

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Price Transparency Act

The unexplained and often significant price gap between Canadian and U.S. prices for the same products is a frustrating and all too familiar reality for any Canadian who has ever shopped online or travelled to the United States.

Experts estimate that Canadians pay between 10 to 25 % more than Americans for many identical goods. Some components of those price differences are justified ? the exchange rate, price of fuel, and product safety standards are all factors outside of our control. However, sometimes the difference in price is because of geographic price discrimination.

That is why we have tabled the Price Transparency Act, which provides the Competition Commissioner with the tools necessary to investigate alleged cases of price discrimination and publicly report to Canadians situations where consumers are unfairly targeted with higher prices.

This is another step our Government is taking in order to help put more money back into the pockets of Canadians.

The truth about Services for Veterans

Recent media reports are suggesting that Veterans Affairs has reduced its services for veterans by eliminating front-line positions.

The assertion is absolutely false. We are reducing back-office expenses while increasing front-line services for Veterans.

Examples of these back-office reductions include the amalgamation of all the ministerial reporting units in Veterans Affairs into one, resulting in the elimination of 50 to 75 positions across various program areas.

Other administrative reductions include those related to the Veterans Independent Program. Since Veterans Affairs stopped requiring veterans to submit receipts in order to be reimbursed for expenses like snow clearing, yard maintenance, and home cleaning, eighty clerical positions in this program became redundant.

In the Disability Benefit Program, 12 photocopy and processing clerks were reduced when we moved to digitized medical records. In the Service Delivery Branch, re-organization of three regional management centres into one in Montreal reduced hundreds of managers, processing analyst and administrative support clerks. Reducing bureaucratic expenses while increasing front line support services is just simply common sense.

The reality is we have increased benefits and investments for Veterans by more than \$4.7 billion since 2006. We are also making it easier for veterans and their families to access the services they are entitled to.

Through our enhanced service delivery, more that 2.4 million phone calls, letters, forms, and emails between veterans and the government have been eliminated since 2013. These are just some of the ways that we are better meeting the needs of our veterans.

Cracking Down on Online Crime

Bill C-13, the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act, has been given Royal Assent. The legislation will give police the modernized tools they need to protect Canadians, in particular children and youth, from acts of cyberbullying. The Bill will:

Prohibit the non-consensual distribution of intimate images;

Empower a court to order the removal of intimate images from the Internet;

Permit the court to order forfeiture of the computer, cell phone or other device used in the offence;

Provide for reimbursement to victims for costs incurred in removing the intimate image from the Internet; and

Empower the court to make an order to prevent someone from distributing intimate images.

In addition to this legislation, the government earlier this year launched an anti-cyberbullying national awareness campaign, Stop Hating Online, to raise awareness of the impact of cyberbullying and how this behaviour amounts to criminal activity.

The website canada.ca/StopHatingOnline, is a comprehensive resource for parents and youth that includes information, advice and tools needed to identify, prevent and stop cyberbullying. The government is also supporting the development of a number of school-based projects to prevent bullying, including cyberbullying, as part of \$10 million in funding through Public Safety Canada that was committed in 2012 towards new crime prevention projects.

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.