

Deputy Prime Minister talks affordability, gas prices in Newmarket-Aurora

Affordability is top of mind for many Canadians at the moment, and it was top of mind for Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland on a tour of an automotive parts factory in Newmarket-Aurora last Thursday.

Accompanied by Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynan, Ms. Freeland, who also serves as Canada's Finance Minister, touted the Exco plant as a homegrown success story that will be important in a shift towards a green economy.

'It's businesses like [these] ? innovative, homegrown, Canadian-headquartered companies ? that offer good, stable jobs that are exactly what we need to continue growing Canada's economy,' she said.

Also part of growing Canada's economy is ?creating a national system of affordable childcare to help more women into the workforce? and bringing to the country ?skilled workers that our businesses need.

'Our government is working hard to help great Canadian businesses like this one hire, continue to provide great jobs, continue to grow, continue to be competitive and world-leading,' she said. 'Canada has had the most rapid jobs recovery in the G7. Our GDP today is 2.2 per cent higher than when COVID first hit, but we also know that inflation, a global phenomenon, which is a lingering result of the COVID recession and has been exacerbated by Putin's illegal invasion of Ukraine and by China's COVID Zero Policies is making life harder for Canadians.

'Canadians feel it when they go and fill up their tank or go to buy their groceries. What our government is going to do to help Canadians whether this latest storm is what we have been doing over the last two years of getting through COVID and that is: have a plan, work together, and support each other.'

Key points in the plan, she said, were an enhanced Canada Workers Benefit, cutting child care fees, the implementation of a national dental care program starting with kids under 12 this year, a 10 per cent increase in Old Age Security for seniors 75+, and indexing the Canada Child Benefit, GST Credit, Canada Pension Plan, Old Age Security, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement to inflation.

With inflation rapidly rising, politicians like Ontario Premier Doug Ford have called for a cut to the so-called 'Carbon Tax.' This was an idea rejected by Ms. Freeland during the local stop.

'When it comes to the price on pollution, I think that Russia's illegal war in Ukraine has actually made the green transition more urgent than ever,' she said. 'I believe that this war needs to make us understand as a world and as Canadians how important it is to shift to a green economy. Being here today has made me more confident than ever than Canada's ability as a country to make that transition and to benefit from that transition.

'We know the most effective mechanism to accomplish that transition is a price on carbon. It is a market mechanism that really works and so I really think that now is a time to really be glad that in Canada we have a serious, predictable set of measures that will help our country make that transition. I really want to emphasize this is a transition we need for our children, [our] grandchildren, it's a moral imperative and we have to do it? but there are great jobs for Canadians in the green transition and this country we're standing in today is a great example of that.'

Money collected through the 'price on pollution' goes 'back to Canadian families' through the form of a cheque ? and she underscored that gas prices are a different issue altogether.

'It is important to emphasize this is a global commodity,' she said of petroleum and fossil fuels. 'The price increase is being driven by a very terrible man, Vladimir Putin, and his illegal war in Ukraine. When we go and fill up our cars, if you want to get mad at someone, first and foremost get mad at Vladimir Putin and let's continue to do what we're doing as a country and that's to help the very brave people of Ukraine win that war and therefore end that war.'

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter