

## A Pre-Election Wish List

Financial Post  
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September 10<sup>th</sup> 2019

**Last week, the Canadian Taxpayers Federation released its “wish list” for the upcoming election. The Financial Post reprints those wishes below.**

1. Balance the budget: The Trudeau government promised to balance the budget in 2019-20, but is now projecting a deficit of \$19.8 billion. Canadians should demand every party present a plan to return to balance as soon as possible.
2. Core spending review: A pledge to undertake a core spending review to identify the least efficient five per cent (approximately \$16 billion) in government spending.
3. End corporate welfare: Eliminate more than \$3 billion in taxpayer subsidies for business, and instead put that money toward deficit reduction and/or broad-based tax relief.
4. Scrap the media bailout: Media independence is critical to any functioning democracy, and efforts to make media dependent on taxpayer handouts obviously undermines that independence.
5. Ensure pipelines get built: The pipeline deficit has meant a loss of over \$6.2 billion in federal revenues since 2013, or \$3.6 million per day. The Trans Mountain expansion should get built and sold so that taxpayers are made whole once again.

6. Reform government-sector pensions: Defined-benefit pension plans are expensive and unsustainable in the long run. Government workers should be moved over to defined-contribution (RRSP-style) plans.

7. Simplify the Income Tax Act: The Income Tax Act is over 1.1 million words and 3,200 pages. Undertake a multi-year review, like the Carter commission, to examine the entire tax code with the primary goal of simplification, which would greatly streamline tax compliance and enforcement.

8. Eliminate the federal carbon tax: Allow provinces to pursue their own climate change policies that are tailored to their regions.

## TAXATION

9. Cut income taxes: This fiscal year, Canadians will pay \$170 billion in personal income taxes. Any reduction in this figure will go right into the pockets of working Canadians.

10. End tax-on-tax double taxation for goods such as gasoline: Taxes should be transparent, and not imposed by stealth, and these taxes currently cost Canadians more than \$2 billion annually.

11. Repeal the escalator tax on alcohol: Hiking taxes automatically through a formula buried in legislation circumvents political accountability, and sets a terrible precedent that will invite governments to use this mechanism for other taxes.

12. No new sugar or fat taxes: As with many other taxes designed to shift behaviours, taxes of these types are regressive and do not work as promised and should be rejected.

13. Stop taxing medical cannabis: We don't pay taxes on medicine, and medically necessary cannabis should be no exception.

## **ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**

14. Enforce the First Nations Financial Transparency Act: First Nations people have a right to transparency and accountability from their leaders and the federal government should enforce the law that helps empower them to do so.

15. End the use of omnibus legislation: Unwieldy, trojan horse legislation allows governments to pass laws without proper scrutiny and undermines Parliament's oversight function. Bills should be broken up so that they can be properly debated, critiqued and where necessary, amended.

16. Implement recall legislation: Legislation, modelled on British Columbia's, that provides a mechanism for constituents to hold their member of Parliament accountable between elections would create a strong disincentive for MPs to break faith with their constituents.

17. Give the Information Commissioner order-making powers: Canada's federal access-to-information laws are broken; requests for information can take years to be fulfilled and are often heavily redacted. The Information Commissioner should be empowered to order the release of information.

18. Ensure independent officers of parliament, including the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Auditor General and Information Commissioner are all properly funded: Accountability suffers when those tasked with holding government to account do not have the resources to do their jobs.

19. End the endless expense account for former governors general: Once their term of service is complete, taxpayers should no longer be on the hook for the ongoing expenses of former governors general.

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