

Federal budget helps our region

To the Editor,

If the question for residents of Hastings-Lennox and Addington is "will this budget help me?" the answer is an unequivocal "yes." The budget that our government laid out is a direct delivery on promises made in the October election. Canadians voted for real change, and Budget 2016 is an important part of fulfilling that promise.

Families in Hastings-Lennox and Addington will benefit from this budget. Our new tax-free Canada Child Benefit (CCB) will lift almost 300,000 kids nation-wide out of poverty, including countless local children. Did you know that our region has one of the highest levels of child poverty in Canada at twice the provincial average, according to our local Poverty Roundtable? This is a signature piece of legislation to combat local poverty and I could not be more proud. Families who benefit from the CCB will see an average of \$2,300 more per year, tax free. That's much-needed help for families, whether it's used for putting kids into an arts or sports program, new supplies for school, or food on the table.

The middle class in our riding will benefit from this budget. We all know that when the middle class is doing well, our country is doing well. But, it's been too long since the middle class got the support it needs. Our tax cut for the middle-income earners will put more money in people's pockets to support local economies!

Seniors in our riding, especially those on a fixed income, will benefit from this budget. We are putting the retirement age for Old Age Security (OAS) and Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS) back to 65, and we are increasing by 10 per cent the GIS for low-income seniors, which will put additional much-needed money in the pockets of 900,000 seniors across Canada and the more than eight per cent of seniors in this riding who still live below the poverty line. Our seniors built this country, and it is our duty to see that they have the security in retirement that they deserve.

Municipalities in our riding will benefit from this budget. We know that municipalities shoulder a heavy burden, and they need help. A new application intake for the Building Canada Fund will start this spring, since there is \$9 billion of remaining funding nation-wide that can be used for infrastructure such as roads and bridges. In terms of new programs, Phase 1 of our infrastructure plan will invest an additional \$11.9 billion to improve water and wastewater systems, expand affordable housing, and protect infrastructure systems from the effects of climate change. In its March media release the Federation of Canadian Municipalities applauded our budget which marks a new era of federal-municipal partnership and which stands to transform communities. As chair of National Rural Caucus, I have communicated the unique needs of Rural Canada to our government, and they are listening. I am proud to report that a significant proportion of this new infrastructure funding will go to Rural Canada, as well as an additional \$500 million dollars in funding to improve broadband Internet access in Rural Canada.

I also heard from small municipalities "like the ones we have in our riding" that it is difficult to compete with the larger municipalities who have more money and human resources to put together applications. Our government is listening, and now \$50 million has been set aside to help small communities with their asset management plans.

My team welcomes your continuing engagement in helping us develop solutions to our local and national challenges. We want to hear your thoughts, and we will always be happy to answer your questions.

Mike Bossio

MP, Hastings-Lennox and Addington

Chair, National Rural Caucus