

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
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Expanding Compassionate Care Benefits

The Government is committed to ensuring the Employment Insurance (EI) program remains responsive, fair, and flexible to labour market conditions, while continuing to support Canadians and their families when they need it most. Through Economic Action Plan 2015, the Government is enhancing EI compassionate care benefits (CCB) to provide additional financial security to Canadian workers and their families in times of need.

This measure, which will come into effect on January 3, 2016, will increase the number of weeks of CCB benefits from six to 26 weeks which can be taken within a one-year period (up from 6 months). These changes are another way that our Government is supporting families, particularly primary caregivers.

Support for Autism Research

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) is widely considered the fastest growing neurological disorder in Canada, impacting an estimated 1 in 68 children. It is a lifelong diagnosis that manifests itself in a wide-range of symptoms, including difficulty communicating, social impairments, and restricted and repetitive behaviour. Individuals with autism and their families face unique challenges over their lifespan, often leading to families in crisis situations. The Government recognizes these challenges and recognizes that Autism Spectrum Disorder is not just a health issue?it has overarching implications for Canadian society as a whole.

Economic Action Plan 2015 proposes to provide \$2.0 million in 2015?16 to create a working group, led by the Minister of Health, to consult with stakeholders on the development of a Canadian Autism Partnership that would address key issues such as information sharing and research, early detection, diagnosis and treatment, and supporting families.

The Government's record of support for individuals with autism includes providing \$100 million for the Canada Brain Research Fund, establishing a National Surveillance System to establish reliable data on Autism Spectrum Disorders, launching a Research Chair in Autism Spectrum Disorders Treatment and Care Research Program, and providing \$11.4 million to support the expansion of vocational training programs for individuals with ASDs.

Investing in Senior's Health

As Canada's population ages, age-related cognitive impairment and chronic conditions are becoming more prevalent. The burden on families is hard, and growing. By 2031, the number of people living with dementia is expected to hit 1.4 million. Research on aging and brain health issues such as dementia can lead to better diagnostic tools and more effective treatments. The result is happier and healthier lives for Canadians. That is why Economic Action Plan 2015 provides up to \$42 million to support the establishment of the Canadian Centre for Aging and Brain Health Innovation at Baycrest Health Sciences in Toronto. In addition to providing world-class geriatric health care, Baycrest is home to a leading academic health sciences centre, affiliated with the University of Toronto and collaborating with research institutions across North America.

New Horizons for Seniors Call for Proposals

The 2015?16 New Horizons for Seniors Program (NHSP) Call for Proposals for community based projects will be launched May 29. Organizations will be able to apply for funding for projects that encourage seniors to play an important role in their communities by volunteering, participating in and leading community activities. The program also provides funds to help organizations make necessary modifications or repairs to their existing facilities, or to purchase/replace equipment and furnishings to enable programs and activities for seniors. Details on how to apply will be available at esdc.gc.ca/eng/seniors/funding. As a result of actions taken by the Harper government since taking office in 2006, seniors across Canada are receiving over \$2.8 billion in annual tax relief.

Food Labelling Survey

The Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) is seeking feedback on proposed options to change food labels and the food labelling system. An online survey will be available at www.inspection.gc.ca/labelling until June 30, 2015.

This survey is the second phase of consultations for the CFIA's Food Labelling Modernization initiative. It presents specific options for comment, such as revising the format of best before dates, expanding food class names (i.e., "vegetable oil" or "flavour"), and

changing the required contact information for food dealers.

The Government of Canada is working to improve food labelling to help consumers make informed purchasing decisions and support an evolving food sector. I encourage you to make your opinions known by participating in this important consultation.

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