



## BRIEFING: Pre-Budget Consultation – Budget 2017

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December 2, 2016

The Honourable Bill Morneau  
Minister of Finance  
Member of Parliament, Toronto Centre

Dear Minister Morneau,

Thank you for the opportunity to share ideas on Budget 2017 from the perspective of my constituents. In November, my office organized a community town hall and pre-budget consultation for those residents of London North Centre. In total, approximately 35 people participated – notwithstanding it was held on a stormy winter evening – and the key ideas put forward were as follows:

- Investing in a national pharmacare program. This might prove expensive in the short-term but it will save funds in the long-term and is necessary to ensure the health of Canadians.
- Continuing to focus on a national housing strategy.
- Concerns about a slow-growth economy were understood by those present, as was the need for targeted investments in areas that will boost the economy significantly (eg: infrastructure and transit in particular).
- The need for rapid transit funding was emphasized. The City of London is currently seeking funding to help support their “Shift” plan, which would see the implementation of Bus Rapid Transit (BRT). London is the largest Canadian city currently without a rapid transit system.
- Guarding against mortgage insurance risks. With a dramatic increase in housing starts and purchases in London (3,000+ and 10,000+ for 2016 respectively), concern was expressed that any potential economic shock could cause repayment challenges for new homeowners. This, in turn, ought to raise concerns for the Canadian government since Ottawa is expected to cover 100 percent of costs in mortgage default cases. Obviously the risk increases substantially if these housing figures are evident in other centres.

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- Fears of automation and its potential to generate job displacement were evident among some who attended the consultation. This was, however, offset by a few who argued encouraging youth to pursue science, technology, engineering and math fields could help turn the federal government's innovation agenda into a genuine jobs strategy rather than a growth strategy in the strictest sense.
- The arts and humanities ought to be seen as contributing to the innovation agenda because of their ability to generate critical thinking skills.
- Investing in homecare is necessary if the challenge of an ageing population is to be properly confronted.
- With an ageing population in London, it came as no surprise that more support for the Canadian Pension Plan and Old Age Security were underlined as critical.
- Oil pipelines are necessary in order to overcome risks presented by alternatives, namely rail transport. However, community consultation and spill mitigation plans are needed in order to ensure responsible oil development.
- Research and Innovation funding was deemed vital, as Western University faculty were in attendance.
- Student leaders requested two specific items:
  - o The Federal Government lift the 2% cap on the Post-Secondary Student Support Program, and provide an additional \$50 million dollars per year.
  - o The Federal Government should mandate increased targeted undergraduate funding opportunities in all three Tri-Council agencies.

Once again, I appreciate the opportunity you have provided for Members of Parliament to make you aware of what we are hearing needs to be included within Budget 2017.

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Should you have any further questions or concerns, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Peter Fragiskatos".

Peter Fragiskatos  
Member of Parliament (MP)  
London North Centre