

2021 Budget Brief

Thank you for this opportunity to participate in the 2021 Federal Budget.

It is my concern, as it is that of many millions of Canadians, that our recovery from the covid-19 pandemic is a unique opportunity to change the way Canadian society functions (as much is currently dysfunctional), and the 2021 Federal Budget can help to bring about a “new normal”

Firstly, we must acknowledge and agree that corporations and the wealthiest one percent (1%) of Canadians do not need government money. They, in fact, must be taxed more aggressively, towards levels last seen during and after the Second World War. These tax measures must be implemented before asking all other Canadians to contribute more in taxes. Taxed 99% of their wealth, a billionaire still possesses more wealth than they can use in a lifetime, and what they ‘earn’ comes from the labour of millions. Moreover, corporations that have previously benefitted and profited from federal subsidies must now be required to repay a percentage of their benefactors – the Canadian people. This is especially true for those in the fossil fuel, automotive and arms industries.

Where would these additional taxes go? Namely, to improve life for *all* Canadians:

Permanent retention and increase of the \$300 per month addition to disability benefits;

Continuation of the CERB program until 95% of Canadians who lost employment during the pandemic are once again gainfully employed;

The development – in coordination with the provinces – of a permanent, guaranteed, annual liveable income. Further to this, all future economic treaties and trade agreements must ensure that trading partner nations enact similar measures to endure a life of dignity for all peoples, as pursuant to Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The development – again in coordination with the provinces – of a national Pharmacare program. Essential to this is the renewal of public manufacture in Canada of generic pharmaceuticals.

Many Canadians understand the need for a Green New Deal that ensures the recovery from the pandemic does not make Canada’s environment worse for future generations. To that end, the budget must include investments in:

The guarantee of clean drinking water for *all* Canadians, particularly, those living for far too long with polluted waters on First Nations reserves;

Renewable independent (particularly Indigenous) energy projects not funded by the provinces;

Public transport, especially buses, but also rapid transit systems and bicycles, through rebates;

The electrification of older transport modes (aircraft, ships, locomotives, trucks, buses, automobiles, etc.) through retrofit rebates. Where this is not possible, this program could focus on the use of materials as such wood waste from lumber and paper mills to produce biofuels;

The development of energy savings retrofits of homes and businesses, again through the rebate process; and

To stimulate the development of innovation in renewable energy and environmental recovery, a research reward, functioning in a similar way to the prizes given out in the late 19th and early 20th Centuries for transport technology records and 'firsts'. Through the fund, rewarded research into new ideas and technologies would be incubated, with the proviso that in exchange for the monetary reward, the researchers surrender all patent rights claims to the Canadian people, for the benefit of all humanity.

Finally, and to make these essential changes fair and transparent, the federal government must invest in processes ensuring Canadians' trust in research and information. These need to include:

New funding and an updated mandate for the Chief Science Advisor and for continued mechanisms for science advice in government;

New tools and programs to support interdisciplinary research, as well as coordination and communication of science across sectors, jurisdictions, and between government and universities;

Steps towards openness and transparency in government science and data;

Support for scientific trainees to ensure they can recover and thrive after the pandemic; and

Building on investments to stop the spread of misinformation online.

The 2021 Federal Budget is a unique opportunity to create a new normal that benefits all Canadians, including those of future generations. Austerity and tax cuts for corporations and the wealthy will no longer suffice. It is my hope that the ideas I bring forward (not all my own; the research reward fund, however, is) will help to convince decision-makers that a new paradigm of economic thought is required for the Canada and the world of the 21st Century.

Thank once again for the opportunity to provide my input into Budget 2021.

Sincerely,

Scott Van Denham