



# Hélène Laverdière

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Please note this is the English translation of the Householder.

For the original French version, please visit my website : [www.helenelaverdiere.npd.ca](http://www.helenelaverdiere.npd.ca)

## 2017 Liberal budget

Many Canadians struggling with part-time and precarious employment, rising costs and critical debt levels were hoping that Budget 2017 would invest in building a fairer economy that benefits everyone. Unfortunately, the most recent federal Liberal budget contains nothing on a number of critical areas and delays funding for many others. In fact, spending has been postponed until after the next election. This will leave Canadians waiting a long time to see even the things they were promised by this budget, and we can already point out a number of broken promises.

One of the biggest disappointments of this fiscal year is the allocation of resources to the environment—or the lack thereof. After more than a decade of inaction in the fight against climate change, the Liberals promised that they would take this issue seriously. Instead, they cut \$1.25 billion over the next two years from the funds previously promised to support the transition to a greener economy. This is all the more critical given that, according to *Re energizing Canada: Pathways to a Low Carbon Future*, an independent report by 72 Canadian university researchers, Canada is not on track to meet its emission reduction targets. Moreover, the reduction pathway is not consistent with decarbonization requirements under the Paris Climate Agreement. For the sake of future generations, we cannot afford further delays in climate change action.

Budget 2017 reduced planned funding for public transit for the second time—cutting \$835 million over the next five years. By 2022, the Liberals' current plans will provide \$4.1 billion less for public transit than they committed to in their platform. The budget also cancelled the Public Transit Tax Credit. This cut is totally absurd.

New Democrats welcome the government's new investments in affordable housing, something the NDP has been fighting for for a long time. However, it is deplorable that this spending has been postponed until much later, and we question how much has been set aside for the development of social housing, which is desperately needed, especially in Montreal.

With regard to homelessness, expected new investments are promising; however, here again, the lion's share of the announced spending will only begin in 2019–2020. Where the funds will be allocated and how they will be spent remains to be seen. How much will be allocated to the province of Quebec and to Montreal also remains to be seen.

Lastly, the NDP had hoped to see the elimination of the stock option deduction, which is nothing more than a tax loophole for executives and CEOs. The Liberals not only refused to make large corporations pay their fair share, they moved forward with plans to privatize public infrastructures, which will continue to allow the largest investors to get even richer.

## 375th anniversary of Montreal: upcoming activities in Laurier—Sainte-Marie

The 375th anniversary of Montreal is an ideal opportunity to celebrate diversity in our neighborhoods and communities. The Grande Tournée, officially launched on May 12, will be celebrated across Montreal's 19 boroughs for 19 consecutive weekends. Volunteers have been doing an amazing job, not only at the launch of the Grande Tournée, but at events organized in various parks throughout the summer.

The Grande Tournée will be coming to Lafontaine Park the weekend of September 8 to 10, and to Faubourgs Park September 15 to 17. Be sure to watch for the dates for one of my favorite events: "Les fenêtres qui parlent." In each of Montreal's 19 boroughs, 40 people living on the same block will lend their windows or verandas to artists to exhibit one or more works of art. This year's theme is ENCOUNTERS.



## *Nuclear weapons: a failure in Justin Trudeau's foreign policy*

*Two decades after the end of the Cold War, nine countries possess a combined 15,000 nuclear weapons. In the hands of a growing number of states and non-state entities, nuclear weapons represent a major threat to global security. A single nuclear warhead could kill millions of people, with the effects lasting decades.*

*With the election of U.S. President Donald Trump, who has pledged to increase the American nuclear arsenal, and troubling recent actions by North Korea, it is more urgent than ever that the international community work together to ban nuclear weapons.*

*One might assume, given the lofty rhetoric of Prime Minister Trudeau that "Canada is back" on the international scene, that Canada would be leading this effort. After all, the Canadian Parliament unanimously voted in favour of nuclear disarmament in 2010. And at their policy convention in 2016, members of the Liberal party followed the NDP's lead and voted in favour of efforts for a nuclear-free world. So it would make sense that Trudeau's government would be a strong supporter of a nuclear weapons ban treaty.*

*If only that were true.*

*Not only did Canada vote against starting negotiations for a nuclear weapons ban treaty this past Fall, but now that the international community has moved ahead with negotiations, Canada is boycotting them.*

*This is a travesty and a massive failure in Justin Trudeau's foreign policy. We must work toward a comprehensive nuclear weapons convention if we want to achieve significant progress.*

*An ethical government would participate in negotiations for a nuclear weapons treaty. If we truly want nuclear disarmament, we have to work hard for it, along with over 120 countries that are committed to banning the bomb. It's time the Liberals grow a backbone and do what's right. They should get to work and attend the nuclear weapons ban treaty negotiations.*

## *Human rights of LGBTQ persons in Chechnya being violated*

*The recent imprisonment of hundreds of gay men in Chechen prisons described as "concentration camps" has shocked the international community. At least four men have died as a result of this torture, humiliation and abuse. According to survivors' testimony, Chechen police in one conservative Russian region admonished parents to "solve the problem" of their children's sexual orientation, otherwise the authorities would "take care of it." Activists who tried to denounce this persecution in May were immediately arrested.*

*LGBTQ rights in Russia have deteriorated in recent years. Many attribute this to the introduction of legislation such as the "anti-propaganda" law introduced in 2013 to protect children from "harmful information" and from the loss of "traditional family values." The Russian government decided that any discourse in support of the LGBTQ community would be banned. Consequently, Russian civil society actors need the support of the international community, especially in light of serious human rights violations in Chechnya.*

*New Democrats have asked the Liberal government to call for an international investigation into this horrific treatment. After pressing the Liberals to join international counterparts in condemning the campaign of mass arrests and detention of gay men in Chechnya and to call for an international inquiry into this persecution, the Liberals finally responded by asking the Russians to investigate.*

*But that is simply not good enough. What we need is an independent international inquiry. We must also extend Canadian protections to the men escaping these human rights violations and provide full refugee status for those who manage to escape this horrendous situation.*

## *Turkey's deteriorating human rights record*

*I am deeply concerned about human rights violations in Turkey. Turkey is an important ally of Canada, particularly with regard to the Syrian refugee crisis. But harassment and imprisonment of human rights defenders, of journalists and academics that are critical of the government, of members of the political opposition and of Kurds, is unacceptable.*

*To date, I have met with several Kurdish-Canadians from Turkey, Iraq and Iran and have also worked on consular files of Canadians imprisoned in Turkey.*

*In May, I participated in a press conference with Quebec MNAs Amir Khadir and Carole Poirier and a number of civil society organizations, including the Kurdish Federation of Canada and the Armenian National Committee of Canada. This conference urged the governments of Quebec and Canada to take action and express their deep concerns about the deterioration of human rights in Turkey.*

*It's time for a Commission of Inquiry on Afghan detainees*

*Over the past year, I have repeatedly asked the Canadian government to launch a commission of inquiry into Canada's practices and policies relating to the transfer of hundreds of detainees to Afghan authorities, during Canada's mission in Afghanistan.*

*There is evidence documented by Canadian diplomats that, during Canada's Afghan mission, many detainees transferred to Afghan authorities were tortured. This is reprehensible; now the key question is how much Canada knew about the treatment of detainees in Afghan custody. This is important because of Canada's obligations under international law; if the government was aware of torture and other abuses, and did nothing to stop it, then it may be a violation of international law.*

*New allegations, made last June, are equally alarming. In an anonymous letter to La Presse, Canadian military police alleged that Canadian*



*soldiers had been instructed to “terrorize” Afghan detainees to extract information.*

*Last year, over forty civil society groups, lawyers, academics and prominent Canadians signed a letter calling for a commission of inquiry. New Democrats were among the signatories.*

*We raised this issue in the House of Commons multiple times, yet National Defence Minister Sajjan rejected our call for an inquiry. We must ask, why? Did he decide against holding a public inquiry into the Afghan detainee situation knowing there would be conflict of interest because of his role as liaison and intelligence officer in Afghanistan? If this was not his decision, did he recuse himself from the discussions since he would have been an important witness during a possible inquiry?*

*I am still waiting for a response from the minister.*

*This is not a new issue; remember that during its minority government, the Harper government was nearly found in contempt of Parliament for refusing to release unredacted records to a Parliamentary committee tasked with examining the question.*

*In 2009, Justin Trudeau said of the Afghan detainee scandal, “We need to get at the truth.”*

*The time to do so is now. Canada should not sweep possible violations of international law under the rug. If Canada is not complicit in violations of international law, let us finally prove so. The truth is long overdue.*

## ***Development of areas around the Jacques Cartier Bridge***

*On April 20, 2017, the City of Montreal held an open house in collaboration with Jacques Cartier and Champlain Bridges Incorporated to discuss the development of the areas around the Jacques Cartier Bridge. This consultation attracted numerous local stakeholders and residents.*

*Participants were invited to share their concerns about sensitive areas, specific uses for the approaches and traffic concerns, to ensure smooth and safe transportation for the residents of south central Montreal.*

*Aside from addressing safety issues, the quality of life of community residents must be ensured, despite the constant vehicle traffic across the bridge and along Highway 720. A number of options have been proposed, including the integration of community art in the public spaces and the organization of activities in certain parks. In order to make everyday life more enjoyable and peaceful, access to the river should also be a priority.*

*A summary of the opinions expressed during this public consultation will be published in July. I believe it is essential to ensure the sustainability of the neighborhood by bringing local residents and stakeholders together again, if necessary, to another consultation organized by the Office de consultation publique de Montréal (OCPM), as has already been requested by several organizations and residents. The proposed developments will shape the landscape of the neighborhood for decades to come, so residents of Sainte-Marie and south-central Montreal must be given the opportunity to express their concerns and their visions, and deserve to be heard.*

## ***My bill on safe railway crossings***

*Thank you to the many partners who supported my bill, which would have authorized the Minister of Transport to order the construction of safe railway crossings. Shamefully, the Liberals defeated my bill in May. I will keep pushing this important issue and calling on Minister Garneau to stand up for the needs and safety of Canadians, which should take priority over the interests of railway companies like CP.*

## ***Centre-Sud of Montreal: launch of the Quartier nourricier food security project***

*Launched on May 29, 2017, Quartier nourricier is a community project to improve food security in the Centre-Sud community in Montreal. The Carrefour alimentaire Centre-Sud, the Corporation de développement communautaire Centre-Sud, Sentier urbain and the Société écocitoyenne de Montréal have been working together to develop the project in partnership with citizens and other organizations to address the neighborhood's needs. The project has several components:*

- a production component to build a greenhouse near Walter Stewart park and ensure the sustainability of a nursery. This component will also create jobs through a work integration program for marginalized youth;*
- an education component that offers workshops and opportunities to share knowledge on urban agriculture and healthy eating;*
- a marketing component that will upgrade the infrastructure of the Marché Solidaire Frontenac and expand the range of healthy products it offers;*
- a public involvement and engagement component to create a network of urban gardeners involving citizens and organizations; and*
- a community giving component to distribute surplus food from the greenhouse and from the Marché Solidaire Frontenac to community organizations. In addition, the nursery will provide fruit trees and perennials for various greening projects (citizens' committees and organizations).*

*I urge you to find out more about this exciting project. For information and to learn more about the proposed activities, go to [www.quartiernourricier.org](http://www.quartiernourricier.org).*



## *Justice for Omar Khadr*

*Omar Khadr, a Canadian citizen, was just a child when he was imprisoned in Guantanamo Bay by the U.S. military. He was incarcerated there for 10 years and suffered serious psychological and physical trauma. He served another three years in a Canadian prison before finally being released in 2015.*

*The U.S. Supreme Court, the Supreme Court of Canada, Lawyer's Rights Watch Canada, Amnesty International and the International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group have all said that Omar Khadr's fundamental human rights had been violated.*

*That is why members of the Montreal community have launched a petition calling on the Government of Canada to offer Omar Khadr an official apology and appropriate redress so that he can turn the page on these difficult years.*

*Petition e 934 is open for signature until July 20 and can be found on the Parliament of Canada website.*

## *Documentary: The Price We Pay*

*On May 24, more than 100 people answered an invitation and came to watch *The Price We Pay*, a documentary by Canadian journalist and filmmaker Harold Crooks. The film examines tax avoidance by multinationals and possible solutions to counter this phenomenon. Philosopher and tax avoidance expert Alain Deneault attended the viewing and answered questions.*

## *Finally! Supervised injection services in Montreal*

*After years of waiting, supervised injection services are finally coming to Montreal. Two of the four sites will be located in Laurier-Sainte-Marie and will be managed by well-known and recognized organizations: Cactus Montréal and Spectre de rue, in close collaboration with Montreal's department of public health.*

*Why have supervised injection services?*

*To improve quality of life in neighbourhoods!*

*Supervised injection services reduce improperly discarded needles, injection in public spaces and citizen complaints. The community thus becomes cleaner and safer for everyone; this ensures greater social harmony.*

*To save lives!*

*Supervised injection services allow intravenous drug users to inject safely using sterile equipment. They help prevent overdoses and the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C.*

*The establishment of such services does not increase the number of drug-related offences nor does it encourage users to transition to intravenous drug use.*

*Lastly, studies show that supervised injection services can help people overcome their dependence on drugs through interactions with nurses, peer helpers and psychosocial workers who are on site at all times.*

*This solution provides a safer environment for everyone. I have supported the establishment of supervised injection services from the outset and am pleased that the project is coming to fruition. Various activities, including neighbourhood committees and open houses are being organized to ensure that these services are effectively integrated in the community.*

*If you have any questions or would like additional information, I encourage you to phone 514 842 7226 or go to [www.santemontreal.qc.ca/sis](http://www.santemontreal.qc.ca/sis).*

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