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Cannan: Water supply and demand study needed for Okanagan



Ron Cannan

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As Mark Twain once said, "Whisky is for drinking; water is for fighting over."

I'd like to change that to water is for fighting for.

In the Okanagan Valley we are one of the highest

drought risk areas in Canada, with some of the fastest population growth and an economy that is heavily dependent on water especially, our agriculture and tourism industries.

That's why I was pleased to join Cabinet Minister Stockwell Day last week to announce funding of \$6.9 million to complete the Okanagan Valley's Water Supply and Demand Study.

Natural Resources Canada is providing \$3.3 million of the \$6.9 million, which includes contributions from 18 partners in provincial ministries, local governments, First Nations and non-governmental organizations, the private sector and academia.

From that study will come important information on climate change and its impact on our water supply, how we can best adapt and what our priorities should be as we go forward.

This funding represents a true collaborative effort, with a wide range of users involved in working together to ensure the reliability of water supply in the Okanagan.

Anyone wishing more information can contact the Okanagan Basin Water Board website at www.obwb.ca

I was also happy to participate in another funding announcement which will help build affordable seniors' housing and support a local industry. The governments of Canada and British Columbia will provide \$15.5 million for the construction of 322 modular housing units for seniors and persons with disabilities.

Chaparral Industries here in Kelowna will be one of the manufacturers.

Not only will we create more affordable housing,

this funding will support an innovative local industry and creates jobs.

Last week also brought Western Economic Diversification Minister Lynne Yelich and Agriculture Minister Gerry Ritz to town.

Yelich met with various community groups including the Women's Resource Centre and the Kelowna Chamber of Commerce while Ritz came to attend the B.C. Fruit Growers' Association annual convention.

* * *

Time and time again, you, the citizens of this great community, come out and give of your free time to make our community the supportive and caring place it is.

I want to acknowledge the Friends of Library in Rutland and all the volunteers who helped to make the beautiful, newly expanded facility a reality.

I also want to acknowledge all the volunteers who helped make this week's Wendy's DreamLift campaign such a big success.

The 16th annual Wendy's DreamLift Day raised \$99,742.58, which will help send children with life threatening illnesses or severe disabilities to Disneyland in California.

More than 100 volunteers help out by taking the day off work, without pay, to make this event happen.

Finally, I want to congratulate everyone, organizers, volunteers and participants alike who worked very hard for many months to make the arrival of the Olympic Torch to Kelowna and Lake

Country such a huge success.

What an incredible outpouring of community spirit, and Canadian pride and unity.

* * *

On a final note, I was in Ottawa on Jan. 22 with my caucus colleagues to meet with Prime Minister Stephen Harper and our Cabinet to discuss the economy and prepare for the 2010 budget.

The good news is that 12 months after we launched the Economic Action Plan to stimulate job creation across the country, the International Monetary Fund has confirmed that stimulus efforts are "driving the global rebound" and "fiscal stimulus planned for 2010 should be fully implemented."

As we enter Phase II of Canada's Economic Action plan, our priority is to continue to build a strong foundation for job creation and economic growth. I can't express strongly enough how important it is for you to get involved and to let me know what you feel our course of action should be, what should be included in the next budget.

If you have suggestions for the upcoming budget, drop me an email at ron@cannan.ca and I will pass them along to Finance Minister James Flaherty.

Ron Cannan is the Conservative MP for Kelowna-Lake Country.

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