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Committee on Environment and Sustainable Development*

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Dear Friends,

The cost of living and healthcare remain top of mind for Canadians.

In respect to the cost of living, the government continues to give priority to helping make life more affordable while recognizing the need to avoid contributing to inflation. It has sought to achieve this delicate balance through carefully-targeted affordability measures. The March federal budget included both a new one-time grocery rebate (to be delivered through the GST tax credit) and the announcement of the launch of the new Tax-Free First Home Savings Account. These Budget 2023 measures complement other recent initiatives aimed at easing pocketbook pressures such as the introduction of dental care (to be expanded from children under 12 to include seniors, people with disabilities and those under 18 by the end of 2023), a tax-free \$500 payment to help those struggling with rent, and the new Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Program for eligible households.

While the delivery of healthcare is the responsibility of the provinces and territories, from the beginning Ottawa has contributed financially to our public healthcare system. In February, the federal government announced an increase in its funding for healthcare by way of a new healthcare agreement with the provinces and territories. The agreement is moreover

designed to strengthen accountability for results and encourage reforms that will improve outcomes within the current publicly-funded model.

The government is not only addressing these two immediate and pressing priorities. It is also focused on creating future opportunities for the Canadian economy. In particular, the government continues to invest in the fight against climate change. Budget 2023 includes important new investments to support the transition to a green economy. These investments are not only designed to counter the pull of the U.S. Inflation Reduction Act, whose generous incentives (US\$369 billion) risk diverting clean-tech investments to that country. They are also aimed at laying the groundwork for Canada to be a leader in the global green transition.

Last but not least, Budget 2023 includes major funding to protect Canada's freshwater. First announced during President Biden's visit, the budget commits \$420 million to address water quality issues in the Great Lakes as well as funds for the St. Lawrence River and other key watersheds.

Investing in Healthcare

This past February, the Prime Minister met with the premiers to identify shared healthcare priorities and discuss ways of further cooperating to improve the system. At the meeting, the Prime Minister announced that the federal government would increase healthcare funding to the provinces and territories by an extra \$46.2 billion to bring total federal health transfers to \$196.1 billion over the next 10 years.

The new funding includes an immediate unconditional top-up of \$2 billion to help with challenges in pediatric hospitals and emergency rooms and to reduce surgery wait times. It also includes \$1.7 billion over five years to support hourly-wage increases for personal support workers and other related professions.

The new federal funding also includes \$25 billion, over ten years, to be delivered through bilateral agreements tailored to support the needs of each province and territory in areas of shared priority: family health services; health workers and backlogs; mental health and substance abuse; and modernizing the healthcare system. This funding will be contingent, however, on ongoing healthcare investments by the provinces and territories, ensuring that they are also committing the necessary resources to help improve the system. Provincial and territorial governments will be required to develop action plans outlining how the funds will be spent and how progress will be measured in the four areas of shared priority.



Speaking to McGill law students on the relationship between environmental law and health



Welcoming Beaconsfield city councillor Rob Mercuri for a tour of Parliament Hill

Canada Nursing Officer

The government has reinstated the position of federal Chief Nursing Officer to recognize the expertise and contributions nurses provide to Canadian healthcare and better channel their input into decisions affecting the healthcare system. Although first created in 1968, the position had been eliminated in 2012 by the previous government. The new CNO, Dr. Leigh Chapman, is a registered nurse with almost 20 years of career experience and a proven understanding of leadership in a variety of nursing environments. Dr. Chapman will provide strategic advice from a nursing perspective to Health Canada in priority policy and program areas. These areas include health-workforce planning and stability, long-term care, home care, palliative care, mental health, alcohol- and drug-use treatment, models of care, scope of practice, and competencies.



Meeting with Minister of Seniors Kamal Khara and Pointe-Claire city councillors Cynthia Homan and Paul Bissonnette

Dental Care

The government is currently in the second year of its three-year roll out of national dental care for uninsured families with incomes under \$90,000. The first phase of the program began in 2022 with coverage for children under 12-years old. The Canada Dental Benefit is currently providing eligible parents or guardians with direct, up-front, tax-free payments of up to \$1,300 over two years, per child. To date, more than 240,000 children receive the dental care they need under the program. In 2023, coverage will be extended to seniors, persons with disabilities and children under 18 years. In 2025, all uninsured Canadian families under the family-income threshold will be covered. The plan is currently being administered by the Canada Revenue Agency.



Laying a wreath at the Remembrance ceremony in Sainte-Anne-de-Bellevue

Building Green Supply Chains

A future built upon clean technology and sustainable energy depends on access to critical minerals — metallic or non-metallic elements such as lithium, graphite, nickel, cobalt, copper, rare earth elements, potash, uranium, and aluminum. These minerals are of paramount importance in the manufacturing of green infrastructure such as solar panels and electric-vehicle (EV) batteries.

This rising demand for critical minerals — the World Bank predicts a 500-percent increase by 2050 — not only presents an opportunity for Canada to position itself as a global supplier of choice for the green economy, it also creates new avenues for Canadian workers and businesses. With these new opportunities in mind, the government has released its Critical Minerals Strategy (CMS), supported by up to \$3.8 billion. The CMS is part and parcel of a broader strategy to position Canada's supply chains for the green transition.

Canada Water Agency

Canada's freshwater supplies, while abundant in parts of the country, are under increasing pressure from climate change, population growth and pollution.

Budget 2023 includes funding for a new Canada Water Agency to help address national freshwater priorities and foster collaboration among federal departments, provincial governments and Indigenous governments and communities. The agency will not be a regulatory body that creates and enforces rules around freshwater management and protection. Rather, it will operate as a locus of shared knowledge and expertise for better ensuring Canada's freshwater security. The government will introduce legislation to fully establish the agency by the end of 2023.

Heat Pump Affordability Grant

The government has launched the new Oil to Heat Pump Affordability Grant (OHPA) to assist Canadians who currently heat their homes with oil to transition to electric cold-climate air-source heat pumps. Heat pumps carry environmental benefits as well as direct economic benefits: users can save on average between \$1,500 and \$4,700 per year on their home energy bills.

The OHPA will provide up to \$10,000 — when combined with the Canada Greener Homes Grant — to homeowners to cover costs, including for the purchase and installation of an eligible heat pump, electrical upgrades required for the new heat pump and safe removal of the existing oil tank. What's more, the grant will be given up front, before installation, in recognition of the financial burden involved.

Eligible criteria include: the home is oil-heated as of January 2023 (with a consumption of at least 1,000 litres of heating oil in the 12 months prior to the application); the applicant is the primary resident and owner of the home; the owner's after-tax income is equal to or less than a threshold based on the provincial median income and number of occupants of the home.

More information is available at the Canada Greener Homes Initiative tab of the Natural Resources Canada website.



Welcoming Minister Steven Guilbeault for an appearance before the House of Commons environment committee



Attending the annual Greek Independence Parade



At the West Island Black Community Association's 40th anniversary gala



At the John Abbott College free oral-hygiene clinic with clinic volunteers

Tax-Free First Home Savings Account

In Budget 2023, the government announced the launch of the new Tax-Free First Home Savings Account (FHSA). The FHSA will help home buyers save for a downpayment on their all-important first home. The FHSA is a combination RRSP- and TFSA-type savings instrument. Like an RRSP, contributions are tax-deductible and withdrawals — including income earned in the account — to purchase a first home will be non-taxable, like a TFSA. Tax-free in; tax-free out. Prospective first-time home buyers will be able to invest a maximum \$8,000 per year up to a total maximum of \$40,000.



With Minister of Seniors Kamal Khara, MP Sameer Zuberi and members of the West Island Sikh community on a visit to Ottawa

Court Challenges Program

The federal Court Challenges Program provides individuals and groups with financial support to access the courts to defend their constitutional and quasi-constitutional official language rights and human rights in Canada. Once adopted by Parliament, Budget 2023 will provide \$24.5 million over five years to double federal financing of the program. Moreover, the budget includes \$22.1 million to ensure federal institutions fulfill their duty to enhance the vitality of official language minority communities and for research on the number of children who have a right to be educated in the minority official language. Finally, the budget increases funding to non-profit organizations that serve official language communities.



Chairing a meeting of the all-party House of Commons environment committee

Seniors Newsletter

The Minister of Seniors, the Honourable Kamal Khara, publishes a regular online newsletter with important information and updates for seniors. If you would like to receive the Minister's newsletter as well as other Government of Canada information related to seniors, please contact me via email (please enter "Seniors Newsletter" in the subject line). It will be a pleasure to facilitate your addition to the newsletter's subscriber list.




On Parliament Hill with MPs and members of Team Canada 1972 on the 50th anniversary of the Summit Series

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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