



Media Release:

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Federal Stimulus Budget

While yesterday's federal budget focused on a number of elements to stimulate our economy, it also adopted many of the proposals from Chambers of Commerce throughout the country including accelerating infrastructure spending; providing incentives for new business investment in machinery and equipment; continue the previously announced corporate tax reductions; and ensuring credit for Canadian businesses and consumers.

The concern is how this budget stimulates the economy here in Thunder Bay and the region. While there are some immediate benefits; a tax credit of up to \$1,350.00 for home renovations; support for laid off workers by increasing regular Employment Insurance (EI) benefit entitlements by five extra weeks and providing for additional training over two years to extend EI income benefits for workers participating in longer-term. Providing \$170 million of funding for two years to secure a more sustainable and competitive forestry sector as well as providing that part of the \$1 billion will be geared towards support for new forestry products; Investment in First Nations Infrastructure; Providing \$1 billion over two years for a Community Adjustment Fund that will help mitigate the short-term impacts of restructuring in communities; Strengthening support for economic activity in the North with \$50 million over five years to establish a new regional economic development agency for the North and \$90 million over five years to renew the Strategic Investments in Northern Economic Development program; Funds to provide for targeted twinning improvements to a number of segments of Highways 11 and 17; and the almost \$12 billion in infrastructure spending.

While this move is a great step forward, we still do not know how much this will affect our region. "I would like to have seen a fair and equal EI system across the country. We have had many lay-offs due to the downturn in the Forestry sector and this is a serious concern", stated Mary Long-Irwin, President of the Thunder Bay Chamber of Commerce. "In order to spend money, people need money in their pockets. We also need to continue to work together to ensure that we get our share of support for our forestry sector."

"We also hope a large piece of the infrastructure funding will go to public transit systems and the procurement of the new Coast Guard vessels", stated Lisa Sticca, Chair, "the question is - where will these products be built? The stimulus is for **this country** and if we are talking building light rail vehicles let's make sure they are built here in Ontario, Canada"

"Overall it is step forward. We will continue to work for our community to ensure that funds reach Thunder Bay and area as it is crucial to improving the quality of life within the community of Thunder Bay", add Sticca.

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