

# OTTAWA REPORT

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## Federal Funding for Aurora

The Harper Government has announced the renewal of the Gas Tax Fund to provide predictable, stable funding for public infrastructure. As a result, Aurora will receive more than \$8 million in federal funding over the next five years for local infrastructure projects and improvements.

The federal Gas Tax Fund provides municipalities with the flexibility to choose and plan infrastructure projects based on their specific priorities. The fund is a permanent source of funding for municipalities. It is predictable, long-term and stable, and is helping municipal governments address their infrastructure needs while improving environmental sustainability and creating jobs and economic growth.

Since 2006, our government has extended, doubled, indexed and made permanent, the Gas Tax Fund.

## Public Consultations on Labelling

Canada's Health Minister, Rona Ambrose, is seeking input into the proposed changes to the way nutrition information is presented on labels.

The proposed changes are to the format of the Nutrition Facts table, the list of ingredients, the list of nutrients that must appear in the table, and to the Daily Values. It also includes changing how ingredients are listed, including grouping sugars together, so parents and consumers have a clearer picture of how much sugar is added to the food and the label is easier to read.

The overall goal is to provide Canadians with the nutrition information they need to make informed decisions about the foods they buy and prepare for themselves and their families. The results of this current series of consultations will help inform the decisions about changes to nutrition labelling. Canada is a world leader in the field of nutrition labelling and was one of the first countries to require mandatory nutrition labelling on pre-packaged foods.

I invite you to provide your feedback online at [www.hc-sc.gc.ca](http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca). The consultations will run until September 11, 2014

## Paper Bill Fees

The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has announced an upcoming meeting with telecommunications and broadcasting distribution companies to discuss the practice of charging additional fees to customers who wish to receive paper bills. The CRTC has also released the results of its fact-finding exercise on these practices in response to our government's request to look into this issue.

CRTC has found a wide variation in how companies approach paper bill fees. Certain companies provide exemptions to these fees, such as for customers who do not have Internet access, but there is no consistent practice across the industry. The CRTC is concerned that the approach taken by the industry in the transition from paper to electronic bills may not have taken into account the specific circumstances of some Canadians.

The meeting will be led by the CRTC's Vice-Chairs of Broadcasting and Telecommunications. Participants will be expected to come up with a clear and predictable approach to paper bill fees, if any, as well as exemptions for any such fees. This will ensure that you have the information you need to make informed decisions.

## Honey Bee Research

Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz has announced an investment of \$1 million to initiate a four-year-nation-wide surveillance project to document the health profile of honey bee colonies in Canada.

The aim of the project is to record the nature, extent and prevalence of diseases, pest organisms and chemical residues in Canadian apiaries. To date, surveillance of this nature has been done at the regional level, and the sector is seeking to expand coordination and identify commonalities nationally on the health of bees. This baseline information is essential in regional colony health management practices and will identify exotic organisms before they establish themselves within Canadian bee populations.

## Lowering Wireless Prices

The 2014 Wall report on wireless prices has been released. It confirms that wireless prices continue their downward trend in an environment of increased competition; falling 22 percent since 2008 when the Harper government first announced its goal to lower wireless prices for consumers. Actions to achieve this goal include:

- ? announcing the AWS-3 spectrum auction and its plan to set aside spectrum for operating new entrants;
- ? recently passing legislation to cap wholesale roaming rates on Canadian networks to prevent wireless providers from impeding competition;
- ? concluding the 700 MHz spectrum auction, which increased competition and generated \$5.27 billion in revenue;
- ? strengthening rules requiring carriers to share cell towers to facilitate competition;
- ? enforcing a "use it or lose it" policy for spectrum use to ensure that wireless companies use their spectrum licences for the benefit of consumers;
- ? enabling access to spectrum for new entrants in spectrum auctions;
- ? committing to introduce enforcement measures to increase consumer protection.

We will continue to stand up for consumer choice and competition in Canada's wireless sector.

If you would like to contact me on any issue, please call 905-953-7515 or visit my website at [www.loisbrown.ca](http://www.loisbrown.ca). I look forward to hearing from you.