

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Expanding benefits for injured Veterans

Veterans Affairs Minister Erin O'Toole has announced two new initiatives to improve benefits and services for Canada's Veterans and their families.

The first is an expansion of the Eligibility for the Permanent Impairment Allowance (PIA). The PIA provides life-long monthly financial support to Veterans whose employment potential and career advancement opportunities have been limited by a permanent service-related injury or illness. The change will expand the number of Veterans eligible by being less restrictive about the requirements relating to their ability to independently carry out most daily activities.

The second is a proposed new Family Caregiver Relief Benefit that will recognize the vital contribution of informal caregivers who are most often family members to the health and well-being of seriously injured Veterans, by providing an annual tax-free grant of \$7,238.

Both initiatives are in addition to other improvements for Veterans that include the Retirement Income Security Benefit that would ensure that an eligible Veteran's total annual income is at least 70% of what he or she received in financial benefits from VAC before age 65; proposed increases to the Earnings Loss Benefit for part-time Reserve Force Veterans; and investments in new and expanded mental health initiatives for Veterans, serving military members and their families.

The Government of Canada will continue to ensure that Veterans and their families in Newmarket-Aurora and across the country, have the support they need, and are treated with care, compassion and respect.

Funding available to help local businesses boost exports

The Government of Canada has announced a number of measures to assist small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) seize opportunities abroad as part of the Government's pro-jobs and pro-export plan.

A new export market development program will provide direct financial assistance to entrepreneurs seeking to develop new export opportunities and markets, especially in high-growth emerging markets. These initiatives will be particularly helpful in helping Newmarket and Aurora businesses to finance activities such as participation in trade fairs and missions, and market research to create new business opportunities. Between 500 and 1,000 exporters across the country are expected to receive funding from the program each year.

The Canadian Trade Commissioner Service (TCS) will also receive new staffing and programming resources to further assist Canadians doing business with the world. The TCS has more than 160 trade offices in Canada and around the world to help provide export advice and guidance to entrepreneurs.

This new funding builds on the Government's commitment to encourage and support entrepreneurship by connecting them with the tools and resources they need to succeed.

Legislation to Crack Down on Cyberbullying Comes into Force

I am pleased to announce that the Protecting Canadians from Online Crime Act is now in force. The new legislation helps ensure that Canadians are better protected against online exploitation by helping to protect young Canadians from cyberbullying and to stand up for victims.

It is now an offence to share an intimate image without the consent of the person in the image. New measures will empower a court to: order the removal of intimate images from the Internet; 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 or elsewhere; and make an order to prevent someone from distributing intimate images.

The new legislation provides police with the necessary means to investigate crime in today's high-tech environment while maintaining judicial checks and balances to protect Canadians' privacy.

Enabling Accessibility Fund accepting proposals

The 2015 Enabling Accessibility Fund (EAF) Call for Proposals for community-based projects is open. The program supports the capital costs of construction and renovations related to improving physical accessibility and safety for people with disabilities in Canadian communities and workplaces. Proposals can involve a wide variety of projects; however, priority will be given to projects

that enhance access for children with disabilities, Veterans with disabilities or seniors with disabilities.

Examples of eligible projects could include building accessible playgrounds for children with disabilities, widening hallways and doorways, installing elevators and automated power doors, installing accessible washrooms and service counters or upgrading facilities that offer programs for adults and/or children with autism and other cognitive/intellectual impairments.

Under this call for proposals, organizations can receive a grant of up to \$50,000. The deadline for submissions is April 27, 2015.

Since the creation of the EAF in 2007, our Government has funded over 1,800 projects helping thousands of Canadians gain better access to their communities' facilities, programs and services.

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.