

Taxpayer Wishlist:

A DOZEN BILLS POLITICIANS SHOULD INTRODUCE IN PARLIAMENT

The Canadian Taxpayers Federation created a list of bills that members of Parliament could bring forward to benefit taxpayers either through private members' bills or government bills.

MPs can introduce private members' bills that do not raise taxes or increase spending, [according](#) to the House of Commons' procedure and practice guidelines. Bills that reduce spending and taxes are allowed.

The list below highlights policy proposals that should be included within bills.

1.

End automatic pay hikes for MPs

MPs get pay raises each year based on the average annual increase in private-sector union contracts with corporations that have 500 or more employees. MPs are scheduled for another pay increase on April 1, 2022.

MPs have already received [two pay raises](#) while millions of Canadians struggled through the pandemic. The two pandemic pay raises range from \$6,900 for backbench MPs to \$13,800 for the prime minister. The federal government [stopped](#) the automatic pay raises between 2010 and 2013 in response to the 2008-09 recession. The CTF has identified [31](#) jurisdictions that have reduced politician pay at some point during the pandemic.

2.

Remove Canada Revenue Agency reporting requirement on the sale of homes

During the 2021 federal election, both the [Liberal Party](#) and [Conservative Party](#) said they would not impose a home equity tax. However, in 2016, Ottawa made it [mandatory](#) for Canadians to report the sale of their primary residence even though it's tax-exempt.

Taxpayers are rightly concerned that this reporting requirement will make it easy for the government to start charging a capital gains tax on the sale of their principal residence. Politicians who want to prove they won't tax the sale of Canadians' principal residence should remove the requirement for taxpayers to report the sale of their home.

3.

End the expense account for former Governors General

Former governors general can submit expenses for up to [\\$206,040](#) per year for the rest of their lives and up to six months after their death. Governors general should be cut off from their expense account when they leave office.

In addition to the expense account, former governors general are eligible for their full pension regardless of how long they serve in the role. Even though Julie Payette only served for a little more than three years, she will still receive an estimated [\\$4.8 million](#) if she continues to collect the pension to age 90. The governor general's annual salary is [\\$302,114](#), according to the 2019-20 public accounts of Canada.

4.

Repeal the escalator tax on alcohol

First passed in the 2017 federal budget, the alcohol escalator tax automatically increases excise taxes on beer, wine and spirits every year by the rate of inflation on April 1. Taxes already account for about half of the price of beer, 65 per cent of the price of wine and more than three quarters of the price of spirits. The escalator tax on alcohol means booze taxes have increased twice during the pandemic with another increase scheduled for April 1, 2022.

A bill should end the automatic tax increase on alcoholic beverages and force MPs to vote on tax increases.

5.

End the gas tax-on-tax

Canadians are paying sky-high gas prices and higher taxes are making these prices more painful. Taxes account for 31 to 42 per cent of the price of gasoline, according to the [analysis](#) released by the Canadian Taxpayers Federation. The federal government charges sales tax on top of the other fuel taxes. That means that as the price of gas and fuel taxes increase, the tax-on-tax costs Canadian drivers more money.

A bill should end the practice of levying the general sales tax on top of other fuel taxes.

6.

Require consultation on equalization referendum

The federal government should be required to consult with the provinces following the referendum where 62 per cent of Albertans voted to end the equalization status quo. In addition, the bill should require the federal government to publish all documents from provincial negotiations on the Department of Finance's website. This would help guard against what happened in 2018, when the federal government [extended](#) the existing equalization program until 2024 without consulting with the province.

7.

Enhance transparency around corporate welfare

A bill should ensure minimum transparency requirements for any arrangement where taxpayers' money is given to a private business. The transparency requirements should include the amounts disbursed or guaranteed, repayment schedule, amounts paid back, interest rates on loans, and frequent reporting on repayment. The bill should cover direct cash subsidies, grants, loans and loan guarantees. These contribution agreements should be subject to access to information provisions. Parliament must also be required to vote on the subsidies before a business can receive any taxpayer funds.

8.

Exempt user-generated content from online censorship

In its attempt to pass Bill C-10, the government [removed](#) a clause that would exempt user-generated content from being regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission. Law professor Michael Geist called this removal "an unconscionable attack on the free expression rights of Canadians." Canadians have the right to free speech on social media and online platforms. That right is vital to hold politicians accountable.

A proactive bill should be passed that explicitly protects user-generated online content from being regulated by the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission or any similar government regulator.

9.

Implement federal recall and initiative

If politicians work for the people, the people should be able to give politicians pink slips for poor performance. If legislation belongs to the people, the people should be able to repeal it if it goes against our wishes. Through recall and initiative legislation, a citizen could launch a petition and, if it gets the required number of signatures, citizens can then go to the ballot box to decide whether to recall a politician in a byelection or deal with legislation in a referendum.

Recall and initiative legislation has been successfully implemented in British Columbia since [1995](#) and the Alberta government passed recall and initiative legislation in 2021. A bill should be passed to ensure Parliament is accountable to all Canadians through recall and initiative rules similar to those in British Columbia and Alberta.

10.

Exempt grain drying costs from federal carbon tax

Bill C-206 was introduced in the [43rd Parliament](#) to exempt natural gas and propane used for grain drying from the carbon tax. Bill C-206 was passed through the House of Commons, but was unable to pass through the Senate before the 2021 snap election was called.

"Bill C-206 would have provided cost relief for farmers and ranchers who are already struggling with additional costs from the carbon tax as well as a tough year because of the drought," [said](#) Ian Boxall, Vice President of the Agricultural Producers Association of Saskatchewan.

A bill that mirrors Bill C-206 should be introduced to exempt natural gas and propane used on farms from the carbon tax.

11.

Create an Auditor General for First Nations communities

A bill should be passed to create a new Auditor General to support First Nations communities, based on a recommended from the [Assembly of First Nations](#).

“In the Northwest Territories, we have a member who’s been fighting for financial information for 15 years,” [explains](#) Sherry Greene, who is a financial transparency advocate from Samson Cree Nation. “But it’s not only there, it’s all across Canada from coast to coast.”

Members of First Nations communities deserve to have the same checks and balances over their governments as other Canadians do. Creating an Auditor General to cover First Nations communities would be a good step toward this goal.

12.

No pension for convicted MPs and senators

Ensure MPs or Senators who has been convicted of serious crimes while serving in office are not eligible to collect their Parliamentary pension. This would deter the exploitation of power that comes with political office. This bill should mirror the private members’ bill, Bill C-518, that was introduced in the 41st Parliament.