

- EDITORIAL -

# Budget ignores debt and deficits

The Trudeau Liberals' latest budget deserves a thumbs-up from Canadians - but a qualified one.

To be sure, the carefully-calibrated spending measures unveiled Tuesday by Finance Minister Bill Morneau are basically sound. They hold the promise of growing our economy, advancing equality and improving the daily lives of millions of Canadians.

It's what's missing from this budget that's the problem. It neither acknowledges nor deals with the greatest threat to Canada's long-term economic well-being - the massive deficits to which this government now seems addicted.

And this casts a long shadow over an otherwise bright fiscal agenda. Blessed with higher than expected revenues, the Liberals opted to spend an extra \$20.3 billion on policy action over the next five years.

While that sounds like a lot of money, it's not out of line when set beside Canada's 2017 gross domestic product of nearly \$1.7 trillion.

Besides, much of the spending is wisely targeted. There's money for scientific research and innovation and to increase the participation of women in the workforce. Increased funding for Indigenous Peoples will advance the necessary cause of reconciliation.

The plan to study a national pharmacare program shows the Liberals continue to search for new ways to meet the needs of Canadians - though many will suspect the government is simply trying to neutralize part of the upcoming New Democratic Party platform.

Critics have savaged this budget for failing to move toward a national child care program. Indeed, the lack of affordable child care expansion is an oversight for a government committed to growing female participation in the workforce.

It does, however, sidestep the issue of how this national program would be paid for, which will defuse some of the criticism from the right that the Liberals remain profligate spenders.

Canada's economy is, in fact, humming along nicely under the Liberals. Recent economic growth has been strong, unemployment low and wages rising. The economic plan the Liberals ran on and implemented deserves credit for at least some of this. So what's the problem with a shrewd, compassionate budget that acts progressively while holding onto the purse strings?

Let us point to its deficit - \$18.1 billion for 2018-19.

Canada is 10 years from its last recession, which was one of the worst in its history. Another recession will inevitably come. Yet the Liberals have no plan to end deficit spending in what are certainly good times. This could leave them and the nation ill-prepared for the next economic downturn. The federal debt will reach \$651.5 billion in 2017-18 and soar to \$730.1 billion by 2022-23. And interest rates are rising, making servicing the debt more costly.

Adding to the uncertainty are the latest American corporate tax cuts and the possible demise of the North American Free Trade Agreement, which could result in jobs and investment locating south of the border.

Today, the Liberals' Plan A - this week's budget - looks good. Let's hope there's a Plan B if undesirable nightmares become unavoidable realities.



## - LETTERS & COMMENTARY -

### Newsrooms should start asking readers instead of telling

*Re: Jan. 25 editorial Helping distinguish 'news' from 'opinion'*

The IFP's effort to instruct the public on the workings of journalism fell both short and wide of the mark.

A more instructive tool is content analysis, in which one counts how many column inches or broadcast minutes the media devotes to positive, negative and neutral coverage of any topic.

Take any such controversial topic of the last 20 years as gun control, legalization of marijuana, gay marriage, abortion or any other. You will discover that the media covers those

topics with a clear bias, one way or another.

Or you might take the public crucifixion of Mike Duffy or Rob Ford as examples of the media run rampant.

I am as down on crack cocaine as anybody, but Ford was convicted by accusation, as was Duffy, and, recently, Patrick Brown, and the media is wearing the executioner's hood and an Alfred E. Neuman face.

Newsrooms should be advocates for fairness and the law, not be weaponry for activists. Polls of newsrooms in Australia, Canada, the U.S., Great Britain and Germany show that over 80 per cent of respondents say they are small-l liberals.

A recent Statistica report puts public trust in reporters about on par with

lawyers and local politicians.

It was not always so. When I was in grad school, we also found that the goals of the reporters had changed from wanting to tell the story to wanting to "change the world."

The media is an unfriendly place for independent thought. I keep hoping journalism has reached its nadir and will wake up and smell the coffee, but it doesn't.

At minimum, you should start asking your readers instead of telling.

**Kerry Knudsen,**  
*master of science in journalism*

### Where's the diversity?

Why is our provincial Liberal government at-

tempting to introduce a publicly funded educational curriculum on "Sikh Heritage Learning Tools" towards supporting and promoting a diverse perspective?

Where's the so-called diversity in doing this?

Shouldn't our education system be directed towards a greater understanding of Canadian geography, history, and cultures, before spending taxpayers' money on catering to specific groups?

Isn't this something that the school boards and politicians should be focused on, considering the number of newcomers to Canada every year?

Teach about our country first, cultural learning should be kept to the home. Today, there are so many cultures in our society.

**George Startup**

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newsroom@theifp.ca  
IndependentAndFreePress  
@IFP\_11

## CONTACT US

**The Independent & Free Press**  
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77  
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1  
Phone: 905-873-0301  
Classifieds: 905-234-1016  
Fax: 905-873-0398

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For all delivery inquiries, please e-mail lpolar@miltoncanadianchampion.com or call 905-234-1019.



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