

The Budget

I will begin in recognition of the International Year of the Family by thanking my own family for their encouragement and the support they have always given me.

I would also like to thank the most dedicated campaign team for all their hard work and the constituents of Lambton—Middlesex for the trust and confidence they have put in me by electing me as their representative in the 35th Parliament and may I also add as the first female representative for the riding since Confederation.

Prior to my being elected, I also had the privilege to work with the former member for Lambton—Middlesex, the Hon. Ralph Ferguson, who was the agriculture minister in the Turner government.

Hon. members may be interested to know that Lambton—Middlesex has a pivotal role in Canada's history. The historic Battle of the Longwoods took place in Middlesex country during the War of 1812. In fact the great Indian Chief Tecumseh was killed during the Battle of the Longwoods. No doubt were it not for the role of Tecumseh in repelling the Americans, we would probably be a part of the United States today.

On the Lambton side of the riding oil was discovered in the mid-1800s in Enniskillen Township, the first oil discovery in all of North America. In fact some of these oil wells have been producing for over 100 years and are still producing today.

Lambton—Middlesex is one of the largest ridings in southwestern Ontario. It is predominantly rural in nature, containing 18 municipalities, several towns and villages, one urban centre, Strathroy, and four native reserves.

The single largest industry in Lambton—Middlesex is agriculture, producing fruits, vegetables, corn, soybeans, raising poultry, dairy, pork, and beef, just to name a few.

I am proud to say that a number of very prominent Canadian leaders in the field of agriculture reside in my riding.

I would also be remiss if I did not mention that Cuddy's turkey farms, one of the largest turkey breeding farms in North America, is located in Lambton—Middlesex. It exports turkey parts all over the world.

As co-chair of the ethanol task force and ad hoc committee exploring the viability of a Canadian ethanol industry, I am pleased to see that the Minister of Finance is willing to review the necessity for greater assurance of federal excise tax exemptions for ethanol. I would urge the minister to make this his next top priority.

We have a window of opportunity that we must not ignore. We must encourage the greater use of ethanol blended fuels. It is good for the environment. It is a renewable resource and will create huge new markets for corn and grain.

This budget sets in motion some of the most fundamental far-reaching reforms in government policy in decades in such crucial areas as social security and defence.

Canadians have told us they are fed up with government inertia. They want a government to have a game plan and stick to it. We have a game plan, our election platform, Creating Opportunity, the red book.

In this budget we are funding every key initiative in the red book. We are delivering on our commitment.

What pleases me the most is that this budget offers a balanced approach because of its three main goals: economic renewal, deficit reduction, and social reform. These are all foundations for our top priorities, jobs and growth.

By focusing on these three goals this budget directly answers the concerns and priorities expressed by Canadians during a first-ever series of consultation conferences. The budget takes action through funding for infrastructure programs, a commitment to rolling back unemployment insurance premiums to the 1993 levels, and through new strategies to promote small business, the engine that drives the new economy.

The recession has taken its toll, as it has all over Canada, on some of the small businesses in my riding. However, a number of enterprising factories producing footwear, auto parts, frozen foods, mobile homes, to name just a few, have bravely weathered the economic storm through their own diligence, creativity and hard work.

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I am especially gratified and relieved that the \$500,000 exemption for small business and farm property will remain.

I am also very pleased that the home buyers plan which allows first time home buyers to use RRSP funds as a down payment is now a permanent program. The use of RRSPs has grown by leaps and bounds in Canada as more and more Canadians make use of them as a retirement supplement.

In agriculture areas such as my riding of Lambton—Middlesex RRSPs are often the only means of ensuring retirement security. Small and medium sized businesses do not want handouts. What they require is an environment characterized by improved access to capital, the encouragement of innovative leading edge technology, a commitment to better management training, a reduction of the regulatory and paper burden and the adoption of an aggressive trading mentality to take advantage of new export markets.

I am delighted that this budget addresses all these areas. In fact this budget is a winner I believe for small business. The following programs are being initiated: the Canada investment