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Dear Friends,

Since 2015, Canadians have created over 800,000 net new jobs. Today, Canada has its lowest unemployment rate in over 40 years.

Middle-class families are better off than under the previous government. A typical middle-class family receives on average \$2,000 more per year than in 2015. This owes to the impact of the Canada Child Benefit and the middle-class tax cut. The Canada Child Benefit has helped lift nearly 300,000 children out of poverty.

Canada's net debt-to-GDP ratio — the combined debt of all levels of government in relation to the size of the economy — is the lowest in the G7 and is on a downward path. The federal budget deficit is less than 1 percent of GDP and also projected to decrease from 2019-20 onward.

Budget 2019 includes measures to sustain Canada's economic growth. The budget introduced the *First-Time Home Buyers Incentive*, an initiative that will improve housing affordability while at the same time encouraging new residential home construction.

The budget also includes a new *Municipal Top-Up* to enable municipalities and First Nations communities to address additional local infrastructure needs. The \$2.2-billion *Top-Up* will supplement the federal government's longer-term *Invest in Canada* infrastructure investment program. The *Top-Up*, which represents a one-time doubling of the federal *Gas Tax Transfer*, will be distributed to municipalities on a per capita basis.

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Canada's space strategy

The Prime Minister has announced that Canada will be a partner in the Lunar Orbiting Platform-Gateway, a new space station to be built in orbit around the Moon. This lunar outpost will be a single stepping-off point for lunar surface access. The Platform-Gateway will also serve as a platform for future deep space exploration, including missions to Mars. Canada will supply a robotic arm guided by artificial intelligence — the Canadarm 3 — for this project that will take humans further from the Earth than ever before. The Platform-Gateway project is the cornerstone of the government's new \$2.05-billion investment in the space sector.



Visiting MDA's Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue facility with the Prime Minister

Minister for Seniors

The Prime Minister has appointed a Minister for Seniors. The new Minister, Filomena Tassi, will focus on the government's investments in home care, palliative care and community care to ensure they are well coordinated. She will also work to address crimes that target seniors, including elder abuse and online financial scams. The Minister for Seniors will work with other colleagues on best options for moving forward with the implementation of national pharmacare.

National pharmacare

Budget 2019 takes important first steps towards implementing national pharmacare. Namely, the budget proposes to create the Canadian Drug Agency, which will coordinate the bulk-buying of pharmaceuticals by provinces, territories and insurance companies to lower drug costs by up to \$3 billion per year in the long term. The budget also proposes a national strategy to deal with the high cost of drugs for treating rare diseases.

The Canada Training Benefit

In an ever-changing economy, Canadians should have the opportunity to invest in new skills. Budget 2019 proposes to establish a new Canada Training Benefit — a personalized, portable benefit to help Canadians get the training they need. The CTB will have two components: a credit of a lifetime limit of \$5,000 to be used against training fees; and Employment Insurance of up to four weeks of income every four years to help cover living expenses while on training and without a regular paycheck.

Milk and the USMCA

Canada's supply-management system has been preserved under the renegotiated NAFTA (USMCA), which has yet to be ratified. Canada did agree in negotiations to raise the allowable quotas for U.S. dairy imports. However, Canadian tariffs — ranging from 200 to 300 percent — will continue to apply to quantities of dairy products that exceed the new quotas. The new quotas are expected to give American dairy farmers access to up to 3.5 percent of Canada's dairy market, from 1 percent today.

Many are concerned about the presence of the bovine growth hormone rBST in U.S. milk imports. This hormone is banned for use in Canada, not because it is dangerous for human health but because of its negative effect on the udder health of cows. In the U.S., 17 percent of cows receive rBST.

Prior to the USMCA, the Canadian market already included dairy products made with imported U.S. milk ingredients. That said, if the milk you buy carries the blue-and-white *Dairy Farmers of Canada* logo, it was produced in Canada from cows free of rBST. It is not a requirement, however, that wholly-Canadian milk carry this logo: the logo is affixed by producers on a voluntary basis. On the other hand, milk produced in the U.S. and sold in Canada, either as a prepackaged product or in bulk for later packaging in this country, must say *Product of the U.S.A.* on the packaging. Consumers can learn about the ingredients in any given dairy product by contacting the manufacturer or importer.



Celebrating Paul Henderson's 76th birthday on Parliament Hill



Discussing the benefits of biomass research at McGill's Macdonald College



Welcoming new Canadian citizens in Pointe-Claire with Mayor John Belvedere



With water researchers from McGill on a visit to Parliament Hill

Zero-Emissions Vehicles

The government is pursuing a multifaceted strategy to fight climate change. It is introducing a price on carbon pollution — called the *backstop* — that will apply in the four provinces that have not already implemented mechanisms for putting a price on greenhouse-gas emissions within their jurisdictions. The federal price on carbon will *not* apply in Quebec. Our province is already part of a carbon-trading market with California.

The government also wants to increase the number of Zero-Emissions Vehicles sold in Canada — to 10 percent of new cars sold in 2025, 30 percent in 2030, and 100 percent in 2040. The government has announced a \$5-million investment to build 100 fast-charging stations for electric vehicles in Quebec, including two stations in Beaconsfield and two in Kirkland. The stations will be built by Hydro-Québec with funding from a Natural Resources Canada initiative focused on completing a coast-to-coast network of electric-vehicle fast chargers and natural-gas and hydrogen refueling stations. At the same time, the National Research Council recently opened the Manufacturing and Automotive Innovation Hub in London, Ontario, to help Canadian automotive manufacturers integrate ZEV technologies. Finally, Budget 2019 proposes to provide \$300 million for a new federal incentive of up to \$5,000 on purchases of ZEVs, including plug-in hybrids, under \$45,000. To encourage automotive fleets to adopt ZEVs, the budget proposes to make these vehicles eligible for a full tax write-off in the year they are put to use.

First Nations water

The government has resolved to eliminate all long-term drinking-water advisories in First Nations communities by March 2021. To this end, \$1.8 billion is being invested over 5 years toward upgrading First Nations drinking-water systems. Progress toward this vital objective has been steady and positive. When the government assumed office, there were 105 LTDWAs on public water systems in First Nations communities. As of March 2019, 59 such advisories remain.

Combatting plastic pollution

Since the 1950s, according to the United Nations, the production of plastic has outpaced that of almost every other material. Many valuable products contain plastic, including life-saving medical devices and green technologies like solar panels. Plastic has also allowed for safer food storage. But there is a flipside: only 9 percent of the 9 billion tonnes of plastic the world has ever produced has been recycled. If current consumption patterns and waste management practices persist, by 2050 there will be around 12 billion tonnes of plastic litter in landfills and the environment. At last summer's G7 meeting, Canada took the lead in encouraging other countries to adopt the *Ocean Plastics Charter*. The signatories — Canada, France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, and the European Union — resolved, among other things, to adopt measures to avoid “the unnecessary use of plastics and prevent waste” and stimulate innovation to find alternatives. At the same time, new federal regulations are tackling the problem of plastic microbeads — plastic particles equal to or less than 5 mm in size — in Canadian freshwater and marine ecosystems.



At Community Awareness Day with members of Pointe-Claire City Council



Presenting awards at Scouts Day on the Hill



Celebrating St. Patrick's Day in Kirkland with Jean Merrifield — 102 years young!



Collecting plastic debris with members of the Lac-Saint-Louis Youth Council

First-time home buyers

First-time home buyers can withdraw and use \$25,000 from their RRSP without having to pay tax. Budget 2019 proposes to increase that withdrawal limit to \$35,000. The budget also proposes to create the *First-Time Home Buyer Incentive* for those with family incomes under \$120,000. Under the program, CMHC would offer qualified first-time home buyers a 10-percent shared-equity mortgage for a newly-constructed home or a 5-percent shared-equity mortgage for an existing home. This equity investment by CMHC would reduce the amount a homeowner would need to borrow, thus reducing their monthly mortgage payments. The equity share would be repaid to CMHC upon sale.

The high cost of wireless

Concerned by the high cost of wireless services, the government is issuing a new directive to the CRTC, Canada's telecommunications regulator. The directive will require the CRTC to encourage greater competition in the cellular marketplace. For example, the Big Three (as well as regional players) could be forced to give smaller wireless companies access to their network infrastructure at wholesale prices. These smaller companies would then sell wireless packages to their own retail customers, thus fostering competition and putting downward pressure on prices.

Palliative care framework

Canada — and Montreal — have played significant roles in the development of palliative care. In 1973, Dr. Balfour Mount began to explore the needs of dying patients at the Royal Victoria Hospital. He went on to coin the term "palliative care." It is no coincidence that the Montreal region houses Canada's largest and leading palliative care hospice: the West Island Palliative Care Residence. As a long-time advocate for palliative care at the federal level, I welcome Health Canada's release of the *Framework on Palliative Care in Canada*. The framework's goal is for "all Canadians with life-limiting illness to experience the highest attainable quality of life until the end of life."



Taking part in a plane-pull competition in support of the Special Olympics



At the launch of the UCMAS abacus and mental-math program in Kirkland



With federal Health Minister Ginette Petitpas Taylor at the NOVA thrift shop in Kirkland

Stay in touch

The number of avenues for communication between citizens and their elected representatives has greatly increased. This is a good thing: it is only through open dialogue that politicians can get to know their constituents' priorities and link these to the business of government. My Facebook page — and Twitter account — are important vehicles for obtaining your feedback on those issues that matter to you. They also allow me to keep you informed of my activities.

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