

January 2013

January 8th

January of each year is the opening of "income tax" season- the period of time up until April 30th of 2013 when 2012 income taxes must be filed with the Canada Revenue Agency. Recently I had a constituent request federal income tax rates from the year 2000 in order to compare with the income tax rates for 2013. The results are somewhat interesting and I would like to share them with you for general interest. In the year 2000 there were three federal income tax brackets- the first \$ 30,004 dollars was taxed at a rate of 17%, the next \$30,004 up to \$60,009 was taxed at a rate of 25% and all income over \$60,009 was taxed at 29%.

In 2013 there are two significant changes; the first is that there are now four tax brackets instead of three as was the case in the year 2000. The first income tax bracket now applies on income up to \$43,561 and is taxed at a rate of 15%. The second tax bracket is on income between \$43,652 up to \$87,123 and is at a rate of 22% while the third tax bracket is on income over \$87,123 up to \$135,054 and is at a rate of 26%.

Obviously the highest tax bracket is now on income in excess above \$135,054 and is still taxed at the same rate as was the highest income tax bracket in the year 2000 at 29%. Clearly the most significant changes in income tax rates over the past decade have been reduced income tax rates for lower income Canadians.

The second major change introduced by our Government in 2006 and expanded in many budgets since has been targeted tax relief to help support families and at the same time promote employment that helps to drive our local economies. Targeted tax relief measures include the following: The Family Caregiver Tax Credit, The Medical Expense Tax Credit, The First-Time Home Buyers' Tax Credit, The Children's Fitness Tax Credit, The Hiring Credit for Small Business, The Children's Arts Tax Credit, The Apprenticeship Job Creation Tax Credit, The Tradesperson's Tool Deduction, The Textbook Tax Credit, The Universal Child Care Benefit, The Tax-Free Savings Account, The Registered Disability Savings Plan, The Canada Employment Credit, The Public Transit Tax Credit and The Volunteer Firefighters' Tax Credit. Although I have had one citizen to date request higher income taxes, the overwhelming majority of taxpayer's I have heard from welcome tax relief and keeping more of their hard earned net income within the family household.

If you would like more information on these tax credits further information is available on either the CRA website or toll free via the CRA call center. In addition there are also many tax professionals and in some areas volunteers who can be of further assistance. My office will also be sending a mailout, outlining many of these measures for your future reference.

One other major tax change in recent years is the ability to file your income tax return online. The average processing time for an online submitted tax filing is typically two weeks compared to 4-6 weeks for a paper filed return. It should also be noted that the method you choose to file your income tax return in no way increases or decreases the potential for an audit. Income tax is rarely a popular topic among most taxpayers however our Government is proud of the tax relief we have provided to Canadian families. Recently our Government announced public sector pension reforms

that will begin the process of rebalancing public sector employer and employee pension contributions to an equal 50-50 cost sharing model. In addition the retirement age for new federal public sector jobs will be increased to age 65. These changes alone will save taxpayers \$ 2.6 Billion over the next five years. I encourage all taxpayers to claim any credits that you may be entitled to when you file your 2012 income taxes.

January 15th

This week I have had a large number of requests for comment regarding the ongoing challenges of the Attawapiskat First Nation, and related events that have occurred recently in Ottawa. To be clear, it is relatively easy to criticize the financial management practices at Attawapiskat. At a time when some are living in appalling conditions, the Chief and her live-in partner who is also the band co-manager have a combined household income reported to be \$250,000 per year. When asked about the \$250,000 the band co-manager is quoted as "I think it's adequate for the job that is being done". A recent Deloitte Audit along with a management letter from the Band's own accounting firm Ross, Pope & Co., have raised very serious questions regarding the accounting practices and lack of documentation to illustrate where millions in spending has gone. However as easy as it may be to criticize the lack of financial accountability in Attawapiskat, we must also recognize that criticism does little to help those living in Attawapiskat who do not have the benefit of a \$250,000 household income. For those living in appalling and unacceptable conditions, very serious challenges remain.

There is also, in my view, a much larger problem; one that was highlighted on Monday, October 15, 2007. It was on this day that Tsawwassen First Nation Chief Kim Baird gave a historic speech in the BC Legislature to recognize the first reading of a Bill that would ultimately bring into law, a treaty agreement for the Tsawwassen First Nation. Inside the Legislature many First Nations leaders had gathered to celebrate the success of this milestone agreement however outside of the Legislature a different group of First Nations leaders had also gathered to protest against the treaty and related process. This strong disagreement and lack of a consensus based approach within First Nations was what occurred again last week in Ottawa. While Assembly of First Nations National Chief Shawn Atleo gathered with other First Nations leaders in a meeting with the Prime Minister, other First Nations leaders disagreed so strongly with this meeting that they attempted to create a physical blockade to prevent the meeting from even occurring. The fact that there is such a strong lack of consensus among different First Nations leaders is clearly serving as a barrier to find solutions which would improve the lives of so many.

Closer to home I often asked why instead of protesting, more bands do not follow the example of successful bands such as the Osoyoos Indian Band and the Westbank First Nation. It is important to recognize that there are many variables unique to individual bands that must be taken into consideration; a subject I wrote about in my September 3rd, 2012 MP report. However, one key aspect that both Westbank and Osoyoos share is the ability to utilize band lands for economic development initiatives through long term leases. Ironically one of the provisions of Bill C-45 is to streamline and make it both easier and faster for those bands that do make the decisions to enter into long term leases to be able to do so. In other words, Bill C-45 actually makes it easier for First Nations to follow the same economic principles that have been successful for Westbank and

Osoyoos if they choose to do so, and only if they choose to do so. Yet some band Chiefs are opposed to having the process of leasing band lands simplified, even though they can choose not to do so. I mention this point only to put into context the degree of challenge that exists with such strongly differing opinions.

The Solution? As I mentioned earlier, and in my Sept 3rd, 2012 MP report, I believe that each First Nation is unique. As is often the case, one size fits all Ottawa imposed solutions seldom find success in an area where there is so much diversity. I also believe it is important that Government at all levels attempts to engage and work with individual bands on a one to one basis. In my view we must also focus more on the many First Nation success stories and not always on the failures. Fortunately we currently have many great things occurring within the Penticton Indian Band and there is a positive working relationship between the leadership of the Band, and all levels of Government. The projects we are collectively working on will greatly help to increase economic development, employment and revenue for the band and for our region collectively. I am excited at the opportunity that is currently before us, and hope in the very near future this will be a success story unique to our region.

January 21st

This week will be the second term inauguration of President Obama. As much as there is often talk on the importance of diversifying Canada's international network of trading partners and related markets, we should not overlook the importance of Canada's strong economic relationship with the United States. In 1989 as some will recall, the Canada-US Free Trade agreement came into force. I would say that in its day it was not without controversy and politics; as much in play then as they are with trade and investment agreements today. Only now, we have the benefit of hindsight to look back for more perspective on this historic free trade agreement. Contrary to false and alarming claims made by critics at the time, the border has not disappeared and as proud Canadians we continue to celebrate our love for our country and what it means to be Canadian on July 1st of each year. Not only have hardworking Canadians proven that we can compete today globally, we stand tall and continue to uphold those values that have built this great nation into one of the world's leading economies.

Since the Canada-US Free trade agreement began in 1989, Canada's annual GDP has increased by over \$1 trillion— that translates to almost 4.6 million more jobs here in Canada today. Two way trade with the United States has almost tripled. As I travel throughout Okanagan-Coquihalla and meet with employers there are many who depend upon free and unrestricted access to the United States market. However it is also important to recognize that although "Free trade" in principle provides unrestricted access, in reality there remain many barriers; regulatory red tape and other legislative road blocks that serve to stifle the movement of goods and services. For example the "trusted trader" program is intended to assist those companies with cross-border trade opportunities and yet the registration process requires dealing with two different agencies of government essentially requiring similar information. My former private members bill addressed the problem where Canadian wineries could legally sell to a customer in Texas or Asia but not into Alberta or Manitoba. As I mentioned in a recent MP report, international ownership restrictions in one sector could put hundreds of local workers out of a job. As another example in the wine sector- a winery looking to bottle and produce wine and create jobs here in the Okanagan will pay a duty on those grapes unless they are grown in Canada – even if there is a shortage of locally grown grapes.

This week is "RED TAPE AWARENESS WEEK" and I believe it is important that we not just take notice, but take action to eliminate those barriers that are standing in the way of creating and sustaining jobs. Sometimes the solutions are relatively simple, for example in my Bill, an amendment of roughly 50 words helped open up the Canadian wine market to Canadians. A proposed change to the Food and Drug Regulations that would allow provincially regulated pharmacy technicians to transfer prescriptions to another pharmacy could benefit 15,000 pharmacists and save close to \$ 9 million annually in administrative costs. Another change is the ability to consolidate business accounts under one business number when dealing with the CRA. This change allows business owners to spend more time running the business instead of time spent dealing with the criteria of the CRA. Another new initiative is the one for one rule. This rule ensures that each time a new regulation is introduced, it will be offset by the removal of another existing regulation. Canada will be one of only a handful of jurisdictions in the world to undertake such a leading-edge approach. There are more initiatives that are underway however these examples represent our Government's commitment to help business owners grow and focus on generating revenue and jobs instead of being mired in regulatory red tape that in some cases can date back many decades or more.

January 29th

As you may have heard, this week the House of Commons will resume sitting on Parliament Hill for what is expected to be another robust session of debate and discussion. Some of the already identified items on the projected order of business for this week include Government Bills C-48 and C-52. Bill C-48 is the "Technical Tax Amendment Act". Over time tax amendments are often introduced by Government that make changes to various aspects of income tax and sales tax much as was done recently in Budget 2012. Ultimately these proposed tax amendments must be included within legislation and to date it has been well over 10 years since the Act was last updated thus creating a significant backlog. One of the benefits of a stable majority in the House is that these kind of technical tax amendment bills that are important to ensure the integrity of our tax system, were often neglected during the recent minority years of Liberal and Conservative governments. As this is more of a technical Bill it is not expected to be a controversial one and the tone of today's debate seemed to be generally supportive.

Bill C-52 "The Fair Rail Freight Service Act" is in response to recommendations made by the Rail Freight Service Review Panel. In summary, challenges can arise within sectors of the agricultural community in securing mutually supported agreements between shippers and railway companies. The lack of a successful agreement can serve as a barrier preventing producers from getting their goods to market in a manner that provides certainty. Bill C-52 proposes new incentives to help strengthen the agreement making process, specifically an arbitration process will be introduced in the event an agreement cannot be reached and monetary penalties can also be assessed if there are violations to an arbitrated agreement. I have spoken with constituents who are familiar with the Canadian rail system and were supportive of seeing these legislative changes. Much like Bill C-48, this is also a Bill that is not expected to be a controversial one, as the opposition parties at committee supported the legislation with no changes or amendments.

In addition to Government Bills, there will also be a number of Private Member's Bill coming up for debate this week. Bill C-457 "An Act to Repeal the Clarity Act", Bill C-452 "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons)", Bill C-425 "An Act to Amend the Citizenship Act", Bill C-444 "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code", Bill C-460 "Sodium reduction strategy for Canada" and finally Motion M-412 "Hydroelectric Project". In addition to private members business,

Parliamentary committees will also again be sitting throughout the week while House votes may be occurring Wednesday and Thursday evenings.

Not occurring this week but later this session will be the introduction of a new budget, along with continued debate on the following topics where bills have already been introduced to the House of Commons: Enhancing Royal Canadian Mounted Police Accountability Act; the Faster Removal of Foreign Criminals Act; the First Nations Financial Transparency Act; the Increasing Offender Accountability for Victims Act; the Northern Jobs and Growth Act; and the Safer Witnesses Act. If you have comments or concerns on any subject please do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience. As taxpayer's your input is an important consideration for the work that we do in Ottawa and while we may not always reach agreement on issues of concern the importance of sharing views and exchanging information should never be overlooked.

February 2013

February 4th

The Clarity Act is not one that is referenced very often in the cafes and coffee shops that I visit on a regular basis throughout Okanagan-Coquihalla. However, it is a topic that has been very prominently part of the discussion on Parliament Hill this past week. For those of you unfamiliar with the Clarity Act, this is a law created under the former Chretien Liberal Government that ultimately stated the provisions on how any province, but more specifically Quebec, could potentially leave Canada- a process also known as "secession" in Parliamentary terms. The Legislation was passed in 2000, some five years after the 1995 Quebec referendum on separation. As can be expected, it was a controversial bill (Bill C20) at that time and was not universally supported in the House of Commons and was widely opposed by Quebec provincial political parties. One key aspect of this legislation was that ultimately the Federal Government, as opposed to the Quebec Provincial Government, maintains the ability to override a referendum decision with respect to secession. This is a somewhat brief and simplified summary of the Clarity Act which would also require an amendment to the Canadian Constitution for any Province to leave the federation.

An MP from the Bloc Quebecois has recently sponsored Bill C-457 that proposes to repeal the Clarity Act and suggests that the Quebec Provincial Government and not the Federal Government should ultimately have jurisdiction with respect to the secession of Quebec. In response, NDP leader Tom Mulcair, through a NDP MP, has introduced Bill C-470. Among some of the language in Bill C-470 is the principle that "the Quebec nation has the right to democratically decide its own future". One key part of the NDP proposal is the following clause that "the majority of valid votes are cast in favour of the proposed change". This requirement means that a simple majority of 50% plus 1 could, in effect, open negotiations for Quebec to leave Canada. The major concern heard around Parliament Hill thus far is that the NDP, through Bill C-470, is making it easier for Quebec to leave Canada largely for political reasons given that much of the NDP caucus comes from the Province of Quebec. In response, the comment from the NDP is largely that Bill C-470 provides more clarity to the process of secession and how it might work in reality. Others have indicated that the bar for the separation of Quebec from Canada is being set to low by the NDP as well

as the fact that Bill C-470 is unnecessary. While the debate this week has certainly been interesting, I am personally not supportive of either bill. As a legislator I would like Parliament to focus on creating more jobs & investment, building a more skilled workforce and ensuring the safety of our streets. As a Canadian, I am proud to be part of a strong and united country. Ultimately there will be a vote in the House of Commons and I welcome your views.

Also this week we will be the phasing out of the Penny... as I reported in my April 16th MP report the Royal Canadian Mint will no longer be distributing the penny. Although the penny will retain its value indefinitely, our Government encourages Canadians to either redeem them at financial institutions or consider donating them to charity. In the absence of the penny, a process of rounding up or down (affecting cash transactions only) as follows: For transaction between \$1.01 and \$1.02 cents the total would be rounded down to \$1.00 For amounts of \$1.03 - \$1.04 would be rounded up to \$1.05 while conversely amounts of \$1.06-\$ 1.07 would also be rounded down to \$1.05 and an amount of \$1.08 or \$1.09 would be rounded to \$1.10. If you have a further question on this topic, please visit my website at www.danalbass.com/penny or call my office at 1 (800) 665-8711.

As I am running out of space in this week's report, here is a brief summary of some of the Bills that are before the House of Commons this week: There will be continued debate on Government Bills C-52 Fair Rail Freight Service Act and Bill C-48 Technical Tax Amendment Act that I referenced last week. New Private Members Bills C-464 An Act to amend the Canada Labor Code (parental leave for multiple births or adoptions), Bill-462 Disability Tax Credit Promoters Restrictions Act, Bill C-266 Pope John Paul II Act, Bill C-459 Air Passengers Bill of Rights, Bill C-383 Transboundary Waters Protection Act and Motion M-400 Homes Not Connected To A Sanitation System. Votes this week will potentially occur on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday. If you would like further information on these or any Bills before the house or to pass on your comments or questions please do not hesitate to give me a call.

February 12th

As a first time Member of Parliament I greatly value the advice and wisdom that is often shared with me by more senior and veteran elected officials from all levels of government. In particular, a recent MLA report from Speaker of the House Bill Barisoff really hit home for me. In his December 17 comments Mr. Barisoff spoke of the unpleasant but important need for publicly elected officials to be in tune with death and tragedy. In my relatively brief time as an MP I have already noted that, while serious tragedies often make the headlines, the media spotlight is quick to shift to other issues of the day, all too often leaving the victims and their families behind. For the past year I have worked closely with the family of Lynn Kalmring. As I shared with the House of Commons recently, Lynn Kalmring was a loving mother, sister, daughter, and friend to all who loved her. Lynn's life was tragically taken from her in a senseless and brutal act of domestic violence. The suffering and immense hardship for the Kalmring family did not end with Lynn's passing; rather, it was only the beginning of an ongoing challenge that, in many ways, only victims of such a tragedies truly understand. It should not have to be this way.

Likewise, although I have only briefly met with a few of the family members who have suffered greatly at the hands of Allan Schoenborn (the man who took the lives of his three children in Merritt, B.C.), his legal status of being found not criminally responsible for this heinous act continues to terrify

the family and victims to this very day. It should not have to be this way.

In yet another example, long time Okanagan-Coquihalla residents may recall the 1997 tragedy that occurred in Summerland. Kevin Machell, who was released on parole, senselessly murdered Tammy Grono and her mother Cecilia at a motel in front of his own pre-school aged children. These murders occurred in spite of a restraining order against Kevin Machell. In fact, the victim who had feared for her life as a result of death threats was neglected to even be notified that Machell was on the loose and that he had failed to report to a half-way house. Sadly those children grew up without a mother or grandmother by their side. It should not be overlooked that this tragedy occurred some 16 years ago. Today families involved in similar tragedies continue to be victimized by a justice system that all too often puts the rights of criminals ahead of the victims and ahead of public safety. It should not have to be this way.

This past Friday I had the honour of supporting our Prime Minister at an event as he announced the "Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act". This act will introduce several important changes that will help to put the rights of victims ahead of criminals, as well as aiding in protecting the public and reducing these acts from occurring in the future. This legislation will ensure that victims are specifically considered in the decision making process and more importantly are notified when a person found Not Criminally Responsible (NCR) is discharged; including the creation of non-communications orders. This legislation will also create a High-Risk Designation- individuals designated by the court as high-risk must be held in custody and cannot be considered for release by a review board until their designation is revoked by a court. Under the existing law, it is a review board and not the court that determines when these individuals are no longer considered a "significant threat" to public safety. This increased judicial oversight will be guided by the principal that public safety is the paramount consideration in the decision-making process relating to accused persons found to be not criminally responsible.

In my view these changes are long overdue and I am proud to be part of a Government that is finally taking action and putting the rights of victims first and enhancing public safety in the process. The families of serious domestic violence should not have to live in fear for their safety and continue to be victimized by offenders.

February 26th

One topic that has been very actively discussed recently both on Parliament Hill and in Okanagan Coquihalla is the Canadian Senate. There are generally three main perspectives that I hear from local citizens and from other Members of Parliament in Ottawa that include reforming the Senate, abolishing the Senate altogether and leaving the Senate alone.... taking the status quo approach. In these discussions I have also discovered that there are, at times, some misunderstandings of the legal status of the Senate and the obligations of Government to comply with legislation that, in some cases, is well over one hundred years old.

One area that I frequently hear disdain for pertains to the practice of appointing various Canadians to the Senate. The question I am

frequently asked is “Why doesn’t the Prime Minister stop appointing Senators and just get rid of the Senate?” The challenge is that the Senate, sometimes referred as the “Upper Chamber” or the “Other Place” (as it must be referred to within the House of Commons) is part of our Constitution. When the founders of Canadian Confederation created the Senate, they did so by essentially dividing Canada into five different regions: The Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, Western and “Additional”. Additional includes Newfoundland, Labrador, NWT, Yukon and Nunavut. By design the Senate is not based on a representation by population model as is the House of Commons but rather on the principle of “equal” regional representation where the first four regions each have 24 seats while the “Additional” regions have 9 of the 105 seats in the Senate.

Consequently the constitutionally mandated Senate representation arrangement means that regions of Canada are legally entitled to the number of seats as defined within the Constitution Act of 1867. To date every Prime Minister elected in Canada’s history has by legal obligation, appointed Senators when vacancies arise, most often created by a Senator reaching the mandatory retirement age of 75. In addition the Prime Minister can, in exceptional circumstance, also temporarily appoint 4-8 additional Senators if there is a deadlock that must be broken.

One of the challenges to the Senate “equal” representation model is that it conflicts with representation by population. As an example the current Senate model ensures there are actually 30 Senate seats east of Quebec – that is six more Senate seats than the 24 in all of Western Canada combined. Likewise for Ontario in spite of having a much larger population than Quebec has the same number of seats in the Senate. As a result, some regions in Canada from a population perspective are under-represented compared to others. As an example here in BC there are 6 senators compared to 10 in Nova Scotia. When it comes to the discussion of abolishment of the Senate, many in western Canada are strongly in favour while some regions of Canada are equally as strongly opposed.

Recently our Government has posed a series of six questions to the Supreme Court of Canada to request a ruling on how the Senate can be legally reformed or abolished in accordance with our Constitution – one of the many questions is a ruling on the need to determine if there is a requirement to have a Canadian constitutional debate involving all of the Provinces and Territories. Although many have expressed a desire to see action taken on the Senate, few have expressed interest in opening up a Canadian constitutional debate that could potentially pit different regions of the country against each other a time when national unity is critically needed. This will be the first time in over three decades that our Supreme Court will look at the issue of Senate reform in a review process that will ideally provide more clarity on how action can be taken on the subject of Senate reform and/or abolishment. I welcome your views

on this subject.

After a brief recess the House of Commons will again be in session this week and one of the Government Bills up for debate for the first time is Bill C-55: "The Response to the Supreme Court of Canada Decision in R. vs. Tse Act". This is in my view an important Bill although it has to date not generated a considerable amount of public commentary as opposed to Bill C-30. While Bill C-30 is now effectively a dead bill, it was frequently mischaracterized as the "Internet spy bill" even though Bill C-30 did not allow for any unauthorized "spying" to occur without judicial oversight. Bill C-55 on the other hand, does pertain to the legislation that allows law enforcement agencies to engage in lawful but limited surveillance activities without judicial oversight. I believe that any legislation that allows law enforcement to engage in acts of surveillance without a court order is important to Canadians and as such, I will spend much of this week's report covering Bill C-55.

One key aspect of Bill C-55 is to recognize that it does not create new powers for law enforcement, but rather seeks to clarify existing legal tools available to police in matters of public safety as a result of a Supreme Court of Canada legal ruling. Law enforcement at times requires the ability to respond very quickly in situations where there are urgent circumstances. Kidnappings, hostage taking and bomb threats are a few examples where urgent actions are expected of the police to protect innocent victims and maintain public safety. The kidnapping of 23 year old Vancouver resident Graham McMynn in April of 2006 and the prompt response by the Vancouver Police Department in using all of the legal resources available to safely return Mr. McMynn to his family serves as a reminder of why legislation in a Bill such as C-55 is needed.

Currently the laws that govern police use of a wiretap (as it is frequently referred to as) without court authorization can only occur in situations where there can be imminent harm as defined in section 184.4 of the criminal code. From a historical perspective this particular legislation was passed into law some two decades ago by a former Government in 1993. One of the oversights of the existing legislation is that there is no legal requirement for an individual who has been the subject of a wiretap to be notified of this fact after the incident has occurred. The Supreme Court has ruled that if law enforcement intercepts private personal communications under section 184.4, there is an obligation to notify the individual that this action has occurred. The Supreme Court has further directed Government to respond to this matter by April 13 of 2013. I mention this last point as often I am asked what factors are involved in establishing the timing on when various Bills are introduced into the House of Commons.

Bill C-55 proposes to add new requirements to comply with the ruling of the Supreme Court of Canada. One new requirement proposes mandatory notification for any person who has had personal communication intercepted under this act within 90 days unless a court ordered extension for the notification period is granted by a judge. A second proposal is to publish annual reports on the use of "imminent harm" wiretaps so the public can be better informed on these practices. The final proposal better clarifies and narrows the scope that allows police officers the ability to use this legislation. The current definition is broader in also including peace officers. Overall I believe the proposals in Bill C-55 will provide better balance and help to increase the transparency of a process that all Canadians should always be aware of. Also occurring this week is continued debate on Bill C48 "Technical tax Amendments" and Bill C42 "Enhancing RCMP Accountability Act". Senate Bill S-7 "Combating Terrorism Act" and S-12 "Incorporation by Reference in Regulation Act" are up for 3rd and 2nd reading debate respectively. Private Members Bill C-463 "Discover Your Canada Act", C-419 "Language Skills Act" and C-425 "An Act to Amend the Citizenship Act" are some of the Private members business that will come before the House this week.

March 2013

March 14th

Last fall I had an opportunity to tour one of the South Okanagan's largest private sector specialty manufacturing plants. In summary, I was extremely impressed not just at the size and scope of the operation and the many important well paying jobs that it provides, but also by the many international projects that it is currently involved with worldwide. I later had the opportunity to confirm in a meeting with a local economic development officer, who shares the goal of ensuring building employment and investment, that this particular company is indeed the largest employer in the area. To think that this internationally respected manufacturer can design, engineer, and build components for important projects around the globe all from a small rural British Columbia community is a remarkable example of Canadian ingenuity and capability. This local operation also serves as a reminder of the importance of infrastructure investments along with global free trade agreements with other countries and important interprovincial agreements such as TILMA to ensure that our local industry can compete and grow.

While at this manufacturing plant I was also shown a component that looked very much like the one's produced within the operation. Unlike the same part manufactured in house, with a maple leaf, identifying both the company and the country where it is made, this particular component was actually in fact a counterfeit copy with no identifiable manufacturer. Although it is often said

that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, in this case it is a very serious concern. This particular component requires engineers to design, a foundry and machine shop to build, sales staff to sell and more plant staff to ship. In short there are many well paying local jobs that are created in getting this component to the market. These are important jobs that support families who in turn support our local economies and as such these counterfeit goods should not be treated lightly.

Last Friday in the House of Commons our Government introduced Bill C-56 "Combating Counterfeit Products Act". This act proposes to create a number of new enforcement tools to better protect Canadian manufacturers from the threat of illegally manufactured counterfeit goods entering into, being sold or otherwise distributed within Canada. Under the Act, border officials would have new abilities to detain shipments until rights holders can be contacted. In addition, Canadian businesses will also be able to request assistance with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) to share rights information on suspected shipments. New criminal offences can also apply to those individuals who are in the commercial possession, manufacture or trafficking of trademark counterfeit goods. New civil legal options will also be made available to legitimate rights holders to pursue legal action against those who profit from counterfeiting practices.

Aside from the potential damage I observed from counterfeiting practices firsthand, the value of counterfeit goods seized in Canada has increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to almost \$ 40 million last year. More important is the potential loss of Canadian jobs and what that would mean for small rural communities where other much needed well paying employment can be hard to find. Bills like C-56 may not generate much attention however the importance to take action against counterfeit goods is yet another way that our Government is ensuring that we protect jobs and support our important manufacturing sector.

Also occurring this week in Ottawa is continued debate on Government Bills C-47 "Northern Jobs and Growth Act" and C-48 "Technical Tax Amendments Act" while Senate Bill S-9 "Nuclear Terrorism Act" will also reach report stage debate. Some of the Private Members Bills up for debate this week include C-457 "An to Repeal the Clarity Act" C-452 "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons) along with Motions M-382 "Religious Freedom" and M-412 "Hydroelectric Project". If you have comments, questions or concerns on these or any Bills before the House of Commons please do not hesitate to contact me by phone 1(800) 665-8711 or email dan.albas@parl.gc.ca at your convenience.

March 14th

Last fall I had an opportunity to tour one of the South Okanagan's largest private sector specialty manufacturing plants. In summary, I was extremely impressed not just at the size and scope of the operation and the many important well paying jobs that it provides, but also by the many international projects that it is currently involved with worldwide. I later had the opportunity to confirm in a meeting with a local economic development officer, who shares the goal of ensuring building employment and investment, that this particular company is indeed the largest employer in the area. To think that this internationally respected manufacturer can design, engineer, and build components for important projects around the globe all from a small rural British Columbia community is a remarkable example of Canadian ingenuity and capability. This local operation also serves as a reminder of the importance of infrastructure investments along with global free trade agreements with other countries and important interprovincial agreements such as TILMA to ensure that our local industry can compete and grow.

While at this manufacturing plant I was also shown a component that looked very much like the one's produced within the operation. Unlike the same part manufactured in house, with a maple leaf, identifying both the company and the country where it is made, this particular component was actually in fact a counterfeit copy with no identifiable manufacturer. Although it is often said that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, in this case it is a very serious concern. This particular component requires engineers to design, a foundry and machine shop to build, sales staff to sell and more plant staff to ship. In short there are many well paying local jobs that are created in getting this component to the market. These are important jobs that support families who in turn support our local economies and as such these counterfeit goods should not be treated lightly.

Last Friday in the House of Commons our Government introduced Bill C-56 "Combating Counterfeit Products Act". This act proposes to create a number of new enforcement tools to better protect Canadian manufacturers from the threat of illegally manufactured counterfeit goods entering into, being sold or otherwise distributed within Canada. Under the Act, border officials would have new abilities to detain shipments until rights holders can be contacted. In addition, Canadian businesses will also be able to request assistance with the Canadian Border Services Agency (CBSA) to share rights information on suspected shipments. New criminal offences can also apply to those individuals who are in the commercial possession, manufacture or trafficking of trademark counterfeit goods. New civil legal options will also be made available to legitimate rights holders to pursue legal action against those who profit from counterfeiting practices.

Aside from the potential damage I observed from counterfeiting

practices firsthand, the value of counterfeit goods seized in Canada has increased from \$7.6 million in 2005 to almost \$ 40 million last year. More important is the potential loss of Canadian jobs and what that would mean for small rural communities where other much needed well paying employment can be hard to find. Bills like C-56 may not generate much attention however the importance to take action against counterfeit goods is yet another way that our Government is ensuring that we protect jobs and support our important manufacturing sector.

Also occurring this week in Ottawa is continued debate on Government Bills C-47 "Northern Jobs and Growth Act" and C-48 "Technical Tax Amendments Act" while Senate Bill S-9 "Nuclear Terrorism Act" will also reach report stage debate. Some of the Private Members Bills up for debate this week include C-457 "An to Repeal the Clarity Act" C-452 "An Act to Amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons) along with Motions M-382 "Religious Freedom" and M-412 "Hydroelectric Project". If you have comments, questions or concerns on these or any Bills before the House of Commons please do not hesitate to contact me by phone 1(800) 665-8711 or email dan.albas@parl.gc.ca at your convenience.

March 18th

One of the trends I have observed with a number of bills and private members bills in Ottawa is that many propose to limit, penalize or otherwise restrict, actions which occur in our day to day to lives. Very few bills enhance the rights of citizens however, on March 11th, Bill C-26 came into force that does expand and better clarify the ability to make a citizen's arrest. As many of you may be aware, under the previous laws governing a citizen's arrest it was far more likely that the law abiding citizen who was attempting to make the arrest would be in trouble, than the person doing the crime. Many may recall a real-life situation when a small grocery store owner in Toronto who had been victimized repeatedly by shoplifters made a citizen's arrest and successfully caught a shoplifter only to be subsequently charged with a number of criminal offences including forcible confinement.

Although the shop owner was eventually acquitted the lengthy and extremely costly legal battle was not unlike being victimized a second time and all for attempting to protect his family livelihood from a criminal.

Bill C-26 The Citizen's Arrest and Self Defence Act, was introduced by our Government in November of 2011 and implemented several important changes that now underpin new rights for all citizens. The most

significant change in the new citizens arrest law is that a citizen's arrest can be made within a reasonable period of time after he or she finds someone committing a criminal offence occurring on or in relation to property. This power of arrest would only be authorized when there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is not feasible in the circumstances for the arrest to be made by a police officer. The new citizens arrest laws also allows for a reasonable use of force, taking into account all the circumstances of the particular case.

To be clear, the intent of this weeks report is NOT to advocate for vigilantism nor to suggest citizens take the law into their own hands but rather to provide information so all citizens can be aware of these changes and hopefully avoid misuse and misunderstanding. A citizen's arrest should never be viewed lightly as it is a serious and potentially dangerous undertaking. Law enforcement officers are highly trained professionals and generally, reporting criminal actions to the police is the best course of action. The main intent of the new citizens arrest law is to provide more legal guidance and clarity in those situations when crime occurs where there are reasonable grounds to believe that it is not feasible in the circumstances for the arrest to be made by a police officer. If you have further comments or concerns on Bill C-26 that has now come into force do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

This week the House of Commons will again be in session with continued debate on a number of Bills that I have referenced in previous reports. Government Bill C-55 "Response to the Supreme Court of Canada decision in R. vs Tse Act, Senate Bills S-9 "Nuclear Terrorism Act" and S-12 "Incorporation by Reference in Regulation" will be on the floor of the House of Commons early in the week. If you would like more information about any of these pieces of legislation, please contact me at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or by phone at 1 (800) 665-8711. On Thursday, March 21, our Government's Economic Action Plan budget for 2013 will be introduced by the Honorable Finance Minister Jim Flaherty. In next week's report I will provide further information on some of the measures within the 2013 Economic Action Plan.

April 2013

April 4th

Last week was a somewhat unusual one in Ottawa as much of the focus was on SO-31's, otherwise known as "Member's Statements" and the ability of Members of Parliament to engage in these 60 second statements delivered in the House of Commons directly before question period. Ultimately some in the media had this story turning into a full blown crisis of free speech and/or a large scale mutiny by some of the Government backbenches. If you are unfamiliar with a "Member's Statement", the summary definition is stated as "Members who are not Ministers are permitted to address the House for up to one minute on virtually any matter of local, provincial, national or international concern". Although the definition is quite open, there are in fact a number of restrictions that apply. During a member's statement there are to be no personal attacks on individual members or an attack on Senators and the actions of the Senate cannot be criticized. Likewise, questioning court rulings or the character of judges is also deemed inappropriate as is defamatory comments on non-members. In addition the use of verbatim comments from private citizens is to be avoided and comments should not be of a commercial nature.

As for the speaking order for these statements in the House of Commons, it is defined by the Chair who "consults speaking lists provided by the Whips of the various parties and attempts to recognize government Members and Members in opposition on an equal basis". This is not my definition but rather the definition from the House of Commons Compendium of Procedure. I raise this point as contrary to what you may have heard in the media, Parliamentary practice is clear in recognizing that Whips of a respective party have long been involved in the process of determining the speaking order during Members Statements. Much of this current debate is in questioning to what extent a whip should (and by extension a party) be involved in what individual Members of Parliament can or cannot say within the House of Commons. This is largely the more important subject and one that I would like to address in my report today.

First, I believe it is imperative to recognize that once you exclude Ministers, there are still hundreds of MP's who can and do speak on matters of importance to their constituents each day the House of Commons is sitting, without incident or controversy. In fact last week in recognizing World Autism Day, my colleague MP Mike Lake delivered one of the most touching Member's Statements I have yet heard in the House of Commons. However as is often the case, such a truly meaningful statement, eloquently delivered by MP Mike Lake, ended up being overlooked by the media- some might say upstaged in terms of coverage, by a statement from another MP that never even occurred.

Obviously I cannot speak for other Members of Parliament however from my own experience I have been able to deliver many Member's Statements in the House of Commons without incident. Examples of some of my statements include last year's record breaking season of the Penticton Vees, the good work that Canadian Shriners do on behalf of sick children across Canada and more recently recognizing the importance of responsible resource development to our rural communities such as Logan Lake and Merritt. I have received positive comments on these statements from colleagues on both sides of the House and from many local citizens. Often I find there is great interest in these types of statements as they help to reflect the diversity of our great country. My most recent statement spotlighted the work of International Space Station Commander Hadfield via radio at Uplands Elementary School as well as Olympian Kristi Richards at the Summerland Middle School. Both of these individuals are excellent role models for our youth and continue to encourage young Canadians to work hard and follow their dreams.

These are a few examples of Member's Statements I have given in the House of Commons on behalf of the citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla. If anyone is so interested I also post these members statements on my www.danalbas.com website, under the heading 'video'.

I make a point of authoring my own Member's statements largely based on events and achievements occurring within our riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla. My Member's Statements are not directed by any outside influences and it has never been suggested to me what I should or should not say as a Member of Parliament. From my own experiences in representing the citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla I have found Members Statements to be a brief but very important way that we as MP's can share events that occur in our ridings with other Canadians, and I have never encountered any difficulty whatsoever in doing so.

As the House is temporarily recessed to allow Members to work in their respective ridings, I will be meeting with constituents throughout our communities this week and look forward to hearing and discussing your comments and concerns. If you have any feedback on Federal issues or legislation before Parliament please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 1-[800-665-8711](tel:800-665-8711) or by email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca .

April 8th

Hearing the concerns of citizens is, in my view, one of the most important responsibilities of public office. Why I make a point of personally returning phone calls and attending a great many meetings is that, as taxpayers, you deserve to be heard by those you elect to represent you. There may not always be agreement on every issue but there can often be a consensus even on those points, upon which we can agree to disagree. However, there are also those issues where we can be unified in our views on matters that we collectively see as important. One of those issues that I continue to hear about from increasing numbers of constituents, is Canada's temporary foreign worker program.

Although concerns on this program have increased significantly over the past week, this has been an issue I have been hearing about for some time. As a result of these concerns that many constituents have taken the time to pass on to me, I was able to raise this issue in the House of Commons in late March when I stated:

“There are times when as Canadians we must rise above partisan interests and recognize areas that are of Canadian concern. I am not alone when I say that many of my constituents are concerned when they see temporary foreign workers taking jobs that many of us agree Canadians should be working at. Let us also recognize that the program originates back to the early 1970s. It was always intended to be temporary and yet, nearly 40 years later, the program is now older than many members of the House.”

The above is only a portion of my comments found in the Hansard record from March 26th, 2013. At the time I made these comments within the House of Commons I heard widespread agreement from all sides of the House recognizing the importance of this issue to Canadians. It also should not be overlooked that this is also a concern for many employers that I have taken the time to meet with locally. Although there have been some recent examples of employers potentially accessing this program for purposes that are contrary to the intent, and as a result this program is currently under formal review, the vast majority of employers I have heard from would prefer to hire employees who are Canadians or permanent residents. The challenge expressed by many employers is that either they are unable to find qualified workers with the required skills, or frequently in the case of the agricultural and hospitality sectors it is hard to find workers who will accept the positions offered.

In response the 2013 Economic Action Plan introduced by our Government has announced a new Canada wide job training program to help promote an increase of targeted skills training. The new program proposes a partnership between the federal and provincial governments that could potentially provide 2/3rd's funding with the remaining 1/3rd share from employers for a combined total of up to \$15,000 per worker for important new skills training. Although the partnership agreements need to be in place with the various Provinces and Territories the initial reaction I have heard from many employers and some post secondary training institutions has been positive. The importance of our country in being able to respond quickly and more efficiently to critical skills shortages is important. Recently I heard from one local employer about the need for skilled saw technicians and the lack of this type of training in our region in spite of these jobs being extremely well paying. This is but one of many examples that I hear on an ongoing basis and I am certain that most can agree that increasing the availability and diversity of our educational opportunities that can lead to well paying employment for citizens is an important priority that is in our National interest. As this is the final week before the House of Commons resumes sitting this Monday, April 15th I welcome the opportunity to hear from you. I can be reached at 1-800-665-8711 or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

April 14th

The House of Commons resumed session this week and what began on a feisty note with the anointment of a new leader for the Liberal Party of Canada has very quickly become a reflective one, given Monday's events in the United States.

In times of immense tragedy, words often fall short to convey our deepest condolences; thoughts and prayers for those who have been victimized by traumatic events are often difficult to put into perspective. Specifically, the recent events at the Boston Marathon are among those occurrences that are truly beyond such words. Senseless violence and attacks on innocent victims are reprehensible actions that Canada, as a country, has always stood opposed to. May we all take a moment to reflect on these unfortunate events and stand with our neighbors in condemning those who are responsible for these senseless acts.

Back in Ottawa, the wheels of Canadian Parliament will continue to move forward with a number of issues on the Parliamentary calendar for the week ahead. While the business of supply debate continues on the budget there will also be a number of private member's bills coming before the House. Bill C-475 An Act to amend the Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (order-making power) will begin second reading (first time debated). Despite the announced budget measures to double the current Last Post Fund in late March, Motion 422 on the Last Post Fund will also come forward for debate (first time debated). Resuming debate at second reading will be Bill C-266 Pope John Paul II Day Act, while Bill C-394 An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the National Defence Act (criminal organization recruitment) will reach Report stage. Later in the week Motion 412 "Hydroelectric project" will come before the House for a vote and on Friday Motion 230 "Anaphylaxis" will be debated for the first time.

This week's opposition day motion will involve debate on the temporary foreign worker program – a concern that I share in hearing from many constituents and also referenced in my MP report from last week. Over the past seven days I have been hearing increasingly from citizens, employers and organizations regarding the TFW program and many important points have been made on this issue. I welcome your comments on this or any subject and if you have not had a chance yet to share them directly with me please do not hesitate to do so. I can be reached toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca. Your views are extremely important to me as I often reference the concerns I hear when in the House of Commons.

As the British Columbia election period is about to get underway I would like to formerly thank all departing MLA's for their years of service to our region. Locally both MLA John Slater and Speaker of the House Bill Barisoff will not be running for re-election and I would like to take a moment to thank these individuals for their efforts in public office. As a former city councillor, I valued having a strong working relationship with both MLA's and wish them well in future endeavours. I would also like to pass on my appreciation for all of the candidates who will be spending a great deal of time campaigning over the next month and hope citizens take the time to meet with all of the candidates and express your concerns in the process. It should never be overlooked that democracy is not a spectator event and is enhanced when people get involved.

April 23rd

In light of recent events, this week our Government has moved up 3rd reading debate on Bill S-7: Combating Terrorism Act. Although the Liberals have indicated they will be supporting this act, the NDP made the disappointing accusation that the move to bring this act into law in an expedient manner was a political one and in making this comment, ignored the important provisions contained within this act for the benefit of our law enforcement agencies. It should be noted that the

Combating Terrorism Bill S-7 is not newly drafted legislation, having been introduced into our current session of Parliament over a year ago and in the previous Parliament as Bill C-17.

Rather than questioning the timing of the debate on Bill S-7, I believe it is more important to discuss the Bill's contents. Bill S-7 proposes a number of changes to our current Criminal Code that has largely been designed to focus on criminal acts after they have occurred. Bill S-7 recognizes that law enforcement officers need more improved legal tools that will enable them to disrupt planned acts of terrorism before they occur. One of the amendments in this Bill would allow investigative hearings and provide judges with the power to require someone who is believed to have information about a planned act of terrorism, to appear before a court to answer questions. If the person does not comply with the order, the same judge may in turn issue a warrant for their arrest. A similar new provision involves the creation of "recognizance with conditions". This means that in the event law enforcement agencies have reason to believe that terrorist activity will be carried out, application may be made to a judge for the imposition of conditions on suspects that would be necessary to prevent terrorist acts from occurring, including having said suspects appear in person before the court. Having a suspect appear in court allows a judge to consider whether it is desirable to impose reasonable conditions with the burden on government to establish why the requested conditions should be imposed. In the event an individual refused the conditions set by a judge, the court in turn could commit the individual to prison for up to 12 months.

In addition Bill S7 would also create a new offence for leaving or attempting to leave Canada in order to commit terrorism offences. This new offence would also include leaving Canada to participate in a terrorist training camp. Offences in this area could be subject to imprisonment for up to 14 years. In all of the above proposed amendments to the Criminal Code it should also be pointed out that strict conditions would need to be met for any of these tools to be utilized by law enforcement and would include the consent of the Attorney General.

Recent world events including those within United States and Canada have given us all reason to pause and reflect on those who seek to use terror against innocent victims. It is unfortunate that Bills like S-7 are necessary to protect Canadians and keep Canada strong as a nation however, it should not be overlooked that these amendments involve strong judicial oversight for each new measure that is proposed. Canada is a country that follows the rule of law including fair process and judicial overview. In balance I believe these measures will enhance the tools of law enforcement in maintaining public safety with sufficient independent judicial oversight to ensure that the values we hold as Canadians will be maintained. For these reasons, I will be voting in support of this Bill. I welcome your comments and questions on this or any Bill before the House of Commons. I can be reached at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

April 29th

Over this past weekend a local newspaper ran an editorial that ultimately questioned the use of tax dollars for partisan purposes, more specifically for "ten-percenters" allegedly being used for partisan political "attacks". Ultimately the editorial succeeded in generating a number of questions and comments from a cross section of citizens. I view this as a positive indicator when local citizens express interest on a particular subject and as a result would like to provide more information on this topic as part of my weekly MP

report. For those of you unfamiliar with a “ten percenter” it is a mail out resource provided to Members of Parliament to communicate issues of importance from the MP to the public. As these mail outs may not exceed 10% of the total number of households in an MP’s riding, they are called “ten-percenters”. Although MP’s are not restricted by how many “ten percenters” they can send out, they are limited to households within the riding represented by the MP in question. The costs of a ten per center come out of a Member of Parliaments office budget and are disclosed annually in the Board of Internal Economy “Individual Members Expenditure Reports”. It should also be noted that Member of Parliament office budgets are subject to annual spending limits that cannot be exceeded and are also disclosed in the same “Individual Members Expenditure Report”

As for the content of a “ten-percenter” Members of Parliament are free to communicate any issue or concern they deem of importance to local citizens. As was pointed out in the recent editorial, at times Members of Parliament from all parties have used these mail outs in a manner that many would agree is politically themed. However what was not pointed out in the editorial is that many Members of Parliament do not participate or engage in using aggressive, politically themed ten-percenters. Due to the interest in this kind of MP mail out, it is timely to discuss the approach I have taken as the MP for Okanagan-Coquihalla. Any mail out from my office I authorize personally with an approach that the mail out must provide information or helps to get feedback from constituents, often both. I believe it is important to make sure my priorities are in line with constituents and that concerns are being heard. As a rule I typically avoid personal attacks or strongly themed politically partisan messaging. One observation that I have come to appreciate from our now retired MLA and former Speaker of the House Bill Barisoff, is that most citizens prefer aggressive partisan attacks are left out of the debate and discussion. Although I will not be using these particular ten percenters that have raised the ire of some, I do support the right of Members of Parliament from all sides of the House to communicate on issues they believe are important without restrictions on the content. As Members of Parliament we are accountable to you- if our comments are offensive or disagreeable we deserve to be held to account for them if not in person at a meeting or through a phone call, then at the ballot box. If you have any further questions or concerns about ten percenters please feel free to share them with me.

Parliament Hill will be a busy one this week as the formal budget implementation bill will be introduced as well as important changes to the temporary foreign workers program will be announced. In addition debate will continue on the following Government Bills- C-15 “Strengthening Military Justice in the Defence of Canada Act” Bill C-54 “Not Criminally Responsible Criminal Reform Act”. This will also be a busy week for Private Members Business as Bill C-476 “Parliament Budget Officer Act” Bill C-394 “An Act to Amend the Criminal Code, Bill C-460 “Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada Act” along with the following motions M-428 “Electronic Petitions” M-430 “Persons with Disabilities”. If you would like further information on these bills or any matter before the House please contact me at your convenience. I can be reached via email at Dan.Albas@parl.gc.ca and toll free via phone at 1-800-665-8711

May 2013

May 6th

Each week I look forward to hearing from dozens, sometimes even hundreds, of different citizens on issues and concerns of importance to them. Although common issues may often parallel events in the media, others may be unique or related to an unreported matter that many citizens share a common interest with. One of the more recent concerns I have heard about involves the CBC. If you have been following some online websites, you may have heard of a diabolical plan where the Government will secretly “take control” over the CBC and convert the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation into a political propaganda machine. Like most rumours, speculation and innuendo, there is generally some factual validity at the core of an issue that is often then stretched or otherwise exaggerated to the extent that what is really occurring is at odds with the allegations. In this case these concerns relate to Bill C-60, the Economic Action Plan for 2013. Bill C-60 does not in any way compromise the journalistic independence of the CBC, nor does this Bill enable the Government of Canada to actively engage in the creative or political direction of the CBC. Let's start by pointing out that this provision applies to all crown corporations and does not unfairly single out the CBC. The provision requires each board of directors for these crown corporations to have their labour mandate approved by Treasury Board. These mandates currently are and will still be created independently by the crown corporations. This is the same criteria that ministries follow to ensure that there is responsible management. Crown corporations have either received, or continue to receive billions of taxpayer dollars every year and the shareholders are the Canadian public. If a crown corporation were not to be run responsibly, it would be the taxpayer that would ultimately foot the bill.

Given these challenging fiscal times it would be irresponsible of Government to not retain the ability to control costs that are shared by Canadian taxpayers as a result of public sector labor agreements. While some may favour the “blank cheque” approach with respect to Crown corporation labor agreements, it should also be pointed out that the vast majority of Federal public sector workers are already subject to Treasury Board oversight and this legislation will provide greater parity within the public sector and will also protect the interests of Canadian taxpayers. If you would like to read the actual text of the Bill please do not hesitate to give me a call or send an email. Another concern that I have heard from many citizens on is the billboard that I inherited and have continued to use along Highway 97 (heading south) at the northern boundary of our Okanagan-Coquihalla riding in West Kelowna. Many citizens have taken the time to share concerns over this billboard and the dislike for billboard signs in general.

I believe it is important to listen to the concerns of citizens and in this case there was a strong consensus opposed to this billboard sign. The challenge from my perspective is that this sign was extremely effective in relaying my contact information to citizens in West Kelowna, an important consideration as it is rare for a community that size to not have an MP office located directly within

the municipality. Fortunately one of the citizens who had expressed displeasure about the billboard sign also offered a constructive suggestion; that opening an office in West Kelowna would help negate the need for the sign. After much investigation this is precisely the course of action currently underway. The billboard sign contract has not been renewed and later this month I will have a new constituency office to assist West Kelowna and area residents with the many federal concerns that arise in the area. This office will also be more strategically located for citizens in Peachland, Merritt and Logan Lake who frequently travel through West Kelowna on a more regular basis. My existing Penticton office will continue to offer service to Penticton and the southern portion of Okanagan-Coquihalla as before.

It will also be another busy week on Parliament Hill as debate continues on Bill S-209 "An Act to amend the Criminal Code" (prize fights) Bill C-60 (second reading) along with private members bills S-213 "Korean War Veterans Day Act", C-460 "Sodium Reduction Strategy for Canada Act", C-463 "Discover Your Canada Act", and C-479 "An Act to Bring Fairness for the Victims of Violent Offenders". For more information on these or any Bill before the House of Commons I can be reached at 1-800-665-8711 or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca.

May 14th

This week the focus across Canada will be on British Columbia as the Provincial general election will have occurred by the time you read my weekly report. At the time of my writing, the election outcome is unknown, however one thing I can guarantee is that there will be no shortage of pundits, media and interest groups speculating on what the election results mean for British Columbians. As it happens, this is also a constituency week for the House of Commons as the House resumes session next Tuesday, May 21st.

In spite of this being a constituency week, an interesting report was released by a non-partisan organization that studies political participation in Canada. This particular report looked at the House of Commons and studied 54 days of discussion within the House in an effort to analyze which MP's speak the most. From a demographic standpoint the results were interesting. MP's under 35 years of age represent 9% of the House composition but spoke for 11% of total time during the 54 days studied, while 89% of the discussion was dominated by the remaining 91% of MP's who are over 35. From a gender perspective female MP's currently make up 25% of the House and spoke just in excess of 30% of the time period under study. From a Political perspective the parties speaking times were listed as NDP 44%, Conservative 36%, Liberal 16%, Green 2% and Bloc Quebecois 1%

During this same period of time my own content in this study was listed at just over 6,000 words spoken in the House of Commons. This put me ahead of Justin Trudeau at 5,400 words but well behind Tom Mulcair who as opposition leader spoke some 44,000 words in this time frame. The focus of this study is solely on words spoken and does not take into account Parliamentary Committee

work nor does it take into consideration those who have introduced Private Members Bills or Motions in the context of words spoken, however the results do indicate those who have a preference for talking. From my own perspective my focus is more on listening- it is why I do my annual summer listening tour and why I make a point of retuning phone calls and attending meetings. In my view, people deserve to be heard and as elected representatives listening to others is how we better understand the concerns of Canadians.

Whatever the outcome of the BC general election is this week I believe it is important to recognize that through democracy, the people have spoken. Although it is inevitable that some will be disappointed by the election outcome, we must not overlook the importance of respecting our democratic process and thanking those citizens among us who had the courage to put their name forward to serve the public interest. Let us never forget the freedom we enjoy as Canadians in electing our representatives.

May 22nd

With the Provincial election now concluded and the respective campaigns left to reflect and ponder the past thirty or so days I was reminded of the campaign I was involved with when running for Member of Parliament some two years ago.

One of the messages I heard loudly and clearly from a wide variety of citizens was the need to take immediate action on the MP pension plan, which was widely seen as grossly unfair to taxpayers. It was a message I shared in Ottawa as one of the first MP's to publicly call for changes to the MP pension plan that would make it more respectful to taxpayers.

It was rewarding to have the chance to vote in favour of those changes in the last budget implementation bill which will ensure the MP pension plan moves towards equal contributions and also penalizes previous early retirement benefits. These are changes Canadians expected and asked for and our Government delivered on that request. It is for this reason that I am particularly disappointed by some recent events that I know a number of citizens are concerned about as well. In fact, I have heard from an overwhelming number of constituents this past week who are united in sharing their strong opposition to unaccountable Senators who engaged in actions that are unbecoming of public officials and that concern is justified, in my view.

The Senate remains a challenging institution to abolish or reform, more so given that particular provinces (arguing through the Courts), maintain that our constitution requires Provincial consent to make such significant changes. While Canadians await further clarification from the Supreme Court of Canada on the legal basis by which Senate reform or abolishment can occur, that delay should not be an excuse to engage in actions that are offensive to taxpayers. As I have in the past, I will continue to support changes that increase accountability to taxpayers.

Ottawa is also very busy this week as a result of our Government introducing a motion to extend the sitting hours of the House of Commons into the evenings. Some of the Bills coming before the House from Government this week include continued debate on Bill C-48 Technical Tax

Amendments Act, first debate on Bill C-52 Fair Rail Freight Service Act, and report stage for Bill C-51 Safer Witnesses Act. Senate Bill S9 Nuclear Terrorism Act will also come before the House for third reading debate. Private Members business will include the first debate on Bill C-489 An Act to amend the Criminal Code and the Corrections and Conditional Release Act (restrictions on offenders). Business of Supply will also come before the House as will a number of votes.

Although I have discussed the majority of these Bills in previous MP reports if there is a Bill coming before the House you would like further information on, or would like to comment or share a concern please do not hesitate to contact my office at your convenience. I can be reached via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

Before this week's report comes to a close I would like to congratulate those newly elected and re-elected MLA's who will be representing our region in Victoria. I would also like to thank retiring MLAs such as Bill Barisoff and Harry Lali who gave many years of service to citizens in their respective communities Finally I would also like to recognize all of those who ran for the office of MLA who were not successful.

It takes great courage to run for public office and requires a significant personal commitment during the writ period. A special thank you to the many volunteers who work tirelessly behind the scenes helping candidates in their respective campaigns. I look forward to working with our new and re-elected MLA's along with the dedicated representatives in local Government to ensure we take action on issues of concern for the citizens we collectively represent.

May 27th

The Senate and expenses of individual Senator's continues to be the single most discussed topic I have heard from local citizens throughout my travels over the past week. In fact, there are few issues in the past two years that have generated as much feedback and anger from citizens as this particular topic. Public officials at every level of Government have an obligation of trust to spend tax dollars in a fiscally transparent and responsible manner. If an elected official breaks that obligation, in my view, there should be penalties and I will continue to support initiatives that increase transparency and accountability to taxpayers. However, I also believe that it is important to recognize that while there are legitimate questions regarding the practices of some senators, this should not unfairly taint those who conduct their affairs accountably. There are many Senators who work hard on behalf of taxpayer's and who use taxpayer provided funds in a responsible manner.

An example of the good work that is done in the Senate can be found in Senate Bill S-10 that will come before the House of Commons this week. Bill S-10 is called the "Prohibiting Clusters Munitions Act". It should never be overlooked nor taken for granted that there are some regions in the world where innocent lives are taken through the use of explosive "cluster bombs" also known as "fragmentation bombs". These types of military ordinance may be loaded with shrapnel, fragments of metal, incendiary related combustible materials or even chemicals. The intent is to inflict as much collateral damage to an areas as possible. These types of devices have been used in modern day conflicts such as Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and more recently rumored to have been used in Georgia, Libya and possibly Syria. These types of explosive devices are most frequently the cause of

death for innocent families including children in conflict areas and have been universally condemned by a large number of organizations and countries around the Globe.

In 2008 at the Convention of Cluster Munitions our Government signed on to an international treaty process to eliminate the use of cluster munitions. At the same time Canada withdrew over 12,000 cluster munitions that are currently in the process of being destroyed with an estimated completion date of 2014. More than 100 countries have also signed on to this same agreement and are in the process of withdrawing and destroying cluster munitions from active service. As this is an international treaty, under our Canadian constitution it must be passed in Parliament and implemented in legislation to be deemed valid and allow Canada to meet our obligations under this agreement. That is where Bill S-10 comes in. The intent of my comments on this topic is to point out that there is important work that is performed in our Canadian Senate that should not be overlooked. Bills like S-10 do not receive much media attention however it is important that Canada continues to take a lead role in helping to protect innocent victims from potential harm. S-10 is a Senate Bill that I intend to support and am proud that Canada is taking a role in eliminating the use of cluster munitions.

Also being debated in the House this week is another Senate Bill, S-2 "The Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act". This is a bill that proposes to create basic rights and protections for individuals on reserves in the event of a relationship breakdown, or on the death of a spouse or common-law partner. This Bill references the family home and other assets to ensure that families living on reserve have the same rights and protections as people living off reserve when it comes to matrimonial property. Bill S-2 will also allow courts to apply First Nations matrimonial and real property laws for those First Nations who have enacted related legislation. It also targets violence against women and children living on reserve. It will allow courts to grant emergency protection orders to remove a violent partner from the home.

Also occurring this week is continued debate on Government Bill C-54, "Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act" and Bill C-48 "Technical Tax Amendments Act, 2012". There will also be a number of Private members Bills and Motions up for debate along with multiple votes. With such a busy parliamentary schedule the House has extended the sitting hours until midnight meaning many of my days will be in the 16-18 hour range thus delaying the times I have available to return your calls and emails. As always I welcome your comments, concerns and questions on these or any matter before the House. I can be reached at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

June 2013

June 10th

In my March 14th MP report I touched on the subject of Canada's wireless communication industry and the fact that Canadian consumers pay some of the highest wireless communication rates worldwide. In the same report I also covered many of the initiatives that our Government has introduced or is in the process of bringing forward to help stimulate wireless provider competition and improve availability in many markets across Canada. In response to that report I received a number of comments from citizens who were generally encouraged that government is taking a more active role to increase competition and encourage greater access along with more competitive pricing. Following that report I also had a meeting to hear directly from representatives of the Canadian wireless industry who also passed on some information that may be of interest.

According to the Canadian wireless industry roughly 99% of Canada's population now has access to wireless service that is 3G or faster, in fact there are now more wireless connections in Canada than wired. The largest growing demographic of smartphone users is between 18-34 years old- who make up 74% of all Canadian users. On average traffic on some Canadian wireless networks is growing by 5% per week with over 274 million text messages sent per day. As for the Canadian wireless industry, it now employs more than 261,000 people and contributes in excess of \$40 billion annually to the Canadian economy. In terms of investment, nearly \$24 billion has been invested in wireless infrastructure over the past decade. It is estimated that by 2014 more people will connect to the internet via a mobile device than a conventional desktop computer. At the same time for users over 55 years of age smartphone use is expected to increase from roughly 17% of the population to close to 30%. Clearly the Canadian wireless industry is a fast growing one involving more and more Canadians of all age groups. It is for these reasons that many might take interest in the newly announced CRTC wireless industry code that will bring new rights to Canadian wireless consumers.

Changes to "The Code" as it is referred to, will include the ability to cancel your contract at no cost after a maximum of two years, the ability to cancel your contract and return your phone at no cost, within 15 days (and specific usage limits), if you are unhappy with the service, to be able to have your phone unlocked after 90 days, or immediately if you paid in full for your phone. Also included is the option to have your service suspended at no cost if your phone is lost or stolen, to receive a notification when you are roaming in a different country, disclosing what the rates are for voice services, text messages, and data usage, to limit your data overage charges to \$50 a month and your data roaming charges to \$100 a month and to pay no extra charges for a service described as "unlimited". You may also refuse a change to the key terms and conditions of your contract, including the services in your contract, the price for those services, and the duration of your contract. The above changes in some cases apply differently to pre-paid wireless services and all of the changes do not come into effect until later this year on December 2nd of 2013. If you have further questions or comments on these changes please do not hesitate to contact me directly.

Debate in Ottawa this week will include the following Government Bills C-60 "Economic Action Plan 2013" and Bill C-51 "Safer Witnesses Act". Senate Bills S-2 "Family Homes on Reserves and Matrimonial Interests or Rights Act" and S-17 "Tax Conventions Implementation Act, 2013" Private Members Bills this week will include Bill C-419 "An Act respecting language skills" and Bill C-478 "Respecting Families of Murdered and Brutalized Persons Act" If you have comments, questions or

concerns on these or any Bill before the House of Commons please contact me toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

June 10th

As I write this week's report to you it happens to be tax freedom day. This is the day where your combined tax bill from all levels of Government is considered to be "paid" by the average Canadian and from that point on, any income can go towards paying for expenses, discretionary spending, debt or directed to savings etc. I believe that we should never overlook the fact that it takes roughly half a year to get to this point although the upside is that five years ago it took nearly 7 months to reach tax freedom day. In fact, today the federal tax burden on Canadians is at its lowest level in 50 years. Lowering of the GST rate from 7% to 5% and reducing income taxes are primary reasons for these changes however there have been nearly 150 different types of tax reductions introduced by our Government overall in recent years. In addition over one million low income families, seniors and individuals have been removed from the tax rolls over this same time frame, to directly benefit those most in need.

Ultimately these changes leave more money in your wallet where you can decide best how those funds can benefit you and your family. It is estimated that the burden on the average family today has been reduced by more than \$3,000 per year in combined taxes. Often the debate within the House of Commons will focus around how best to grow jobs and the support the Canadian economy and if these objectives are best met through bigger government and more governmental spending or smaller government with taxpayers deciding where to best spend their hard earned money. This is to a large extent an ideological debate and while most agree with the need to balance taxation levels there is again disagreement on where the balance point should be. One point that is not in dispute is that last week Statistics Canada announced over 95,000 net new jobs were created all across Canada in the month of May-the majority being full-time, in the private sector. This was the second largest monthly job gain in Canadian history, and I was also pleased to see that youth employment was also up by over 54,000 jobs- the largest increase in youth employment in roughly thirty years. Since July of 2009 there are now over one million net new jobs in Canada as our job creation record is the best within the G7.

Odds are you may not have heard about Canada's recent success in new jobs or our progress in moving tax freedom day earlier in the year. I have noted most of the recent media focus has been on a fellow backbench MP resigning from caucus as the principal news story dominating a large segment of our Parliamentary press gallery. Over the same time frame there have also been many important Bills that have moved forward but again are largely unreported as the focus remains on the actions of a few and overlooks the work of many. If I sound somewhat jaded with how some of the Ottawa media cover what we do in Ottawa, it is in large part because I feel the positive work and many accomplishments are constantly ignored or overlooked. This past week I spoke in support of several different private members bills that are important to citizens in Okanagan-Coquihalla. I know from my experience with my own private members bill how much effort and compromise is required to bring a Bill through the House. The fact that so many of these bills are overlooked is disappointing.

Fortunately there is a solution: www.openparliament.ca is a volunteer run website that is the creation and hard work of Mr. Michael Mulley. Open Parliament is an incredible resource and does an

outstanding job in compiling what occurs within the House of Commons and presents that information in a very user friendly and informative manner. In short, Open Parliament allows you to “keep tabs” on what occurs in the House of Commons and most importantly it is a very effective tool for citizens to hold their elected Members of Parliament to account. I encourage citizens to visit Open Parliament to hold me to account. Speeches, member statements, voting records and even my twitter feed are aggregated and presented in an easy to follow manner and I encourage citizens to pay a visit to the site. If you have any comments, questions or concerns do not hesitate to contact me toll free at [1- 800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

June 17th

Last week was perhaps one of the most unusual I have yet encountered on Parliament Hill. A bizarre incident occurred late in the week when a national news outlet broke a story that Thomas Mulcair, Leader of the Official Opposition, had failed to stop at a series of stop signs on Parliament Hill with an RCMP cruiser with its lights flashing in pursuit. When Mr. Mulcair finally arrived at his parking stall, it is further alleged he made aggressive comments to the RCMP officer involved. As is often the case, this issue became a large media story and also dominated much of the daily Question Period. The Liberals in turn introduced a motion reminding all Members of the House about the importance of respecting Parliament Hill traffic regulations and thanking the RCMP for enforcing them. The motion was quickly passed by the House with all in favour.

This issue was quickly succeeded by another as the subject arose of Members of Parliament, more specifically Justin Trudeau, and the practice of missing time in the House of Commons while accepting thousands of dollars from charities in order to deliver paid speeches. This has led to many reporters delving into the financial disclosure of all Members of Parliament to probe the extent of Members of Parliament billing charities for work while they are also being paid as MPs. While the subject quickly became the most hotly discussed issue in Ottawa, what was less reported was that Mr. Trudeau has now volunteered to work with organizations that he past billed for speeches in an effort to mitigate any hard feelings and resolve outstanding issues. From my perspective while both of these events received a large amount of media attention once again it must also be pointed out that many important bills that are progressing through Parliament remain largely unreported. This was a concern similar to what I voiced in my report from last week.

Of those items that received little attention, here is the progress of some of the recent Legislation within the House. Bill C-60, the budget implementation bill, has passed third reading. Bill C-62 “The Yale First Nation Final Agreement” has reached third reading in the Senate, Senate Bill S-2 the “Matrimonial Real Property Rights Act” that I have discussed in the past along with Bill S-8 “Safe Drinking Water on First Nations Lands” has now passed third reading in the House of Commons. Bill S-6 “Election and term of Office of First Nations Chiefs” has come before the House as has Bill S-16 “Trafficking in Contraband Tobacco”. One bill that will be up for debate and that I intend to speak to, is Bill C-54 “Not Criminally Responsible Reform Act”. Citizens in Merritt will know the tragedy of three young children who had their lives senselessly taken by an individual who was found to be “Not criminally responsible” for his actions. The family of these children, including their mother, have since discovered that there are many loopholes in this legislation that allow for the family to be continually victimized by an individual whose actions have already caused far too much pain. Bill C54 seeks to take action on many of these long outstanding issues and introduces greater judicial oversight into

this process in addition to greater consideration for victims. This is a bill that has been strongly opposed by the Liberals and I expect the debate will be a very involved one. I have heard from many citizens in the community of Merritt who are strongly supportive of this Bill. I will continue to speak in support of this Bill and look forward to voting in favour of it.

Also occurring in the House of Commons this week is private members business that includes Bill C-473 "An Act to amend the Financial Administration Act" and Bill C-452 "An Act to amend the Criminal Code (exploitation and trafficking in persons) will reach report stage. A reminder again from last week's MP report the excellent website www.openparliament.ca is a great resource for all citizens to keep tabs on legislative events occurring on Parliament Hill. If you have a comment or question on these or any Bill before the House of Commons please contact me toll free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

June 24th

Without question, one of the most frequently raised concerns that I hear from citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla, pertains to the Canadian Senate, and by extension- senators. Recently I have had several requests to write about the Senate in a weekly MP report. Although I have covered this particular topic previously, it has been suggested that some may have missed that report. As this is a topic of concern for many, I have included further information on the subject of our Canadian Senate that I also discussed in February of this year.

The two Senate questions I hear most often are directly related to each other: "Why isn't the Senate abolished?" and "Why not just stop appointing Senators and get rid of the Senate?". The answer to these questions is complex as it involves the legal status of the Senate and the obligations of Government to comply with legislation that, in some cases, is well over one hundred years old. The Senate, it should not be forgotten, is part of our Constitution. When the founders of Canadian Confederation created the Senate, they did so by essentially dividing Canada into five different regions: The Maritimes, Ontario, Quebec, Western and "Additional". Additional includes Newfoundland, Labrador, NWT, Yukon and Nunavut. By design the Senate is not based on a representation by population model as is the House of Commons but rather on the principle of "equal" regional representation where the first four regions each have 24 seats while the "Additional" regions have 9 of the 105 seats in the Senate. All of this was re-affirmed in 1982 with the repatriation of the Constitution and a new constitutional amendment process was adopted.

Consequently the constitutionally mandated Senate representation arrangement means that regions of Canada are legally entitled to the number of seats as defined within the Constitution Act of 1867. To date every Prime Minister elected in Canada's history has by legal obligation, appointed Senators when vacancies arise, most often created when a Senator reaches the mandatory retirement age of 75. In addition, the Prime Minister may, in exceptional circumstances, temporarily appoint 4-8 additional Senators if there is a deadlock that must be broken. One of the challenges to the Senate "equal" representation model is that it conflicts with representation by population. As an example, the current Senate model ensures there are actually 30 Senate seats east of Quebec – that is six more Senate seats than the 24 in all of Western Canada combined. Likewise for Ontario in spite of having a larger population than Quebec, Ontario has the same number of Senate seats as Quebec. This senate

imbalance was summarized recently by Justin Trudeau who made the comment that “We have 24 senators from Quebec and there are just six from Alberta and six from B.C.... That’s to our advantage.”. Given that some regions in Canada, from a population perspective, are under-represented compared to others, when it comes to the discussion of Senate abolishment, many in western Canada are strongly in favour while regions of Canada such as Quebec are just as strongly opposed as demonstrated by Mr. Trudeau.

Many constituents are surprised that the legislation to reform the Senate, enabling Provincial elections and establishing for the first time, term limits, have been held up in Provincial courts. In order to be able to move on Senate reform, and rather than wasting years and potentially millions of taxpayer dollars in legal wrangling, our Government has posed a series of six questions to the Supreme Court of Canada requesting a ruling on how the Senate can be legally reformed or abolished in accordance with our Constitution. One of the many questions one on the need to determine if there is a requirement to have a Canadian constitutional debate involving all of the Provinces and Territories. Although many have expressed a desire to see action taken on the Senate, few have expressed interest in opening up a Canadian constitutional debate that could potentially pit different regions of the country against each other at a time when national unity is critical. This will be the first time in over three decades that our Supreme Court will look at the issue of Senate reform and/or abolishment in a review process that will ideally provide more clarity on how action can be taken on our Canadian Senate.

July 2013

July 1st

As a Canadian and as an elected official, Canada Day is easily my favorite day of the year. It is that one special day when we, as a nation, come together and celebrate all that we love about our country. While we gather in celebration here in Canada it should not be lost on us that in Egypt the citizens are also gathering in mass for entirely different but important reasons. We should also not overlook that our neighbors in Alberta are also gathering together to support fellow citizens in the cleanup after a devastating amount of flooding. More and more often around the globe mass gatherings of citizens are becoming increasingly common. However what is becoming less so is celebrations such as Canada Day. Giving thanks and sharing in the spirit that we collectively share is part of what makes us unique.

This Canada Day I was able to visit with citizens in Merritt, Summerland, Penticton, West Kelowna and Peachland, driving to each community with a few other stops along the way. The beauty and diversity of our region here in Okanagan-Coquihalla combined with the warm hospitality of those who live here are part of what makes Canada Day such a special one. I would like to sincerely thank the many volunteers and citizens who give generously of their time to come out and share in the spirit of this amazing day. It is always a pleasure to meet so many new people and I am already looking forward to my summer listening tour so that I can return to many of these same communities and meet with more citizens. Hearing and sharing the thoughts and ideas that help make our country great is part of how Canada has become the envy of the world.

On that same note, recently the New York and Copenhagen based Reputation Institute named Canada as the world's most reputable country for the third year in a row. Trust, admiration and respect are many of the qualities that contributed to Canada earning this esteemed position based on 27,000 submissions from G-8 countries who ranked 50 different nations. Following Canada in the second ranking was Sweden with Switzerland in third and Australia in fourth. Norway, Denmark, New Zealand, Finland, the Netherlands and Austria rounded out the top 10 countries while the United States in contrast was ranked 22nd.

As mentioned earlier, my annual summer listening tour will begin in mid July- if you would like to arrange for a meeting at your home, business or other location in your community, please do not hesitate to contact my office to set up an appointment. As something new this summer, I will also be hosting a number of drop-in Friday's at both my West Kelowna/Westbank and Penticton constituency offices. I have taken note that some citizens can better take advantage of a "drop-in" format as opposed to having scheduled meetings. These Fridays, I often refer to as "barber shop" Fridays, will be advertised through my upcoming MP reports. If you have any questions, comments or concerns please do not hesitate to give me a call. I can be reached at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

July 8th

Although Forestry falls under Provincial jurisdiction it is important to recognize the importance of this industry to all levels of Government that also includes communities, local economies and the many working families who are supported directly and indirectly by forest sector jobs. In Okanagan-Coquihalla, communities such as Merritt, Logan Lake and Okanagan Falls have long had direct ties with the forest sector while many important industry related support businesses are located in Penticton and West Kelowna/ Westbank. For many years, Canada's largest trading partner has been the United States and with the American housing construction boom slowing down, this in turn has reduced export demand and has resulted in mill closures as we witnessed locally at Okanagan Falls. To further challenge the British Columbia forest industry, the pine beetle devastation has also reduced the available timber supply and recent mill tragedies have dramatically increased insurance costs for those mills still operating. In summary, there are a number of challenges within this industry as critics are generally quick to point out. However while it is often easy to criticize, it is also important to recognize efforts underway to help support the forest industry.

Free trade agreements, although often opposed by some, open up new markets that British Columbia lumber manufacturers can access and this in turn, can help keep mills open and people working. As an example of this, BC lumber exports to China exceeded \$1 billion in revenue for the first time in history in 2011. Exports to Japan have had similar success and more recently a wood export guide to India has been prepared for manufacturers. The need to diversify Canada's trading partners is a top priority for the Canadian forest industry as it is in many other industries. However it is also important that innovation is not overlooked as another means to diversify and increase demand for our local value - added lumber producers.

This week I was excited to attend an important event as Structural Wood Products announced an expansion of the recently opened Okanagan Falls production facility. This new expansion will allow for the construction of the new "Eco Structure Wall System" that consists of pre-fabricated

engineered wooden wall structures made using the technology of the cross laminated construction method. These walls are intended to be an alternative to conventional concrete “tilt-up” wall construction with the advantage of being lighter, stronger and also offering improved insulation qualities while being more energy efficient to produce and transport. For Structurlam, a company with 50 years of expertise and over 150 employees this is an investment that has a very bright future.

In Whitecourt Alberta, Millar Western Forest Products is introducing an anaerobic hybrid digester that will convert pulp mill effluent to green energy. This waste to green energy technology has the potential to be used in other mills to help reduce waste and lower long term energy costs. In Meadow Lake Saskatchewan, the local Tolko Mill will soon become the first in North America to produce specialty orientated strand board products on a single production with enhanced quality controls.

These innovations are a few examples of Natural Resources Canada partnership projects under the Investment in Forest Industry Transformation Program . Although challenges in the forest industry remain, the need to proactively expand and diversify our value - added forestry sector are essential objectives that help support local economies and help create new and support existing jobs. While we as a country continue to lead the G-7 in job creation and overall fiscal management it is also important to recognize this success does not happen by accident. Through partnerships between industry and all levels of Government working proactively together to open new trade markets or increase innovation we can and will succeed.

July 16th

As you may have already heard, one of the larger media stories out of Ottawa this week focused on the subject of Monday’s cabinet shuffle. For political pundits and journalists alike, cabinet shuffles are somewhat like open season as speculation, opinion and judgment are cast within mere hours of the announcement.... long before any of the newly announced Ministers have had the opportunity to spend time in a new or pre-existing portfolio.

Over the past two years while I have served on Parliament Hill, I have worked with many of those named to cabinet on Monday. I have gained an insight and a much better appreciation of and respect for the demanding job of being in cabinet and the great importance of the role. My comments might be at odds with what you may have heard from recent media reports. From reviewing many of the pundits’ comments over the past 24 hours one re-occurring theme from some in the Ottawa-based media gallery seems to be that cabinet “doesn’t matter”. It was not my intention to cover the topic of the cabinet shuffle in this week’s report, however after reading many media stories I feel compelled to comment from another perspective. It is my experience as a Member of Parliament that who serves in cabinet does matter, and in my view, it matters to all of us.

I would like to share one of my first challenges as an MP that will forever be in my memory. Not long after being elected, a situation occurred where a Priest, who was legally in Canada and working on starting a new life here at a local Temple, was, in error, issued a deportation order and given five days to leave our country. In this instance the community in question, including the local Mayor and MLA, rallied strongly in support of the priest. As the newly elected MP, my only option was to pursue this matter directly with the Minister responsible. I was very much aware that the Minister could have simply said “MP Albas, there is nothing I can do in this case” however that was not the response I

received. Instead the Minister in question took the time to hear the concerns, looked at the information I presented and offered to try and help. In the end, we found a solution; however it was not lost on me that were it not for a Minister who was willing to take the time to get involved in this case, it certainly would have had a very different outcome.

In another instance when I first arrived in Ottawa, one of my primary tasks was to take on the archaic prohibition-era liquor importation rules that prevented Okanagan based wineries from sending wine to other regions in Canada. This was an issue that was raised in an all-candidates debate and throughout my initial summer listening tour I heard that it was a problem which had frustrated many in Okanagan-Coquihalla for years. It was an out-of-date law that made no sense. Although this issue would eventually be addressed by a relatively short amendment through my private member's bill, I also received incredibly strong support from the Minister in question, and from other Ministers with related portfolios. Little did I know how important this support would turn out to be. Although this issue was a relatively small one on the national scale many of the bureaucrats I spoke with said it could or should not be done as a Private Members Bill. In fact, the number of reasons why this could not be done seemed to grow almost by the day. Without the support of the Minister it is highly unlikely that the Bill ultimately would have received royal assent, or if it had, certainly not within the first 12 months of this 41st Parliament.

To the pundits in Ottawa these small events seldom make the media radar screens but to the people involved, they are important. Having Ministers who take the time to listen and are willing to help make things happen goes a long way toward making a difference in our communities. In this shuffle the Ministers referenced in this report have been moved into other Ministries where I believe they will continue to make a difference for Canadians.

There are also a number of Parliamentary Secretaries who have now moved into Cabinet that I have worked with extensively on various Parliamentary committees and without exception these are very capable and committed people who I also believe will do good work on behalf of Canadians. There are a number of different and important issues to be addressed in the communities within Okanagan-Coquihalla and I look forward to working with our new cabinet to ensure continued success for our region. As my summer listening tour is soon to begin I welcome the opportunity to meet with you or your organization. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-800-665-8711 or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

July 25th

The summer constituency break from the House of Commons for Members of Parliament is often referred to as the "BBQ Season", although I have yet to attend any barbecues so far this summer. I have been very fortunate to be able to attend a large number of different community events, engage in meetings with constituents, meet with local government officials and have toured many small business operations. Although we often think of "big business" when it comes to employment we should not overlook that here in Canada 98% of workers who support families are actually employed by small businesses. In many of the small business operations I have visited locally I have observed a pattern where investments in innovation and new technology along with plant expansions are helping to increase sales growth and create a demand for more workers.

Government can also play a role to assist this growth and investment– as an example in our most recent Economic Action Plan budget the temporary hiring credit for small business was extended for an additional year. Many of the small business employers I have met with are taking advantage of the hiring incentive which is credited automatically when a new employee is hired. In fact across Canada roughly 560,000 small businesses have taken advantage of this credit and that in turn has resulted in excess of \$220 million being re-invested. That not only helps these businesses to take on new opportunities as they arise, but also aids in keeping our local economies strong. From a recent meeting with an Okanagan Falls employer, I learned that these new investments are resulting in some very interesting and innovative products which will greatly benefit our region as well as helping to create some much needed new jobs. This is particularly important to areas that have been hard hit of late, due to the cyclical nature of some industries or from the fall out of the financial crisis of 2007-8 and the recession that followed. These kinds of investments help to create stability and confidence that is vitally important to see continued success. While some would like to see more investment by the government in terms of direct jobs, almost all those that I have met, see the importance of local, regional, provincial and federal elected officials helping to support policies that help the private sector to invest and grow. I have also become more aware of how local Okanagan-Coquihalla businesses who operate internationally are utilizing regional strengths with various products from the Kootneys or Similkameen Valley. More recently I learned of another opportunity in the Similkameen Valley that can support a reasonable number of jobs while also enhancing environmental protection– which is something I plan to explore further.

When in Ottawa, we debate and vote on the various clauses that are contained in the many Bills that come before the House of Commons, however it is very rewarding to see firsthand the net outcome of these Bills once they become law. The provisions in some of these bills are intended to help support jobs and to grow our local economies. A visiting Minister was asked what bills he helped pass this year that would help the Canadian economy. His response was the 'Northern Jobs and Growth Act'. That helps our territories to better and more efficiently process, with full environmental scrutiny and review, the many resource development projects that have been discussed since the times of Diefenbaker. How would Okanagan-Coquihalla benefit from these Territories being able to permit more like provinces, with less of the process being run out of Ottawa? We have world class manufacturers of service vehicles and electrical components for mining as two examples. These employers provide high paying jobs that help support our local economies. These past few weeks I have toured many small business operations and met employers who are taking advantage of these incentives to make new investments and to hire new workers in these expanded small business operations. That is not to suggest there are not still challenges or more work that we can do. An important part of my summer listening tour is meeting with groups and individuals to hear ideas and challenges that exist so these can be shared in Ottawa once the fall session is underway. I welcome your comments, questions and the opportunity to meet with you. Please do not hesitate to contact me at 1-800-665-8711 or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

July 31st

As I shared in a recent report roughly one month ago, Canada Day is my favorite day of the year in large part because it is that one special day when we, as a Country, come together and celebrate all that we love about our great nation. Since being elected as a Member of Parliament it has also occurred to me how often I wish there were more days where we all stopped for a moment to think about the true meaning of Canada Day. I submit that for each of us, the meaning will be different, unique and special. Most importantly I believe we can recognize that collectively we are all part of a greater good that we know and love as Canada. That when we work together, as a nation, when we are united, we are so much stronger than when we are divided. What sets us apart from most other nations is that in spite of our vastness and great diversity we can stand together and support what makes Canada strong.

I mention these points out of concern that I am observing a trend from different jurisdictions including local governments, Provincial governments and increasingly, groups and organizations that have lost sight of the big picture and seem to disregard the greater good. Frequently these disputes and disagreements are centered around jurisdiction, decision making and finance, or put another way.... power. There are some issues that I believe affect all of us as Canadians to the extent that it is in our national interest to work together, find consensus and solutions. If you followed the recent Premiers' conference in Niagara on the Lake in Ontario you will know that some were critical of the proposed new Canada Jobs Skills Training Program provisions laid out in the economic action plan in this year's budget. To be fair it is easy to criticize. The Job Skills Program has not evolved to the stage of reaching individual agreements with different Provinces at this point. The program also proposes significant changes to the status quo and depends on employers being actively involved in the skills development training. This last point enrages some critics who resent private sector employers being involved in publicly funded Government programs that to date have been largely delivered at the discretion of the Provinces.

However there is a larger more important point that critics routinely ignore and that is the fact that the current skills training system is largely not accomplishing its goals. How do I know this? I make a point of meeting with employers and touring local business operations on a weekly basis. The number of employers who are struggling to find the skilled workers they need is alarming. At the same time, I have also encountered and met with many graduating students who are deeply in debt after having borrowed to fund an education in a profession where there are few jobs available. Those graduates are now forced to look at re-training or taking lesser positions that do not reflect their educational investment. For many employers the short term solution has been to turn to the temporary foreign workers program- the increasing use of this program is a concern that I know all Canadians from all political spectrums share. I raised these same concerns in the House of Commons earlier this year and even in that heavily partisan environment, I heard loud consensus from all sides. In summary I believe it is within our national interest as a Country to take action on this problem. While I respect there will always be disagreement and debate on the decisions of Government, in this instance I believe we cannot stand by and support the status quo approach while we have unemployed young graduates and a growing use of temporary foreign workers. Many do not like change however we must not overlook that one of our great strength as a Country has long been our ability to come together for the greater good to keep Canada strong.

August 2013

August 19th

The most discussed topic to arise this week is the announcement that the House of Commons will be prorogued and reconvening in October instead of mid September as the fixed Parliamentary calendar was originally set for. Prorogation is one of the more interesting and also misunderstood of all of the various procedures regarding parliamentary affairs. What is a “prorogation”?

In essence each “session” of Parliament is not unlike a chapter in a book. Much as each chapter will have a beginning and an end, so too will a session of Parliament.

Prorogation is officially defined as the ending of a session of Parliament. In this case the 1st session of the 41st Parliament will come to a close and when the House reconvenes in October there will be a throne-speech which is the Parliamentary tradition for opening a new session of Parliament as the Government outlines the direction and agenda of the coming session, that in this instance will be the second session of the 41st Parliament.

Although some will try to suggest that the Parliamentary act of prorogation is an unusual or uncommon one, in fact the opposite is true. Looking back at all 41 of our elected Parliaments and beginning with our first Parliament in 1867, there have only been five Parliaments that did not have two or more sessions. In fact many Parliaments had 3 or more sessions with some being as many as 5, 6 and even 7 sessions within the duration of an elected Parliament. To be fair, prior to the House of Commons adopting a fixed calendar, the only way the House could adjourn was either by agreement of the larger parties, (something that rarely occurs even to this day) or by Proroguing the House. As we also know from more recent history, prorogation is not only used to allow for a throne speech and a new session within a Parliament, it can also be used by Government to avoid votes of confidence (obviously more common in a minority Government) or as was done recently in the Ontario Legislature, to make way for the governing party to choose a new leader- and thus a new Premier of the Governing party. It should also be noted that prorogation is a tool that can be used at the discretion of Government without the consent of the opposition (that would normally be required to adjourn the House).

There are also some misconceptions that exist about Prorogation, the most common is that all bills, in particular Private Members Bills, are in effect “killed” when a House prorogues. This is partially true in that if a Bill is not re-introduced into the House of Commons, it would then cease to exist on the order paper. However Bills that are re-introduced can be reinstated at the same stage of debate within the House that existed prior to prorogation, the only exception would be if a Bill was in the Senate and in these circumstances it reverts back to the House of Commons at third reading. The other misunderstanding that I have come across pertains to the role of Ministers, contrary to what has been suggested, Ministers maintain responsibilities and continue to preside over the portfolio in question during a period of prorogation no differently than during a session. Likewise for Members of Parliament, we continue to meet with constituents and work within our constituencies no differently than when the House is adjourned.

In spite of Prorogation being a very commonly used Parliamentary practice established over many decades in the House of Commons by Governments of all stripes, the opposition will understandably denounce this move. The most common allegation is that prorogation “avoids accountability”. I will answer this criticism in advance because the reality is that prorogation can only defer debate – it does not prevent debate from occurring once the House resumes. I should also add that it was our Government that moved to add an additional 20 hours of weekly debate for the end of the summer session- a move that was opposed by the Opposition.

Ultimately this decision by Government allows our Prime Minister to introduce and move ahead with a new policy agenda that will keep Canada strong. Although Canada already has the best job creation record in the entire G-7 we must not overlook the importance of jobs and those who are currently unemployed. I look forward to the second session of our 41st Parliament and the upcoming Speech from the Throne.

August 26th

Depending on your level of political interest you may or may not be aware that Federally, much like Provincially, our various regions are divided up into what are called ridings. In a Provincial riding an MLA will be elected and Federally an MP- however it is the boundaries that ultimately determine which communities and geographical areas will exist within a particular riding.

As growth can occur in some regions faster or more slowly than in others, from time to time the boundaries are reviewed and reconfigured to reflect population changes, given that in Canada we use a "Representation By Population" model when establishing riding boundaries. The independent non-partisan Federal Electoral Boundary Commission has the responsibility to determine riding boundaries that adhere as strictly as possible to the principle of "Representation By Population". This is a very challenging task. In adhering to these guidelines often regional and geographical concerns may become secondary to keeping the population within each of the ridings, approximately equal. From the Federal perspective the riding boundaries are reviewed once every ten years and I believe 8 years at the Provincial level.

Those of you who follow Federal politics closely will be aware that the current electoral boundaries have been under review for the past year. The first draft of proposed new boundaries released in 2012 generated a significant amount of local opposition both in the riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla and more so in the riding of BC Southern Interior. Last week the final report on our new electoral boundaries for the next federal election was released and while some minor changes have been made from the preliminary proposed boundaries I expect those changes will not be to the extent that many were looking for.

Although a full summary is available online at the Federal Redistribution website I will summarize some of the more significant changes. The current BC Southern Interior riding represented by NDP MP Alex Atamanenko is by far the most impacted by the new boundaries. The communities of Rossland, Trail and Castlegar are no longer in a riding with nearby Nelson and instead will be in a new riding identified as South Okanagan-West Kootenay. Also in this new riding are the community's of Oliver, Osoyoos and most notably Penticton.....but do not include Summerland, Keremeos or Princeton.

For my riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla the commission has largely left the riding intact with West Kelowna, Merritt, Logan Lake, Summerland and Peachland still part of the riding that will be renamed Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. Obviously the largest change is that Penticton will be removed from this riding and Keremeos and Princeton along with a portion of Kelowna will be added. Although some communities will be supportive of these changes, from what I heard when I attended the public input session and from speaking with various local government leaders and citizens, I am expecting that the majority will be opposed.

From a political perspective and given the change in boundaries, another question that may arise is.... in which riding will an incumbent MP run.... assuming they stand for re-election. In my case I have already heard this question from a number of local media and while I believe this issue is of little significance at this point given the next election is still a long time away, I also believe citizens deserve candid and timely answers from elected officials. From my perspective Okanagan-Coquihalla is a large and very diverse riding and I have spent the past few years becoming familiar with many important community issues as well as building relationships with community leaders, the vast majority of whom will remain within the new riding of Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. Given the importance of knowing local challenges and the need to build strong community relationships to help resolve them, representing a familiar riding and working with community leaders you know, is, in my view, the way an MP can be most effective. In my case that would be Central Okanagan-Similkameen-Nicola. Having said that, it is also important to recognize that these new boundaries do not come into effect until the next Federal election and at the moment there are many projects and priorities in Okanagan-Coquihalla that we must collectively continue to pursue. I welcome your comments on this or any topic and can be reached toll-free at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711) or via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca

September 2013

September 2nd

The September long weekend has often been thought of as the “end of summer” given that students will be returning to classes in the days following the holiday Monday. For students entering post-secondary education it can be a very exciting time but also an expensive one.

Although post-secondary education falls primarily within Provincial jurisdiction, our Government offers some tax relief that parents and students should be aware of. For example students can claim tuition fees that are paid to a College or University and in some cases other Canadian educational institutions that offer post-secondary courses. In addition, tuition fees paid for courses that are certified by Employment and Social Development Canada to develop or improve occupational skills may also be claimed.

In meeting with a very well regarded local manufacturer in West Kelowna last week the challenge of finding skilled workers was identified in spite of offering very well paying local positions. In fact, with close to a dozen different tours of local manufactures over the past few months I have yet to encounter one that has not reported similar challenges in finding skilled workers. I would urge many students entering into post-secondary education to give strong consideration to trades-oriented training opportunities.

Another tax relief program that post-secondary students may take advantage of is the ability to claim an education amount of \$400 for each entire or part month in the year that they are enrolled in a full-time qualifying educational program, or \$120 per month for part-time enrolment in a specified educational program, at a designated educational institution. One program that may be of benefit to some students is the ability to claim a textbook amount of \$65 for each month where they qualify for the full-time education amount or \$20 for each part-time month. In all of these programs it's very important to keep your receipts, as they must be used to apply for the various tax rebates. Last year there was roughly \$11 Billion claimed by students and families in tax relief to help absorb the costs of post-secondary education. Although this is a very significant amount of financial assistance, there still yet may be qualifying students and families that are unaware that this and other tax relief is available.

The importance of investing in your future with a quality education is one that can never be emphasized enough. I hope all students have a productive and enjoyable school year.

Much as investments in education are important, so too are investments into infrastructure. As part of my summer listening tour I had the opportunity to participate in many ribbon cutting events celebrating the completion of various much needed infrastructure work. Road projects, sewer and water systems and increasingly, public walk-ways, are just some of the many improvements to many communities within Okanagan-Coquihalla.

Recently I was asked by a senior resident to put our Government's commitment to infrastructure funding into perspective. By the numbers since 2006, our Government has contributed towards the creation to over 43,000 projects Canada wide. The new building Canada plan also includes \$70 Billion in federal infrastructure funding over the next 10 years. In the next two years alone over \$10 Billion will be invested into infrastructure. To put this number into context from a historical perspective this \$10 billion over the next two years is more than the previous Liberal Government invested into infrastructure during the entire 13 years they were in power. I mention this last point not to be partisan but to provide a context on the commitment of our Government to invest in community infrastructure compared to what was done previously. I know from my time as a city councillor, the ability to partner with senior levels of governments ensures that community infrastructure is built in a manner that residents can best afford.

By ensuring that our infrastructure commitment is guaranteed over a 10 year cycle local government can better plan priorities and also budget accordingly. However we should also recognize that that virtually every aspect of infrastructure planning, development, engineering, building and often maintenance is performed by individuals with some level of post-secondary training and/or education. As we enter September and our children return to the classrooms let us all recognize the importance of education in the future of our great country.

September 9th

In one of my July reports I referenced the importance of innovation and cited specific examples where our Government has entered into partnership agreements with many value added wood producers in Western Canada including Okanagan Falls.

The importance of developing new wood based building technology is critically important to many communities in Okanagan-Coquihalla as it creates many well paying jobs and supports rural resource communities. In the same report I also referenced the central need to create new trade agreements that in turn can open up new markets that our local manufacturers can access. In previous reports I have also referenced the efforts of our Government in creating new trade agreements with other countries and at the same time have also noted that there will always be those who continue to oppose these trade agreements.

Why is trade important to British Columbia and Canada? Rather than engage in a rhetorical answer to this question I believe it is important to provide specific real world examples. Last week the community of Whistler hosted the 10th annual Global Buyers Mission and Wood First Forum. In many respects this forum is like the world series of BC wood products as over 350 buyers representing 23 different countries gathered to do business with BC wood producers. When you consider that over 40 percent of all Canadian wood products are now exported internationally clearly the importance of trade deals and this forum are key to our forest industry and our regional economies. In fact, despite recent challenges within the sector, the Canadian forest industry currently employs roughly 235,000 Canadians and contributes over \$20 billion annually to our GDP. The spin off employment and economic impact on other industries as we know locally is also very significant.

Getting back onto the topic of trade and the forest industry while some have questioned trade with countries such as China, South Korea and more recently India, it is also important to recognize that wood product exports have increased significantly to these countries. China is now Canada's second largest wood export market and South Korea has moved up to number five. In fact Canada now exports significant amounts of wood product to over 20 different countries that also include Japan, Taiwan, Netherlands, Philippines, Belgium, Turkey, Hong Kong, Pakistan and New Zealand to name a few. We are also fortunate that Canada's Minister of International Trade is the Hon. Ed Fast from Abbotsford, British Columbia and as such has a firm understanding on the importance of trade to the BC Forest industry.

How does trade and wood product exports benefit us locally? In several previous reports and in Parliament I have often shared the success of Penticton based Structurlam Industries, who has now expanded into Okanagan Falls. This innovative value added company provides over 150 well paying jobs. Much of the lumber sourced by Structurlam comes from Kalesnikoff Lumber, a rural mill located in Thrums, B.C. that has taken pride in being a BC specialty wood producer for over 70 years. Each of these operations employs many local workers and utilizes many local industries for support services and supplies. While in Whistler at the Global Wood Buyers forum, over 150 architects participated in a forum to learn more about new innovative building technologies, like the ones at Structurlam. It should be noted that some of these innovative wood products are made possible by investments in innovation created in partnership by companies like Structurlam and our Government. These new and innovative products have created a very promising level of interest and I have also been informed that two international delegations will be visiting Structurlam in the weeks ahead. These types of events seldom receive much media attention however they are indeed very exciting for those in the BC wood sector and show how our Government, working in partnership with industry can create innovations that generate new jobs and support our local economies. Let's also not overlook the importance of trade deals in opening new markets that help create Canadian prosperity and employment.

September 23^d

In my mid July MP report I focussed on our newly named Federal Cabinet and the many ways Ministers can serve the interests of Canadians including specific examples where cabinet Ministers have supported my work as a Member of Parliament on behalf of citizens here in Okanagan-Coquihalla. One point that I did not address in that report was the fact that the majority of the new faces who were promoted into cabinet were formerly Parliamentary Secretaries. This in turn created a number of vacancies for Parliamentary Secretaries, (or "PS" as they are referred to in Ottawa) that were filled when an announcement was made by our Prime Minister on Thursday of this week. I mention this because I was honoured to be among those named to serve as a Parliamentary Secretary. My particular appointment is to serve as the Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Treasury Board.

What does a Parliamentary Secretary do? The Guide of Parliamentary Procedure defines this role as a "member of the government party named to assist a Minister as the Minister directs. A Parliamentary Secretary may table documents or answer questions on the Minister's behalf, but may not present government bills". In my case the responsibility is to serve the President in the execution of his duties as chair of Treasury Board. Typically a PS will communicate decisions and policy and also help to facilitate related Bills and legislation through the House of Commons and in particular, to provide guidance at the committee review stage of proposed legislation. Having taken my own private member's bill through the House of Commons to Royal Assent with unanimous support and having

served on several Parliamentary Committees these are challenges I look forward to. A Parliamentary Secretary is also subject to the Conflict of Interest Act and in many cases will also be required to obtain a security clearance depending on the portfolio involved.

For those of you wondering what Treasury Board is, the summarized definition is a cabinet committee responsible for financial, personnel and administrative management within the Federal Government. This also includes comptrollership, approving regulations and most Orders-in-Council. The President has the responsibility for translating the policies and programs approved by Cabinet into operational reality within Government and to provide departments with the resources and the related administrative infrastructure required. As the Secretary to the President I view my role as a great honour and one I share with residents of Okanagan-Coquihalla given the importance that our region has in reflecting the views of our great country.

I am also encouraged by other Parliamentary Secretary appointments announced by our Prime Minister that I believe will also benefit our region. My colleague and good friend MP Mark Strahl has been named as PS to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. In light of some of the significant projects currently before the Penticton and Westbank First Nations, having a nearby representative with a BC perspective will be helpful. Other positive British Columbia based appointments include MP Andrew Saxton serving as PS to the Minister of Finance, MP Cathy McLeod serving as PS to the Minister of Labour and for Western Economic Diversification, and MP Randy Kamp serving as PS to the Minister of Fisheries and Oceans. These portfolios are all of considerable importance to our Province and to our region. Although my new duties will require me to spend more of my time in Ottawa, I will continue to personally return your calls and meet with local citizens, groups and organizations. Taking your concerns to Ottawa is just as important to me as an MP as it was to represent citizens to City Council when I was a councillor. Accountability can only begin when the voices of citizens are heard. On a final note, I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to the many citizens who have taken the time to pass on kind words on my recent appointment. Your comments (and criticisms) are always welcome.

September 30th

This week I am back in Ottawa attending a number of briefings and meetings related to Okanagan-Coquihalla and also my new duties as Parliamentary Secretary to the President of Treasury Board. When I'm in Ottawa one of the ways I stay in touch with the Okanagan is through reading various online editions of local news outlets. One recent trend that I have noted in some letters to the editor is an increase of personal attacks directed against elected officials. In any democratic society there will always be disagreement from time to time on issues and likewise there is merit in constructive criticism and debate, however mean spirited personal attacks in my view have no standing and add little constructive value to a discussion. I know many Mayors, councillors, MLA's and MP's who work hard on a range of challenges and generally throughout the Okanagan we have a good track record of our different levels of government working together in successful partnerships. While it is understandable that some of the projects and administrative decisions will be disagreeable to some the reaction to insult and attack the decision makers as opposed to questioning the decisions made is counterproductive and lowers the level of debate.

Fortunately there is an alternative. If you disagree with the decision of an elected official rather than engaging in a personal attack, why not take the time to first contact the individual(s) directly to share your concerns and at the same time ask why a particular policy or decision was made.

A meaningful two way discussion can better inform both parties and that in turn can lead to a better understanding on an issue. There may not be a mutual agreement however at the very least there will always be a benefit to respectful dialogue that focuses on the issues and not the personalities involved.

On a different subject recently a few people have asked some questions on my weekly MP reports and it occurred to me that I have not in the past provided information on my weekly reports. It may surprise some to learn that there is no formal requirement for a Member of Parliament to issue regular reports to constituents. From my own observations I have noted that some MP's do weekly reports as I have done since being elected while others prefer bi-weekly or monthly and some take a more sporadic approach depending on events the MP believes are of interest to local constituents.

As far as content of an MP report this is entirely at the discretion of the Member of Parliament. While some make allegations that MP reports are written or are otherwise directed by the Prime Minister's Office (or elsewhere) these claims are completely untrue. In my case I compose my own reports each week no differently then how I respond personally to emails and return citizens phone calls. For the record my reports are not "vetted" or "approved" and each week are sent directly from my office to local media and citizens that can sign up for an automatic email subscription. If you are interested to receive my MP reports via email you can do so at my www.danalbas.com website. I try in each report to cover topics that may be of interest to local citizens and to communicate on bills and other aspects of Parliamentary affairs to increase awareness of what occurs in Ottawa here locally.

Each week I typically receive a number of responses to a MP report that can range from being positive and encouraging and at other times can be quite critical of Government or asking for additional information. I greatly value all comments and concerns including criticisms; this input is greatly valued and hopefully with continued respectful dialogue we can continue to build a stronger Canada.

November 2013

November 19th

This past weekend I participated alongside a group of citizens from the community of Merritt and surrounding areas as part of a search and rescue effort, looking for a missing local resident at Stump Lake Ranch. Sadly, we were not successful in our efforts, but it is heartening that so many local citizens came out and helped in the effort to find a fellow community member. I would also like to take a moment to thank the many volunteers who are involved in search and rescue organizations in our local communities throughout Okanagan-Coquihalla. This challenging and highly valued service from so many volunteers is important for those who may be missing a loved one and is very community minded.

The House of Commons has again resumed session this week after a brief five day recess. We will continue discussions on Government Bills C-2 "Respect for Communities Act" and Bill C-3 "Safeguarding Canada's Seas & Skies Act". There will also be a number of Private Member's Bills up for debate this week, including Bills C-428, "Indian Act Amendment and Replacement Act", Bill C-523 "Mandatory Disclosure of Drug Shortages Act", Bill C-520 "Supporting Non-Partisan Agents of Parliament Act" and Bill C-461 "CBC and Public Service Disclosure and Transparency Act." If you would like further information on these or any other bill before the House of Commons do not hesitate to contact me at your convenience.

Also occurring this week is a vote on the opposition day motion from the NDP that was introduced last week. The motion suggests that the Keystone XL pipeline is not in Canada's best interest. This has been an interesting debate as both our Government and the Federal Liberals are supportive of the Keystone XL project that the NDP has been actively opposing for some time. On a related theme, this past weekend there was also an effort to organize and demonstrate against the Northern Gateway pipeline in front of my Penticton office. As I was in Merritt and could not attend this gathering, I feel it is important to recognize that a number of citizens took the time to speak out against this particular pipeline project. I also hear from a number of citizens who are strongly supportive of pipelines in general or in some cases supportive of certain pipeline projects but opposed to others. This is certainly an area that I welcome further input from citizens on. While some have expressed opposition to pipelines, very few have proposed alternatives that do not include increased rail or truck transport that also carry risk.

Although the House of Commons is now in session until mid-December, if you have a comment, concern or question I am available by phone in the late afternoon and early evening here in BC while I am in Ottawa. I can be reached via email dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711).

November 25th

As mentioned in a recent MP report, as a result of the positive feedback I received from last year's accountability report this will now become an annual report that I will submit to the citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla. I will also follow the format used last year including information from the period of April 1st of 2012 up to March 31st of 2013 in accordance with the Board of Internal Economy reporting periods. While some of this information is publicly available, it can be difficult to find and often exists at several different locations online or not at all. As stated last year, I believe it is important for citizens to have an annual summary on the activities of elected officials in public office including the related costs.

Office expenses and travel are typically the most scrutinized areas of spending for elected officials at any level of government. For Members of Parliament from British Columbia, our travel expenses are higher than those of MP's from other areas in Canada as a result of the fact that we fly the farthest distances between B.C. and Ottawa. My personal travel expense during this time frame was just under \$55,000 – in my case this works out to roughly 420 hours in an airplane and I would estimate over 95% was regular coach class– I didn't fly first class before being elected as an MP and I continue to make every effort to fly economy class where possible as an MP.

Total spending for my offices here in Okanagan-Coquihalla and in Ottawa including all staff, leases, advertising and the above mentioned travel was \$394,289. This amount is within the top 10 lowest expenses for a BC based MP. Currently the average total spending of an MP in British Columbia is roughly \$445,000. Closer to home NDP MP Alex Atamanenko from B.C. Southern Interior has posted spending of 493,616 as a comparison. The highest spending BC based in MP is Liberal Hedy Fry at \$516,429.

Sponsored travel falls into a different category as Members of Parliament are invited from time to time to travel to other destinations both within and outside of Canada for a variety of different reasons. These invitations often include airfare and accommodations being paid for by the Host and

not taxpayers. When Members of Parliament accept these special trips they are required to disclose and report such travel to The Conflict of Interest and Ethics Commissioner. I can confirm that while I did receive invitations of this nature I did not accept any complimentary trips or travel nor have I since being elected.

One other category of spending is spousal travel. The Board of Internal Economy allows for MP's to fly a spouse between Ottawa and a member's home riding. Post Media is credited with doing an analysis on these benefits and in turn also reported on them with a list ranking all MP's. The highest spending MP for spousal travel was now former Toronto-Centre Liberal MP Bob Rae at just under \$ 57,000. My ranking on this list was #198 with spending of \$900.45.

In terms of meetings and other community events (not including my regular duties in the House of Commons) this past year I attended or participated in over 400 –a similar number to the previous year. This does not include unscheduled events or daily phone calls that also occur throughout the year. Some good news to pass on is that the Board of Internal Economy has been implementing new or revised rules that in my view will help to keep expenses in check across the board. The information included in this week's report is intended to provide a brief summary of some of the more commonly scrutinized expenses. If there is other information that you are interested in, please do not hesitate to contact me with your request. I can be reached via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or at 1-800-665-8711.

December 2013

December 2nd

Last week I released my second annual accountability report to the citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla and was encouraged by the strong level of response from local residents and from media on the efforts to increase transparency. As one member of the media pointed out, determining how elected officials spend tax dollars should not require the effort of one or more access to information requests. I agree. Those who disagree with releasing more detailed financial information often point out that the amounts of money in question are comparatively small as a percentage of overall spending and that the increased administration required is ultimately, not cost effective. While these are valid arguments and should be considered on a case by case basis to ensure there is indeed a benefit to the public, they should not be used as a barrier against increased public scrutiny. There is also a more compelling consideration and that is the matter of public trust. Citizens expect elected officials to act honourably and to spend tax dollars prudently in a fiscally respectful and accountable manner. As we also know – those objectives are not always met and over time this can diminish the trust that citizens have in their Government. While the media is often fixated on those incidents where tax dollars were not spent in an acceptable manner, often there is much less attention paid to genuine efforts that are being made to help increase fiscal accountability.

Last week I mentioned that the House of Commons Board of Internal Economy was implementing new or revised rules that, in my view, will help to keep expenses in check across the board. This week

I would like to reference some of the changes that I wholeheartedly support. One of the more common criticisms of House of Commons expense reporting is that it has traditionally been lacking in detail and is only posted once a year. To rectify these deficiencies, the reports to the public will now be released quarterly (beginning in April of 2014) and more detail will be provided. In future reports, secondary accommodation expenses will be reported as a separate category while events, gifts and meeting expenses will also be reported in individual categories and not consolidated, as is the case currently. Travel rules will also be changed to include a requirement that a traveler must be identified, the destination, dates and purpose of travel and individual trip cost clearly stated. Currently many of these details are reported only in a consolidated annual format.

Aside from these changes being implemented by the House of Commons, many Members of Parliament within the Conservative and Liberal caucuses are also volunteering to begin publicly posting monthly expenses that will be posted on the MP's website. Although the NDP have currently refused to join these efforts to voluntarily disclose monthly MP travel expenses, it is encouraging that a majority of MP's not in the NDP are supporting these volunteer efforts to help increase transparency. I will also be among those MP's participating in the voluntary expense disclosure that is linked to my MP website.

I would like to thank the many citizens who have taken the time to voice strong support for increased financial transparency and accountability in MP spending. Having strong support from the citizens of Okanagan-Coquihalla for increased expense reporting is a message that I continue to share and support in Ottawa. Much as with the changes to the MP pension plan these proposals are not always popular within the Parliamentary precinct however having a strong mandate from citizens is an important part of our democratic process. Although more work is still required in these areas, based on the feedback I have received from taxpayers I will continue to support efforts that increase the transparency of MP spending. If you have a question in this or any matter before the House please do not hesitate to contact me directly. I can be reached via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or toll free at 1-800-665-8711.

December 9th

There have been very few bills that have generated as much discussion, debate and feedback as Bill C-559. This is quite remarkable given that this Private Member's Bill was only tabled into the House late last week and has yet to be deemed votable or to reach second reading. You may ask, "What exactly is Bill C-559?". It is called the Reform Act of 2013 and was introduced recently by my colleague MP Michael Chong.

Depending upon who you ask, the reactions to this Bill have ranged from being viewed as the salvation of our Parliamentary democracy to declarations that the Bill is an all out assault on the democratic principles which have helped shape our great country. Media pundits, academics, retired politicians, interest groups and most importantly, citizens have all taken the time to comment on this Bill with a passion and a level of interest rarely observed, at least from my limited time as a Member of Parliament. I view this level of engagement as very encouraging and to date the majority of the input I have heard locally is supportive of this Bill.

There is also something which extends beyond this Bill that I believe is worthy of

note. In the days prior to Bill C-559 being introduced into the House of Commons, an advocacy organization began a lobbying campaign with local MP's, calling on them to support this democratic reform Private Member's Bill. I mention this due to the fact that the actual provisions of the Bill at that

point were unknown with many openly supporting the bill based on what they believed to be the contents and objective- in this case an "increase" in democracy. The challenge for legislators is that the actual content of what is proposed in a bill is of equal if not more importance than the intent. Does Bill C-559 increase democracy?

One of the proposals of this Bill is to end a requirement that a locally elected candidate who intends to run for a political party is formally endorsed by the leader of the party in question. What is interesting on this point is that it was actually a Liberal Government in the 1970's who introduced this requirement in large part to ensure that special interest groups could not unduly influence the candidate selection process at the local level. In many respects, the requirement for formal endorsement by a party leader has acted as a disincentive in attempting to influence a candidate selection process as the results can be nullified by a party leader if desired. Bill C-559 proposes to eliminate this safeguard.

Another proposal in the Reform Act allows for 15% of a party caucus to initiate a leadership review process and ultimately the majority of caucus MP's attending a leadership review meeting could in effect remove a democratically elected Prime Minister and in-turn could install a new Prime Minister solely based on a majority caucus decision with no democratic participation from Canadians. A similar clause is also proposed in the democratic reform bill with respect to how an MP can be removed from or re-instated to caucus. If 15% of the caucus membership requests a review and a majority of caucus members in attendance at the review in question vote for the removal or re-instatement of another MP (within caucus) that majority vote would stand regardless of the intentions of the Prime Minister. The intent of these proposals is to increase the power of individual MP's and to decrease the ability of the Prime Minister to unilaterally make decision with respect to caucus composition. In other words the Prime Minister would be more susceptible to the demands of individual Members of Parliament or smaller groups of MP's as opposed to the consensus of caucus or `team` approach that has emerged over the past few decades.

One other point of interest is that should Bill C-559 be adopted, the implementation date would be 7 days after the next election. This would mean that some provisions around candidate selection would not actually be implemented until possibly the year 2019. Will these proposed changes increase democracy? To date I have read the bill and dozens of opinion editorials both for and against the Reform Act that offer different but valid points. I would still like to hear from more citizens on this bill once the actual contents are better known. I believe almost everyone supports increased democracy in our electoral process. However the details of how that is best achieved (otherwise known as reading the fine print) should not be overlooked. For the record I support increasing democracy, transparency and accountability in our political process and welcome your comments and views on this important subject. I can be reached at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or by phone at 1 (800) 665-8711 and I do look forward to hearing from you.

December 16th

Recently I was asked how it is determined what subjects will be mentioned in my weekly MP reports. This is a great question and one that I have not covered previously. Since my first day elected as a city councillor I have always made a point of reading emails and returning phone calls from citizens. In my view hearing the concerns of people is a critically important part of being accountable and having a better understanding on issues of concern. Typically the issues that are more frequently raised in a given week will be the same issues I will reference in my weekly MP reports. From time to time I also get requests to cover a specific area of concern and in some weeks what I hear from citizens may be at odds with what are the major media events being reported by the news media.

This week I had anticipated much of the discussion would be on the recent announcement from Canada Post regarding door to door delivery changes and new stamp prices. To my surprise over the past week I have heard very little overall on these changes and of the comments I have heard the vast majority were understanding that changes in technology and societal trends create a need for Canada Post to respond. Over the past few weeks the single largest issue from a feedback perspective remains the subject of last weeks MP report– Bill C-559 “The Reform Act of 2013” introduced by my colleague Michael Chong. I greatly appreciate the response to last week's report and I have noted that many citizens have taken the time to send in some very detailed comments now that the full content of the Bill is publicly available. I continue to welcome your input on this very important subject that is clearly a concern of many citizens in Okanagan-Coquihalla.

Earlier this week I was honoured to represent the Minister of Agriculture and Agri-Food, the Hon. Gerry Ritz for an announcement at a local business, a short drive away from the Pacific Agri-Food Research Centre in Summerland. The announcement was a funding contribution under the Growing Forward 2 agricultural innovation program. As many local citizens are well aware, there is a growing demand for natural plant extracts. Phytochemicals, such as antioxidants can be found in fruits, vegetables, as well as plant-based beverages like tea and wine. These natural chemicals not only help plants defend against environmental threats such as damage from pests or ultraviolet light, but can also assist against heart disease, diabetes and high blood pressure.

One of the challenges is to find an efficient method to extract the phytochemicals from plants as currently the process involves the use of chemicals that often fall under the category of dangerous goods. The funding announced this week will support a new process that uses pressurized water, rather than solvents and chemical agents to extract the phytochemicals from fruits and vegetables. Obviously the use of water rather than chemicals reduces health and environmental hazards and also ensures that extracted phytochemicals have a higher level of purity. The need to develop new and innovative value added agricultural products is an important one for our region. The new trade deal with the European Union proposes to eliminate up to ninety-five per cent of current tariffs when it comes into force. This in turn can create new markets and new opportunities for our region and ensure our valued agricultural sector remains a sustainable and important part of our future.

December 24th

It is rare that I re-submit a previously completed report however in this case with the upcoming January 1st 2014 deadline for certain classes and wattages of incandescent light bulbs much of this information has been requested.

With the start of the New Year in 2014 will be changes to Canada's national lighting standards that in turn will impact some of the light bulbs that will be available for sale. The new standards establish energy efficiency levels for light bulbs sold in Canada that also calls for less energy efficient incandescent bulbs in certain wattages to be phased out. Specifically the standards will apply for bulbs in the 75- and 100-watt range after January 1, 2014, and bulbs in the 40- 60-watt range on or after December 31, 2014. Once the new standards are in place consumers will have energy efficient lighting choices that include light emitting diodes (LEDs), compact fluorescent lamps (CFLs) and with the most recent amendment incandescent halogen bulbs. It should also be noted that not all light bulbs currently on the market will be affected by these changes – for example decorative lamps and related light bulbs, appliance bulbs, three-way fixtures, chandeliers, rough service/utility bulbs, oven lamps as well as specialty bulbs for agriculture and industrial applications will all be exempt from these new regulations.

Why introduce these light bulb energy efficiency standards? There are a number of reasons for these changes. Currently lighting (on average) accounts for roughly 10% of household energy use. By using more energy efficient light bulbs nationally the cumulative energy savings are estimated at more than \$750 million by 2025 with corresponding greenhouse gas emission reductions by up to 7.5 mega-tonnes over the same time frame. At the same time, these regulations also parallel the same standards being introduced in the United States. Having the same lighting standards across North America will also benefit those in the lighting and electrical sectors including manufacturers, wholesalers and importers. Canada is one of eighteen countries currently in the process of implementing minimum standards in light bulb energy efficiency.

In my view it is also important that citizens be aware that while CFL bulbs offer high energy efficiency and long life they also contain a small amount of mercury, roughly enough to cover the tip of a ball point pen. Although no special handling is required in the use of these bulbs in the event a CFL bulb breaks Health Canada does have recommendations on best practices for clean up. Some of the recommendations include allowing the room to ventilate for 15 minutes prior to entry, and to use gloves when picking up the glass and sticky tape for loose pieces. Using a vacuum or broom is not recommended as this can spread the dust to other areas of your home. For more information on CFL bulbs and disposal of broken CFL bulbs the Health Canada website has some helpful information, please goto: <http://www.hc-sc.gc.ca/hl-vs/iyh-vsv/prod/cfl-afc-eng.php>

The intent of this week's report is to help eliminate confusion on Canada's minimum energy efficiency light standards given many recent questions on this topic. If you have further question on this or any topic please do not hesitate to contact my office at via email at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or via phone at [1-800-665-8711](tel:1-800-665-8711). Before I close this week's report, I would like to take a moment to wish all citizens a safe and enjoyable holiday season along with best wishes for the New Year. As many of may have an opportunity to be away from work over the holiday's if you do have a comment or concern please do not hesitate to send it my way at your convenience. Please enjoy a very Merry Christmas from my family to yours.

December 30th

As this is my final MP report for 2013, I wanted to reflect back on some of the events of the past year that stand out in my work as a Member of Parliament for our riding of Okanagan-Coquihalla. On a personal note, one of the events that I followed closely was the criminal trial that resulted in a guilty verdict for the individual who took the life of Penticton resident Lynn Kalmring. As I shared in the House of Commons, Lynn was a loving mother, sister, daughter and friend to all who loved her. Lynn's life was tragically taken in a senseless and brutal act of domestic violence. There are many details that cannot be publicly shared out of respect for the privacy of Lynn's family but it remains clear to me that there is still much work to be done to help victims of serious crime and domestic violence. While the outcome of the trial was welcomed by the Kalmring family, we should never overlook the magnitude of loss that is experienced and how victims can continue to be re-victimized in a system that is slowly evolving to recognize the need for change. I have spoken in support of two such measures in the House of Commons this past year and will continue to endorse legislative changes that better protect victims of serious crime and domestic abuse.

Another series of events that occurred in late 2013 have also been quite telling from my perspective. Two of my colleagues in caucus both reached significant milestones with their private member's bills in December. One of these members was widely reported about in the media and the other was from my perspective largely ignored by the same media. The private member's bill you did hear about was Bill C-559, the Reform Act of 2013, introduced by Wellington-Halton Hills MP Michael Chong. The private member's bill you didn't hear about was Bill C-428, the Indian Act Replacement and Amendment Act introduced by Desnethe-Mississippi-Churchill River MP Rob Clarke. What is more surprising over the difference in media coverage on these two bills is that while Bill C-559 has not yet been deemed as votable, Bill C-428 passed 3rd reading debate in the House of Commons and is now before the Senate at 1st reading. What is also noteworthy is that MP Rob Clarke, the author of bill C-428, is also a member of the Muskeg Lake First Nation. In fact, the Library of Parliament has confirmed that going back as far as 1867, no private member's bill introduced by a member of First Nations origin has ever received Royal Assent or passed third reading in the House of Commons. For those that do follow my MP reports, you are likely reading about MP Clarke's historic achievement in the House of Commons for the very first time. When one considers both the symbolic importance of this achievement by MP Clarke and the important subject matter of the bill, it raises concern that it has been overlooked by many.

I mention Bill C-428 and MP Rob Clarke as it is my view that all too often a First Nation's success story or achievement is ignored, while the challenges such as in Attawapiskat (as an example) remain front page news for weeks on end. Rob Clarke's Bill C-428 and Michael Chong's Bill C-559 both share one trait in common- they propose a challenge to the status quo and suggest that we consider reform if there is a better and more effective means to govern. As we head into 2014 and the promises of the New Year I believe we can all keep an open mind and ask ourselves what things we can change to improve in ourselves and those around us. While it is undeniably true that we as a country have incredibly much to be thankful for, we should also never cease to challenge ourselves and others to do better. As Canadians we always succeed when we rise to the challenge of building a stronger Canada. As always if you have a comment, question or concern, please contact me at dan.albas@parl.gc.ca or call 1-800-665-8711. My sincere best wishes to all for a prosperous New Year in 2014!

