

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

MPs will soon be returning to Ottawa as Parliament gears up for a new session beginning January 27.

There will be much to do as we look forward to a new budget and continued work on initiatives such as cyberbullying legislation, expansion of trade and support for communities.

All eyes may soon be on Ottawa; however, work that is just as important - if not more so - will continue in MP constituency offices across the country, just as it does each and every day, including here in Newmarket-Aurora.

For example, in the first half of January alone, my office has read and responded to thousands of emails, hundreds of phone calls and dozens of letters. I have held 42 meetings with constituents on issues ranging from mail delivery to economic development to electoral reform including those with municipal leaders, business owners, students, families, retirees, chambers of commerce and the Mental Health Commission of Canada.

Thus far in 2014, I have hosted a successful pre-budget consultation meeting, spoken to an enthusiastic group of girl guides, attended two Chambers of Commerce networking breakfasts, hosted the Minister responsible for the Economic Development Agency of Southern Ontario in the riding, toured the Communitech Hub in Kitchener, participated in a roundtable on advanced manufacturing, attended community fundraising events, met with the leadership at Southlake Regional Health Centre and held a New Citizens Tea.

My staff have met with many more constituents on specific problems including those related to immigration, taxes, and pensions. Constituency work rarely gets the media attention, but it is the bread and butter of every MP. Residents may be surprised to know of the diversity of issues handled by my office. For example, early last week a senior contacted my office, as a last resort, for help as a result of an alternative energy provider's sales tactics.

The constituent felt he was bullied into accepting a maintenance program for his furnace. Being a senior on a fixed income, he could not afford the monthly bill but felt he had to accept the agreement so that the company would cease pestering him.

His many subsequent calls to the company ever since to cancel this unwanted service, had proved unsuccessful. While technically not a federal issue, I instruct my staff to help anyone asking for assistance, in any way they can, and this was no exception. In this instance, my office persisted with the company in question until a senior management person was reached.

The result - a cancellation of the unwanted maintenance program for the constituent and a refund for three months of the unwanted service.

In another instance, we recently received a call from the employer of a constituent who had unexpectedly passed away. The constituent's family desperately wanted their grandmother to come to Canada from Nairobi for the funeral. We were able to facilitate the processing of the visa that enabled the grandmother to join her family in their time of grieving.

As another example: A local business fell into difficulty with bureaucratic paperwork at a critical time in the execution of an international contract. Just days before their goods were scheduled to be shipped overseas, an unintended loophole in legislation surfaced that threatened to put a hold on the shipment.

I was able to work with the appropriate Minister and his staff, to rectify the situation in time for the goods to be delivered on time, as scheduled.

These three examples highlight the variety of issues that my office deals with every day. Whether you need help with a personal issue or complex business problem, or just need advice, as your Member of Parliament for Newmarket-Aurora, I and my office stand ready to assist. If we cannot help directly, we will steer you in the right direction.

What your MP office can do for you:

Assist you in dealing with any federal department

Provide celebratory greetings for significant birthdays, anniversaries or special occasions

Attend your community event

Arrange tickets for Question Period or tours of Parliament Hill

Table petitions

Provide Canada pins and flags for special visitors or trips abroad

Respond to questions on any federal issue

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.