

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Federal funding for community infrastructure

Each year, the federal Gas Tax Fund assists municipalities by providing funding for local infrastructure projects. The federal government understands that by building stronger communities and modernizing and developing our infrastructure, we are creating jobs and opportunities and building a better Canada for future generations.

Since 2007, our government has made many significant improvements to provide long-term, stable infrastructure funding to Canadian communities through the Gas Tax Program:

- o In 2007 it was extended through its original program end date to 2014,
- o In 2008 it was doubled from \$1 billion to \$2 billion annually,
- o In 2011 it was legislated as a permanent source of funding,
- o In 2013 it was indexed at 2% per year, and
- o In 2014 it was made more flexible with the addition of 11 categories.

The federal Gas Tax Fund is flexible, allowing communities to choose projects locally and prioritize them according to their needs. Reliable, up-front funding provides greater certainty for municipalities to plan and carry out projects.

This year, Newmarket and Aurora received over \$3.8 million through the fund. Gas tax funded projects include numerous local road reconstruction and drainage improvement projects, replacement of deteriorated watermains and service connections, sanitary sewer repairs, and installation of curbs and sidewalks; improvements that we all appreciate each and every day.

Over the next ten years close to \$22 billion in gas tax funding will flow to communities across the country. By enshrining these commitments in legislation, provinces, territories and municipalities are assured of an ongoing funding stream to address their municipal infrastructure needs and priorities.

National standards for Veterans' service dogs

Erin O'Toole, Minister of Veterans Affairs, has announced that national standards will be set for service dogs which assist Veterans with mental health conditions such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

National standards will help to ensure consistency across the country for psychiatric service dogs. A constant companion, these dogs can help their owner manage many common symptoms of PTSD, and guide them away from stressful situations. They can also provide physical support if their owner loses his or her balance.

The Government of Canada is committed to supporting research to achieve better outcomes for Veterans with PTSD and other mental health conditions. This is another example of the work being done to better serve Veterans and their families who are living with mental health conditions.

Public Consultation on Lyme Disease

The Government of Canada has launched a consultation process to support the development of a Federal Framework on Lyme Disease. This consultation will solicit perspectives from the medical community, governments, patients' groups, as well as individual Canadians.

The Public Health Agency of Canada's current Action Plan on Lyme Disease will serve as a platform for the development of the Federal Framework. It aims to mitigate the risks to Canadians posed by Lyme disease through three pillars: engagement, education and awareness; surveillance, prevention and control; and research and diagnosis.

Lyme disease is a serious emerging infectious disease in many parts of Canada and is caused by the bite of blacklegged ticks infected with the bacterium *Borrelia burgdorferi*. Populations of blacklegged ticks are growing meaning that the risk of contracting Lyme disease is on the rise across Canada. The Government of Canada has invested close to \$5 million for Lyme disease research since 2006. In 2014, the Agency launched a public awareness campaign to educate and raise awareness among the general public and health care providers.

Stakeholders and the public are invited to participate in the online consultation at:

http://surveys-sondages.hc-sc.gc.ca/s/lyme_disease-maladie_de_lyme/?l=en. Comments will be accepted until June 30, 2015.

HEADS UP

Parliament will continue debating important pieces of legislation including Bill C-59, Economic Action Plan 2015, No. 1 which contains many essential measures such as the family tax cut, enhancements to the universal child care benefit, and a reduction to the small business income tax; Bill C-35, Justice for Animals in Service Act (Quanto's Law), an important bill which would ensure appropriate criminal penalties for killing or harming police animals and other service animals; and Bill S-7, Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act, which demonstrates our government's commitment to end violence against women and girls.

Lois Brown is the Member of Parliament for Newmarket-Aurora and Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of International Development. She can be reached by phone at 905-953-7515 or through her website at www.loisbrown.ca