

NOT EVERYONE IS HAPPY WITH BUDGET

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really huge for people trying to get into the housing market. In Halton that matters a lot because we know that housing affordability is a really big issue."

Not everyone is happy with the budget or what it has to offer.

Some have pointed out the Liberal government came to power in 2015 on a platform that vowed to return to balanced budgets by 2019.

This budget unveiled \$22.8 billion in new spending over the next six years and features a deficit that is expected to grow to \$19.8 billion in the 2019-2020 fiscal year.

Gould said Canada has a very healthy debt to GDP (gross domestic product) ratio.

"When it comes to comparing us to other G7, OECD (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) or G20 countries we are in excellent economic shape," she said.

"The other thing I can say is our plan in terms of investing in Canadians is working. Over 900,000 jobs have been created since we took office, 825,000 Canadians have been lifted out of poverty, we have over 300,000 children that are no longer living in poverty, we have the lowest unemployment rate in over 40 years. This is the sign of a healthy economy. Our position is investing in Canadians is making a tangible impact and is only going to help us grow our economy. This

is not the time to go towards austerity measures."

Federal Conservative Leader Andrew Scheer said the budget is intended to distract Canadians from the SNC-Lavalin scandal the government has been embroiled in for the past few weeks.

Conservatives stomped their feet and eventually walked out of Parliament in protest during the reading of the budget on Tuesday, March 19.

Scheer spoke at his party caucus following that budget reading.

"His (Trudeau's) plan could not be more obvious. It is a trick right out of Kathleen Wynne's playbook," said Scheer.

"Massive deficits to distract from his corruption before the election and massive tax hikes to pay for it all after the election."

Gould called the actions of the Conservatives during the budget reading "childish" and "incredibly unfortunate."

She also said presenting the annual federal budget is not a distraction.

"Look, we're the federal government and we have a budget. The business of government continues, and we've been working very hard over the past three and a half years to deliver for Canadians," said Gould.

"The items that I mentioned earlier are things that Canadians have been advocating for and it is our job as a government to respond to those and make sure we are delivering in a way that is go-



Burlington MP office photo

Burlington MP and Minister of Democratic Institutions Karina Gould.

ing to improve the lives of Canadians. I believe that is what this budget did."

She said another important initiative is the creation of the Canadian Drug Agency, which she said would help lay the foundation for national Pharmacare.

The government is dedicating \$35 million over four years to create this agency.

"There are many people who are choosing between taking their medicine or paying for food or paying for rent and this is one step towards getting us to a place where this is not going to be the case anymore," said Gould.

Starting 2022-2023 the budget also proposes an investment of up to \$500 million per year to help Canadians with rare diseases get access to medications- the prices for which Gould says can be astronomical.

Gould said the budget also helps seniors by proposing to introduce new measures to enhance the security of workplace pensions in the event of corporate insolvency.

These measures would seek to make insolvency proceedings fairer and more transparent and would give courts greater ability to review payments made to exec-

utives in the lead-up to insolvency.

The changes would also clarify federal pension law that if a pension plan is terminated, it must still provide the same pension benefits as when it was ongoing.

"We've had a lot of seniors and people of all ages talking about the fact that we need to protect pensions for the individuals who work at these companies that are going through closures," said Gould.

"This budget announces that we will be making legislative changes to protect those pensions, which I think is absolutely fundamental and something that personally I have been working on since I was elected."

Gould also drew attention to health research funding in the budget including:

- \$10 million for ovarian cancer research

- \$150 million for the Terry Fox Foundation to set up a Marathon of Hope Cancer Centres Network, which will allow these centres to share data, harmonize resources and apply new technologies

- \$50 million to create a national dementia strategy.

"Ovarian cancer is one of the top cancers that affects and impacts women and we have woefully underfunded research. I am so proud to note we are making this investment, and this can be directly pointed back to advocacy efforts of citizens in Halton Region," said Gould.

Gould said the Terry Fox Foundation investment also came following great advocacy from Halton citizens.

She said Oakville North-Burlington MP Pam Damoff should be recognized for her work championing this initiative.

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