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Dear Friends,

As the economic shocks of the pandemic continue to subside and inflation shows signs of slowing, there is hope interest rates will begin to decline. Even a slight decrease would go a long way to easing pressures on family budgets.

Bank of Canada interest rate decisions are independent of the government. The Bank's overriding goal is to maintain the financial stability the economy needs to grow smoothly and create jobs.

For its part, the government is focused on implementing targeted measures that make life more affordable for Canadians. National dental care, pharmacare and childcare readily come to mind.

The cost of food remains stubbornly high. Food price inflation is driven by many factors. The outbreak of war in Ukraine caused international energy prices to rise sharply and restricted Ukraine's — the "breadbasket of Europe" — exports of grain, resulting in higher international grain prices. Closer to home, wildfires and drought have negatively impacted agricultural production, putting added upward pressure on the cost of food. Outside Quebec, the federal carbon price — which in fact does not apply in Quebec — has been shown by credible studies to *not* be a factor affecting food prices.

That said, the government is concerned about the current level of competition in the grocery sector. With this concern in mind, it recently passed legislation — Bill C-56 — to strengthen the federal Competition Act.

The Competition Tribunal now has the power to act against agreements between non-competitors — not only collusion between competitors — that lessen competition. An example would be where a big grocery chain works with their landlord to prevent smaller competitor stores from opening nearby. The legislation also gives the Competition Bureau stronger evidence-gathering powers to be able to better investigate and prove anti-competitive behaviour.

Finally, Bill C-59, before Parliament at the time of writing, will further strengthen the Competition Act to allow the Competition Tribunal to consider the impacts on competition of mergers that result in more industry concentration. At present, the Tribunal is not legally permitted to consider a merger solely on the basis of "evidence of concentration or market share."

Building homes

The federal government continues to invest to accelerate residential home construction with a view to adding at least 100,000 new residential units across Canada over the next four years. More specifically in Quebec, the federal government will invest \$900 million — representing nearly 23 percent of the total it is investing across the whole country. This sum will be matched by the province under a recently-signed bilateral agreement, bringing total funding for new home construction in Quebec to \$1.8 billion. With this new federal-provincial funding, we can expect to see over 23,000 more units than normally anticipated by 2027-2028; including 8,000 new social and affordable housing units, of which 500 will be for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Already, \$1.7 million from this new funding has been earmarked for the West Island's *Ricochet* social housing project which will serve young adults with low income and people struggling with mental health challenges.



At an announcement of CMHC low-cost financing to build 3,000 new rental housing units in the Montreal region including in Pierrefonds

Supporting your rights as a financial consumer

The Financial Consumer Agency of Canada is responsible for protecting the rights and interests of consumers of financial products and services. The FCAC's website (enter "FCAC" in your search engine's search bar) contains valuable information relating to banking, borrowing, lines of credit, and mortgages — including on renegotiating your mortgage and on mortgage-relief options. On the FCAC website you can access online information, tools and resources that help promote and strengthen financial literacy. The website also includes a portal for asking specific questions or filing a complaint with a financial institution or external complaints body.

The FCAC expects banks to help individuals who may be struggling to pay their mortgages due to exceptional circumstances. Finance Minister Chrystia Freeland's *Fall Economic Statement* introduced the new Canadian Mortgage Charter listing specific guidelines on how financial institutions are required to treat vulnerable borrowers who are struggling financially.



Speaking at a rally in support of Ukraine on the second anniversary of Russia's full-scale illegal invasion



At Community Awareness Day at Plaza Pointe-Claire with members of the Lakeshore University Women's Club

Business Benefits Finder

The Business Benefits Finder is a useful tool for entrepreneurs, small businesses and non-profit organizations.

The portal acts like a search engine that can pinpoint helpful resources by allowing the user to specify their goals and the kinds of resources they need. Goals can include conducting R&D, starting or buying a business, buying or leasing equipment or property, growing and expanding a business, hiring and training employees, reducing pollution, and increasing productivity. The portal can identify resources such as grants, loans, tax credits, and wage subsidies. It can also help with partnering, hiring interns and accessing expertise such as researchers. To access this valuable tool, enter "Business Benefits Finder" in your search engine's search bar.



Laying a wreath at the National Field of Honour on Remembrance Day

9-8-8 Suicide Crisis Helpline

In November, Minister of Mental Health and Addictions Ya'ara Saks announced the launch of the 988 Suicide Crisis Helpline. The 988 line replaces the Talk Suicide Canada service. Its easy-to-remember, three-digit number makes it simpler for people to access the help they need. 988 is intended for those experiencing a suicide crisis or who are worried about someone who may be thinking about suicide.

The 988 line is available across Canada in English and French, by phone or text, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year. Trained responders are ready to answer calls and texts and provide support and compassion without judgement.

When someone reaches out to 988, they are connected to a responder who is closest to them based on their area code. If a local responder is not available, the call or text will be routed to another 988 partner or to the national back-up hub, ensuring that all calls and texts to 988 are answered. Callers can receive specialized support for youth or Indigenous communities. The Kids Help Phone is one of the partners delivering specialized support for youth. Hope for Wellness offers specialized support for Indigenous callers.

Addressing auto theft

Auto theft is a serious problem not to be ignored. That is why the government has been making smart investments to better manage the border to prevent stolen cars from leaving the country.

The previous government reduced the number of positions at the Canada Border and Services Agency by 1,059 and was on track to cut 400 more positions. The Liberal government has restored every single CBSA job cut by the Conservatives and added an additional 884 positions.

In February, the government announced new funding to test available detection technologies that could support the work of border services officers who examine shipping containers.

The government has also made changes to the Criminal Code, increasing the maximum penalty for motor vehicle theft on summary conviction.

Finally, the federal transport minister will modernize the Canadian Motor Vehicle Safety Standards to ensure that vehicle makers consider technological advancements that can better deter and prevent vehicle theft.

Export of horses by air

The 2021 Liberal election platform committed to ending the export of horses by air for slaughter. This past September, my Liberal colleague Tim Louis introduced Bill C-355, An Act to prohibit the export by air of horses and to make related amendments to certain Acts. On January 31, the bill passed at the second reading vote — the vote that establishes whether a bill will proceed to a parliamentary committee for further study — in the House of Commons. Once the committee study of the bill is completed, it will be returned to the House of Commons for final rounds of debate and voting.



At the BEAU Holiday Market with Beaconsfield councillor Dominique Godin and NOVA West Island volunteers



Celebrating Black History Month with (from left to right) Allison Saunders, Joan Lee and Shaina Thornhill



Celebrating Mary Samborsky's 102nd birthday



Attending WIAH's 65th anniversary celebrations

CIVIX

Civics education is fundamental to a healthy democracy. Since 2003, CIVIX has provided learning opportunities to help millions of school-aged youth develop the habits of active and informed citizenship. CIVIX offers a number of program modules: Student Vote; Student Budget Consultation; Rep Day; CTRL-F (digital literacy); and PoliTalks (active listening and respectful self-expression). To learn more about CIVIX or to invite me as your federal representative to speak to students at your school as part of the Rep Day module, visit www.civix.ca or contact my office.

Consultation on airport operating hours

Aéroports de Montréal is planning to submit to Transport Canada a new proposal for restricted flight operating hours at Trudeau Airport. ADM will hold an Open House to share its proposal with the public and receive comments. The Open House will take place on May 9, 2024 from 2:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. in the meeting rooms on the 2nd floor of the airport terminal, located at 975 Roméo-Vachon North, Dorval. Visitors will be given parking vouchers. In addition to the Open House, ADM is launching an online consultation. The consultation portal will be available at the latest on April 30 on ADM's website www.admtl.com/en/adm under the "Community" tab.


Visit my website

My social media pages are ideal for following my political activities and staying on top of federal government news. My website, however, remains a valuable source of in-depth information on issues. There you will find policy briefings as well as full-text versions of speeches I have delivered in the House of Commons. In this 44th Parliament, I have debated on a range of subjects, including but not limited to: Ukraine; the Official Languages Act; the notwithstanding clause; immigration levels; environmental protection; wastewater regulations; Bank of Canada independence; criminal sentencing reform; bail reform; firearms control; and electoral reform.

Stay in touch

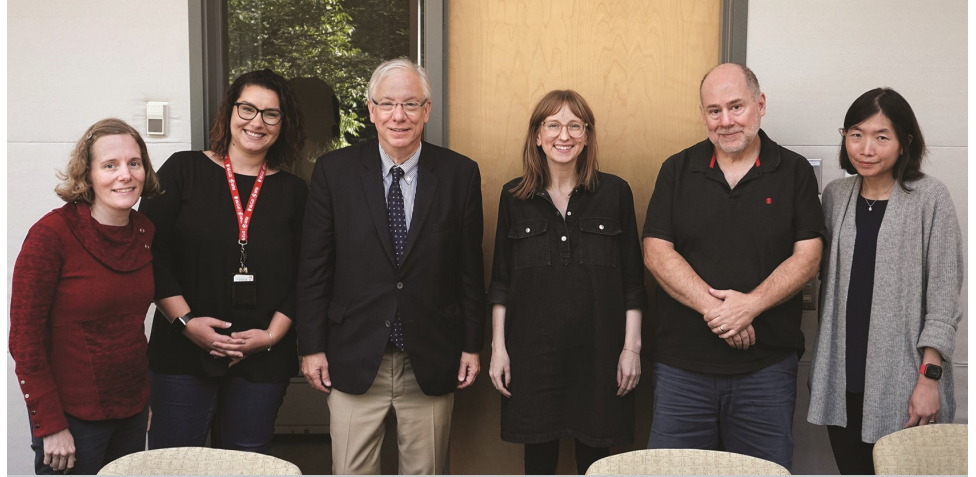
The number of avenues for communication between citizens and their elected representatives has greatly increased. This is a good thing: it is only through open dialogue that politicians can get to know their constituents' priorities and link these to the business of government. My Facebook page and X 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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With research scientists from McGill's Regenerative Medicine Network under the leadership of Dr. Terry Hébert



At the BKRA annual ringette tournament with U19 champions Pointe-Claire



Taking part in Hudson's St. Patrick's Day Parade

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