

FIVE CHALLENGES FOR A NEW FEDERAL CABINET

Right now Canadians are judging Justin Trudeau's new federal cabinet by who got in and who was left out. But two or three years from now, Canadians will judge the prime minister and his Liberal power circle by how they've risen to meet the most urgent challenges facing this country.

Here's our list of issues that should keep them all awake at night.

Climate change: Most voters in last month's federal election backed parties committed to preventing global warming from becoming a global catastrophe. As a result of action taken in Trudeau's first term, carbon pricing in some form or another is now in effect across the country. These and other measures mean Canada is more than halfway to meeting its Paris Agreement pledge to reduce emissions by 30 per cent by 2030.

But there's still a long, arduous journey ahead. While Canada is responsible for only a small fraction of the world's carbon emissions, it can and should play a leadership role in pioneering the kind of low-carbon economy other countries could embrace. For this to happen, the federal government has to persuade Canadians to accept major lifestyle changes, including far higher carbon taxes.

National unity: The premiers of Alberta and Saskatchewan - provinces without a single Liberal MP - have taken a page from Quebec's playbook. Raising the spectre of Western separatism, they're pushing for more provincial autonomy in ways that could weaken the federation. The return of the Bloc Québécois as a powerful but parochial force in Parliament will further fray the national ties that bind. It's already led to a battle of words between Prairie and Quebec leaders.

Not only does Trudeau need to find answers to western grievances, he should act as an impartial conciliator between the provinces. In addition, his government must continue working for reconciliation with Canada's Indigenous Peoples. There can be no unified Canadian nation without the participation of its First Nations.

Recession risks: Recently, the Parliamentary Budget Officer reported that federal deficits will be much higher than the government had planned. But that's without including the tens of billions of dollars in new spending and tax cuts the Liberals promised in October's election. The global economy is sputtering. Unresolved trade conflicts between the United States and China are only increasing the risk of a widespread recession in the next few years. Preparing Canada for that likelihood while delivering the new cash they've promised will force the Liberals to make tough decisions. They can't do it all.

Pharmacare: Nowhere will wise budgeting decisions be in greater demand than when it comes to keeping the Liberal promise to move forward with some kind of national program to provide greater public access to prescription drugs. The New Democrats have announced that their support for keeping the minority Liberals in power is contingent upon the fast establishment of a universal pharmacare program. Yes, the Liberals should find ways to fill the yawning gaps in our public health-care system. But economic realities won't let them ignore costs.

The storms in this globalized world won't disappear. They will only become harder to navigate through. Let's hope Trudeau is putting the right crew in place to do it.

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WINTER HIKING: IT'S ALL ABOUT FOOTWEAR

IT'S TIME TO MAKE THE SWITCH TO WINTER HIKING BOOTS, SAYS NICOLA ROSS



NICOLA ROSS
Column

It's time to put on snow tires. Right? What if I told you it was also the time to switch to your winter hiking boots?

Winter hiking boots? What are winter hiking boots and why would I need them? You may wonder.

BOOTS

I spoke with Gerry Johnson, the hiking boot guy at Hiker's Haven. He said there are three main differences between summer and winter hiking boots:

1. Winter boots are insulated. They are rated from -20 to -40 C.
2. They are usually higher cut to keep snow out of your boots.
3. Most importantly, they have a sole made of rubber that, like snow tires, stays soft and pliable when cold.

This means that winter hiking boots keep your feet warm and dry, and give you great traction in snowy conditions and superior traction on ice.

ICERS

If the trails are icy, you can add icers, whether they are winter or summer boots. Slipping icers onto your boots is akin to putting chains on your snow tires.

They come in various degrees of "aggressiveness," with Yaktrax being about a four on a scale of one to 10.

Gerry likes ICETrekkers with a diamond pattern be-

cause they are more aggressive than Yaktrax and don't slip sideways. You can leave them on for sections of the trail that are clear of snow or ice.

Kahtoola MICROspikes are more aggressive yet but won't stand up to walking across hard roads or along clear sections of trails.

SOCKS

In the sock department, Gerry turns to merino wool. "Even thin merino wools socks are warm," he says. "So there is no need to use thicker socks, which might not fit well, especially if you are (don't tell Gerry!) using your summer hiking boots."

POLES

They aren't footwear, but using hiking poles is a great idea.

Make sure the metal tips are exposed.

Gerry says that from early fall until late spring he has his icers on his boots or in his pack - just in case.

From Loops & Lattes Hiking Guides' author and avid hiker Nicola Ross. Visit nicolaross.ca for more information or reach her at nross@woodrising.com.

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nnc National NewsMedia Council
newsroom@theifp.ca
IndependentAndFreePress
@IFP_11

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CONTACT US

The Independent & Free Press
280 Guelph Street, Unit 77
Georgetown, ON L7G 4B1
Phone: 905-873-0301
Classifieds: 1-800-263-6480
Fax: 905-873-0398

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