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MPs receive Federal Budget feedback at local conversation

Aurora's Members of Parliament ? Sandra Cobena and Costas Menegakis ? got feedback from residents on the 2025 Federal Budget at a forum hosted at the Aurora Cultural Centre on Saturday morning.

The forum was convened just days after the Federal Government presented its long-awaited financial blueprint in the House of Commons, one which was touted as an investment in the future and one that address uncertainties resulting from ongoing trade disputes with the United States.

The Budget, said Prime Minister Mark Carney, confronts the challenges of global trade ?head on.?

?Budget 2025 is about building Canada strong: investing in our people, our ideas, and our industries,? he said in a statement. ?We're ushering in a new economic strategy to supercharge growth and give businesses the confidence to invest. We will enable $1 trillion in total investments in five years ? to give ourselves more than any country could ever take away.?

The budget includes $280 billion in capital investments over the next five years, which the Government says will ?mobilize more than $1 trillion in total investment from public, private, and institutional partners.?

?As these investments are realized, they will drive creation, faster growth, and stronger revenues to sustain social programs that help Canadians get ahead,? said the Federal government.

Cobena, Newmarket-Aurora's Conservative MP, however, says Canada's deficit and debt remain top of mind given what was presented last week.

?We wanted to go out into the community to bring the budget and also just be available for questions because, of course, this budget comes a year-and-a-half after the last one was tabled and there has been so much anticipation,? she says. ?Having the financial background, this is right up my alley, so I was very excited to just have a roundtable and just have a discussion on finance.

?My concern, of course, is the deficit and the debt. Those two numbers are big. We know now that the deficit is roughly $78.3 billion, if all the assumptions come to be. But we know already that is not going to be the case. The Prime Minister is looking to buy submarines that are expected to cost about $100 billion for the lives of the submarines and that was not included in the budget. When we look at the deficit and the debt specifically, the numbers are astronomical. The debt is $1.3 trillion. The number is so big. This budget adds $324 billion of debt and that is particularly concerning because it is essentially handing every Canadian family a $20,000 credit card and saying, ?Good luck, you pay for it.' That has direct implications for our youth.?

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Youth, she says, are ?particularly impacted? right now when it comes to affordability, housing, and job opportunities.

This was a point that was highlighted Saturday by one attendee who said his daughter spent all summer trying to pin down a job, but without any luck.

?I knew there was a lot of things going through his mind because I could see it in his eyes. When we opened it up for a question-and-answer, he stood up and was very, very upset,? she recalls. ?He said, ?I honestly just feel with this budget not presenting a clear path, a clear solution for them, I just want to tell my kids to go to another country. I'm just so frustrated.' [In the last election] there were a lot of people who were on the fence in terms of who to support. They trusted that the Prime Minister and his experience would lead to a budget that was more fiscally responsible, but with actual opportunities for today to address the crisis that we have today ? not so abstract and so long-term and hinging on a number of assumptions.?

As she heads back to Ottawa next week, Cobena says she will continue to advocate on budget clarity and for residents and businesses alike.

?Big businesses are important, but when we talk about the economy, it's that mid-market, it's small and medium-sized enterprises that create the jobs that create the wealth, and they are not being exempt from the rules, clearly,? she says, referencing some rule exemptions for big projects. ?There's not a real plan for them. With those businesses, they're not cash rich enough to be able to lobby the government, hire expensive lobbyists, expensive accountants to help them find loopholes in taxes so they can reduce their expenses?.

?They are the ones that are being disproportionately impacted?. They're still struggling, they're still having to deal with mountains of regulation; some regulation is necessary, but the problem is you've got a government that just has a new idea, a new regulation, another one, another one, and that's why we see the delays that we do.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter