

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Moving ahead on Economic Action Plan 2014

Economic Action Plan 2014 Act, No. 1, has been introduced in the House of Commons. This key legislation marks the next chapter in keeping our promises to Canadians: returning to budget balance in 2015, promoting jobs and economic growth, and supporting families and communities. The Act supports families and communities by:

- ? Encouraging competition and lower prices in the telecommunications market by capping wholesale domestic wireless roaming rates.
- ? Introducing a Search and Rescue Volunteers Tax Credit.
- ? Increasing the maximum amount of the Adoption Expense Tax Credit to \$15,000 to help make adoption more affordable for Canadian families.
- ? Exempting acupuncturists' and naturopathic doctors' professional services from the Goods and Services Tax/Harmonized Sales Tax.
- ? Expanding the list of eligible expenses under the Medical Expense Tax Credit to include costs associated with service animals that are specially trained to assist individuals with severe diabetes, such as diabetes alert dogs, as well as amounts paid for the design of an eligible individualized therapy plan.
- ? Enhancing access to Employment Insurance sickness benefits for claimants who receive Parents of Critically Ill Children and Compassionate Care benefits.

Since the government first introduced its Economic Action Plan to respond to the global recession, Canada has recovered more than all of the output and all of the jobs lost during the recession. Employment has increased by over 1 million and is over 600,000 above its pre-recession peak?the strongest job growth among Group of Seven (G-7) countries over the recovery. Almost 90 per cent of all jobs created since July 2009 are full-time positions, close to 85 per cent are in the private sector and over two-thirds are in high-wage industries.

Fair Elections Act

The Fair Elections Act has been introduced to protect the fairness of federal elections.

The elimination of vouching and use of the Voter Information Card as a valid identification are key measures contained in the Act. Vouching occurs when an elector with identification attests that they know another person who does not have identification, thereby enabling that person to vote.

It runs solely on the honour system and is therefore open to error or fraud. Studies commissioned by Elections Canada demonstrate mass irregularities in the use of vouching and high rates of inaccuracy on Voter Information Cards. A report relating to administrative deficiencies at the polls in the 2011 election revealed that vouching procedures were so complex that irregularities occurred in 25% of cases where vouching was used.

At the same time, Elections Canada has identified that 1 out of 6 electors may get a Voter Information Card with the wrong address. Each time someone votes fraudulently, they cancel out the ballot of an honest voter. The Fair Elections Act will end vouching; and require in law that Elections Canada communicate what forms of ID will be accepted at polling locations so that voters will know before they head to the polls what they will need to bring.

I believe that the right to vote is too precious to have it open to the potential of abuse. With a total of 39 forms of authorized ID to choose from, these changes will serve to strengthen the integrity of the election process and ensure fairness to all.

New Building Canada Fund Open for Business

The New Building Canada Fund is fully open for business. A key element of the \$53 billion New Building Canada Plan, the Fund supports infrastructure projects of national, regional and local significance that promote job creation, economic growth, and productivity. The Small Communities Fund, included in the New Building Canada Fund, will be of specific help to Newmarket and Aurora. I look forward to working with both municipalities to ensure we take full advantage of the \$1 billion set aside for this component that is specifically earmarked for municipalities with fewer than 100,000 residents.

Volunteer Recognition Certificate Program

Volunteers are an integral component of a healthy and vibrant community. Indeed more than 13 million Canadian volunteers contribute over 2 billion volunteer hours each year, building and maintaining resilient communities at home and around the world. In acknowledgement of the valuable contributions of our community's volunteers, I am once again offering my Newmarket-Aurora Volunteer Recognition Certificate program. Organizations and community groups can nominate their volunteers to receive a special certificate from their Member of Parliament in recognition of their efforts to improve the lives of others. If you would like to nominate your volunteers, contact my office for more information or download the nomination form at www.loisbrown.ca.

Free Community Income Tax Clinic

My Community Income Tax Clinic, held in partnership with the Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) continues until April 11. This confidential clinic is free for modest-income individuals. For more information or to book an appointment, please call 905-953-7515 or email Lois.Brown@parl.gc.ca.

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.