

Newsletter - March 2011 - The "Harper" Government

Trouble viewing this email? [Read it online](#)



MARTHA HALL FINDLAY

MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT / DÉPUTÉE, WILLOWDALE

March 2011

Hello everyone. First, let me thank everyone for the great response to our new newsletter format, and for the many thoughtful and substantive comments. Below, you will find the same format of [Operations](#), [Opinions](#) and [Opportunities](#) as in our last newsletter. February was a very busy, interesting time for Parliament and for me as Trade Critic. I hope you enjoy reading about what we've been doing and, as always, I really appreciate your comments and suggestions.

If you do not wish to receive our emails, please let us know (there is an 'unsubscribe' option below).

OPERATIONS

February was a full month of Parliamentary work, International Trade Committee work, and work in Willowdale.

As the International Trade Critic, a number of key files were in the news: the proposed Canada-US Security Perimeter is causing real concern about sovereignty, although we still want to ease the border for trade; the proposed merger of the TMX (Toronto) and the LSE (London) stock exchanges is controversial; the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) with Jordan was put on hold given events in North Africa and the Middle East, but is now back on; discussions about the FTA with Panama continue, particularly with regard to the lack of a tax treaty between our two countries; negotiations between Canada and the European Union for a Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) continue; and as the United States works toward an FTA with South Korea, the lack of one between Canada and Korea is causing different interests to raise their concerns.

As the MP for Willowdale, I have of course been very busy with various events, meetings, and the like.

Here is a summary of other things that kept me occupied this February:

- With the House back sitting, the International Trade Committee met every Tuesday and Thursday.
- I was asked to speak to the [House of Commons Pages](#) about being an MP. I did this last year, had a wonderful time, and was so pleased to be asked to do it again. It's a chance to be a bit more informal, to talk about what the life of an MP is like, and to spend an evening with a group of smart, engaged young people.
- Caucus Legislative Committee met every Tuesday evening for two hours, to discuss both Private Members' Bills and Government Bills.
- Continuing debate in the House on the FTA with Panama.
- Meetings to discuss threatened labour action at the Port of Vancouver. A great deal of trade goes through the Port, and labour stoppages, even just threatened stoppages, affect a large number of Canadian enterprises because of ships re-routing to other ports. There are no easy solutions.
- Breakfast Round Table with the [Canadian Chamber of Commerce](#).
- Discussion with personnel from DFAIT and Finance about the status of a tax treaty with Panama.
- Visit to Alberta: Meeting between Michael Ignatieff, Bob Rae and I with several oil and gas executives to discuss various issues relating to the oil sands and the proposed pipeline to Kitimat—a good meeting; meeting with several colleagues and the Calgary Herald Editorial Board; a Laurier Club event at the Ranchmen's Club in Calgary; a Town Hall roundtable meeting at the Community Centre in Canmore; participation in various parts of the AGM of the Liberal Party of Canada (Alberta) in Canmore. (And, bonus, I got to stay with my sister who lives in Banff.)
- Every Monday morning the team of Critics met to discuss issues of the day.
- Dinner with the [Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters](#) in Ottawa
- Replaced Mike Savage on the Standing Committee on Human Resources, Skills and Social Development and the Status of Persons with Disabilities (HUMA)
- Supper for the entire International Trade Committee hosted by Justin Brown, Australian High Commissioner at his residence. Very interesting. There are many similarities between Australia and Canada, and some trade opportunities that we should be pursuing.
- Caucus meetings (Ontario and National) are held every Wednesday morning that the House is sitting. (The Liberal "Caucus" comprises all sitting Liberal MPs and Senators.)
- Presentation of a [petition in the House for Iranian Canadians in Willowdale](#).
- Canada-China Legislative Association celebration with the Chinese Ambassador of the Chinese Lunar New Year, the Year of the Rabbit.
- Post-Question Period scrum on Egypt.
- [CPAC Panel, The Week In Review](#).
- Interview with Embassy regarding Bill C-474
- [Politics and the Pen Event](#) put on by the [Writers' Trust of Canada](#), where the Shaughnessy Cohen prize for Political Writing is announced and awarded. This year my friend Shelagh Grant was a finalist for her excellent book "Polar Imperative", so I was rooting for her, but the winner was Anna Porter.
- Meeting with representatives of the TMX to discuss the proposed merger of the TMX and LSE stock exchanges.
- Meeting with Scott Brison and Yuen Pau Woo, President and CEO of the [Asia Pacific Foundation of Canada](#), to discuss various aspects of the various relationships, and how to promote them better in Canada.
- Gala in honour of the founding of the [Canadian Chinese Financial Consultant Association](#) and the Chinese New Year of the Rabbit ([photos](#)).

- [Press Conference in Ottawa regarding the proposed North American Security Perimeter](#).
- Speech to the North York Retired Men's Club (a great event, really well attended, with great questions and some excellent discussion).
- Helping out with the [Cameron Public School Pancake Breakfast](#) ([photos](#)). Great fun for everyone, and particularly nice to see the local firefighters and police out helping too—a real community event. We also took the left-over pancake batter to the [Newtonbrook United Church](#) for their "Drop Inn" Program, which we visited after the Cameron School breakfast. The Newtonbrook "Drop Inn" Program is featured as one of our recommended "Opportunities" below.
- Meeting with representatives of the [Canadian Generic Pharmaceutical Association](#).
- Appearance on CTV's Power Play.
- Meeting with members of the [Armenian National Committee of Toronto](#).
- Meeting with Ross Sturge of the Salvation Army.
- Visit to Brantford, for a tour with former (and future) MP Lloyd St. Amand, of various plants which have either shut down or scaled back operations. The visit included a speech at The Piston Broke ([read more](#)).
- Gave the formal "thank you" to Michael Ignatieff at an event with him in downtown Toronto.
- Meeting with the [Chinese Business Chamber of Canada](#)—an excellent meeting where we discussed how to enhance opportunities for new arrivals from China in Canada, and for Canadian businesses in China ([photos](#)).
- Visit to the [Willowdale Early Years Centre](#), as part of a city-wide Family Day celebrations at Ontario Early Years Centres across Toronto ([photos](#)). The goal was to highlight the work everyone does at these Centres with children, parents/caregivers and our partners in the community service sector. This was particularly nice for me, as my mum had volunteered for years at the Early Years Centre in Collingwood.
- Discussion with the Ambassador of Panama regarding the status of the FTA between Canada and Panama and a possible tax treaty between our two countries.
- Participated in a panel at the [Insurance Brokers Association of Canada](#) Strategic Planning Meeting in Niagara-on-the-Lake.
- Liberal Party of Canada (Ontario) Executive Board Meetings.
- Press Conference in Ottawa (filling in for my colleague Mark Holland), with representatives of the [Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#) regarding the need for an inquiry into the use of force and detention at the G20 in Toronto.
- [Couchiching](#) Ottawa Roundtable with Nathalie Des Rosiers of the [Canadian Civil Liberties Association](#). Very interesting session.

OPINIONS

This month's topic is: **The "Harper" Government**

I have, I hope, developed a reputation for not being too partisan. I respect differences of opinion. I respect different policy ideas. I believe that Members of Parliament of all parties must work together where we can, despite different opinions on matters of policy. And many of us do.

As a Canadian, you know how critical it is that every MP respect the rule of law, as well as all of the Parliamentary rules and limits that ensure that no one person, or party, can rule unchecked.

That is what makes a democracy.

This should be even clearer, knowing that in other parts of the world people are fighting for real democracy against controlling dictatorships and abuses of power.

A wise man once said, "... if you want to test a man's character, give him power." Stephen Harper's real character is now clear to all Canadians. He is Canada's Prime Minister, yet he shows no respect for Parliament, nor for the collective work that Members of Parliament from all parties can accomplish. He has gone too far. And the blame falls directly at Mr. Harper's feet, not with all Conservatives. I stress that, because I have many Conservative friends who are as uncomfortable with what's going as I am. I'm proud to have friends and colleagues in all parties – Liberal, Conservative, NDP, Bloc and Green.

We respect each other, but more importantly, we respect Parliament.

I want Parliament to work for all Canadians.

Stephen Harper does not.

Recently:

- Stephen Harper has ***dictated*** that all federal departments, boards, agencies and commissions replace the phrase "Government of Canada" with "The Harper Government". This is extraordinary, and not simply because it's against the rules. Our government is ***not*** his personal fiefdom. It is the Government of ***Canada***. With "Harper" now to be used at all times instead of "Canada", what is next? Huge murals of Harper's face on all government buildings?
- The Speaker of the House of Commons has ruled against the Conservatives now ***three times***.
 - o First, for hiding information from Parliament on allegations of torture of Afghan detainees.
 - o Now, because Minister Oda misled Parliament, and
 - o Again, because Harper has hidden critical financial information from Parliament on prisons and corporate tax cuts. As the Speaker said, "This is a serious matter that goes to the heart of the House's undoubted role in holding the government to account." If the rulings are upheld, it will be the first time in Canadian history that a Government and a Cabinet minister will be guilty of contempt of Parliament.
- Four senior ***Conservative Party leaders could face time in jail***, including two Conservative Senators, for orchestrating the infamous Conservative Party "in-and-out" election campaign scandal. The Federal Court of Appeal, one of the highest courts in the land, has ruled against the Harper Conservatives, and Elections Canada has filed formal charges. The Harper Conservatives dismiss all of it, calling it simply an "administrative difference of opinion". This shows utter lack of respect for our courts and the rule of law.
- The Conservative Minister of Citizenship and Immigration has been found using his ministerial office to campaign for immigrant votes. There is real concern that he has used government resources, connections, information and his influence to gain partisan advantage within immigrant communities. New Canadians are furious to discover that they are being crassly taken advantage of, simply for votes, by the very Minister who should be looking out for their best interests.

Stephen Harper's Conservatives are defying the rules of our Parliament and of our democracy. Yes, I'm a Liberal. But more importantly, I'm a Canadian who will stand up for our democracy, and I will fight to protect the cornerstone of that democracy, our Parliament, and the rule of law.

Newtonbrook United Church's Drop Inn program:

Every Wednesday at the [Newtonbrook United Church](#) and the Taiwanese United Church in Toronto, doors are open for anyone who wishes to be a guest for breakfast, or lunch. This program began eleven years ago as a service to our community. For example, for the month of January 2011, the number of free meals served weekly was a total of 863. If you can volunteer, provide assistance or would like to learn more about this and the many other programs offered by the church for the community, please feel free to [contact](#) them directly.

Please keep in touch. I may not always be able to answer personally, but your opinions are critical for me to do the best job I can. They are much appreciated, so send them along, and thank you in advance.

All the best,

Martha Hall Findlay
Member of Parliament, Willowdale
Official Opposition Critic, International Trade

Contact us / Contactez-nous: 416.223.2858 / 613.992.4964

House of Commons, 368 Confederation Building, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Email / courriel: HallFindlay.M@parl.gc.ca Website / site web: www.marthahallfindlay.ca Facebook