilson-Raybould and Dr. Jane Philpott.

I have also heard many expressions of disbelief and anger over this cabinet expulsion from a wide variety of citizens.

Mr. Trudeau insists this decision was made because trust had been broken and as a result these two individuals could no longer remain as members of the Liberal caucus team.

My question this week:

On the question of credibility do you believe Mr. Trudeau or Ms. Wilson-Raybould?

April 10th

This week's report will be a short one.

Chances are you have heard of the giant grocery retailer that is owned by Canada's second wealthiest family, the Weston's.

Loblaws is a multi-billion dollar company that media sources reported, posted a \$221 million net profit in the fourth quarter of 2018

The reason I mention this is the Liberal Government announced this week that it is giving Loblaws up to \$12 million to help the for profit company to buy new, more energy efficient, refrigeration systems to help reduce Loblaws emissions.

This announcement has been one of considerable controversy in Ottawa as both the NDP and the Conservative opposition strongly disagree.

The obvious concern is that, when it comes to what Mr. Trudeau calls "putting a price on pollution", why does the average person have to pay when a multi-billion dollar private company earning hundreds of millions in profits receives potentially \$12 million towards new refrigeration?

My question this week:

Do you support large private corporations being given millions of your tax dollars on programs such as this one?

April 17th

On April 1st in British Columbia, the carbon tax rate was increased from \$35 tonne to \$40 tonne.

This translates to an increase on the carbon tax you pay on your gas home heating bills as well as when you fuel up your vehicle.

As a result I am increasingly hearing complaints from citizens over higher gas bills and the price at the pumps.

One recent question I received was how much higher the carbon tax increases will go.

When Prime Minister Trudeau called for a Pan Canadian agreement on pricing carbon pollution in Canada, it mandated a carbon tax rate of \$50 per tonne in 2022.

So, April 1st of each year, BC's carbon tax rate will increase until it hits \$50 per tonne, currently forecast for April 1, of 2021.

In terms of revenue, the BC NDP 2019 provincial budget over the next three fiscal years reveals that the carbon tax is forecast to generate \$1.7, \$1.97 and \$2.2 billion.

That is close to \$6 billion of carbon tax revenue collected over the next three years.

There has also been some confusion as the federal government imposed a national carbon tax on provinces that did not agree to the Pan-Canadian carbon pricing agreement.

In those provinces, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario and New Brunswick, the Trudeau Government has indicated the intention is to ensure the national carbon tax is revenue neutral to citizens, although there is some debate on the veracity of those claims.

Is the carbon tax revenue neutral here in BC?

While BC's carbon tax will generate close to \$6 billion in tax revenue over the next three years, the climate action tax rebate, intended to offset those costs to lower income citizens over the same period, is forecast to return just \$928 million.

“Clean BC”, another climate relate provincial program, has a total spending forecast of \$679 million over the same three year time frame.

Therefore, in order to meet Mr. Trudeau’s \$50 per tonne carbon tax target, BC citizens will pay close to \$6 billion in new carbon tax over the next three years.

Despite collecting \$6 billion carbon tax revenue, only roughly \$1.6 billion is being returned in various programs related to climate change.

That means, in BC , the carbon tax is not revenue neutral.

I mention this as many citizens are confused when they hear the federal government suggest the carbon tax is revenue neutral when that is not what is being experienced here in B.C.

It is also important to be aware that while the federal government has dictated the \$50 per tonne carbon tax increase, in BC, it is the decision of the current NDP provincial government if the carbon tax is revenue neutral or not.

My question this week:

Do you support the carbon tax increasing to \$50 per tonne by 2021/22?

April 24th

One of the many collateral repercussions that have occurred with the ongoing SNC-Lavalin controversy within the Prime Minister’s office has been the leaking of confidential information related to the judicial appointment process for the Supreme Court of Canada.

For what appears as purely partisan political purposes, personal information was revealed about a judge from Manitoba who had been considered for a potential Supreme Court appointment.

The intent of the leak was to suggest there was prior conflict between the Prime Minister and the now former Justice Minister, Jody Wilson-Raybould.

As a result of this serious leak both Ms. Wilson-Raybould and the opposition parties asked for an

investigation to identify the source of the leak.

Although Mr. Trudeau has condemned the leak and denied his office was responsible, the Liberals have also blocked a motion to allow for this investigation to occur.

Fortunately, our federal Privacy Commissioner Daniel Therrien confirmed that his office will be investigating this leak of confidential information related to a candidate for the Supreme Court of Canada.

Despite calls from the opposition to suspend any further nominations to the Supreme Court pending the outcome of this investigation, Mr. Trudeau has refused and publicly stated "We have the merit-based independent process to choose judges."

I mention all of this as the Globe & Mail just reported breaking news that "The Prime Minister's Office is using a private party database called Liberalist in its background checks on candidates for judicial appointments, a tool that allows them to see whether would-be judges have supported the Liberal Party in recent years..."

My question this week:

Do you believe it is appropriate for the Prime Minister's office to use a Liberal party database to vet potential judges?

May 2019

May 1st

The recent Alberta election resulted in a change of government from the NDP to the United Conservative Party (UCP) under the leadership of now Premier Jason Kenney.

This election result has a unique BC connection, given one of the promises from Premier Kenney was that the UCP would immediately proclaim Bill 12.

For those of you unfamiliar with Bill 12, it is referred to as the "turn off the taps" legislation intended to enable the Alberta government to have the power to restrict the flow of oil into British Columbia.

The bill is a retaliatory measure against the BC NDP government, who continue to oppose the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion project.

How would Bill 12 work?

Not by physically shutting down any pipeline.

Rather, requiring that Alberta companies who currently export petroleum products to have special provincial licenses.

The licenses in question would allow for the government to impose restrictions on what products and quantity of product may be approved for export.

Although the Alberta government has indicated it will not immediately use this legislation, the BC government has indicated they will challenge the constitutional validity of this legislation and are in the process of seeking an injunction in the courts.

A couple of questions are often raised.

What effect could this have on gas prices in BC?

If completed, how would the the expanded Trans-Mountain pipeline impact BC gas prices?

Here is the challenge.

Currently the Trans-Mountain pipeline has to carry a range of different products within the same pipeline.

In other words, refined products, such as gasoline that is used by BC drivers, passes through the same pipeline as the unrefined products, such as diluted bitumen.

Within the industry, this process is called “batching” and the Trans Mountain pipeline is the only one remaining in North America to still use this inefficient process.

If built, the expanded new section of the Trans-Mountain pipeline would exclusively carry what is known as “heavy oils” such as diluted bitumen.

This allows for the existing section of the Trans-Mountain pipeline to be used exclusively for refined products that include gasoline.

It is expected that the increased supply and capacity of gasoline as a result of this project being completed will create lower gas prices, notwithstanding increases from the carbon tax.

It would also have the positive benefit of reducing our energy reliance on American refined fuel.

The irony here is that some of the same elected officials who support increasing the carbon tax on fossil fuels to, as Mr. Trudeau has stated, “make better choices”, also support increasing the gasoline supply to protect drivers from being gouged at the pumps.

Last week, the Liberal Government stated that they “can’t guarantee it will have a decision on the proposed Trans Mountain pipeline expansion prior to the next election”.

This despite the fact Mr.Trudeau spent \$4.5 Billion to purchase the Trans-Mountain pipeline. calling the expansion “to be in Canada’s national interest.”

My question to you this week:

Do you support the expanded Trans-Mountain pipeline project?

May 8th

This week the Auditor General (AG) released the 2019 spring reports raising a number of concerns.

The first item raised related to federal government call centres.

The AG found that “millions of calls” cannot get through to a government agent.

These calls either are sent to an automated service, or are directed either to a government website or to call back later.

For those callers who are able to get through, wait times of 30 minutes or more are common.

Ultimately the report concluded that call centres are not focused on clients and has made a number of recommendations to rectify this problem.

Another area of concern relates to processing of asylum claims.

The report references that between 2017 and 2018 over 40,000 individuals were intercepted for not entering Canada at a legal border crossing.

The result is a backlog that has greatly increased wait times.

The AG has made a number of recommendations to try and streamline the process and create more efficiency.

From my reading of the report, it appears that the agency is supportive of the recommendations.

Government advertising was also targeted.

The AG concluded that the “oversight of advertising was not sufficiently robust to ensure that the Government of Canada was meeting its commitment that public funds were not to be spent on partisan advertising.”

The government has agreed with the report and recommendations in this area. RCMP and their ability to properly equip members was also audited.

The AG concluded that “not all RCMP officers had access to the equipment they needed to respond to an active shooter situation” although progress was noted in areas such as body armour and carbine rifle supplies.

In this regard the RCMP fully agreed with the findings and recommendations of the AG’s report. The item from the AG’s report that I have saved for last relates to the taxation of e-commerce.

In this case, the AG looked a variety of online purchases that also includes digital services such as streaming of movies and music.

The report noted that online e-commerce is a quickly growing industry and conducted the audit to determine how effectively Canadian tax policy is keeping pace.

It was determined that in 2017, the Government of Canada did not receive an estimated \$169 million in GST on foreign digital products and services sold in Canada.

The AG also points out that vendors selling these same products and services from within Canada would have been required to collect and remit those taxes.

However it was noted that while these foreign based service providers are not currently subject to Canadian taxation, they are subject to taxation within the countries that are located in.

In this particular area the report made no specific recommendations.

The AG concluded that the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) has limited authority on e-commerce and advised that CRA should be able to expand its compliance activities in this area.

CRA has agreed.

That leads to my question this week:

What are your thoughts on current taxation policy when it comes to e-commerce?

May 15th

Last summer the Vancouver Sun reported that the RCMP suspect that arson could be behind as many as 29 different wildfires near communities such as Naramata, Okanagan Falls, Osoyoos, Oliver, Penticton, Summerland and Lake Country.

More concerning is that many of these fires were deliberately set in areas close to residential housing.

This not only threatens public safety but frequently creates the need for an evacuation order.

While wildfires, flooding and other disasters often bring out the best in people as they work together to save lives, animals and homes, it can also bring out the worst.

There is a small segment of the population consisting of individuals who use evacuation orders as an opportunity to engage in criminal actions such as looting, vandalizing and stealing from evacuated family's homes.

These despicable acts occurred last year to evacuated homeowners in communities such as Williams Lake and 100 Mile House.

Looting is not unique to B.C., it has also occurred after floods in Atlantic Canada and the tornado strike that occurred in Quebec.

The threat of looting creates anxiety and even resistance to evacuate a residence, which is not only a threat to public safety, it can also considerably increase the challenges for first responders.

In my view, those individuals who use disasters as an opportunity to abuse public trust and prey on people at their most vulnerable times must be held accountable.

That is why I have proposed a private members bill, Bill C-447, to take action against looting.

My bill proposes to amend the Criminal Code so that committing a crime and taking advantage of an evacuation order for those experiencing a natural disaster or emergency is to be considered an aggravating circumstance for sentencing purposes.

Ultimately this bill, if passed, would create new legal tools for judges when it comes to sentencing those found guilty of looting.

I believe it is important that Canadians experiencing the trauma of a natural disaster have the increased confidence that our criminal justice system has their back.

As my bill was only just tabled this week, it is unclear if the Liberals, NDP and Green Party will be supportive of it or not.

My question this week:

Are you supportive of my latest private members bill?

May 22nd

In one of my November 2018 MP Reports, I referenced the Fall Economic Statement that included a number of new announcements including a controversial \$595 million dollars to subsidize some Canadian media organizations.

I observed that this media subsidy raised serious concerns from many prominent journalists on the important role of journalistic independence from government.

I also raised some of my own questions.

If a media organization is denied funding, what recourse does it have?

Should it change the style or tone of reporting?

Cover different stories?

Hire a lobbyist?

There remain no answers.

There is also the fact that the Liberals introduced this media subsidy program in an election year.

At that time, the Liberals indicated they would appoint a panel to decide who is, and who is not, eligible for this funding.

This week the Liberals revealed the organizations that will serve on that panel.

They are: News Media Canada, the Association de la presse francophone, the Quebec Community

Newspaper Association, the National Ethnic Press and Media Council of Canada, the Canadian Association of Journalists, the Federation professionnelle des journalistes du Québec, the Federation nationale des communications and Unifor.

The choice of these appointments has raised some serious media alarm bells.

Canadian columnist Andrew Coyne stated: "It is quite clear now, if it was not already: this is the most serious threat to the independence of the press in this country in decades."

From my own perspective I also have very serious concerns about this program.

In response to the breaking news from the Globe & Mail regarding SNC Lavalin, Mr.Trudeau claimed:

"The allegations in the Globe story are false."

In other words, he seemed to imply it was a "fake news" story, a tactic increasingly used south of our border.

It is therefore concerning that Mr. Trudeau is naming organizations who will ultimately be deciding which media organizations are eligible for this subsidy program.

As a result, I believe it is critically important that only independent non-partisan organizations should have a role in this.

For example, one of Mr. Trudeau's appointments is Unifor.

Unifor is a union that represents many journalists and other staff who work in variety of different media organizations.

Unifor's National Executive Board have publicly stated that they will be "the worst nightmare" of the leader of the Conservative Opposition in the upcoming election.

These views are well known and despite that, Mr.Trudeau has appointed this politically partisan union to participate in the process of selecting eligible media set to partake of a large Liberal government subsidy.

Regardless of personal political views, I believe adding partisan interests to this process should raise serious worry.

My question this week:

Do you support this media subsidy being influenced by partisan groups such as Unifor or do you think it should be a non-partisan process?

May 29th

After this week there will be just three sitting weeks left before the expected June 21st adjournment of the House of Commons for the summer recess.

Normally the House would resume in September however in this case there is not expected to be another sitting as the writ will be dropped in September to make way for the October election. In other words we are entering the final three weeks of the 42nd Parliament.

As is often the case this time of year, the daily sittings will now be extended to 11 PM or midnight each day until the House business concludes. For the Government this is always a challenging time as they must prioritize what bills they want to see passed as there will be some legislation that will not be able to get through the House in time.

There is also a new challenge where the Senate in more recent times has demonstrated an increased willingness to either amend or attempt to delay some bills. A Bill amended by the Senate will return back to the House of Commons for further debate as opposed to receiving royal assent. Another Government action occurring is the tender will soon be released for the replacement of our current CF-18 fighter jets.

CBC reports that the tender “was pushed back recently as federal officials amended the process of evaluating industrial benefits in order to allow Lockheed Martin's F-35 to remain in the competition.” If you are confused, yes this is the same F-35 that the Liberals in 2015 stated “We will not buy the F-35 stealth fighter-bomber”.

The Swedish aerospace company SAAB has also expressed interest in making a bid with the Gripen E fighter. Some have suggested that the European company Airbus may also submit a bid with the Typhoon jet fighter. The Boeing Superhornet may be the final bidder. It is expected that the final decision would not be made for a replacement until 2022, with no replacement fighters arriving until at least 2025.

All of this would also likely depend upon the results of the next election as military procurement policies tends to change with each new government.

My question this week:

Do you support the F-35 being included in the tender for a possible CF-18 replacement aircraft despite the Liberals 2015 promise not to do so?

June 2019

June 5th

As I mentioned in last week's report, as the House of Commons now enters the final few weeks before the summer adjournment and in this case the final scheduled sitting before the election in October, there are some added challenges for the government.

As the government attempts to prioritize bills it would like to see passed through the House, those bills must also pass through the Senate.

This has become more challenging in recent times as the Senate has demonstrated an increased willingness to either amend or attempt to delay some bills.

One of those bills currently before the Senate is Bill C-48.

What is Bill C-48?

It is called the "Oil Tanker Moratorium Act" and it applies exclusively to coastal B.C. - more precisely the north coast.

Before I reference the Senate, I will share some of my own concerns with this bill.

First, is the inherent contradiction of this proposed legislation.

As we know, Mr. Trudeau is proposing to increase the tanker traffic off the west coast with the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion project.

It is the north coast where he is proposing to ban all oil tankers.

Many have pointed out the contrast in acknowledging risk in one geographic region, and yet ignoring that same potential for risk in another region.

From a safety perspective, the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation can provide spill response service in both geographic regions.

Likewise the Pacific Pilotage Authority, a crown corporation, can also provide the same world-respected marine pilots to navigate these vessels in both regions. Companies such as Seaspan (as an example) can also provide multiple tugboats to assist with docking and escort services in both areas.

In other words the same safety conditions the Prime Minister trusts in one geographic region can be equally provided in another.

So why a proposed ban in one region and not the other?

The simple answer is politics, and this is where the Senate, currently debating Bill C-48, has weighed in.

As CBC Reports, a Senate committee investigating this bill has concluded that "the bill is a cynical, intentional bid to cripple the economy of Prairie provinces, particularly Alberta, and curry political favour elsewhere in the country."

The same CBC report further states this is “driven by the calculation that the ruling Liberals have few seats to lose in Alberta and Saskatchewan.”

I will note the Liberals currently have 3 seats in Alberta, and 1 in Saskatchewan compared to 17 in BC.

It should also be pointed out that there are 30 different First Nation bands who have joined together to launch a lawsuit trying to stop this tanker ban from going forward.

They call this proposed tanker ban an unjustified infringement of their aboriginal rights and title.

They point out that this proposed tanker plan would thwart their ability to create economic support for their community through the development of an oil export facility.

At the moment it remains unclear how the entire Senate will vote on the Senate Transportation and Communications committee recommendation to kill Bill C-48.

My question for you this week:

Do you support Bill C-48 and the moratorium on oil tanker traffic off the North coast?

June 12th

As the Official Opposition, it is our job to hold the government accountable and at the same time to provide information to citizens that the government may not widely share or present in great detail.

An example of this can be found in the recent media headline “Trudeau announces ban on single-use plastics by 2021”.

This was an actual media headline quoted directly from a Global news story.

I believe most Canadians are supportive of the idea of taking action on the growing problem of plastic pollution that can have devastating impacts, particularly in sensitive marine habitats.

Often these sensitive marine habitats are polluted by developing countries that do not have proper waste disposal and recycling systems or rogue fishing operations that break maritime waste management protocols.

However, as Canadians, we should always look to make improvements to ensure a clean environment.

The idea of taking action on this front requires a credible plan in order to be successful and on that note the Prime Minister’s plan to ban single use plastics is deserving of scrutiny.

For starters, the Prime Minister actually made no promise to ban single use plastics by 2021.

The date of 2021 is an interesting one as the leader of the NDP made a similar promise recently, only setting their date at 2022.

So what did the Prime Minister actually say?

The promise was to “ban harmful single-use plastics as early as 2021”.

Note the word "early".

So the actual promise has no firm deadline whatsoever.

One may also ask what is exactly meant by a “harmful single use plastic”?

In this case the promise suggests this will be determined by “scientific evidence” and where “warranted”.

In other words there is no clear definition.

What we do know about the Canadian plastic sector is that it has estimated annual sales of \$10 billion in plastic resin and a further \$25 billion in products for a total value of \$35 billion, roughly 5% of sales in our domestic manufacturing sector.

From a waste perspective, some of the most common forms of plastic waste are found in plastic packaging that comprises 43% of total plastic waste.

Automotive plastic waste is 9%, textiles 7% and electronic equipment is 7%. Other uses make up the remainder.

A few more important questions remain unanswered.

What is the specific timeline?

What happens when there is not an alternative replacement product to a single use plastic, such as in the medical field?

What would be the total costs to achieve this plan and who would pay for it?

Since provinces have jurisdiction over waste management and recycling, have they been consulted and are all provinces supportive?

If I sound skeptical, it is largely because I am.

It appears this plan to reduce single use plastics is well meaning but short on details- more so with a fall election in the offing.

This Prime Minister has a habit of making promises.

For example:

A balanced budget in 2019.

The 2015 election was to be the last to use first past the post.

A Liberal Government would not use omnibus budget bills that he makes no effort to fulfill.

My question this week:

Do you believe this is a credible plan to reduce single use plastics?

June 19th

This week the Prime Minister made what many view as a difficult political decision; to once again approve the construction of the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion project.

The total expected cost of the expansion and acquisition is now estimated to be around \$14 billion.

The Prime Minister indicated that construction would begin during this year's summer construction schedule and has not announced how the \$14 billion will be repaid.

The day before this announcement was made the Liberals also tabled a motion to "declare that Canada is in a national climate emergency".

For the record, a resolution of the House is defined as a "declaration of opinion or purpose; it does not require that any action be taken, nor is it binding."

The Conservatives proposed amendments to the motion that called on the government to acknowledge that it is not on track to hit its Paris GHG reduction targets and also to recognize that climate change is a global problem.

Although the Conservative amendments were supported by the Green Party, they were voted down by the Liberal majority, who ultimately passed the original motion with the Conservatives opposed.

From those who are strongly opposed to the Trans-Mountain pipeline project, I am already hearing outrage that the Prime Minister would approve this \$14 billion oil pipeline project the day after declaring a national climate emergency in Canada.

To understand their opposition to the Trans-Mountain project, according to Environment and Climate Change Canada, it will increase the nominal pipeline capacity from the current level of 300,000 barrels per day to 890,000 barrels per day.

The upstream GHG emissions associated with 890,000 barrels per day is estimated to be between 20 and 26 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year.

However, as the expansion project is adding 590,000 barrels per day the upstream GHG emissions are estimated to be between 14 to 17 megatonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent per year with the expansion.

NDP MP Peter Julian, who is from BC, commented that "The Liberals are slapping each other on the back because they passed a motion that is meaningless. [On Tuesday] they are going to rubber-stamp the Trans Mountain pipeline, which will dramatically increase greenhouse gas production in the country. The hypocrisy is beyond belief,"

The Liberals continue to insist that the environment and the economy go hand-in-hand.

So my question this week is not about whether you support the Trans-Mountain pipeline.

Instead, my question is;

Do you believe that oil pipeline expansion projects, that increase GHG emissions, actually go hand in hand with the environment as the Liberal government insists?

July 2019

July 3rd

The British Columbia Utilities Commission (BCUC) is a provincial agency and is currently conducting a limited review into gasoline pricing in British Columbia.

This review will have some federal implications and I believe this will be of interest to many citizens in our region.

The review was ordered by the BC NDP Provincial Government earlier this year after a public outcry on high gas prices at the pump and the April 1st increase to the carbon tax.

The reason the review is limited is because the BC NDP, in the terms of reference to the BCUC, made one very important limitation:

“The commission (BCUC) may not inquire into the effects of provincial enactments or policy on gasoline and diesel prices in British Columbia,”

In other words provincial BC NDP energy policy and related taxation cannot be included in this review.

Early work from the BCUC (as reported by Mr. Rob Shaw of the Vancouver Sun) indicates that the National Energy Board (NEB) stated that the “refining margin on regular gasoline in Vancouver in April averaged 52.1 cents per litre”

To put that figure into context, that is approximately double the national average.

However, here is another interesting fact:

In the lower mainland, the total of the transit tax, provincial taxes including the carbon tax, federal excise tax, and GST add 52 cents per litre.

So the combined governments take in taxes is roughly equal to the oil companies refining margins.

That amount would be less here in the Central Okanagan- Similkameen- Nicola as there is no local transit tax.

One other interesting consideration relates to the Trans Mountain pipeline (TMX).

Suncor has stated that pipeline capacity for refined products, that includes gasoline and diesel, has decreased by 30-36 million litres per month.

This in turn means this gasoline must be shipped by either rail or truck, which is more costly.

Parkland Fuel, the operator of the refinery in Burnaby, have also stated that because the TMX pipeline is at capacity, often carrying other products (diluted bitumen is one example), they have to pay a premium to secure supply capacity from other shippers.

This is relevant as it is some of the first quantifiable evidence that the lack of available capacity for gasoline & diesel in the TMX pipeline is playing a role in creating higher gas prices at BC pumps.

As I wrote in my May 1st, 2019 report, the reason for the lack of capacity is due to the fact that the TMX pipeline must carry a range of different oil products ranging from gasoline to diluted bitumen.

The expanded new section of the Trans-Mountain pipeline (if built) would exclusively carry what is known as “heavy oils,” such as diluted bitumen, allowing the existing section to transport products such as gasoline & diesel to increase supply.

Ironically BC NDP Premier Horgan, who created the BCUC review to “get to the bottom” of high gas prices in BC, opposes the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion.

My question this week:

How much are you impacted by gasoline prices?

July 10th

Chances are you will have heard the term “fake news” and concerns of alleged and actual uses of inaccurate information to unduly influence an election result.

While this remains a hot button issue south of our border, we have also had a real example of this here in Canada.

During the recent Burnaby South by-election, NDP candidate and party leader Jagmeet Singh was featured in an inaccurate news story suggesting Mr. Singh resided in what was described as a “\$5.5-million dollar mansion resplendent with ornate staircases and murals painted on ceilings”.

For the record Mr. Singh lives in no such residence.

The incorrect story, as is often the case, was circulated in many social media circles, often by political opponents of Mr. Singh.

It is currently unknown who was ultimately responsible.

What is more troubling is that inaccurate news stories can be sourced from third party organizations or individuals from other countries who may refuse to respect or cooperate with the laws of Canada or other countries.

With our Canadian federal election approaching in October, similar concerns have been raised over the potential for electoral interference occurring during this time period.

This week the Liberal government released the rules they will be creating in response to these concerns.

Ultimately it will be a group of unelected senior public servants in Ottawa who will decide if an incident that occurs is considered to be electoral interference or not.

This group is made up of the Clerk of the Privy Council, the national security adviser to the Prime Minister, the Deputy Minister of Justice, the Deputy Minister of Public Safety and the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs.

In the event they believe a situation is an act of intended electoral interference they will notify the Prime Minister, the leaders of the other political parties as well as Elections Canada and an announcement providing further information will be forthcoming.

The challenge is that there is no actual definition of what type of incident or situation is defined as "interference".

This decision will be up to the discretion of the people involved, who typically have often been appointed by the Prime Minister.

In this case the Prime Minister will not have the power to veto this process, if it concludes that an event or situation has transpired.

Some who follow Ottawa very closely will know that statements made by the former Clerk of the Privy Council during the SNC Lavalin/Justice Committee hearings were criticized by many journalists and pundits alike for being overtly partisan.

I can state that I would not have confidence in this process if the former Clerk had not retired after losing confidence of the other Party leaders.

My question this week:

Do you have confidence that this process will effectively prevent or otherwise discourage outside electoral interference during the election?

July 17th

The official opposition has the responsibility to hold the Government to account.

Part of this responsibility means looking at how the government spends your money on programs, projects and services to determine if there is value and results being delivered for taxpayers.

The opposition is also assisted in the work that we do through journalists, who not only hold the Government to account, but also the opposition- in fact all elected officials and all the citizens we represent.

One journalism organization that many Canadians outside of Ottawa may not have heard of is 'Blacklock's Reporter' ,<https://www.blacklocks.ca/>, a unique investigative news organization who stands alone in being the only reporter-owned and operated newsroom in Ottawa.

Recently through a series of access to information requests, Blacklock's reviewed the Trudeau Liberal Government's billion dollar 'Strategic Innovation Fund'.

This fund falls under the responsibility of Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic Development. Minister Navdeep Bains.

For the record I am the shadow cabinet critic for this Ministry.

The results of this access to information data, as reported by Blacklock's, is alarming.

Publicly the Trudeau Liberal Government boasted that this program had loaned out a billion dollars and helped "to create nearly 56,000 jobs".

Is this claim accurate?

In a word, no.

The access to information data reveals that in reality, as of March 31st of this year, only 6,613 jobs have been created.

To put that figure into perspective a total \$1,051,716,827 in funding has been approved by the Trudeau Liberal Government, meaning each job has cost the equivalent of more than \$159,000 per.

Records further revealed that of the \$1.05 billion loaned out to date, only about half, a total \$566.4 million, is due to be repaid with just over 50% due to be repaid by 2041.

It has not been explained why there is a deficiency of over 49,000 fewer jobs then what has been publicly claimed.

My question this week:

Do you feel that the Liberals billion dollar "Strategic Innovation Fund" is meeting your expectations?

July 24th

In less than two months, the writ will be dropped and the official campaign for the October federal election will begin.

I referenced the "official" campaign getting underway because by all accounts active campaigning has already begun.

So, what does "dropping the writ" actually mean?

A writ is "dropped" when the Prime Minister presents the Governor General with an instrument of advice recommending the House of Commons be dissolved.

In turn the Governor General then issues a proclamation dissolving Parliament.

Previously there was no maximum length for a writ period until the passing of "Elections Modernization

Act”, passed in this Parliament, that set that a maximum of length of fifty days.

Another change was the creation of a restricted pre-writ period that began back on June 30th of this year.

This newly created “pre-writ” period imposes restrictions, such as limits on advertising for political parties, prior to the official writ being dropped.

Previously spending limits were only imposed on political parties during the writ period.

How does this change things?

In the writ period the Government enters into, what is known in our Westminster form of government, as the “Caretaker Convention”.

The Caretaker Convention recognizes the underlying principle that government must still run, however the elected political side of government cannot use taxpayer provided resources or other powers of government in an effort to influence the election.

As an example, a Government Cabinet Minister or the Prime Minister could not fly, at taxpayer expense, to make major spending announcement or announce other changes in government policy intended for political gain.

When the Trudeau Liberal Government created the new “pre-writ” period, they ensured that the restrictions on expenses (such as advertising) only applies to political parties.

The Prime Minister and his Ministers are not subject to any spending restrictions on their political activities during the pre-writ period.

The Liberals also ensured that the Caretaker Convention would not apply during the pre-writ period.

Meaning that taxpayer resources can be used while the PM and his Ministers fly around Canada making funding announcements precisely intended for political gain.

Likewise government policies and project announcements can also be manipulated for partisan political purposes.

My question to you this week is one of fairness:

Do you believe that in addition to political parties, that this new pre-writ period should also equally apply to the Prime Minister and Cabinet?

July 31st

Every summer since I was first elected I have traveled throughout every community in my riding as part of my annual summer listening tour.

Citizens deserve to be heard and meeting with people directly in their home communities is a very important part of being a Member of Parliament.

The feedback and concerns that I hear are part of the focus for when the House of Commons resumes typically in September.

This year, the House is not expected to resume given that the next federal election will be in October.

I am frequently reminded at how far away the "Ottawa bubble" is when it comes to those who live in Canadian rural communities.

In several parts of my riding there are no public transit options.

Where there was once Greyhound service in some areas, it now no longer exists.

Some areas have no access to natural gas for home heating.

There is also a lack of internet access in many areas and in some cases no wireless signal whatsoever.

For this reason, both the Provincial and Federal Government have promised to increase rural internet connectivity.

Despite these promises, as many rural residents without wireless service can confirm, little to no progress has been made.

Recently, with the fall election fast approaching, the Liberal Government made yet another promise with regards to rural internet connectivity.

The Liberals announced a down the road program to pay \$600 million over 10 years to what was described as an "Ottawa based company" to launch low-earth orbit (LEO) satellites.

LEO satellites orbit at a height of roughly 1,000 kilometers, compared to conventional satellites that are typically orbit the earth at a range over 30,000 kilometers.

LEO satellites can provide much faster wireless connections to hard to reach, isolated locations.

LEO satellite technology is an emerging industry with several international private sector companies investing in new technology in a race to get LEO satellites launched.

This leads to my question for this week.

The Liberal government's track record on rural internet connectivity has not been stellar.

As the Auditor General concluded in a report from last year, the connectivity program did not get value for money.

The AG also determined that the Trudeau Government was hindered by having no overall rural connectivity strategy.

This remains unchanged.

People in rural and remote communities deserve better than a program where under 15% of the promised funding for internet infrastructure to date, has been spent, as is the case under this Liberal government.

My question to you:

Should the next government prioritize having a comprehensive strategy to make sure rural and remote communities have internet connectivity?

August 2019

August 7th

As we approach the October election, one of the significant concerns in British Columbia is the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion project (TMX) and by extension the increase in related oil tanker traffic.

In previous reports I have referenced many aspects of this project however one area I have not covered has been about oil tankers.

The intent of my report today will be to provide some additional information on this topic.

For the record, there are five types of oil tankers that range in size from the 230 metre long Panamax class up to the 415 metre long ULCC class.

For a frame of reference the Exxon Valdez was the second largest VLCC class at 330 metres in length.

The tankers involved in the TMX project are the second smallest Aframax size at 245 metres.

For some comparison, the BC Ferries "Spirit" class of vessels are 167 metres long.

In terms of capacity, an Aframax tanker can carry up to 750,000 barrels of oil.

The Exxon Valdez VLCC class can carry close to 2,000,000 barrels of oil.

In terms of tanker sailings, the completion of the TMX project would result in roughly 34 tanker sailings per month.

Currently there are 5 sailings.

One question on the minds of the many citizens I have heard from is; what has changed since the days of the Exxon Valdez?

One of the more significant changes relates to construction.

Tankers involved with the TMX project are double hulled construction, which is now subject to Canadian and International regulation.

Other changes relate to regulation and procedures.

Today regulatory requirements include a certificate of insurance, arrangements with the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation for spill response readiness.

Both the tanker and the terminal are required to complete unique spill response plans.

From a procedural stand point, a tanker at the berth is always enclosed with a pre-deployed oil spill boom with a second boom ready for deployment.

No tanker will enter the region without a professional pilot on board and a fully loaded tanker departing must carry two pilots.

All cargo loading is under the supervision of a loading master who must stay on board while the loading is underway.

Aside from these changes, there are also additional use of tethered and un-tethered tugboats acting as escort vessels throughout the arrival and departure process.

Aside from these measures, the Western Canada Marine Response Corporation would also significantly increase both resources and location of resources for enhanced spill response capacity and faster response times.

I have provided this information for greater context and understanding of how marine oil tanker traffic would change with the expansion of the TMX project as well as how tanker safety has also changed.

My question this week relates solely to tankers:

How do you feel about an increase in tanker traffic from 5 tankers up to roughly 34 a month?

August 14th

Canadian political history was made as Prime Minister Trudeau was found guilty for the second time in contravening the Conflict of Interest Act.

In the ruling released this week by Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner, Mario Dion, the guilty verdict related to the actions of Mr. Trudeau in seeking to influence a decision of the Attorney General of Canada in relation to the prosecution of SNC Lavalin.

This situation led to the resignation of Ms.Jody Wilson-Raybould from the Liberal cabinet, before Mr. Trudeau removed her and Ms.Jane Philpott (whom likewise resigned from cabinet due to concerns on the subject) from the Liberal caucus.

The report released this week, known as *"Trudeau II"* raises some very troubling findings.

The Commissioner found *"The Prime Minister, directly and through his senior officials, used various means to exert influence over Ms. Wilson-Raybould. The authority of the Prime Minister and his office was used to circumvent, undermine and ultimately attempt to discredit the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions as well as the authority of Ms. Wilson-Raybould as the Crown's chief law officer,"*

The Commissioner noted that he was denied some of the required information to view "the entire body of evidence" and that some witnesses were also unable to share certain information because of these same restrictions.

Ultimately his conclusion was *"The evidence showed there were many ways in which Mr. Trudeau, either directly or through the actions of those under his direction, sought to influence the Attorney General."*

Since the report was publicly released Mr. Trudeau stated that he *"takes responsibility for the mistakes that I made"* yet at the same time he has also stated that he disagrees with some of the Commissioners findings.

Having now read the Commissioners report in full I also have a few thoughts.

When this SNC Lavalin situation was first reported in the Globe & Mail, Mr. Trudeau told reporters *"The allegations in the Globe story this morning are false,"*

Later at a March 7, 2019 news conference Mr. Trudeau stated *"In Ms. Wilson-Raybould's case she did not come to me & I wish she had,"*

The challenge with this statement is that the Trudeau II report clearly reveals that on September 17 of 2018 Ms. Wilson-Raybould did meet with Mr. Trudeau and relayed her concerns directly to him.

In other words the comments made by Mr. Trudeau in March of 2019 do not reconcile with the facts of September 17th of 2018 as outlined in the report.

My question this week: What do you think the Prime Minister should do in light of this serious report?

August 21st

This week an unusual event occurred as the Ethics Committee convened in Ottawa to vote on calling Federal Ethics Commissioner, Mario Dion, to appear before the committee in relation to the his recent ethics report that concluded:

"The Prime Minister, directly and through his senior officials, used various means to exert influence over Ms. Wilson-Raybould. The authority of the Prime Minister and his office was used to circumvent, undermine and ultimately attempt to discredit the decision of the Director of Public Prosecutions as well as the authority of Ms. Wilson-Raybould as the Crown's chief law officer,"

At this ethics committee meeting Green Party leader Elizabeth May stated:

"This is really scandalous, the Prime Minister is guilty here of the kind of offense in which resignation is appropriate."

She also clarified that she was not making a direct request for a resignation. Despite the Green party, NDP, Conservatives and even one Liberal MP voting for the Ethics Commissioner to appear as a witness at the Committee, the Liberal majority blocked this from occurring. The fact that a non-partisan, independent officer, who was appointed by the Prime Minister, is now blocked by the Liberal majority from appearing at an all-party Parliamentary Committee is deeply troubling and raises serious concerns.

We know that the Ethics Commissioner has publicly stated that he was also blocked from receiving required information to view “the entire body of evidence” when preparing his latest report. We also know that claims from the Trudeau Liberals that the improper pressure applied to the former Attorney General was “all about jobs” is patently false.

The report from Mr. Dion, titled “Trudeau II”, confirmed that Finance Minister Bill Morneau admitted that no study was ever undertaken to validate any potential job losses that have been repeatedly claimed by the Government. It also known that while Mr. Trudeau has stated publicly that the “buck stops with him”, the report reveals privately that:

“Mr. Trudeau's counsel argued that even if his ministerial staff and the Clerk of the Privy Council act on behalf of the Prime Minister when engaging with other ministers or their representatives, Mr. Trudeau cannot be vicariously liable for the actions of his staff...”

This suggests that if whatever information the Ethics Commissioner has been denied by government officials becomes public, the Prime Minister could potentially attempt to place blame on his staff. In other words, this smells like a cover-up.

My question for this week:

Does the Liberal's blocking Ethics Commissioner Mario Dion from appearing before the Ethics Committee concern you?

August 28th

In 2013, when Justin Trudeau was the Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada, he made public comments on the use of omnibus legislation and stated “I wouldn’t use them, period.”

Since that time, that despite this promise, the Trudeau Liberal Government has continued to use omnibus legislation.

Most commonly in Budget Implementation Bills, often referred to as “BIA’s”.

It was within a BIA that changes were made to the Canada Labour Code that impacts federally regulated workplaces.

Some examples of federally regulated workplaces include banking, the telecommunications sector as well as much of the air, rail and marine transportation industries.

The changes will come into force next week, on September 1st, and propose significant changes that I will provide a few examples of:

Shift changes: Employers will need to provide 24 hours' notice of a change or addition to a work period or shift. Subject to exemptions for emergencies.

Overtime refusal: Employees will have the right to refuse overtime. Subject to exemptions for emergencies.

Notice of schedule: Employers will be required to provide 96 hours' notice of an employee's work schedule. Employees may refuse shifts starting less than 96 hours after the schedule is received.

Leave for Aboriginal practices: Aboriginal employees, who have at least three consecutive months of continuous employment, may take up to five days unpaid leave each calendar year to participate in traditional Aboriginal practices.

Personal leave: Employees will be entitled to personal leave of up to five days per calendar year, including three days with pay, after three consecutive months of continuous employment.

Holiday pay: The 30-day length of employment requirement for holiday pay will be eliminated. All employees will now be entitled to holiday pay.

Although this is just a summary of some of the many changes, I am certain most would agree that these changes are undeniably employee friendly.

This fact should not be surprising, given that we are on the eve of a federal election.

However, breaking news out of Ottawa this week from "The Logic" has revealed *"that some companies have already been granted temporary exemptions, effective September 1."*

It has been further reported that other exemptions may be pending.

In other words, some federally regulated employees expecting these new changes to be in effect on September 1st will be disappointed.

As to what employers have been exempted and why remains a subject without answers.

I believe it is everyone's interests, regardless of their thoughts on these new laws, that we protect our legislative processes to ensure that special favours are not seen to advance the cause of some, at the expense of others.

This leads to my question for this week.

Should the Trudeau Government publish a list of all of the exempted employers, including any related lobbying efforts by said employers, and provide the rationale for these exemptions?

September 2019

September 4th

With the federal election date of October 21st, at some point in September, the Prime Minister will present the Governor General with an instrument of advice recommending the House of Commons be dissolved.

In turn the Governor General issues a proclamation dissolving the 42nd Parliament.

The Prime Minister then presents an order in council to the Chief Electoral Officer requesting the writ of an election.

At this point the writ is considered “dropped” and the formal “writ period” will get underway.

Part of what will occur during the writ period are debates among party leaders as well as local candidates.

One new change on the national level is the Trudeau Liberal Government's creation of a 'Leaders' Debates Commission'.

In the past the major televised debates between party leaders were organized by a consortium of media broadcasters.

More recently leader's debates have also been hosted by organizations such as Macleans Magazine and the Munk Debates.

The Leaders' Debates Commission is still largely organized by a consortium of media broadcasters however this process is done independently working with an appointed 'Debates Commissioner'.

The purpose of the Leaders' Debates Commission is to organize two televised debates, one in English and the other in French as was done previously.

Because the process has been finalized in a formal structure there are also rules on what leaders can and cannot participate in the debate.

One of the rules states “At the time the general election in question is called, the party is represented in the House of Commons by a Member of Parliament who was elected as a member of that party”.

This means for a new political party, such as the People's Party of Canada, they do not meet this guideline.

There are other debates that will be occurring again such as the Munk Debate on foreign policy (as one example) that other major party leaders have agreed to attend.

It has now been reported that Prime Minister Trudeau has declined all other debate invitations and will only appear in the debates organized by the Leaders' Debates Commission.

My question this week is as follows:

Do you believe the Prime Minister only attending one English debate and one French debate is enough or would you like to see the Prime Minister participating in more debates?

October 2019

October 23rd

It is a great honour to be in a position to resume writing my weekly MP reports to you after our recent federal election.

Before I go any further I would like to sincerely thank the over 63,000 citizens who came out to polls and advance polls to make your vote count.

I would also like to thank the many volunteers who worked tirelessly on the many different campaigns.

These volunteers play a key role in furthering the interests of our Canadian democracy.

And finally I would like to recognize and thank the other candidates who put their names forward to serve.

These individuals put their lives on hold for many months covering the vast expanse of our Central Okanagan- Similkameen- Nicola riding. All the candidates of this recent election care about their communities and our great country.

As you have likely heard, we have a minority Liberal Government that will be returning to Ottawa.

I have been asked questions what that might look like.

Our House of Commons has 338 seats, however one Member of Parliament will be elected to serve as the Speaker effectively leaving 337 seats, although the Speaker does have a vote in the event of a tie.

The Liberals lost 20 seats in this recent election reducing their total seat count to 157.

That is short of having a majority in the House of Commons.

The NDP also lost seats going from 44 down to 24.

However because the Liberal and NDP seats combined add up to 181, if the two parties were to agree to support a budget or government bill, the Liberals could stay in power.

Another scenario discussed is if the Liberals invited other parties to join them in their cabinet, which is referred to as a coalition government.

Either way the two or more parties could carry a majority vote.

The Prime Minister has stated that he will not, formally or informally, pursue such a coalition but to govern from a minority position.

Although the Conservative Party did gain 28 seats, and won the popular vote over the Liberal Party, it remains as the Official Opposition.

The Bloc party in Quebec increased their seat count winning 32 seats in Quebec and the Green Party added one more seat and now has 3 in total, with two in B.C. and one in Atlantic Canada.

From a historical perspective there have only been three times in Canadian history where an elected Government did not also win the popular vote. 1979, 1967 and 1926.

Although only once before in Canadian history has a first term majority government been defeated and only three times in history has a first time majority government been held to minority status upon re-

election.

Because of the loss of the popular vote, minority government status, and the fact that the Liberal Party was completely shut out of Alberta and Saskatchewan while there was a significant re-emergence of the Bloc in Quebec, many have stated concerns that Canada is facing a potential unity crises.

That leads to my question for this week.

Are you concerned about Canadian unity as a result of the October 21, 2019 election?

October 30th

In last week's MP report I discussed the voting outcome of the recent 43rd Canadian federal election that resulted in a minority government.

What exactly does a minority government mean and how might that work to serve Canadians?

The Liberals hold 157 seats, the Conservatives 121, the BLOC with 32, and the NDP 24. There is 1 independent MP and the Green Party now has 3.

The reason the seat count is critical is due to the fact that it illustrates that the Liberal Government requires only the support of one major party to either pass a budget, or have legislation approved.

While the Government has three parties they have the option of working with on a bill or budget, the same is not true for the opposition.

For the opposition to defeat a Liberal Government bill, no two parties' combined carry enough votes to effectively block the legislation.

The only way the opposition could prevent a Government bill from going forward would be if all three parties agree to work together to block it.

For these reasons the Liberal Government will have the advantage and a fair bit of flexibility in advancing legislation, provided they work with at least one of the three major parties.

From my own perspective, we do have some challenges with each party having more representation in certain regions of Canada than others.

Last week I asked about your concerns regarding Canadian unity and received possibly the most responses to any question I have asked in my weekly reports.

There is no question many Canadians are deeply concerned including many within our region.

What happens next?

The Prime Minister has indicated he will name his new cabinet on November 20th.

I expect shortly after that, the Leader of the Official Opposition will present his own shadow cabinet of critics to speak on particular files and hold the government to account.

Parliament is likely to resume sitting in December with an expected Throne Speech that will outline the

priorities of the minority Liberal government.

This leads to my question for this week:

What are the priorities you would like to see addressed by this 43rd Canadian Parliament?

November 2019

November 6th

This week I am back in Ottawa for the first time since the recent election.

It is a bittersweet occasion having to say goodbye to some colleagues who I have worked with for years who were not re-elected.

It is also an exciting time for those who are newly elected stepping into the House of Commons for the very first time.

Being in the House of Commons as an elected representative on behalf of the citizens we represent is an immense honour.

That we have, both departing and newly arriving Members of Parliament, is all part of a healthy democracy.

This is why honouring Veteran's Week is critically important and on that point, I encourage you to take part in your local Remembrance Day ceremony.

When I reflect on the great importance of Remembrance Day, I am reminded of a visit by former British Prime Minister David Cameron in 2011.

During his visit Mr. Cameron reminded the House of Commons that: "in the world's toughest times and darkest hours, Canada has always defended democratic freedom and fought against tyranny."

As Canadians we have been defined by the sacrifices of the brave men and women who serve in honour of our nation.

On this week, in what is the 11th month, on the eleventh day and at the eleventh hour, Canadians will give pause to honour and reflect on the sacrifice of those brave soldiers who have served.

Let us give thanks to our veterans for all that we have and may we never forget.

My question this week:

Will you be attending a Remembrance Day service?

November 13th

By this time next week it is expected that Prime Minister Trudeau will have announced his cabinet choices for the upcoming 43rd Parliament.

In turn the Opposition parties will also announce their respective official critics in response.

The first week of December, Canada's 43rd Parliament will be convened to elect the Speaker followed by the Liberal minority government delivering its first Speech from the Throne- an outline of the Government's priorities.

The content of the Throne Speech is still unknown, although this week the Prime Minister has been meeting with leaders of the other opposition parties as well as some Provincial leaders.

As I mentioned in last week's report, it is important to recognize that the Prime Minister only requires the support of one of the three major parties in order to secure enough votes to prevent the government from falling.

For opposition parties, while it is easy to oppose, there must also be awareness that if all of the three major opposition parties oppose the Liberal minority government, it would fall and trigger an election.

I believe that Canadians elected a minority government in order to see greater cooperation and compromise in Ottawa.

The Throne Speech presents an opportunity for the Prime Minister to reflect that sentiment or it may also be used to gain the support of one opposition party at the expense of others in a more divisive manner.

At this point, I am working on future private members legislation as well as preparing issues of local importance to raise with new cabinet ministers, once they have been announced.

It is also my intention to work with our Okanagan MP's on a regional level to address areas of common concern such as the threat of invasive species to Okanagan Lake from freshwater mussels.

The struggles of the BC forest sector and the loss of local lumber mill jobs is another concern, more so as we increasingly see BC forest companies investing and creating new jobs in the United States.

These situations affect all of us and hopefully within a minority Government, front and backbench MP's can better work together across party lines to see more results being achieved and less photo-ops staged for political reasons.

This leads to my question for this week:

On the local or regional level. what challenges do you see where increased leadership from the federal government can play a role?

November 20th

On Wednesday Prime Minister Trudeau announced his new cabinet.

Anyone who thought having less seats and a minority Government would in turn result in a smaller cabinet will be disappointed to learn otherwise.

By the numbers the new cabinet now has 37 Ministers in contrast to the 31 Minister's announced by the PM after the 2015 majority.

In order to add so many new Ministers in some cases a new Ministry had to be created.

As an example we now have a Minister of Middle Class Prosperity.

This is perhaps the first time where a well-known political talking point has now become a Ministry.

At this point it is unclear what will be the mandate of this or any Ministry as the official mandate letters have yet to be released.

Not counting PM Trudeau, of the remaining 36 Ministers, 18 are female and 18 are male as the gender quota policy of the Prime Minister remains unchanged.

What has changed is the distribution of responsibilities.

In the last Parliament, women were appointed Ministers or leaders in areas such as the Environment, Foreign Affairs, Justice and Attorney General, House Leader and President of Treasury Board,

In the 2019 Cabinet, all of the roles mentioned above, including Finance, Transport, and National Defence are filled by men.

It is also of interest that the only two Ministers, successfully re-elected, and not returned to cabinet were both women.

There of course is also considerable discussion over who was demoted and promoted however I believe these types of discussions tend to diminish the contributions of the Minister and the portfolio in question, often unfairly.

I will also add that there are seven new faces at the cabinet table and I am certain that there will be no dispute for them serving in cabinet is a promotion.

Regionally the big winner of this cabinet is the City of Montreal, who now has seven Ministers serving in Mr. Trudeau's Cabinet.

17 Minister's are from Ontario and 11 are from Quebec, compared to 4 from BC.

Another significant change is that there is no longer a Minister for Democratic Institutions.

For those hoping that Mr. Trudeau would eventually honour his promise to end the first past the post voting system this seems increasingly unlikely as a result of this move.

Other Ministerial portfolios also no longer exist.

As an example there is no longer a Minister of Sport nor is there a Minister of Science.

This leads to my question for this week:

Given that there is no longer a Minister of Science or Sport, are you supportive that there is now a Minister of Middle Class Prosperity?

November 27th

One of the reasons why I write weekly MP reports is so citizens can be informed and follow events occurring in Ottawa and by extension hold myself and MP's from other parties to account.

As much as I would like to share events occurring in Ottawa this week unfortunately the House of Commons is still not in session.

Despite the election occurring back in late October, Prime Minister Trudeau has waited until Thursday, December 5th to recall the House for a Throne Speech.

After the Throne Speech the House is not scheduled to sit again until Monday, January 27th of 2020.

The House of Commons was last in session in late June of this year and, with the exception of the brief throne speech on December 5th, it will have sat vacant for over half a year.

While it is understandable that this is an abnormal time, as a result of the federal election, it is concerning that nearly three months will have passed, since the election, before the House assumes regular sittings.

I raise this because the BC Forest industry, as one example, is in a crisis situation.

Citizens in Kelowna are deeply concerned that 174 residents who worked at the local Tolko lumber mill are now out of work.

This week the BC NDP Government announced, in the fiscal update, that revenue received from the BC forest sector has decreased by \$110 million.

That is government revenue that now must be made up either through reductions in spending or increased taxes elsewhere.

Also this week Canfor announced that 10 lumber mills will be shut down for a two week period, temporarily displacing over 2,000 workers.

These critically important points deserve to be raised on the floor of the House of Commons for response from the Liberal Government.

Not all problems in the forest industry can be solved by Government.

The current timber shortage and devastation from the mountain pine beetle are two examples of that.

However we also have to recognize that some BC forest companies, currently closing down lumber mills in BC, are not leaving forestry.

Instead they are investing in and opening up new lumber mills in the United States.

This is deeply concerning when BC forest companies leave BC to invest in other regions.

Many of the regions they are investing in have different government policies.

As an example, a lumber mill operating in some of these US jurisdictions does not have higher payroll costs such as increased CPP or the BC NDP created Employer Health Tax.

They also do not pay carbon taxes or are subject to added duties at the border due to a lack of a softwood lumber agreement.

These are some areas where the Federal Government can show leadership.

Unfortunately with the House not sitting, the ability to raise these issues and hold the government to account is denied.

My question this week:

Do you think it is reasonable that the Prime Minister has waited until December the 5th to table a Throne Speech?

December 2019

December 4th

Finally Members of Parliament have returned to Ottawa.

For members of the Opposition it also a time to become familiar with what our critic roles will be to kick off this new parliament.

I am pleased to announce that the entire Okanagan region will be well represented with prominent critic roles:

Conservative MP Mel Arnold (North Okanagan—Shuswap, British Columbia), Critic for Fisheries, Oceans and the Canadian Coast Guard.

Conservative MP Tracy Gray (Kelowna—Lake Country, British Columbia), Critic for Interprovincial Trade

NDP MP Richard Cannings (South Okanagan—West Kootenay), Critic for Natural Resources

My new portfolio will be the Conservative critic of Employment, Workforce Development and Disability Inclusion.

As critics, it is part of our job to hold the government to account.

It is also our responsibility to not just oppose but also to propose policy and solutions that we believe can be of benefit to the citizens that we are elected to serve.

The Governor General will deliver the Prime Minister's Throne Speech outlining the priorities of the Liberal minority government in the upcoming Parliament.

This leads me to my question this week.

What is the one issue that you most want to see referenced in this week's Throne Speech as a priority of the Federal Government?

December 11th

With the House sitting, there are more events to share than can be summarized in my weekly report.

However, there is one event in particular that I believe is deserving of mention despite not being as high profile as other recent events such as the Throne Speech.

Tuesday of this week was the first "Opposition Day" in the House of Commons.

This is the day where an opposition party, in this case the Official Opposition Conservative Party, sets the agenda in the House of Commons with a motion of its own.

Our motion was summarized as follows:

"That, in light of the prolonged diplomatic crisis with China, the House appoint a special committee with the mandate to conduct hearings to examine and review all aspects of the Canada-China relationship including, but not limited to consular, economic, legal, security and diplomatic relations."

It is no secret that Canada's relations with China have deteriorated considerably in recent years.

Two Canadians are currently being held unjustly in Chinese custody.

Canadian Canola farmers have lost 40% of their export market due to unfair Chinese trade restrictions.

Locally in Summerland, a senior care home that is now owned by the Chinese Government has created serious concerns for the residents of this facility and their families with little accountability.

We must also recognize that there are opportunities for having a more constructive relationship with China.

Cleaner burning BC LNG can be used instead of coal in Chinese power plants to lower global emissions.

Locally grown Okanagan cherries exported into China create a very lucrative market.

Tourism is another opportunity.

What's most important about this particular opposition day motion is that it was opposed by the Liberal government.

This is not unlike what occurred in the last Parliament, where the Liberals blocked a proposed committee investigation into claims of inappropriate pressure by Canadian officials on former Canadian diplomats who had been posted in China and were speaking as private citizens.

A pattern Canadians also witnessed with parliamentary committee attempts to further examine the SNC Lavalin affair where the Liberals would use their majority to block and ultimately shut down those efforts.

It was widely observed that unelected powerful people working in the Prime Minister's Office were calling the shots and had a significant role in stonewalling attempts to provide transparency and accountability to Canadians.

That changed this week.

Despite the Liberals opposing the opposition day motion, the three major opposition parties all supported it.

This was a true victory for Canadian democracy with this minority Parliament.

Now it will be democratically elected Parliamentarians having a significant role in how we can examine our relations with China.

Unelected Liberal Prime Ministerial political appointees can no longer look the other way and ignore this most serious situation.

My question this week:

Do you support the creation of this all party committee to review all aspects of the Canada-China relationship?

December 18th

Although the House was sitting last week for the first time since June, the House stands adjourned again as the regular winter break is now in effect until Monday, January 27 of 2020.

This week, the Liberal Government used the opportunity of the House not sitting to release the fall economic update.

One look at the numbers and it is easy to see why the Finance Minister did not want to be grilled in the House over the fact that the Liberals continue to not meet the fiscal promises they make to Canadians.

In this case, while the Liberals had claimed that the deficit would be \$19.8 billion it will actually be \$26.6 Billion during the end of the fiscal period in March.

Next year's deficit is forecast to come in even higher at \$28.1 Billion.

To further complicate these growing deficit numbers is that they do not yet include spending on the many promises the Liberals made during the recent election.

This suggests that either the deficits could potentially become much higher or some of the promises will not be delivered on.

It should also be noted that not all of the increase in these deficits is attributed to spending.

As one example, changes to how the public sector pension fund is calculated raises actuarial costs as a liability.

Also as interest rates change, so does the size of the pension liability, much as it also can have an impact on interest charges spent on debt servicing.

Another concern in the economic update is that it forecasts that economic growth in Canada will decline between 2020 and 2021.

The Liberal Government has also made a commitment to increase the basic personal exemption limit on your personal tax forms to be phased in gradually over the next 4 taxation years until 2024-25.

The Parliamentary Budget Officer calculates the impact on Government revenues over that period of time to be further reduced by roughly \$14 billion.

When one factors in an economic slowdown, that the deficit is well above what the Liberal's forecast in their spring budget, that other Liberal election promises have not been factored in let alone the demands of opposition parties - we are headed for challenging times.

Several Canadian Provinces are also experiencing serious fiscal hardship and are looking to the federal Government for financial assistance.

Statistics Canada recently reported that our Canadian economy posted its biggest monthly job loss since the 2009 financial crisis with 71,000 Canadian jobs lost in November.

While the Finance Minister states publicly that he is "not worried" about these indicators, my question this week:

Are you?