

Throne speech gets mixed reviews



By Brock Weir

This is 'Canada's Moment', and it is time for Canadians to seize it.

That is the vision shared by Prime Minister Stephen Harper and Newmarket-Aurora MP Lois Brown in the wake of Wednesday's 2013 throne speech.

The Throne Speech, which provides a blueprint for the Federal Government's direction for the coming year, was good news to Aurora, according to Ms. Brown, who underscored its focus on jobs and growth. Still basking in the free trade deal reached between Canada and the European Union last week, Ms. Brown said this deal creates '500 million new consumers' for every Canadian business.

'We have businesses in Newmarket-Aurora who are doing business overseas and they want to know they have those opportunities,' Ms. Brown tells *The Auran*. 'It is going to create jobs for 80,000 people in Canada, and when we look at some of the jobs we have in Aurora, it is going to increase opportunities right here.'



Prospective Aurora Liberal candidates Jason Cherniak (Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill) and Kyle Peterson (Newmarket-Aurora), met up at Cherniak's campaign launch at Jonathan's Restaurant on Sunday. Over the summer, Ms. Brown says she sent out over 2,500 questionnaires to businesses, and a further 4,500 out to randomly selected households, receiving 'hundreds' of responses. Respondents, she says, had a consistent message of reducing taxes, something that will be delivered in the coming year, she adds.

'People are stretched to the limit, particularly in Ontario,' she says. 'The more areas our government can work to put money back in the lands of average Canadians is what we want to do. We're looking for those opportunities and we said in the Throne Speech that

when we get to balanced budgets in 2015, we are going to be looking at those avenues to continue giving back money to Canadians.

One of the things we have talked about is income splitting for families. We have already done it for pensions for seniors and they are able to keep more of their own money in their pockets before they start paying taxes. We would like to extend that to families and, yes, there would be a threshold limit, but we are looking at that as a way families will have to spend their own hard-earned money the way they want to spend it.

As for things she would have liked to see in the Throne Speech, Ms. Brown says with \$70 billion in infrastructure planning slated for the next 10 years, she will be ready with Aurora's 'wish list' when the time comes, in consultation with Mayor and Council.

It is something kept in mind by Mayor Geoffrey Dawe. While welcomed news of balanced budgets, new business opportunities for Aurora companies in Europe, and a focus on homeless veterans were welcome, one thing he would like to see are nation-wide strategies.

I would have put a bit more around a nationwide homeless support strategy and I still think we need a nation-wide transportation strategy, he said. We haven't seen that yet.

Mayor Dawe added that as part of a national transportation strategy, he would like to see Federal support for at least one grade-separated railway crossing in Aurora. Wellington Street would be the most effective, but least likely, he said as well as for making the St. John's Sideroad/404 interchange a reality.

For Jason Cherniak, who is seeking the Liberal nomination for the newly created Federal riding of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill, the Throne Speech falls well short of the mark for 'new ideas.' He agreed with Mayor Dawe that a national transportation strategy was needed, along with recognizing 'real problems' facing both the Canadian society and the Canadian economy.

We have a very large problem right now with youth unemployment and underemployment, he says. In the Throne Speech, however, it was claimed youth unemployment in Canada is lower than in other developed countries and essentially proposed continuing to do what they have been doing to date, which has not been working.

What they are not recognizing is many young people in this country are employed in part time jobs, contract jobs without benefits, and jobs that they have not been properly trained for and never intended on working in. That is a serious problem and the government has to be proposing solutions to that if they are going to be helping us. There is an entire generation of young people who are being affected by this and it is important going forward that those people have good jobs and can get their lives started before it is too late.

Prospective Newmarket-Aurora Liberal candidate Kyle Peterson said there was a distinct lack of 'vision' in the document which side-steps 'core issues' for Canadians including transparency and accountability.

I found it ironic that they want to legislate balanced budgets, when they haven't balanced one for years, he said. The fact of the matter is it doesn't really matter what the Throne Speech says, or what Harper promises; Harper will do what he wants, regardless of what he says he will do. He also ignored his own fixed election date law.