

March 23, 2010

Local Liberals Continue to Contribute to National Policy Debates

To succeed, a country must debate its future. It needs to understand its problems explore solutions – and yes, occasionally debate and disagree over the best actions to take.

That is why a few weeks ago I held three Citizens' Forums, in Gananoque, Brockville, and Kemptville, to provide an opportunity to people to debate issues and share views. The results were sent to Liberal leader Mr. Michael Ignatieff and Minister of Finance Jim Flaherty.

That is why, all during the prorogation of Parliament this past winter Mr. Ignatieff and the Liberals held round tables – more than 15 of them - on issues as diverse as veterans' mental health, job creation and the plight of Nortel workers and others whose pensions are at risk.

And that is why the Liberal Party of Canada and its leader, Michael Ignatieff are hosting a conference in Montreal next weekend entitled *Canada at 150: Rising to the Challenge*.

At the Canada 150 conference people from across Canada with a wide variety of expertise will discuss issues key for Canada's future, including how to foster job creation; how to strengthen our pensions and health care system; the politics of energy and how to respond to our changing climate.

I should note that these topics were the top concerns of those who attended our Citizen's Forums – they are real issues for the Citizens of Leeds –Grenville, and they need serious thought.

Remember when Canadians were really engaged in big public issues: the constitutional debates of the 1980s and 90s, the Free Trade election of 1988 and the deficit-cutting debates of the 1990s?

The issues of today are just as large and complex – and they deserve our attention too.

What actions– from funding research and education and supporting small businesses – does Canada need to take for us to create jobs and compete successfully with China, India and Mexico? Can we support our neighbours by buying more local products – as so many of us want to do – while trading fairly with other countries?

How can we provide support to families so that every child has the opportunity to succeed – and help fill the coming labour shortage as the baby boomers retire?

What are we going to do about older Canadians who have little or no savings for retirement – without putting an undue burden on the younger generation of taxpayers? How will we help younger Canadians save for retirement when many are relying on part-time and contract work?

How are we going to pay for growing health care costs as the wonders of medical technology create new and expensive treatments - that everyone expects to receive?

What would our industrial and energy policies be if they truly reflected our concern over climate change? Does the lack of agreement with the United States on a continental approach to climate change justify inaction in Canada?

Perhaps the core question is: What should the role of government – and specifically our national government - be in addressing these issues?

I believe that good government matters – we saw that in how Canada weathered the recession better than many other countries that made poor decisions over the past decade. Canada's strong bank regulations over the past decade are widely credited with keeping our banks strong so that they did not need taxpayer-funded bailouts.

But for government to work well we citizens must openly discuss and tackle the issues in front of us – even if the choices are difficult. Canadians have in the past achieved great things when we put our minds to it. Together, I believe that we can confront our challenges, and succeed in the future.

I'm looking forward to continuing the dialogue with the people of Leeds-Grenville and invite all to get involved.

The next opportunity to debate issues will be at the Brockville Fire Hall on Laurier Avenue to watch the *Canada 150* Conference live-streamed over the internet, send in our questions to the on-line moderator and debate the issues.

Join us to discuss jobs creation on Friday the 26th at 1:00; Pensions and Health Care on Saturday the 27th at 8:30 a.m.; and Energy and Climate Change on Saturday at 1:30 p.m.

I would like especially to invite young people to join us for the debate on climate change: you will be inheriting the results of our actions.

For more information on the Conference go to www.can150.ca or contact me at 613 865-8971 or go to MarjoryLoveys.ca

Marjory Loveys
Federal Liberal Candidate