

MP holds local consultation ahead of Federal Budget



By Chris McGowan

MP Lois Brown hosted her annual pre-budget consultation again this year at the Aurora Cultural Centre last week.

Hosted every year since 2009, the focus, as always, is to encourage feedback from Aurora and Newmarket residents that she can take back to the Federal Government.

Brown stated that "The Canadian economy as a whole is in a very good position globally; we have an AAA credit rating.

She informed the audience that "Canada has created over one million net new jobs since 2009, most of which are full-time jobs, and are in the IT sector."

She also added, "the average Canadian family of four is paying \$3,200 less in taxes than they did in 2006. "We want to see what we can do to reduce taxes even more than they have been," she said. "We are on track to balance our budget."

Keeping this in mind, she asked the speakers that evening not to ask for "any big dollars" as the Government is trying to "restrain spending" to get to a balanced budget.

"We are moving in the right direction, but we still have more to do," said Ms. Brown. "We need to do things smarter. We are asking for people to make reasonable suggestions."

Questions she asked residents to consider were measures to strengthen the national economy in light of "global economic threats", low-cost or cost-neutral items that would aid economic recovery, more efficient and effective spending, and the encouragement of leadership and private sector growth in the Canadian economy.

This is what speakers at last week's meeting called for:

Judy Marshall, CEO, Aurora Chamber of Commerce

Changes to personal taxation: "The government needs to evaluate all credits, debits, and rebates with the purpose of eliminating those processes that are not achieving their intended purpose," Marshall said. "Through research, over one billion dollars could be saved over one year. This would include efficiencies to tax collection."

She suggested the Government should encourage employment within York Region, particularly in the area of new immigrants to Canada

Energy: Plans should be made to modernize Canada's electricity structure. Given the most recent ice storm, the damage and cost to homeowners and businesses as a result was staggering. This must be made a priority.

John Taylor Regional Councillor (Newmarket)

My ask is very specific said Taylor. The need for Rental Housing in York Region and across Canada needs to be addressed. The cost of living in York Region is rising, and York Region has the lowest rental supply in the GTA. Housing is a key driver for the economy and if people cannot find places to live in York Region, they will choose to live elsewhere.

Andrus Lawrence

Lawrence suggested the government needs to put more programs and money into encouraging entrepreneurship and mentorship as well as start up companies involving high tech in York Region. This would generate jobs.

Chris Holbrook

Holbrook was concerned about the unemployment figures amongst well- educated young Canadians. We need to make sure our young people get jobs, and not just low paying jobs.

David Kempton

Kempton expressed his concerns about the government's lack of involvement in environmental issues, such as, fracking for oil, using high-pressured water and chemicals, and suggested that we as Canadians have become oil junkies?. He also suggested that we need to make conscious decisions about using energy wisely.

Peggy Stevens

The issue she brought forward was the concern for the way the budget is reported. There needs to be more clarity and understanding around the use of omnibus accounts.