



By Cory Soal
R.H.A.D.

... Lend Me Your Ears

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Dear people of Halton Hills;

During these uncertain times, rest assured we remain open to serve you. We have adjusted services according to the guidance by Health Canada.

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OPINION

AN OVERWHELMING YEAR... TO SAY THE LEAST

VACCINE ROLLOUT AND ECONOMY RECOVERY TOP PRIORITIES FOR 2021, WRITES MICHAEL CHONG



MICHAEL CHONG
Column

It has been over a year since the COVID-19 outbreak began.

2020 was a difficult year for many, and the challenges will continue into 2021. Canadians are starting to receive the COVID-19 vaccine — but we are not out of the woods yet. The federal government estimates it will take until September before all Canadians have access to the vaccine.

2020 began with the shooting down by the Iranian regime of UIA Flight PS752, killing 55 Canadian citizens and 30 permanent residents. Rail blockades

emerged across the country in opposition to the B.C. Coastal GasLink Pipeline. By March, the COVID-19 pandemic was declared, and key programs were introduced to assist Canadians who had lost work through no fault of their own.

In late August, the prime minister prorogued Parliament to end the parliamentary investigations into allegations of wrongdoing concerning the WE charity. Parliament resumed following the speech from the throne in late September, where the government laid out its priorities.

Since then, Parliament has been meeting to provide oversight and approval of the government's plans. Parliament has been meeting in a hybrid in-person and virtual setting to ensure social distancing.

Last September, Conservative leader Erin O'Toole asked me to be the shadow minister for foreign affairs. In that role, I introduced a motion calling on the government to make a decision on Huawei's involvement in Canada's 5G network and develop a robust plan to combat China's foreign interference operations here in Canada. That motion was passed by the House of Commons in November; the government has yet to comply.

This spring, the federal government will deliver a federal budget, the first since 2019. There was no federal budget last year, only a fall economic statement. The statement projected a

record-shattering deficit of \$382 billion, largely due to emergency spending and a drop in revenues.

Parliament is sitting this month.

Responding to COVID-19 remains my priority, as does planning for the economic recovery. My colleagues and I are focused on holding the government accountable on its rollout of vaccines and ensuring a strong economic recovery.

Michael Chong is the MP for Wellington—Halton Hills, and the shadow minister of democratic institutions for the official opposition. He can be reached at Mchael.chong.a3@parl.gc.ca.

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