

Ottawa Journal: keeping Ontario strong through historic federal transfers

We have the best country in the world. There are many, many excellent reasons for this, but one major reason is the strong services we enjoy as Canadians, such as health care, education, and social services. We also depend on these services. The support for such services comes from our federal Government through federal transfers. Despite the global economic downturn which started in 2008, our Government actually increased transfer support to the provinces and territories. Ontario, in particular, has significantly benefited from federal transfers and can be proud of what that has meant for Ontarians - the continued delivery of essential services for families.

Our Government has made considerable efforts to restore fiscal balance which has been done through various actions taken by our Government, such as record and growing transfer support to the provinces and territories. In fact, federal support has reached historic levels (\$65 billion) and will continue to grow. Furthermore, total federal support for health, education, and social services has increased over 55 per cent since we formed Government in 2006.

In an effort to ensure that transfers grow in line with the economy, our Government made changes, which allows the program to remain affordable and sustainable. This is in stark contrast to previous governments which actually slashed transfer payments to the provinces and territories. Our approach has ensured and will continue to ensure that provinces and territories can provide health care, educational, and other services Canadian families need and rely upon.

Here in Ontario, our province will receive almost \$19.2 billion through major federal transfers in 2014-15. This is an increase of 76 per cent from the previous government including: almost \$2 billion through Equalization; over \$12.3 billion through the Canada Health Transfer (an increase of over \$4.6 billion or 60 per cent since 2006); and over \$4.8 billion through the Canada Social Transfer (an increase of almost \$1.7 billion or 53 per cent since the previous government).

Our Government took action to restore balance to federal transfers. Such action was announced in Budget 2007 and beginning in 2014-15, provincial and territorial health transfers will be allocated on an equal per capita cash basis. This change, which was also done for the Canada Social Transfer, will provide like funding for all Canadians, regardless of where they live. Furthermore, our Government will remain committed to ensuring that no province or territory will receive less in health transfers than they received in 2013-14.

Equalization serves to support ?have not? provinces, whose fiscal capacity is below the national average. Since Ontario first qualified for this program in 2009, our Government has provided nearly \$10 billion in Equalization payments to our province. In addition, we're also assisting Ontario to once again be a ?have? province by making key investments in important sectors, such as automotive and manufacturing.

Canadians in Ontario and all across Canada can count on our Government to continue to provide continued, stable funding support for essential services through federal transfers. Our Government's record is strong and will remain that way as we start 2014.

By David Tilson, MP Dufferin?Caledon