

Prime Minister kicks off budget talks in Newmarket-Aurora



By Brock Weir

The countdown is on for the 2014 Federal Budget and Prime Minister Stephen Harper started the clock here in Newmarket-Aurora on Thursday.

Accompanied by Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown, Mr. Harper held an economic roundtable at Newmarket's Canadian Plastics Group. The visit was dual purpose ? to give local manufacturers from around York Region and the Greater Toronto Area the opportunity to weigh in on their concerns in advance of the budget, but also talk about the opportunity to break into new markets in Europe.

?This is the first of our meetings across the country, the kick-off of hundreds of meetings with myself, Ministers, Members of Parliament and others on pre-budget consultations for our Economic Action Plan for 2014,? said Mr. Harper.

?We will continue to have as our focus jobs, growth and long-term prosperity. Canada continues to do reasonably well and Canadians feel reasonably good, but we are continuing [to live] in a very uncertain world.?

He added over the weeks ahead, his team would be hearing a range of ideas from a variety of participants in the context of their ?determination to balance the budget over the next couple of years? and make sure Canada's ?advantageous fiscal position? is secured in the long term.

The Prime Minister's was the latest economic push in the riding, following a roundtable held earlier in November with Ms. Brown to introduce the Canada European Trade Agreement (CETA).

Whether curious, excited, or armed with questions and concerns, businesses leaders from Aurora and Newmarket gathered November 14 to learn more about breaking into the European market.

?I really want to bring people together to talk about the new CETA agreement that we signed,? Ms. Brown told The Auroran. ?It is a framework agreement for us to go forward on a free trade agreement with Europe. We know it is going to offer opportunities for jobs across Canada.?

An estimated 80,000 ? 100,000 new jobs will be created through the plan, she added, also paving the way for access to ?half a billion people? in Europe, each and every one of them potential new customers.

?We are going to have access to new things from Europe and I can't wait to get French fashion here at North American prices!? Ms. Brown joked.

?The more opportunities we can have for business, the better we all are. People are excited for this agreement. This is better than the North American Free Trade Agreement and this is the biggest free trade agreement we have ever signed. It's just the fact we are accessing an enormous new place to sell our own products means that our companies are the ones who are going to be benefiting from this.?