



A Weekly Column by Dean Hickey

THE FINAL TAKE

AN UNVARNISHED LOOK AT THE SOCIAL AND POLITICAL ISSUES OF OUR TIME



A LOOK AT SOME OF THE DETAILS INCLUDED
IN THE 2025 FEDERAL BUDGET

THIS COLUMNIST WHOLEHEARTEDLY CONDEMNS the decision by Mark Carney's Liberals to exponentially increase spending in their recently released federal budget. Those words form the basis of one of last week's editorials here at The Central, written in response to what has been labelled as the "Canada Strong 2025 Budget." We were quick to highlight the fact that our nation's debt continues to spiral out of control as spending on all manner of programs goes through the roof.

We also suggested the Trudeau-Carney Liberals need to re-examine their ideology and actually start thinking of ways to get overall spending under control - because so much of what Canadians are paying in tax is now going to pay interest charges on our nation's debt. The federal government is nowhere near balancing anything as they continue to borrow tens of billions of dollars every year, resulting in our having become a nation that now lives day-to-day on that same borrowed money, which is not sustainable.

I did some research on what I see as a few key aspects of the budget, and this week I want to share some of the more relevant details. In the wake of years of prolonged deficits, there's still a need for funding in crucial areas of national importance, and that requires a fresh look at where and how every tax dollar is being spent. Let's begin by taking a look at the national crisis that is mental health and addictions – a crisis that is increasingly affecting our society in every way. The budget document has zero mention of meaningful support on this issue. There isn't a single new dollar, program, initiative, or even passing reference to addictions treatment, recovery beds, opioid response, or any such mental-health-and-addictions funding anywhere in the budget. That seems almost unbelievable in the wake of so much suffering on our streets and in so-called 'homeless' camps.

One notable mention is on page 247, informing us that current transfers to the provinces for the funding of home and community care - and mental health and addictions services - are set to remain at \$1.2-billion each year for current programs that are set to expire in 2027. That means there is no new money being allocated to the healthcare crisis that is gripping our country. It is simply a recognition of the final two years of a 2017 commitment, with no mention of expanding or replacing that funding, either on page 247 or anywhere else in the budget.

We need targeted action towards addictions treatment right now, not just a simple count-down of existing programs that we know will soon end. To let \$1.2-billion in essential support simply vanish in 18 months without a known replacement plan at this stage is a failure on the part of our federal government to come to terms with a national crisis – one that has seen over 50,000 of our fellow citizens die from drug overdoses within the last ten years.

The second issue I'd like to highlight concerns the state of childcare programs in this country. They are an essential element that helps keep our overall economy moving forward. Current federal programs have led to what many see as endless waits, a shortage of spaces, and a rationing of childcare. The Auditor General has issued a report which tells us the current approach on tackling this issue has actually resulted in less than half the number of spaces promised by the federal government. The report goes on to say the Liberals are in fact 69,000 spaces short of the target they set for the period ending in March of next year.

Page 245 of the budget shows an expense outlook that offers little in the way of increased funding to alleviate the fact that 50 per cent of parents using child care said they had difficulty even finding a space. This is particularly challenging for those with low incomes who wish to enter the workforce. As it stands, there are too many prohibitive barriers to accessing childcare for vulnerable families, and the 2025 budget has failed to change that. Finally, let us turn our attention to the topic of productivity, research and innovation. The budget does seek to recognize that productivity and investment in research & development on the part of the private sector is lacking. Page 53 tells us, "Over the past decade, Canada's productivity performance has been persistently weak. "In this time, productivity grew by only 0.3 per cent annually – less than one-third the pace of the previous two decades. "This has led to substantial productivity gaps with other G7 economies."

It has become common knowledge that for decades, Canadian companies have invested less per worker than their American counterparts. It's a problem that has gotten worse since 2015 when commodity prices began to collapse due to a sharp fall in energy investment. Well that's no surprise, given the Trudeau government's attack on our natural resource industries during their 10 years in office.

Ironically, Page 54 of the budget document appears to offer up a dose of political humour. While seeking to double down on its attack against our oil and gas industries, it tells us that "Canada must look to new high-growth markets and invest in technology that can unlock its economic potential". That is nothing less than ridiculous, given that we are literally sitting on massive wealth-generating resources as it is. Those resources are being kept locked in place by a radical environmental ideology the Liberals refuse to let go of. As if that wasn't bad enough, the budget has the audacity to go on to say, "Doing so will position the economy for success in the future (What about right now?), defined by... decarbonisation...driven by technology advancement." That sounds like another net-zero fantasy.

So, in the face of all that we've reviewed, one does try to remain somewhat optimistic, which is a difficult task in our current economic and social climate. What the budget does do in terms of looking to a more prosperous future is provide enhancements to science & research initiatives, by encouraging investment in Canadian innovation. The federal government proposes to further increase the annual expenditure limit for science & research and to enable a more beneficial tax incentive program. If what is being proposed may truly help innovative businesses to scale up and grow, it can only be a good thing for a nation that is so desperately in need of increased productivity.

There is so much contained within the 2025 budget that it would take another half-dozen columns to further highlight its important aspects. For now, we'll simply have to leave it there.

Your family may be breathing cancer-causing radon
and you don't even know it

By Greg Gazin
Airthings, a Norwegian leader in air quality monitoring, built the Corentium Home 2 as an improvement on its earlier model. It adds temperature and humidity tracking, enhanced Bluetooth LE and optional SmartLink integration. It runs without Wi-Fi, a smartphone or an app, so setup is as easy as inserting the two included AA batteries.

At 61 × 29 × 113 mm (2.4 × 1.1 × 4.45 inches) and 144 g (5 oz), it is compact and portable, with a battery life of two to three years. The device feels solid for its size, and the LCD display is clear and easy to read at a glance, even from across the room. Pairing it with the free Airthings app unlocks graphs, trends and optional remote monitoring.

The device begins collecting data immediately but requires about a week to stabilize readings because radon fluctuates throughout the day. After that, results are typically within 10 per cent of professional lab measurements, improving to about five per cent after two months. Continuous monitoring captures day-to-day and seasonal changes, which is essential because radon levels can shift based on weather, ventilation and how tightly a home is sealed.

Radon is found in one in 10 Canadian homes. The Airthings Corentium Home 2 provides accurate radon testing and dependable long-term monitoring. The Airthings Corentium Home 2 monitoring system gives you a clear picture of radon levels in your home. Understanding why radon monitoring matters helps explain why a device like this is worth having in the first place. Radon is a radioactive gas produced when uranium in soil and rock breaks down. It disperses harmlessly outdoors, but indoors it can accumulate to dangerous levels.

Health Canada estimates that one in 10 Canadian homes has radon above the guideline of 200 Bq/m³ (becquerels per cubic metre). For context, many Canadian homes fall between 50 and 200 Bq/m³, but levels can be far higher depending on the region. Some of the highest readings occur on the Prairies, in parts of British Columbia, northern Ontario and Atlantic Canada, but elevated levels can appear anywhere. Newer, energy-efficient homes can also trap more radon because they are built to be tightly sealed.

Radon exposure is the No. 1 cause of lung cancer among non-smokers in Canada and the second leading cause overall. More than 3,200 Canadians die each year from radon-induced lung cancer, roughly eight every day, compared with about 300 annual deaths from carbon monoxide poisoning. The danger is silent, slow and often undetected without testing.

Because radon varies from home to home, even on the same street, testing is the only way to know your risk. Testing does not require special tools or renovation; it simply involves placing a monitor in the lowest lived-in area of your home. Homeowners can choose from professional testing, alpha track kits or digital monitors. This is exactly where the Corentium Home 2 proves its value, providing accurate, long-term, repeatable measurements with no recurring fees.

If your long-term radon readings exceed 200 Bq/m³, Health Canada recommends mitigation, which may include sealing cracks or installing a sub-slab depressurization system. Once mitigation is complete, the Corentium Home 2 can verify results over time, something disposable kits cannot do.

The Corentium Home 2 makes radon testing straightforward and ongoing. It is a solid investment in your family's health. For homeowners who want a reliable, no-fuss way to monitor radon over the long term, it is one of the strongest and most user-friendly options available for the price.

With November marking National Radon Action Month, there is no better time to test. Detecting and reducing radon could make a life-saving difference. If you discover elevated levels, call a certified professional and download Health Canada's Radon Reduction Guide at Canada.ca/radon.

Our verdict: For homeowners who want a dependable way to monitor radon without added costs or complexity, the Corentium Home 2 stands out as a strong, practical choice. It offers accuracy, ease of use and long-term reliability in a compact device that works straight out of the box. Given the health risks associated with radon and the simplicity of continuous monitoring, the Corentium Home 2 provides meaningful value and peace of mind at a reasonable price.

