

Marjory Jean Loveys,
Nominated Liberal Candidate,
Leeds and Grenville,

Brockville, Ontario,
February 17, 2010

Mr. Michael Ignatieff, Leader of the Loyal Opposition
Liberal Party of Canada
81 Metcalfe Street, Suite 400
Ottawa, Ontario K1P 6M8

Dear Mr. Ignatieff

As part of my ongoing work to connect with the residents of Leeds and Grenville, and in line with the **'Liberals are still working'** theme, I recently sponsored three *citizens forums* in Leeds and Grenville (in Gananoque, Brockville and Kemptville).

About 70 persons participated, some attending more than one, two hour session (we estimate 175 person-hours of participation). Each session began with a brief introduction, followed by a breakout into subgroups, and ended with a facilitated group discussion. I am attaching the "As it was said" report, but summarized below are the four themes that came up repeatedly and which could help your thinking about future policy development.

- People were emphatic that the **eligibility requirements for EI and CPP are outmoded**, and not in sync with our workforce. Full time, long term jobs are no longer the norm, whereas self-employment, multiple part time jobs, and contract work are increasingly common. A major re-think of the way workers access these key elements of the social safety net is called for.
- People also want our **system of pensions to be strengthened, and existing pension plans to be protected**.
- People want to see leadership and **stronger action to reduce greenhouse gasses, including restricting industrial emissions, incentives for green technologies** and a better public transportation system. The message overall was that Canada's track record on climate change action is shameful – "yes we have to harmonize with the U.S. to some extent, but we should be leading the way, not lagging behind".
- People were concerned that the manufacturing jobs lost in the cities and towns of Eastern Ontario will not be replaced, resulting in the younger generation moving away and resulting in a downward spiral. **More help is needed for SME start-ups and to attract investment to small cities and towns**.
- People were concerned about the level of student debt, and furthermore felt the prospect of this debt is a significant barrier to young people seeking higher education. Younger people and retirees alike feel that the **level of student debt at**

graduation is unacceptable and more generous financing is needed. As one adult participant said “they will have to pay for our health care and our pensions, we should pay for their education”.

In addition to these five key messages, participants expressed satisfaction with the health care they are receiving, were concerned about un-fair trade, expressed a desire to buy more locally-produced goods (especially food) and supported expanded daycare services as well as transportation options for seniors no longer able to drive.

Overall I found the level of discussions at these events to be thoughtful and creative. In fact, if you ever want to try out some policy concepts on citizens in a nearby riding, I am sure there would be many people here delighted to meet and work with you. If you or a member of your team would like additional information about any of these events and/or the specific policy comments, I would be pleased to help.

Since we billed these events as also providing input to the upcoming federal budget, I have also attached a copy of the report to a letter addressed to the federal finance minister.

Sincerely,

Marjory Loveys
613-865-8971 (Brockville)

Attach