

HOUSING AFFORDABILITY

The number one issue of concern I received this summer is easily 'housing' – whether affordability, or the municipal government's attempt to re-zone neighbourhoods with no regard for Area Development Plans.

I recall the decision I made to run for Parliament over four years ago – and it was based on the economic direction I saw this government heading. Expanding deficits at the federal level, along with misdirected spending, require a price to be paid – and that price is escalating inflation – which has shown up most in housing. With new home costs nearly double what they were eight years ago, and incomes nowhere near keeping up, housing is now beyond affordable for many Canadians – particularly young people buying their first home. Apartment rents have seen similar strain; some constituents have told me that their rent has increased by 50%. Particularly on a fixed income, this is obviously unmanageable.

Canadians now have some of the highest household debt in the world; the re-set on mortgages at much higher interest rates is causing serious financial strain for many – and more will be coming.

The inflation the government has caused – throughout the economy – makes the job of building houses more expensive, so houses will cost more going forward. Materials have gotten more expensive, labour is in short supply, and it's hard to get financing for construction. As a result, despite high demand for new housing, fewer homes are being built.

The government's economic agenda has CAUSED housing prices to rise. It is the outcome of their policies. Claiming incompetence at this stage does not redeem them. And they double down by seeking more advice from the same organizations that brought us to this point. I've seen their recent announcements, and it is clear they still have not figured out how badly they have bungled this issue. Misguided or incompetent – it's not a great choice.

This fix will take some time, and it will require solid economic policies from informed decision-makers. The first step is to change the management team that has created this mess in the first place.



Talking to constituents from my tent at summer festivals: (from top) Chinatown Street Festival, Inglewood Sunfest, Marda Gras and Lilac Festival.

 **GREG McLEAN**

MP | CALGARY CENTRE



HOUSE OF COMMONS
CHAMBRE DES COMMUNES
CANADA



GregMcLeanMP.ca



[GregMcLeanYYC](https://www.youtube.com/GregMcLeanYYC)



Greg.McLean@parl.gc.ca

PARLIAMENTARY PREVIEW

I spent the summer talking to people at numerous festivals and events in Calgary, knocking on doors, and meeting constituents in the office and coffee shops. It is not an understatement to say that people are worried.

They are worried about their mortgage or rent payments; about their food bills; and about possible new utility costs triggered by the federal government's net zero electricity demands on top of two carbon taxes.

All of this means they are also worried about their ability to save for their children's education or their own retirement. And they worry that government policies will lead to yet higher inflation and interest rates.

Parliament resumed on September 18 and I am more determined than ever to bring these concerns to a government in Ottawa that just doesn't get it. Are they so out of touch that they don't realize the impact of their policies on families and individuals? They just spend more, tax more, add new costs, and rack up more debt, digging a long-term burden not just for today's taxpayers but for tomorrow's generations to pay back.

Inside are some of the issues Calgary Centre constituents were talking to me about through the summer.



GregMcLeanMP.ca





Clockwise from top left: Opening the YWCA Sheriff King home in Inglewood for women seeking shelter from domestic violence; Muslim Heritage Day; doorknocking in Calgary Centre; the Sunalta Stampede breakfast; the Dragon Boat races; the McLean team assembling to march in the Pride Parade.

ISSUES IN OUR ECONOMY

No question the stressful economy is everyone's number one issue. We know that unnecessarily high government spending, new costs to consumers, and growing taxes all fuel inflation. We know that high inflation leads directly to high interest rates that impact mortgages, car loans, lines of credit, rents, and business costs. Here are a couple of other issues putting pressure on our economy.

Bond Rates put Federal Budget Off-track:

Bond yields have risen almost a full point since April to the highest level since 2007. *This matters because the federal government's heavy borrowing has assumed that interest rates would remain at very low levels - between 2.5% and 3% according to their 2023 budget - but new government debt is costing 5%..*

According to the Finance Department, every 1% increase adds \$3.8 billion in interest charges in year one, rising to \$10.3 billion annually by year five.

Canada is already due to pay \$44 billion in 2023-24 in debt charges - almost as much as the federal government transfers to health care (\$49 billion). Not only is that an annual obligation that our kids will inherit, *it also means that future governments will have less money available in the event of a pandemic, war or other emergency.*

2035 Net Zero Electricity not Realistic

Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault demands Canada achieve a net zero electricity grid by 2035. Six provinces are well on their way because they have hydro or they invested years ago in nuclear. In fact, Canada is at 82% of its net-zero electricity goal. Four provinces, however, including Alberta, generate electricity using coal or natural gas.

Alberta has moved rapidly away from high emissions coal. We are, in fact, ahead of schedule in switching to natural gas, which emits about half of coal's GHGs. Coal will be phased out completely by the end of this year. Alberta also has Canada's fastest growing renewables industry (wind and solar) that needs to be backed up by natural gas to ensure reliability.

Alberta believes a target of 2050 is achievable to get the rest of the way to net zero. Minister Guilbeault refuses to be flexible or offer workable solutions. This unworkable demand will lead to escalating electricity costs and lack of reliability in our grid.

The Alberta Electric System Operator (AESO) - an independent agency - *estimated costs of Alberta transitioning away from natural gas at \$44 to \$52 billion, which could be a 40% increase on your electric bill.* AESO assumed Alberta would switch to renewables (solar and wind), and develop new power storage technologies, carbon capture technology, and hydrogen - all still emerging technologies. AESO also expressed concerns about brown-outs if Alberta switches to less reliable sources of power.

Reliable electricity is foundational to our economy. We can't take risks with a timeline dictated by an unrealistic, ideological agenda.

Alberta is committed to 2050. Alberta MPs will continue to press Minister Guilbeault to agree to a realistic plan to ensure Albertans have reliable electricity.

TREES: MANY PROMISED BUT FEW PLANTED

In September 2019, Justin Trudeau posted on Twitter, "We are going to plant two billion trees in the next 10 years. Period." He and his Ministers have repeated that promise many times as an important plank in their environmental strategy to reduce GHG emissions. How is it going?

The 2 Billion Tree Program promised 2 billion trees over 10 years at a cost of \$3.16 billion. But like so many of this government's virtue signalling announcements, this promise has collapsed.

its targets. Instead of actually planting new trees, NRCAN is going back to count trees planted under earlier programs and by other departments.

The government now says that despite the program's name, they never intended to plant 2 billion more trees. In fact, two-thirds of the trees planted so far have been from pre-existing programs and retroactively attributed to the 2 Billion Trees commitment.

The Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development, Jerry V. DeMarco, says Natural Resources Canada (NRCAN) is using "creative accounting" to inflate its numbers and claim that it is exceeding

“According to Greg McLean, it was very clear from the start that the budget allocated for tree planting was not sufficient to put two billion in the ground. He accuses the government of wanting to hide this information.

“Are they going to plant two billion trees with the \$3.16 billion budget? Well, it seems that, clearly, the answer is no. Now they're trying to get out of that promise,”

- The Saxon, August 16, 2023

DeMarco said simply counting trees from other programs and claiming them as part of the 2 Billion Trees Program does not achieve the promised benefits for climate, biodiversity, and human health.

CONTACT ME

OTTAWA OFFICE
Greg McLean, MP
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
Tel. 613-995-1561
Fax. 613-995-1862

COMMUNITY OFFICE
Mount Royal Place, Suite 445
1414 - 8 Street SW
Calgary, AB T2R 1J6
Tel. 403-244-1880
Fax. 403-245-3468

✉ Greg.McLean@parl.gc.ca

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