

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
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Expanding Canada Student Grants

The Government of Canada is committed to making post-secondary education accessible to all, recognizing that education and training are key factors in building a strong economy and workforce. To this end, on April 7, 2015, Prime Minister Stephen Harper announced the Government's intention to expand eligibility for Canada Student Grants.

Beginning in 2016-2017, Canada Student Grants will be made available to qualifying low- and middle-income students enrolled in educational programs with a minimum duration of 34 weeks. Currently, students must be enrolled in an educational program with a minimum duration of 60 weeks to qualify.

This expansion will help approximately 42,000 additional students per year gain eligibility to Canada Student Grants. To support this expansion, the Government will be providing an estimated \$184 million over four years, beginning in 2016-2017, and approximately \$50 million per year on an ongoing basis thereafter.

Over \$10 billion annually is invested by the Government to support post-secondary education. Since 2006, the Government has taken significant action to help students access post-secondary education and training, including creating the Canada Student Grants Program in 2009. In 2012-2013, nearly 357,000 students received a total of \$695 million in Canada Student Grants.

Canada places at the top of the rankings of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in terms of post-secondary educational attainment, in part due to federal supports for students. Canada has one of the highest youth employment rates among its peers in the OECD.

Record year for tourism

Canada continues its reputation as one of the best places in the world to live, work and invest. 2014 was another strong year for the tourism industry in Canada. Overnight arrivals to Canada by non-residents reached 17.1 million, a year-over-year increase of more than 3 percent, or 537,600 tourists, and more than double the growth rate of tourists in 2013.

Tourism provides nearly 628,000 direct jobs, and tourism revenues in Canada reached \$88.5 billion last year. Travel and tourism is a highly competitive global industry and the Government of Canada will continue to do everything it can to increase legitimate trade and travel which, in turn, ensures economic growth and long-term prosperity here at home.

Coin Design Contest

The Royal Canadian Mint has announced a coin design contest for the 5-cent, 10-cent, 25-cent, one-dollar and two-dollar coins to be issued in 2017 - Canada's 150th anniversary. The contest is open until April 30th and there are five grand prizes to be won. Winning designs will be selected by Canadians online this September. I invite all talented artists in Newmarket-Aurora to submit their designs through www.mint.ca/canada150.

CRTC Consultation

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has launched a major proceeding to ensure that telecommunication services are meeting the changing needs of Canadians.

As the regulator of Canada's communications system, the Commission seeks to ensure that all Canadians have access to a world-class communications system and that they are able to participate in the digital economy. Given this, as well as the importance of telecommunications services to Canadians, the Commission is conducting a comprehensive review of its policies.

CRTC activities have an impact on all of us and I invite you to take advantage of this consultation by providing your feedback through crtc.gc.ca. Comments will be accepted until June 30, 2015.

Tax Free Savings Accounts

In 2009, the federal government introduced the tax-free savings account (TFSA) to allow Canadian residents who are 18 years of age or older with a valid Canadian social insurance number to set money aside tax-free during their lifetime. Contributions to a TFSA are not deductible for income tax purposes; however, any amount contributed as well as any income generated is tax-free

when withdrawn.

TFSAs benefit everyone and over 11 million Canadians have an account. 75% of them earn less than \$70,000 and 50% of account holders earn less than \$42,000 a year. Nearly 700,000 seniors earning less than \$22,000 have a Tax Free Savings Account. For more information, visit tfsa.gc.ca.

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.