

OTTAWA REPORT

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Saving lives through Vanessa's Law

The Government of Canada has welcomed amendments to strengthen transparency in the proposed patient safety legislation Vanessa's Law (Bill C-17). The amendments to Bill C-17 would enable Health Canada to continue strengthening its Regulatory Transparency and Openness Framework that was announced in April of this year.

The framework commits Health Canada to a set of concrete initiatives that would make easy to understand regulatory health and safety information more available to Canadians. With this information, Canadians can make well-informed decisions concerning their health and that of their families. Once implemented, Vanessa's Law will save innumerable lives each year in Canada, and prevent tens of thousands of injuries.

Strengthening Canadian Citizenship

The recently passed Strengthening Canadian Citizenship Act will help protect the value of Canadian citizenship, while continuing to improve the efficiency of our immigration system.

The Act extends the residency requirements for citizenship applicants to four of the six previous years and requires more applicants to meet specific requirements to help ensure they can fully participate in Canadian society.

The integrity of our system will be strengthened with stronger penalties for citizenship fraud and the power to retract citizenship for dual nationals convicted of terrorism, high treason or spying offences. Applications will be fast tracked for permanent residents who serve in the Canadian Armed Forces and citizenship will be extended to children born to Canadian parents serving abroad as servants of the Crown.

These changes are a reflection of the belief that Canadian citizenship is not just a passport of convenience. Rather, Canadian citizenship comes with rights and responsibilities, and a commitment to Canada and Canadian values. We remain committed to helping to ensure our immigration system serves Canadian interests.

Equalization and Ontario

Federal transfer funding to Ontario has increased to a record \$19.2-billion during this time; up 76%, which is 35% above the national average increase.

There are three main transfer payments to provincial governments: the Canada Health Transfer, Canada Social Transfer and Equalization. The Equalization program was created to transfer money to ?have not? provinces whose economies are performing below the national average. Equalization, which is built into Canada's Constitution, is designed to help less prosperous provinces provide similar levels of public services at comparable levels of taxation to others. It will total \$16.7-billion in 2014-15, up 53% since 2005-06. Since it operates on a mathematical formula, government does not decide how it should be divided up among the provinces. Ontario had never collected Equalization money until 2009. In 2013-14, Ontario received over \$3.1 billion in equalization payments. Federal transfers accounted for about 17 percent of Ontario's revenues in that year.

Commemorating the Centennial of World War I

This year marks the beginning of the centennial of the First World War. Canadians made incredible contributions during this important chapter in world history and the occasion provides a unique opportunity to celebrate Canada's proud military history and to honour all those who served. Through the selfless service and sacrifices of an entire generation, Canada established itself as an independent force on the global stage. In all, more than 650,000 Canadians served overseas, and hundreds of thousands of others worked on the home front to support the war effort.

Canada will participate in commemorative events to mark the centennial of the First World War including the Bastille Day Military Parade in France this July. Our government remains committed to recognizing the tremendous sacrifices and achievements of Canada's Veterans, who fought to protect Canadian values of freedom, democracy and rule of law. I extend my heartfelt thanks to our Legions and Veterans Associations in Newmarket-Aurora for their support of our Veterans, and their tireless efforts in organizing several public commemorations each year, so that we may never forget.

If you would like to contact me on any issue, please call 905-953-7515 or visit my website at www.loisbrown.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.