

CANADA’S RESPONSE TO ADDICTION

It is no secret that Lethbridge, like so many other Canadian cities, has a drug problem that keeps getting worse, rather than better. Perhaps it is time to consider an approach different from the one that has controlled public policy for so long. In 2016 the federal Liberal government decided to take a uni-focused response to addiction by funding what is known as ‘harm reduction.’

Many who champion this approach suggest that drug addiction is a normal facet of society and the best response is to reduce the harm done to those engaging in these behaviours and to the overall community. This often involves action such as supervised consumption and ‘safe supply.’ In my role as the Member of Parliament, I have taken the opportunity to travel the country and hear from a great number of people, including federal and provincial government officials, health care professionals, addiction experts, front-line workers, Indigenous leaders, and individuals with lived experience in addiction, and the overwhelming message is that the current approach is not working.

ALL people have greater worth and purpose than simply living for their next high. Why would it ever be considered compassionate to classify some people as forever addicted, and thus incapable of greater things? While keeping the addict alive by avoiding overdose or the consumption of contaminated drugs can be helpful, the long-term solution must be to get folks into treatment and recovery. A recent study conducted by Dr. Julian Somers showed that “it’s better to empower people to get back on their feet, rather than foster dependency through easy access to free drugs.” Another expert in this field, Dr. Kelly Anthony, a lecturer at the University of Waterloo’s School of Public Health Sciences stated that the poorly researched ‘safe supply’ approach ‘consigns the addict to be a slave

forever.” Instead of listening to the expertise of these and other public health and addiction experts who are critical of the safe supply approach, the Liberal government has chosen instead to proceed further down the path of legalization and safe supply. Choosing to politicize this issue instead of putting the well-being of Canadians first is incredibly unjust. Each and every person has inherent value and should be treated with the utmost level of dignity, respect, and honour. Every person should be given the opportunity to seek a better life. A recovery-based approach to addiction is not an easy one, it requires an extensive and holistic patient-centered approach.

From the many conversations I have had with people struggling with addiction—be it loved ones or perfect strangers—I have learned addiction is often a result of trauma. This observation is backed by a massive body of research. Drugs are used as self-medication to numb the pain of the past. To truly help those struggling with addiction we must care for their hearts. The wounds of the past must be addressed, and healing and restoration should be the end goal. Those struggling with addiction are sons, daughters, brothers, sisters, and parents. We absolutely need to meet them in their current place, but instead of leaving them there, we need to have the strength and courage to walk alongside them on their recovery journey, no matter how difficult it may be.

It is my hope that we become a country where the inherent value of every person is affirmed, the human heart is healed, and human potential is developed. We do this by prioritizing detox and recovery, funding mental health services, and respecting and supporting the not-for-profit organizations that are helping drug-users find hope and move through the recovery process. Addiction is dark and the process of breaking free is incredibly difficult, however, with the proper supports in place there is hope for a better tomorrow.

BILL C-11 IS GOVERNMENT CENSORSHIP AT ITS WORST

The internet is a magical space where Canadians enjoy infinite opportunity. Currently, Canadians can create content, share ideas, and access a plethora of information online without government interference, but with the Liberal government’s Bill C-11, this could all change—in a big way!

The government claims this bill is about “supporting Canadian culture” and “leveling the playing field.” But what it actually does is remove freedom and choice away from Canadians and puts more power and control in the hands of

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those who post—are able to make their content accessible online, and how easily viewers can find it.

Bill C-11 will regulate audio-visual content on the internet through an arm of the government called the Canadian Radio-Television Commission (CRTC), which has traditionally been responsible for regulating radio and television. This bill will put the CRTC in charge of creating and implementing regulations for the internet for the very first time. In short, through the CRTC, the government will control what Canadians can see, say, and hear online.

Bill C-11 is a direct threat to the hundreds-of-thousands of Canadians who have been shut out by Canada’s traditional media gatekeepers and who have found tremendous success on platforms like TikTok, Spotify, and YouTube. In effect, the CRTC will pick winners and losers by deciding which content gets moved to the top of the search menu and which content gets pushed to page 53, where it will never be discovered! It will do this by pressing social media providers like YouTube and TikTok to tweak their algorithms and disrupt users’ digital experience to comply with government regulation.

As this bill went through the legislative process, we heard testimony from digital content creators and industry experts who said it would inhibit creators’ ability to succeed and bridle the innovative nature of the internet. Despite these significant concerns, the Liberals rushed the bill through the House of Commons by forcing Members of Parliament to vote on amendments without debate or discussion and steamrolled dissenting voices. Indigenous content creator Vanessa

Brosseau testified after meeting with Canadian Heritage that her perspective on Bill C-11 was shut down and that the government ministry “felt that they needed to really intimidate me with their perspective”. Instead of being open and transparent, the Liberal government chose to stifle debate and gas-light the concerns of content creators.

Regardless of the Liberals’ intimidation and accusations against online creators and digital experts, Canadians have continued to speak out against this legislation. Thousands of Canadians wrote to their Senators and Members of Parliament to share these concerns regarding this bill. After hearing testimony from more than 130 digital experts, Canadian YouTubers, Indigenous creators, and TikTokers, the Senate introduced a small amendment that would make sure some user-generated content would be excluded, but unfortunately, this amendment is not guaranteed to pass the Senate or the House of Commons when the bill returns for further debate. The Liberal Heritage Minister has already hinted that this amendment will be struck down.

Ultimately, with or without this amendment, under Bill C-11, the CRTC will still be able to compel platforms to promote CRTC-approved “Canadian” content.

To have a government agency regulate the dissemination of information online puts Canada in step with countries like North Korea, China, Iran, and Russia.

Oorbee Roy, a South Asian mother from Toronto who shares her skill in and her love for skateboarding on TikTok, testified at committee: “If my video is suppressed because the CRTC decides that someone else’s content should be artificially pushed over mine, I lose my ability to get in front of my audience. That directly affects my bottom line.” She later shared: “The bill will 100% stifle me. I’ve fought so hard to have my voice be heard. Don’t take away my livelihood, please.”

The fight to defend freedom of expression and choice online is not over. Bill C-11 will be returning to the House of Commons in February for a final vote. Please take a moment to write to the Minister of Canadian Heritage, Pablo Rodriguez, at hon.pablo.rodriguez@pch.gc.ca and tell him to kill Bill C-11!

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“The fight to defend freedom of expression and choice online is not over!”

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TRUDEAU PUTS POLITICS OVER PUBLIC SAFETY

Since the Liberals took power seven years ago, violent crime has increased by 32 percent and gang-related violence has grown by 92 percent. There is no doubt about it, Canada is facing a public safety crisis.

The Canadian Association of Chiefs of Police has underscored for years that greater help is needed to secure Canada’s borders and equip metropolitan police with the training and resources they need to go after illegal gun smugglers and gangs. But Trudeau is not interested in solving the problem. His only goal is to score cheap political points.

Enter Bill C-21. This bill targets highly vetted firearms owners who follow the rules and safely use their firearms for hunting, sport shooting, or protecting livestock. It will do nothing to take illegal firearms off the street or stop gun violence. It has nothing to do with keeping our communities safe.

“With this bill, the Trudeau Liberals have launched the single largest assault on hunters and sport shooters in Canadian history.”

Bill C-21 was introduced in Spring 2022 and it was terrible in its original form, then, at the 11th hour, just before Christmas, it was made even worse! By moving a significant amendment at committee stage, the Liberals moved to ban hundreds— if not thousands— of hunting rifles. This was done without hearing from experts or allowing for democratic debate.

Mr. Trudeau wants you to believe he is only going after “weapons of war” and likes to display images of big scary black machine guns when he speaks to the press, but the reality is, the Liberals are going after classic rifles such as the Ruger No. 1, a firearm that is designed to accept only one bullet at a time. The ban also includes the Mossberg 702 Plinkster, a .22 caliber firearm designed for target practice. In addition, it captures firearms like the Webley & Scott Wild Fowl Gun, a shotgun used for bird hunting, along with various other World War II replica firearms owned by Grandpa Joe.

I’d like to hear your thoughts.

NAME: _____
ADDRESS: _____
EMAIL: _____
☐ Please sign me up for email updates

Comments: _____

Return the survey by folding and mailing. No envelope required.

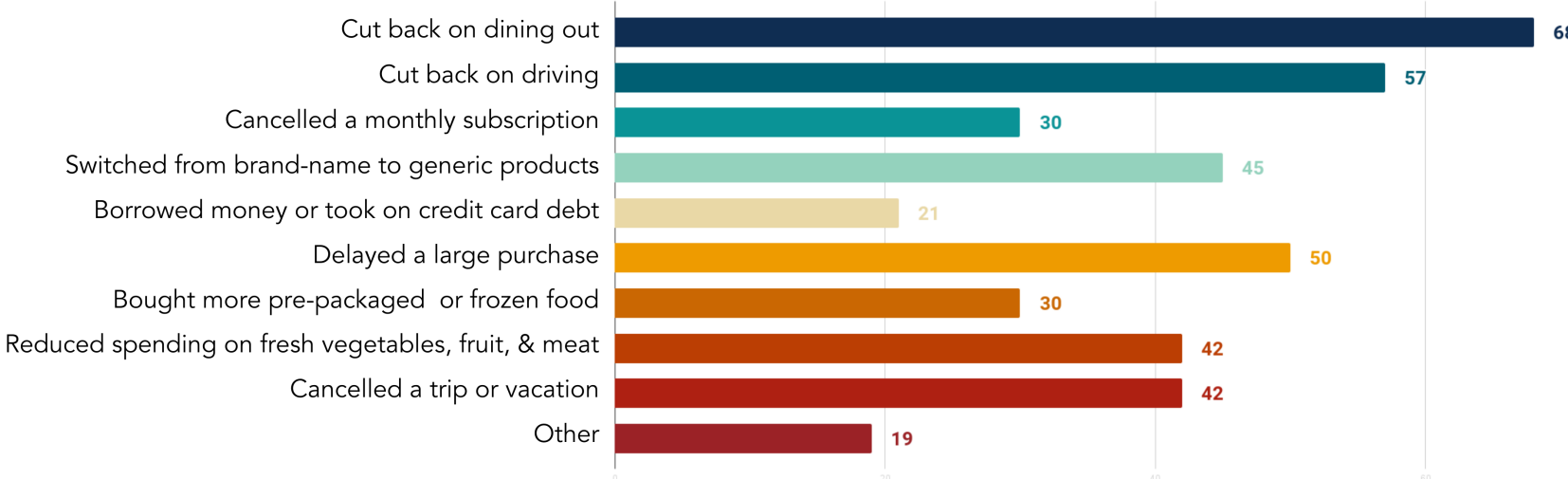
Complete the survey online here!

The Liberals will ban thousands of hunting rifles through Bill C-21. Do you believe this is the best approach to reduce gun violence in Canada?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe

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This amendment is terrible in its own right, but even more so when we consider the fact that it targets Indigenous Canadians, whose culture is deeply tied to hunting and who have treaty rights to hunt for sustenance. The Federation of Sovereign Indigenous Nations (FSIN) Executive released a public statement expressing its concerns. In it, the Chief advocated for those he represents by saying "our people can't afford to have our guns taken away, especially when we are trying to put food on the table during unprecedented times." The Chief went on to highlight the fact that Indigenous folks will be unjustly targeted by this legislation because of systemic racism. He called on the Trudeau government to acknowledge the tremendous harm that will be done by this bill and urged Mr. Trudeau to take a step back. While the Liberals want you to believe they care about community safety, the exact opposite is true. Bill C-5 was brought into effect by this government as a favour to criminals. Ironically, it amends the Criminal Code to take away mandatory jail time for violent gun crime and allow those criminals to serve under house arrest in our communities. Other offences for which the penalty has been significantly softened include weapons trafficking, discharging a firearm with intent, robbery with a firearm, and extortion with a firearm.

This soft on crime approach is not only dangerous, but also a blatant departure from reason. The Liberals' hypocrisy is palpable. Bill C-21 is about politics, not gun safety, and it is at the expense of everyday Canadians who are being victimized in their own communities by gangs and dangerous criminals.

Canadians deserve better. Conservatives have always stood for common sense gun safety and strong consequences for those who commit gun offenses. Why? Because it is the right thing to do. If we value human life, the principles of law and justice, and safety in this country, then we should work to strengthen the structures that uphold those principles. It is obvious to anyone watching that the Prime Minister is not serious about stopping dangerous criminals from getting their hands on illegal guns or making our streets safer. This type of political theatre and virtue signaling is reckless, short-sighted, and out of step with a free and democratic society. It is damaging for all.

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If the actions of the Liberal government concern you, please have your say by contacting the Minister of Public Safety, Marco Mendicino, by emailing him at marco.mendicino@parl.gc.ca or by calling his office at 613-992-6361.



"Bill C-21 is about politics, not gun safety, and it is at the expense of everyday Canadians who are being victimized in their own communities by gangs and dangerous criminals."

LIBERALS TO EXPAND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE IN DYING TO CANADIANS WITH MENTAL ILLNESS

Six years ago, Canada became the fifth country in the world to legalize Medical Assistance in Dying (MAID). The 2016 legislation legalized euthanasia for those whose natural death was "reasonably foreseeable".

In 2021, the Liberals, under Bill C-7, further expanded MAID to Canadians with a "grievous and irremediable medical condition." Under this new scheme, the Liberal government enabled those with disabilities and non-terminal illnesses to access MAID and removed many of the safeguards that were originally put in place to protect the vulnerable. They also mandated that MAID be expanded to mature minors and Canadians with mental illness after March 17, 2023.

In any given year, 1 in 5 Canadians experience mental illness. These are our dearest friends, beloved family members, and valued co-workers—a grandfather with dementia, a mother who struggles with depression, a university student with anxiety, or a colleague struggling with suicidal ideation. Instead of seeking to make it easier for Canadians with mental illness to die, shouldn't we surround these individuals with compassion and ensure they have the supports they need to live well?

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This massive expansion of MAID to youth and those struggling with a mental illness undermines the significant efforts of suicide prevention campaigns and the activism of those to end the stigma surrounding mental health issues. As a society, we should be fighting to ensure all Canadians, regardless of the challenges they face, know their life is precious and of incredible worth.

In recent months, we have already seen the negative ramifications of the Liberals' aggressive promotion of MAID. While Canada's law specifically states that people should never be pressured to seek or sign off on MAID, at least six Canadian military veterans have come forward to testify that attempts were made by representatives at Veterans Affairs Canada to recommend MAID to them in

lieu of the veterans benefits to which they are entitled based on their service to our country.

The United Nations special rapporteurs warned that Canada's MAID legislation communicates "that it is better to be dead than to live with a disability". This message our Canadians veterans are hearing, not as subtle assumption, but loud and clear from Veterans Affairs representatives.

From the beginning, Conservatives raised serious concerns about the risks posed to Canadians by this flawed legislation. More recently, we have been joined by hundreds of organizations and professional medical associations across Canada who are asking the Liberals to halt the expansion of MAID.

"Canada's MAID legislation communicates 'that it is better to be dead than live with a disability'."

In a press conference in December, Justice Minister Lametti announced his intention to introduce legislation to temporarily delay the expansion of MAID. While acknowledging the significant concerns of medical experts, he also stressed the expansion of MAID is an ongoing priority for the Liberal government. This caveat underscores the dangerous approach the government is insisting upon. They are more interested in fulfilling their agenda than listening to the voices of concerned citizens and medical experts.

"Canadians' lives are on the line."

Canadians' lives are on the line. All Canadians, regardless of their ability or challenges, need to know their life is precious and of incredible worth. Please join me in writing to Minister of Justice, David Lametti, at mcu@justice.gc.ca to stop this reckless and harmful euthanasia legislation.



Southern Alberta Ethnic Association Christmas Dinner



Christmas Colouring Competition



Lethbridge Police Ball



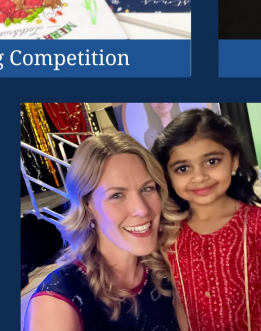
Association of Canadian Publishers



Navratri



Speaking in the House



Diwali



Métis National Council



National Cattle Feeders' Association



School Visit to LCI



Remembrance Day



Coaldale & District Emergency Services Banquet



Federation of Francophone and Acadian Communities of Canada



Canadian Alliance of Student Associations



Streets Alive Mission



Fall Townhall



Immigration Roundtable



COMMUNITY BUILDERS AWARDS 2022

To celebrate volunteerism in Lethbridge, I have the honour of annually recognizing the incredible work of youth, not-for-profit organizations, businesses, and individuals who go above and beyond to serve our community.

STAY CONNECTED!

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