

No plan to expand government stimulus program, Cambridge MP Goodyear says



17FEB10funding49a.JPG Science and technology minister and Cambridge MP Gary Goodyear, shown in February 2010 announcing funding for two local companies from the Federal Economic Development Agency for Southern Ontario stimulus program.

Robert Wilson, Record staff

CAMBRIDGE — Despite troubling unemployment figures and fears of a double-dip recession, the federal government has no plans to expand or extend its economic stimulus program, Minister of State Gary Goodyear said Friday.

The government has said all along that the \$47 billion stimulus plan, which expires March 31, is a two-year program, and the Canadian economy is doing better than most other economies, Goodyear said after a speech to the Cambridge Chamber of Commerce.

“We had a plan that’s been working very well. We’re paying attention to the current changes around the world and here in Canada, but we also have a plan to pay the deficit down as well,” he said.

Goodyear was in town to mark the first anniversary of FedDev Ontario, a five-year \$1.3 billion spending initiative in southern Ontario that is part of the overall stimulus plan.

Earlier this month Parliamentary Budget Officer Kevin Page said many of the projects in the national infrastructure stimulus program were slow getting off the mark and as much as \$500 million may go unspent by the deadline.

But Goodyear said, apart from some isolated cases, many of the companies and municipalities who received funding under the program got their applications in on time and the deadlines will remain firm.

Suggestions by the opposition that the stimulus plan is a huge Tory pork-barrelling machine are “absolutely ridiculous,” he said. For FedDev alone, twice as much funding went to opposition ridings, he said.

“It’s easy to look at Stats Canada and see where the hardest hit communities are and you’ll see that the funding’s going there.”

The federal government has funded all kinds of projects at the University of Guelph and in city of Guelph, a Liberal riding, he noted. “That’s just a cheap political shot and there’s no basis to it.”

During his speech, Goodyear said FedDev Ontario in the year ahead will focus on four key areas: people, knowledge, entrepreneurship and productivity.

Small businesses will be encouraged to partner with universities and colleges for research and development, access will be improved to venture capital and angel funding and businesses will be encouraged to diversify and refocus into such areas as information and communications technology, he said.

He also focused on some of the recipients of FedDev funding in the past year.

Equipment and technology was upgraded in an “old and tired” journalism program at St. Clair College in Windsor, and John G. Wilson Machine Ltd., a metal fabricator near Princeton, Ont., received funds to expand into new markets such as pharmaceuticals and health care products.

The Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation received federal cash to conduct clinical trials at the University of Waterloo, creating 120 jobs, Goodyear noted.

Other recipients appeared in person at the event with display booths and brochures. They included Cambridge poultry processor Grand River Foods, Ayr auto parts firm Bend All and Conestoga College’s Ingersoll campus which received \$3.3 million to establish power line technician and construction techniques programs.

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