

The Lethbridge Parliamentary Report



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Action to get economy on track underway

Canada's Economic Action Plan is the playbook our government is using to get Canada's economy back on track. Our plan delivers for Canadians in several key areas, beginning with reducing taxes for everyone — businesses and individuals. It means that everyone has a little more money in their pocket now, when it's needed most.

We are also making landmark investment in community infrastructure projects, such as upgrade or new construction for roads and bridges, institutions, sewers, water treatment and wastewater facilities. Even community recreation centers, art facility amenities and museums are receiving cash injections. These are investments that really hit home because they are assets that families in our communities use - and depend on - every day.

All of the construction related to the investment means more jobs, more money in people's pockets, and more support for local businesses. Our government is working hard to get the money out the door and the shovels in the

ground for the betterment of communities and job prospects for Canada's workforce.

During this tough economic downturn we are taking action to assist vulnerable workers - a big part of which includes revising an outmoded employment insurance (EI) system. This included extending EI benefits by an additional five weeks for the next two years.

We are also helping Canadians who have lost their jobs upgrade their

skills to enhance their employability, by extending EI income benefits while they are training.

In addition, the federal work-sharing program has been expanded. This program is work-sharing agreements between the government and individual companies put in place to reduce the need for laying off workers during slow periods. By combining EI income benefits with a reduced number of working hours, work-

sharing agreements keep Canadian employees on the job.

There are some communities that need special attention however, like those that are dependent on a single industry for most people's jobs. It could be a place where the local industry employs the majority of residents in town, a community where generations of the same family work alongside one another building cars on the assembly line, or a mill town that's feeling the effects of the reduced demand for Canadian lumber.

During difficult economic times, these are communities that are particularly hard hit. To help single-industry towns to find alternative direction by attracting new businesses and provide heightened support for struggling families our government has created the Community Adjustment Fund to offset costs.

With safer communities a major focus for our government we are enhancing out-dated legislation and creating new

laws to hit perpetrators hard. We recognize, as do most Canadians, that criminals are part of the problem. Weak laws are the other part. Therefore, in addition to strengthening Canada's economy, we are continuing our action to crack down on crime — real crime.

Building on our Tackling Violent Crime Act that was passed before the fall 2008 election, we have already introduced tough measures this session to deal with crime more effectively. For instance, we have brought forward a bill to require a mandatory jail sentence for criminals convicted of

manufacturing drugs, or drug pushers who are caught selling drugs to children or dealing outside of schools.

Recently, Canadians have become increasingly concerned with the surge of gang violence in cities across the country. Together with the provincial governments, we are bringing forward tough new laws to crack down on gang crime. These include hard-hitting measures on gun crimes, including drive-by shootings that endanger members of the public.



Casson's Crew surpasses goal

The Multiple Sclerosis (MS) Enerflex Walk received a major boost from Casson's Crew, a corporate fundraising team Jeanene and I captain in support of MS research. This year our team, which is comprised of family, friends and colleagues, raised \$19,185 in donations, surpassing our fundraising goal by \$4,185. This brings Casson's Crew four-year MS Walk participation total to an incredible \$74,370.00 in collected donations. Our team effort, when combined with that of other participants of the 2009 event, raised over \$190,000 with donations still being collected.

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Criminal justice reform legislation moving forward

During the winter 2006 federal election campaign our Conservative platform was strong on the need for criminal justice reform. Since forming Canada's government 'Safe Streets and Safe Communities' have become more than a mantra – it is our trademark.

As the threat of gun, gang and drug violence escalates across our nation, so too has our government's response to protecting our citizens. Through new or enhanced amendments to existing legislation, we are providing Canadian law enforcement with the increased capacity in which to respond to the criminal element. Increased funding has been allocated to put more front-line police officers on the street, as it has for programming to prevent criminal behaviour among youth before it takes root. Legislation has been introduced to provide victims of crime with a greater voice and greater access to victims' services.

Legislation currently on the Order Paper includes:

C-14 intended to amend the Criminal Code (organized crime and protection of justice system participants) will:

- make murders connected to organized crime activity automatically first-degree. First-degree murder is subject to a mandatory sentence of life imprisonment without eligibility for parole for 25 years;
- create a new offence to address drive-by and other reckless shootings. This offence would carry a mandatory minimum sentence of four years in prison, with a maximum of 14 years. The minimum sentence would increase if the offence was committed for a criminal organization or with a prohibited or restricted firearm such as a handgun; and
- create two new offences of aggravated assault against a peace or public officer and assault with a weapon on a peace or public officer. These would be punishable by maximum penalties of 14 and 10 years respectively.

This bill has passed through the House of Commons and is currently with the Senate Legal and Constitutional Committee following second reading.

C-15 Re-introduced legislation providing mandatory minimum prison sentences for serious drug crimes. This enactment would establish mandatory jail time for those who produce and sell illegal drugs. The proposed legislation also calls for special penalties to be imposed when offences are carried out for organized crime purposes or if they target youth. The amendments to the CDSA would include the provision of:

- one-year mandatory prison sentence for dealing drugs such as marijuana, when

carried out for organized crime purposes or when a weapon or violence is involved;

- two-year mandatory prison sentence for dealing drugs such as cocaine, heroin or methamphetamines to youth, or for dealing those drugs near a school or in an area normally frequented by youth;
- two-year mandatory prison sentence for the offence of running a large marijuana grow operation involving at least 500 plants;
- increased maximum penalties for cannabis production from 7 years to 14 years imprisonment; and,
- tougher penalties for trafficking GHB and flunitrazepam, most commonly known as date-rape drugs.

This proposed legislation has passed second reading in the House of Commons and is currently under review with the Justice Committee.



C-25 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (limiting credit for time spent in pre-sentencing custody).

This legislation will, as a general rule, cap the amount of credit for time served in pre-sentencing custody at a 1-to-1 ratio. A ratio of up to 1.5-to-1 credits will only be permitted where circumstances justify it, and courts will be required to explain these circumstances. These amendments will bring greater consistency and certainty to sentencing, but more importantly prohibit criminals from manipulating the justice system by intentionally delaying court proceedings in an effort to enhance pre-sentencing remand, to essentially reduce jail time.

This bill has passed second reading in the House and is currently with the Justice Committee for review.

C-26 An Act to amend the Criminal Code (auto theft and trafficking in property obtained by crime). The bill creates a separate offence of 'theft of a motor vehicle', which would:

- carry a mandatory prison sentence of 6 months for conviction of a third or subsequent indictable offence;
- establish a new offence for altering, destroying or removing a vehicle identification number (VIN);
- make it an offence to traffic in property obtained by crime; and
- make the possession of such property for the purpose of trafficking an offence. In addition, these amendments would provide for the application of customs powers to allow the Canada Border Services Agency to identify and prevent stolen property from leaving the country.

This bill has received second reading and is currently with the Justice Committee for review.

S-4 A Government bill before the Senate - An Act to amend the Criminal Code (identity theft and related misconduct). Aimed to combat the complex and serious problem of identity theft by giving law enforcement the tools needed to halt this criminal activity made easy by modern, rapidly-evolving technology.

Currently, under the Criminal Code there is offence legislation covering identity fraud - the use of identity information of another person for the purposes of impersonation and forgery however, existing law does not capture identity theft, the preparatory steps of collecting, possessing or trafficking in identity information.

Therefore, the proposed legislation would create new offences directly targeting the early stages of identity-related crime, each of which would carry a five-year maximum prison sentence for:

- obtaining and possessing identity information with the intent to use the information deceptively, dishonestly or fraudulently in the commission of a crime;
- trafficking in identity information, an offence that targets those who transfer or sell information to another person with knowledge of or recklessness toward the possible criminal use of the information; and
- unlawfully possessing or trafficking in government-issued identity documents that contain the information of another person.

S-4 has passed second reading in the Senate and is currently before the Legal and Constitutional Committee for review.

Efforts to end failed long-gun registry continue with PMB C-391

With the introduction of legislation in the House of Commons under PMB C-391- an act to amend the Criminal Code and the Firearms Act to repeal the requirement to obtain a registration certificate for firearms that are neither prohibited firearms nor restricted firearms - our Conservative government continues its efforts to do away with the useless long-gun registry.

The registry was wrong when the Liberals introduced it in 1997 and it's still wrong today. Since first taking office our government has been clear: unfairly targeting law-abiding farmers and hunters is the wrong way to fight crime. That is why we are continuing our work towards abolishing the long-gun registry, while focusing our efforts on fighting gun crime and targeting real criminals.

Yet, opposition parties have refused to accept past legislative amendments that would dump the

failed long-run registry on the basis that it is a serious crime-fighting tool. They obviously do not understand that the registry is focused on owners of non-restricted firearms, rather than criminals who harbor illegal weapons.

For too long, the wrong people have taken the brunt of the failed long-gun registry. Law-abiding farmers and hunters, not the dangerous criminals who are endangering our neighbourhoods and communities, typically own long-guns.

Our efforts continued to move forward, when on May 15 Conservative MP Candice Hoepfner (Portage – Lisgar) introduced PMB C-391. This follows several previous attempts to repeal the long-gun registry, including Senate Bill S-5, which was similar to Bill C-21, which received first reading during the 1st Session of the 39th Parliament and to Bill C-24, which received

first reading during the 2nd Session of the 39th Parliament. Both bills died on the Order Paper when Parliament was prorogued and dissolved, respectively.

Although Bill C-391 removes the need to hold a registration certificate for nonrestricted firearms, it does not change the requirement for all individuals to hold a licence in order to possess a firearm, and therefore to undergo a background check and pass any required safety course. Additionally, legislation will allow for regulations to require firearms businesses to record transactions relating to non-restricted firearms.

Our government is focused on tackling real crime and real criminals – we have successfully introduced legislation that fights gang crime, drug crime and violent offenders and we will continue to do so under our Tackling Violent Crime Act.

EI programs help workers adapt to shifting markets

The sting of the economic downturn felt by hardworking Canadians across our great country is being eased through decisive action undertaken by our government through Canada's Economic Action Plan.

This comprehensive plan is making unprecedented investments to protect vulnerable Canadians and to help them get the support they need, when they need it. These investments are designed specifically to create jobs, help workers affected by the global recession and create more and better opportunities for Canadian workers through skills development and education.

We are assisting vulnerable and unemployed Canadians who have been paying into the Employment Insurance (EI) system for years but have unfortunately – through no fault of their own – are now unemployed. Our government has enhanced the EI program, by:

- Extending EI benefits by five weeks - an estimated \$1.15 billion provides nationally the advantages of an extra five weeks of benefits. In addition, the maximum duration of benefits available under the EI program in areas of high unemployment has been increased by five weeks, raising it from 45 to 50 weeks.
- Extending the work-sharing program - more than 100,000 Canadian jobs are protected by working with Canadian employers to share costs and avoid layoffs. An additional \$200 million over two years will help keep Canadians working and minimizes the impact of the economic downturn by helping companies avoid layoffs while their industry recovers.
- Freezing EI premium rates for 2010 at \$1.73 per \$100 of insurable earnings - the same level as in 2009 and its lowest level since 1982. Keeping the EI premium at the same level in 2009 and 2010, rather than raising it to the break-even level, will achieve a projected combined economic stimulus of \$4.5 billion.
- Investing an additional \$60 million for EI claims processing, including the hiring of additional staff, to ensure that Canadians receive their EI benefits as quickly as possible in a time of high demand.

- Labour Market Development Agreements – an additional transfer of \$1 billion over two years to provinces and territories helps them deliver skills training support for up to 100,000 workers who qualify for EI benefits.
- Strategic Training and Transition Fund – an investment of \$500 million over two years helps provinces and territories make skills and training programs more flexible, supporting an extra 50,000 workers, whether or not they qualify for EI.
- Targeted Initiative for Older Workers – an additional \$60-million investment supports an additional 250 communities in transition by providing new skills training for workers aged 55 to 64.
- Support for Long-Tenured Workers – two new measures provide an estimated \$500 million over two years to extend income benefits for long tenured workers participating in longer-term training, and allow earlier access to Employment Insurance (EI) regular income benefits for eligible workers investing in their own training using all or part of their earnings resulting from a lay-off, such as severance pay. Both of these measures will be implemented in partnership with provinces and territories.

In contrast to our actions, the solution suggested by the leader of the Official Opposition to helping unemployed workers is for Canadians to be eligible to collect employment insurance after working only 45 days. Our government does not support this “45-day work year” idea and neither do Canadians. In fact, we’ve heard from those Canadians that have been working for years. They are telling us that they are offended by the Liberal “45-day work year” idea because the solution is short-sighted, not thought-out and does nothing to support those who have already lost their jobs, including long-tenured workers that need help now.

Right now 82 percent of workers who pay into the EI system are eligible to receive benefits if they lose their job through no fault of their own, and current EI entrance requirements do not impede access to the program.

National Sex Offender Registry strengthened

Proposed legislative amendments to strengthen the National Sex Offender Registry and the National DNA Data Bank were tabled by the Conservative Government in the House of Commons on June 1.

We have been told repeatedly by police services and victims’ groups that the National Sex Offender Registry must be strengthened if we are to better protect our children and communities from sexual predators. We listened and acted on their recommendations by introducing Bill C-34.

The proposed amendments in the legislation include, but are not limited to:

- Automatic inclusion of all convicted sex offenders in the Registry - as opposed to the current scheme where prosecutors must apply and a judge has discretion whether to include a convicted sex offender in the registry.
- Offenders convicted of a designated sexual offence under the Sex Offender Information Registration Act will also now be subject to a mandatory order to provide a DNA sample for the National DNA Databank.
- Police will be empowered to use the Registry to prevent sexual offences, unlike now where they can only use the registry to investigate crimes after they are committed.
- People who are convicted and jailed for sex crimes in another country who return to Canada under the International Transfers of Offenders Act to serve the remainder of their sentence will now be registered in the Sex Offender Registry.
- Canadians convicted abroad of sex crimes and returning to Canada at the end of sentence must report their conviction to police within 7 days of arriving in Canada or face criminal prosecution.

Right to Repair bill under committee review

Bill C-273, commonly referred to as the ‘Right to Repair’ is another complex national issue before the House of Commons that has grabbed the attention of the automotive repair industry within my riding. This bill attempts to legislate access to information for the repair and services of vehicles to independent automotive aftermarket on the same basis as franchised auto dealers.

Essentially, this would require the vehicle manufacturers to make information and tools for the repair of the vehicles they build available to vehicle owners and independent repair facilities. The issue is intricate as it involves a fair and competitive marketplace and the legitimate proprietary concerns of manufacturers, as well as the interests of consumers.

Independent service providers claim that manufacturers provide more information to their dealerships, which they say threatens the long-term competitiveness of the independents. Car-makers on the other hand believe they already share the necessary information and that legislating beyond this affects their dealer networks. In the middle, are vehicle owners, who want choice, competitive pricing, while at the same time assurances that the work being done on their vehicles is done right by technicians who have the best knowledge and tools at their disposal.

Our government is aware of the aftermarket industry concerns and is engaged with stakeholders on the issue in an effort to ensure an efficient and competitive marketplace while protecting consumer interests. Our focus with stakeholders is to encourage initiation of an industry-led /industry-based voluntary approach to consistent integrated standards and regulations, while ensuring that consumers are protected, with a fair, efficient and competitive marketplace.

Bill C-273 passed second reading on May 13 by a vote of 247 –18 and is currently before the Industry committee for study.

Olympic Torchbearers required

Be part of the excitement for the Vancouver 2010 Olympics and Paralympic Winter Games by applying to be an Olympic Torchbearer.



The Olympic Torch Relay, a 106-day journey that will bring all parts of the country together as we prepare to welcome the world to the 2010 Winter Games, will require 12,000 torchbearers to cover the 45,000-kilometre trip across Canada.

The Torch will cross the ocean from Greece to Victoria, British Columbia, and on October 30, 2009 begin its relay across every province and territory. The route for the

Olympic Torch Relay is expected to pass through 1000 communities and reach approximately 90 percent of the Canadian population. The journey will end on February 12, 2010 at the Opening Ceremony in Vancouver, with the lighting of the Olympic Cauldron to signal the start of the 2010 Winter Games.

Be a part of this unforgettable experience by participating locally in the Olympic Torch Relay. For more information on how to become an Olympic torchbearer visit www.Canada2010.gc.ca.

Park^{the} Fee!

Visitors to Canada's national parks and historic sites, including Waterton Lakes National Park, will enjoy low entry fee prices until 2011, following a fee freeze initiated by our government. This decision will allow more families to enjoy

Canada's natural splendor, and will provide a needed boost to our tourism industry.

Keeping the price of tourism in Canada low will encourage more Canadians to vacation at home, rather than traveling abroad.

For individual visitors, the 2008 rates will stay in place until April 1, 2011. For tour groups and tour organizers that deal in group rates, the 2009 rates now in effect will be frozen until April 1, 2012.

Tough on crime action continues

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We are also targeting identity theft, as the opportunities for fraud that the Internet creates mean that we must take a fresh look at how we pursue fraudsters, particularly those who try to rip-off vulnerable seniors. Innovative laws that target the root problem - making it illegal to gather or sell personal information that will be used for fraud - is a major step forward in getting tough on offenders who steal government-issued ID and those who help create fake identification documents.

Bringing some fairness to sentencing is another major step we are moving forward on. Are you aware that when a criminal is convicted and then sentenced, any of the time they spent in jail before and during the trial is counted for double, or even sometimes triple against their total sentence? Think about this. Someone who is too dangerous to be let out on bail before his or her trial can actually end up serving less time in the long run. It is like 2-for-1 justice. And it's not right. So, we have taken action to bring some fairness back to sentencing.

Recently, we introduced new legislation to deal with the failed long-gun registry. Since taking office in 2006, our government has been working to eliminate this wasteful Liberal legacy - a \$2 billion drain of taxpayers' money that unfairly targets hunters and farmers. We firmly believe that the money that gets wasted on it should be going to support front line policing and the pursuit of real criminals.

The Auditor General has even pointed out that it was all for nothing, because the data in the registry isn't reliable. Yet the opposition parties refuse to see reason on this costly, ineffective legislation. To make matters worse, they are trying to end the amnesty that our government introduced for farmers and hunters who hadn't registered in the first place. If they had their way they'd be ramping up the persecution against law-abiding farmers and hunters. That's just unacceptable.

In addition to the action we are taking to crack down on fraudsters and criminals, we are also working to help protect Canadian seniors from the global economic downturn. In

difficult economic times, we must do what we can to ensure that our most vulnerable are able to live in security.

For seniors who live on fixed incomes, this can be a challenging time. That's why our government has once again increased the Age Credit amount by another \$1,000, helping to stretch that fixed income a bit further. At the same time we are helping to build more affordable housing for low-income seniors. Over this year and the next, we are investing \$400 million to expand our affordable housing program.

Most recently, on top of the recession, Canada's pork producers have been unfairly hit in the fallout of the H1N1 influenza. The World Health Organization has gone on public record that, "There is no risk of infection from this virus from consumption of well-cooked pork and pork products." Some parts of the world have resorted to panicking - banning pork products from different parts of Canada. This is wrong!

Experts are saying that pork is not a source of the virus; therefore our government continues to work hard on the international level to resolve these trade issues.

Special Committee on Afghanistan

Following the consent of the House of Commons in late February to re-instate an order to establish the all-party committee on Afghanistan, originally introduced in early 2008 following acceptance of the Manley Report on Afghanistan, I was unanimously elected Chairman of the Special Committee on the Canadian Mission in Afghanistan.

Prior to accepting this new post I had to make the very tough decision to step down as Chair of the Standing Committee on National Defence, a position I had held since May 2006. I gained a lot of satisfaction on defence committee work related to projects focused on the betterment of our troops. However, I am enjoying this new challenge and the continued relationship with our men and women in uniform.

Initially formed in an effort to provide the Canadian public with franker and more frequent reporting of events in Afghanistan, the committee is tasked with offering more assessments of Canada's role in Afghanistan, while giving greater emphasis to the diplomatic and reconstruction efforts, as well as those of the military.

Senate reform

Our government has reaffirmed its commitment to Senate reform by announcing legislation in the Senate to establish term limits for new senators.

In an effort to reform the Upper House and increase its democratic legitimacy the Senate Term Limits bill was introduced. It will cap the tenure of new senators at one term of eight years. The bill also provides that the eight-year term limit will apply to all senators appointed after the October 2008 general election, including the 18 recently appointed senators. The eight-year terms will begin once the bill receives Royal Assent.

Currently senators can potentially serve terms as long as 45 years, if they are appointed at the minimum age of 30 years and serve until the 75-year retirement age.

In introducing the term limit bill, Minister of State Fletcher said, "The fact that senators can hold their seats for as long as 45 years is contrary to the democratic ideals of Canadians. Setting term limits for Senators is one important step in making the Senate worthy of a 21st century democracy."

For more information, visit www.democraticreform.gc.ca

Proposed improvements to farm loans act

Recognizing the critically important contributions made by Canadian farmers to both the economy and society, has resulted in our government taking legislative action to ensure farming remains a viable career.

With many agricultural producers finding it difficult to obtain loans due to tightening of global credit markets, Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz introduced new legislation to guarantee an estimated \$1 billion in loans over the next five years to Canadian farm families and cooperatives, most of which will go to farmers and cooperatives who were previously ineligible.

On May 4, Bill C-29 an Act to increase the availability of agricultural loans and to repeal the Farm Improvement Loans Act to provide eligibility for loans for new farmers, producers taking over their family farm and agricultural co-operatives, received first reading in the House of Commons. By May 26 it had passed all parliamentary stages

and was moved over to the Senate where it received first reading the following day.

This legislation would expand the scope of the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperative Loans Act, ensuring that:

- Farmers would be eligible for new loan guarantee limits of up to \$500,000, which doubles the current limit of \$250,000.
- New farmers would be eligible for loans under the Canadian Agricultural Loans Act (CALA). Currently they are not eligible under the FIMCLA.
- Agricultural co-operatives with a majority farmer membership (50% + 1 farmer members) would be eligible for loans of up to \$3 million for the processing, marketing or distribution of farm products. Loans are currently limited to co-operatives owned 100% by farm members.
- Loans of up to \$500,000 would be available to help inter-generational farmers taking over

their family farm. These loans are currently not available under the FIMCLA.

- The name of FIMCLA would be changed to CALA to reflect its new focus.
- To ensure the new program remains responsive to producers' needs, a full review of the program will be done in five years.
- A new on-line system would improve the delivery of the program.

Prior to developing the amendments proposed in this bill, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada broad-based national consultations were held with young farmers and financial institutions. Stakeholders have confirmed that the changes to the Farm Improvement and Marketing Cooperatives Loans Act (FIMCLA) will be a great step forward.



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I work for you. Don't hesitate to write or call.

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