

Canadian Taxpayers Federation

19 for 2019 Election Wish List

SPENDING AND FISCAL MANAGEMENT

1. **Balance the budget:** the Trudeau government is projecting a deficit of \$19.8 billion for fiscal 2019-20. Simply freezing existing spending at 2019-20 levels (which already represents a 20 per cent spending increase since 2016) - would allow for a return to a balanced budget in two years. This is before even looking at necessary spending reductions and reallocations.
2. **Core spending review:** A pledge to undertake a core spending review of all government spending, to be completed within the first year following the election, in order 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 towards deficit reduction and/or broad-based tax relief. An immediate interim policy should be to attach transparent-by-default conditions on any grants or loans provided to private businesses.
4. **Scrap the media bail out:** 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 dollars 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.

TAXATION

8. **Eliminate the federal carbon tax:** Allow provinces to pursue their own climate change policies that are tailored to their regions.
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. For gasoline and diesel alone, Canadians pay nearly \$2 billion annually in taxes charged on top of other taxes. Tax-on-tax is also charged on alcohol, tobacco and aviation fuel.
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:** Like all Canadians, First Nations people have a right to transparency and accountability from their leaders. Brave activists such as Charmaine Stick, supported by the CTF, have gone to court to enforce the FNFTA themselves, but it should be the responsibility of the federal government to enforce its own laws.
15. **End the use of omnibus legislation:** unwieldy, trojan horse legislation allows governments to pass laws without proper scrutiny 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:** Canadians are increasingly frustrated with politicians who say one thing to get elected and break their promises once in office. Implementing legislation, modelled on British Columbia, 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. Currently, even the Information Commissioner must seek a court order to compel 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 they have left office, taxpayers should not longer be on the hook for the ongoing expenses of former governors general.