

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Economic Growth Continues

The Canadian economy grew 2.5 per cent in the first quarter of 2013, the strongest quarterly growth in nearly two years! This solid economic performance, the seventh straight quarter of positive growth, is another sign Canada's economy remains on the right track. The over 900,000 net new jobs created in Canada since the depth of the global recession (over 90% full-time and nearly 75% private sector) represents the best job growth record in the entire G-7.

Fixing the Senate

When our Conservative government was elected in 2006, one of the pillars of our party's platform was senate reform. Once elected, we attempted to start that process. We brought forward a bill that would limit the terms for senators to eight years. Unfortunately, the Liberals and NDP have voted this bill down, not once, but seven times.

When Canadians gave our party a majority mandate in 2011, we began the Senate Reform process again, but this time, we not only wanted to set term limits, we also wanted to look at an elected Senate, and possibly, abolishing the Senate. These actions, however, may have violated the Constitution of Canada, so the questions of Senate reform were referred to the Supreme Court of Canada for legal and constitutional advice.

In the time that it has taken to do this, seven years now, the Prime Minister has had to replace Senators that retired. Appointments were made to ensure our legislative agenda could go forward through the Senate and the appointed Conservative Senators were clearly advised that we were going to reform the terms of their jobs.

Each has signed an agreement to vote for term limits. Our government will make these changes for Canadians as soon as possible. In the meanwhile, new rules around Senate expenses have been passed. Eleven new measures will provide transparency and accountability by making the rules crystal clear and adding strict limitations for eligible claims.

It was this current government that put in place the Federal Accountability Act. This Act allows the Auditor General (AG) to follow all taxpayer money and ensure accountability and transparency. Never before could an AG audit Crown Corporations (Canada Post, CBC, and Atomic Energy Canada), First Nations' Bands, MPs and Senators. The fact we have uncovered the current cases of inappropriate expense claims by a few members of the Senate, means the new oversight is working.

New Super Credit

The First-Time Donor's Super Credit, a new initiative contained in Economic Action Plan 2013, will significantly enhance the attractiveness of donating to a charity for young and new Canadians who are in a position to make donations for the first time. The credit, which increases the existing credit by 25 percentage points to 40 per cent, will apply on cash donations of up to \$1,000 claimed in any one taxation year from 2013 to 2017. Only donations of money that are made after March 20, 2013 will qualify for the new Super Credit. For taxation years from 2013 to 2017, a new line will be added to Schedule 9, Donations and Gifts to identify the eligible portion of the charitable donations that you have claimed that are donations of money.

Ensuring value for taxpayers

A new mandatory system for tracking employee performance and boosting productivity in the federal public service has been announced. The directive calls for consistency in how employee performance is managed and how employees' skills are developed. Evaluation techniques in the new performance management regime, common in the private sector, will finally be applied to the federal public service. Complacency and the status quo are not an option. Either poor performers improve and become productive employees or they will be let go. Canadians expect nothing less in return for their hard earned tax dollars.

If you would like to contact me on these or any other issue, please call 905-953-7515, or visit my website at www.loisbrown.ca. I look forward to hearing from you.