

David Tilson MP ? Federal government marking International Women's Day is this Saturday

Entrepreneurs are the engines of our economy.

They drive growth, create jobs, and spark innovation. It is fitting then, that International Women's Day 2014 recognizes the contribution of women entrepreneurs and business leaders with the theme: Strong Women. Strong Canada. Canadian Women ? Creating Jobs One Business at a Time.

In 2011, women-owned businesses contributed approximately \$148 billion to the Canadian economy. Currently, women-owned businesses employ more than 1.5 million Canadians. When women entrepreneurs succeed, we all succeed.

The government of Canada is committed to supporting women-owned businesses for success. Economic Action Plan 2014 introduced measures to support women entrepreneurs and business leaders, including a commitment to increase mentorship among women business owners. Additional measures in Economic Action Plan 2014 to support the development of small business and skills development for both men and women include a \$40 million investment in the Canada Accelerator and Incubator Program to help entrepreneurs create new companies and realize the potential of their ideas; a Canada apprentice loan which will provide apprentices in Red Seal trades access to more than \$100 million in interest-free loans each year; and a job matching service that will automatically match Canadians looking for work with employers looking to hire them.

We recognize there is still work to be done to address the gender gap on corporate boards in our country. This imbalance exists in spite of the fact that the business case for closing the gender gap on corporate boards is very strong. In fact, a recent Conference Board of Canada report pointed to the considerable benefits of advancing more women onto corporate boards, including strong financial performance; ability to attract and retain top talent; heightened innovation; enhanced client insight; strong performance on non-financial indicators; and improved board effectiveness. Our government has demonstrated leadership on this issue by working with an Advisory Council of leaders from the private sector to promote the participation of women on corporate boards.

Status of Women Canada's (SWC) initiatives include funding projects that support the economic security and prosperity of Canadian women. Since 2007, SWC has provided more than \$53 million for projects to improve women's economic security and prosperity, including in excess of \$9 million for projects that address women's entrepreneurship.

As we celebrate International Women's Day, I would like to acknowledge all of the women ? including women business owners ? in Dufferin-Caledon who work hard every day to support our families and enrich our community. The government of Canada is behind you and will continue to enact policies that ensure a solid economy and improved prosperity for women, their families, and all Canadians

