

March 31, 2010

Media release

Liberals Link *Canada 150* Policy Conference to Brockville

The Liberal Party of Canada held a major policy conference last weekend, and Marjory Loveys brought the Conference right to Leeds-Grenville. Liberals met in Brockville at a "satellite event" to watch and send questions into the conference, live over the internet. Education and jobs, pensions, health care, energy and climate change, were the focus of the local discussions.

People from Brockville, Prescott, Lombardy, Mallorytown and Westport attended. "It was like we are all starved for civil and substantive discussion in issues that matter", commented Loveys

The conference was ground-breaking by enabling the broad involvement of the public. There were more than 70 satellite events across Canada, 52,000 hits on the website, 6,200 participants in the live-chat, and more than 20,000 webcast viewers. Much of the discussion was in the form of questions and answers, and half of the questions were from the satellite events. The Leeds-Grenville group sent in several questions, some of which were read out and answered at the main meeting in Montreal.

Marjory attended the by-invitation conference in Montreal on Sunday, after hosting the riding events on Friday and Saturday in the meeting room at the Firehall in Brockville. She saw first hand how much attention was being given the exchanges with the satellite events.

"I was particularly taken by the comments by Robert Fowler, the Canadian diplomat who was held by rebels in Africa for over four months," said Loveys. "He pulled no punches, basically saying that Canada's influence in the world has shrunk because we are not even trying to lead - on any issue. Fowler also made a plea for shifting Canadian aid back to Africa, partly for humanitarian reasons but also because of the potential for African failed states to become a major source of terror activities."

On domestic issues, there was much discussion about increasing the scale of the Canada Pension Plan, so that a larger portion of the income for future retirees is secure. The Liberals have endorsed this idea.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ignatieff outlined what, in his view Canada MUST do to prepare Canada for a prosperous future.

He committed to support job creation and ensure that people have the skills they need for future jobs, noting that even with high unemployment some jobs are going unfilled because of a shortage of people with the right skills.

He committed to work with provinces to provide more help to families who are caring for children, aging parents and disabled family members and to focus on the prevention of illness – to both improve the quality of our lives and to reduce future health care costs.

He committed to investing in clean technology and renewable energy - areas with great potential in Leeds-Grenville.

Mr. Ignatieff stated that he would freeze corporate tax cuts to pay for these efforts, and that his target would be to reduce the deficit significantly within two years of winning an election.

Overall, he laid out a small number of priorities and told us how he would pay for them.

"Events such as these provide all Canadians the opportunity to think about their own priorities for government action, both nationally in their communities", concluded Loveys.

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