

and a privilege to have been elected to this position. Julia, Patrick, Kelly and I consider ourselves most fortunate to live in the valley where the warmth and generosity of our people enhance the natural beauty of our area.

When my Liberal colleagues and I were elected to form the government last October, it was as a result of our commitment to jobs and long term economic growth. This budget is a first step in fulfilling the commitment and promise made at that time. It strikes a balance between economic renewal, social policy reform and deficit reduction, a balance that will provide the foundation for jobs and growth.

This budget offers fundamental restructuring of our thrust to this balance so we can move from a passive system to an active one. The changes we are offering will cause some pain but this new active approach will bring on the creativity that is inherent in the people of my riding of Annapolis Valley—Hants and of all Canadians.

I know there is a lot of unemployment in my riding and I feel very badly. It is easy for me to say this because I am fortunate; I have a job. However, I will commit my energies to be a part of the process that will create jobs in my riding.

I recently had an opportunity to travel to CFB Greenwood and meet with the base commander and the defence staff. I have also had a chance to meet with the regular forces and reservists at Camp Aldershot. I am extremely impressed by the dedication, commitment and high levels of professionalism of these military personnel. While these centres have only been minimally affected by the budget, I will work to ensure that the military and civilian jobs at these bases remain secure over the long term.

As the budget indicates, one of the most effective ways to encourage economic growth and jobs is through support of the small business sector. I have talked with many small business owners in my constituency who believe that the federal government can play a very active role in helping small business not only remain viable but grow and create new jobs. I am also working very closely with the local agricultural industry which is the backbone of small business in the community of Annapolis Valley—Hants. By working with this local advisory group we can best determine how the government and the agricultural sector can work together to create jobs.

I have also in the past had the pleasure of working closely with first-rate institutions such as the Acadia University Centre for Small Business. Such centres are not only promoting local community networks but also provide valuable information services to help individuals get their ventures off the ground.

According to a recent survey conducted by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, a freeze or reduction in

government payroll taxes was one of the most important conditions necessary for small business owners to hire more employees.

We have listened. By rolling back unemployment insurance premiums for small business, we are providing these firms with incentives necessary to increase both investment and job creation. I applaud the Minister of Finance's announcement that we are moving ahead with programs such as the Canada investment fund, the Canadian technology network, and a commitment to work closely with banks to improve access to capital for small business.

Aside from assisting small business, this budget has set the foundation for economic recovery through a number of important initiatives. First, the national infrastructure program is progressing rapidly. In Nova Scotia the federal contribution for this program over two years will be \$69 million. Annapolis Valley—Hants is largely a rural riding and, having high quality physical infrastructure, it is imperative for the future economic viability of both the businesses and individuals who call this area their home.

Organizations in my area have submitted several innovative proposals and I hope they will receive positive approval.

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Another major commitment we have made in this budget is the extension of the RRSP home buyers program. Prior to the budget I received many letters from the real estate companies and home builder associations in Annapolis Valley—Hants in support of this program. All of these letters indicated the housing industry will play a central role in Canada's economic recovery and that by promoting this program over the long term the government would be greatly assisted in this recovery.

The budget also makes a \$50 million a year commitment to the residential rehabilitation assistance program. This will further boost the housing construction industry and help create many jobs.

The most important aspect of our commitment to economic restructuring however is our pledge to help individuals obtain the skills necessary to find meaningful jobs. It is my commitment to the people of Annapolis Valley—Hants that I will work tirelessly in this endeavour.

By investing in programs such as the Canada youth service corps, the youth internship and apprenticeship programs, we will assist young Canadians in gaining the training and skills necessary for jobs for the long haul.

I have received over a dozen phone calls in the last week from groups and individuals interested in putting forward proposals for the national youth service corps. I am committed to working