

OTTAWA REPORT

By Lois Brown, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

Supporting and honouring our Veterans through the Last Post Fund

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm our government's full support for a program that is very important to Canadian veterans and their families, the Last Post Fund.

Canada owes an obligation to the men and women we place in harm's way. Every year, the Last Post Fund helps the families of veterans through a profoundly difficult and emotional time in their lives. In the past year, the funeral and burial program assisted more than 1,300 families. This is an obligation that transcends politics and one that has been met by our government and, indeed, by previous governments.

The government's most recent budget, Economic Action Plan 2013, increased the coverage of funerals from \$3,600 to \$7,376. This level had not been adjusted in many years. As outlined in our latest main estimates, the Government of Canada is planning to spend almost \$785 million more in Veterans Affairs compared to when we took office, which was the last year before the New Veterans' Charter was implemented. This is the most support for Veterans ever provided in Canada's 146-year history.

Simplifying the program for Veterans' estates, creating the Office of the Veterans Ombudsman, establishing a Veterans' bill of rights, expanding the Veterans' independence program and restoring benefits for Canada's allied Veterans, are just some of the other improvements we have made for those who have served their country.

Making Drug Labels Easier to Read

The recently launched Plain Language Labelling Initiative will improve the safe use of drugs by making drug labels and packaging information easier to read and understand.

Every day, millions of Canadians rely on drugs to maintain and improve their health, but confusing, technical drug labels can lead to overdoses or other complications. It is a fact that 1 in 9 emergency rooms visits are related to drug adverse events, and as many as 68% of those are preventable. The new rules will allow health professionals, patients and consumers to more easily find out how to use the drug, how often to take it, and when it should not be taken.

Reducing Poverty and Promoting Global Prosperity

Canada is committed to assisting developing countries to harness their potential and create economies where people can lift themselves out of poverty. Government assistance alone however, is not enough. In the 1960s, official development assistance represented more than 70 percent of total financial flows into developing countries. Today, it accounts for less than 15 percent. Private flows, including foreign direct investment, portfolio equity and remittances, are now leading the way.

This is why Canada is supporting non-governmental organizations who partner with the extractive industry to leverage their resources for the benefit of local communities. Our assistance is not conditional on mining contracts or any other specific commercial interest for that matter. We are relentlessly focused on every ethical and effective avenue that makes a positive difference on the ground. In fact, it was our government that fully untied Canada's food assistance, removing conditional barriers to food distribution. This meant that food crops could be sourced where they are most cost-effective, and efficient to transport.

It is no secret that the world is shifting: developing countries are now leading global economic growth. While this is reason for optimism, challenges still exist. The links between extreme poverty in the developing world and insecurity are clear. There is a greater need, in this context, to maximize the tools Canada has available to it. This is also why we elevated the position of development, placing it on an equal footing with trade and diplomacy. Canada's Economic Action Plan 2013, for the first time, enshrines the mandate of international development and humanitarian assistance into law. The new Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development will ensure that Canada speaks with one voice.

Canada has, and will continue to maximize finite taxpayer dollars to make a tangible difference in the lives of those most in need around the world. We will continue to support developing countries' efforts to create free markets, and stable business environments that enable long-lasting results. By combining our strengths, we can modernize traditional forms of assistance, and find new ways to help people pull themselves out of poverty.

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.