

MP's REPORT: What Are Your Federal Priorities?

By Leona Alleslev, MP

Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill

August is the time when you invite me into your businesses, your homes, you stop me in the grocery store or at the community pool and take the time to share with me what you think are the federal priorities facing Canada. I take these conversations very seriously and wanted to highlight what many in our community have told me our country's priorities should be:

1) Tax Reform - The history of Canada's tax system is long and complex, but there have been points in history when Canadians have demanded tax reform because they felt it was not a fair system for everyone. The last comprehensive review of Canada's tax system was arguably Diefenbaker's 1962 Royal Commission on Taxation. Since then, the makeup of society and the nature of work has changed significantly, and our Federal tax system should reflect the needs of today. Canadians are feeling that our tax system is not fair or balanced and when we think the way the government is treating us on things like taxes is not fair then we start to lose confidence in other things our government is doing. But fixing the tax system must be more than tinkering with one tax bracket or one tax incentive. Many of you have told me that we must address the real challenges in our tax structure with a fundamental complete tax review.

2) Dealing with Government Services - Many community members have repeatedly told me how frustrating it is to deal with the federal government. Whether it is calling Revenue Canada for help at tax time and not getting through to a service representative or dealing with a death in the family and having to contact multiple different government departments and relay the same information each time, or going through the rigorous process of gaining citizenship or visa applications where multiple phone calls, mailing of documents and following up still doesn't resolve the problem. The clear message I have heard from you is that ensuring that the federal government delivers the right standard of service to meet the needs of Canadians must be priority.

3) Canada on the World Stage - Many conversations I have had with you have centred around Canada's approach to defence and international relations. You have told me that you are proud that Canada is once again engaged on the world stage but that you now want the federal government to translate that into concrete actions. You want Canada to enhance and strengthen our critical trade agreements with the US, Europe and the commonwealth. You also want to see Canada stand as a sovereign nation and deliver on its commitments to both its citizens and its allies by having a military that is equipped and trained to meet the threats of our time from cyber security, to incursions in the North, to international terrorism and threats to the safety and security of our allies. You have asked me to ensure that our government spends at least what we have budgeted for on defence while also outlining a plan to meet and strengthen our trade and defence, and NORAD and NATO alliance commitments.

These are the three main concerns I have heard on many occasions from you, your neighbours, and others in our community. As your representative in Ottawa, I know that you have entrusted me to ensure that our government understands these concerns and makes it a priority to implement solutions to address them.

I would like to wish you and your families a wonderful August and rest of the summer, and I encourage you to continue to stop and talk to me when you see me out and about in the community and make sure that I remain connected to the things you think should be our priority for Canada and Canadians.

As always, please feel free to contact me by e-mail: Leona.Alleslev@parl.gc.ca, phone: (905) 773-8358, or drop by my office at 12820 Yonge St., suite 202 in Richmond Hill. My team and I are always here to help.