

Liberal Party of Canada
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October 3, 2008

John Gordon
National President
Public Service Alliance of Canada
233 Gilmour Street
Ottawa, ON K2P 0P1

Dear Mr. Gordon,

Enclosed, please find the Liberal Party response to your questionnaire.

For more information on the Liberal Party of Canada's vision for Canada, please take a moment to review our platform online at www.liberal.ca. This document provides details on Liberal goals and priorities.

On behalf of our Leader, Stéphane Dion, and the entire Liberal team, thank you for writing to identify the major concerns of your membership. We appreciate your interest in the Liberal Party's policies as they relate to the issues which affect you.

Sincerely,

Doug Ferguson, President
Liberal Party of Canada



A Liberal Response to the Public Service Alliance of Canada

An advocate not just for our membership but for all Canadians, the PSAC is working to achieve a compassionate and inclusive society that is free of sexism, racism, homophobia and all other forms of discrimination. We are proud of our commitment to the wider community as expressed through our vigorous defence of access to quality public services across the country. The following questions reflect this commitment.

Transparency and Government Spending

a) Will your party commit to full transparency on any expenditure reviews it undertakes?

A new Liberal government will undertake a public, transparent, thorough expenditure review to identify savings across all non-transfer spending plans. This will start modestly and rise to \$5 billion in year four. (Approximately 1.8 per cent of total planned government spending) These savings, as and when they are secured, will be available to reinvest in the priorities of Canadians.

b) Will your party commit to a transparent review of all government contracting?

Yes. We will commit to openness and transparency in the tendering of government contracts. We will abandon the sole-sourcing approach to contracts taken by the Conservatives, ensuring that Canadian companies can compete for contracts while guaranteeing the best equipment or services at the best price.

c) In the event of a federal deficit, will your party cut public spending?

Liberals know how to manage program spending. Between 2002/03 and 2005/06 Liberal budgets held program spending growth – including transfers for infrastructure -- to an average of 6.7 per cent/year. After working hard to restore order to Canada's economic house after the fiscal mess left by the Conservatives, a new Liberal government will not run a deficit.

Health Care

a) Many people in Canada's north are referred south for specialist care and advanced treatment. What specific steps will your party take to improve health care access for remote communities and support publicly delivered health care services?

A Liberal government will work with provinces to end the shortage of doctors and nurses that is crippling our health care system, by establishing a Doctors and Nurses Fund. More health professionals mean more Canadians getting care, and shorter wait times.

The Doctors and Nurses Fund will:

- increase the capacity to train and graduate doctors, nurses and medical technicians by funding actions such as increasing the number of residency positions, including in smaller hospitals, and expanding educational programs;
- remove bottlenecks that currently slow the process of licensing new health care professionals;
- reward medical students choosing needed specialties such as family medicine, rural medicine, and geriatrics; and,
- provide financial support to assist foreign-trained doctors and other health professionals in obtaining their Canadian qualifications more quickly.

To help under-serviced communities attract more doctors and nurses, a Liberal government will forgive \$10,000 per year of student debt for health care professionals who agree to set up practice in an under-serviced community for a minimum of 5 years.

The Environment

a) What measures will your party take to ensure the federal government is a global leader in national environmental protection and enforcement?

Clean Air

The Liberal climate change plan will not only help address climate change, it will also help clean the air we breathe because being more energy efficient and using more renewable energy sources mean we will spew less smog and pollution into our air.

Millions of Canadians live in areas where smog, haze and acid rain pose serious health concerns. The link between air pollution and respiratory diseases is well known. We are seeing alarming increases in childhood asthma, and recent research even shows a link between polluted air and cardiovascular disease. Every year, thousands of Canadians die, and tens of thousands of Canadians end up in hospital and miss work and school due to air pollution.

Clean air has long been a priority for the Liberal Party. But more needs to be done and we intend to do it, together with provinces and local communities.

In addition to our green shift initiatives, a Liberal government will pass tough National Ambient Air Quality Standards to reduce the pollutants that cause smog, haze, acid rain and other problems. These new standards will help to protect Canadians from the sources of air pollution in their regions, using health-based levels of safety for the air they breathe.

We will also help industry to upgrade their technology by making air pollution control equipment eligible for rapid tax write-offs, and implement a comprehensive Mercury

Reduction Strategy, which will help to reduce the presence of this potent neurotoxin in our environment.

Safeguarding our Water

Canadians expect that when we turn on the tap, the water that comes out will be clean and safe to drink.

We want to be able to play on our beaches and swim in our lakes, without fear of exposure to toxic substances or raw sewage.

We want to maintain our rich agricultural and industrial productivity – which rely heavily on water – and, of course, we want to ensure the aquatic animal and plant life in our ecosystems remains healthy and plentiful.

Despite some important improvements over the past decade, many of our waterways are still degraded because of contaminants and inadequate treatment of sewage. New threats are emerging as toxic substances in products or pharmaceuticals accumulate in our water systems, and as climate change lowers water levels and puts ecosystems under threat. And the water needs of rapidly increasing energy production – particularly in the oil sands -- are huge.

That's why we need bold action to protect our water, and that's what a Liberal government will provide. We will implement a National Water Strategy using regulations, monitoring, enforcement and new investment, to clean up our waterways – and keep them clean.

Our substantial infrastructure commitments will help our cities and communities to invest in much needed water-treatment infrastructure to manage water demand and preserve a clean water supply.

In addition, a Liberal government will invest \$400 million in a Canada Water Fund. This new initiative will:

- increase monitoring and reporting of the quantity and quality of Canadian water;
- clean up our waterways, including “hot spots” in the Great Lakes, the St. Lawrence and Lake Winnipeg;
- research the impact of emerging pollutants in water on human and aquatic ecosystem health;
- fight invasive species, such as the sea lamprey or zebra mussel;
- map Canada's underground aquifers that supply our drinking water, so we know where our groundwater comes from and how it is affected by human activities; and,
- support the on-farm and community-based fresh water development programs of the Prairie Farm Rehabilitation Administration.

Priorities will be informed and coordinated by a National Water Council, with membership from all orders of government, First Nations, industry, research institutes and community stakeholders.

a) Will your party commit to actively financing the protection of Canada's fragile northern environment through an aggressive regulatory and enforcement regime?

A Liberal government will aggressively protect Canada's northern environment. Unlike the Conservative government we will fully enforce the Canadian Environmental Protection Act, the Species at Risk Act, the Fisheries Act, and other laws that protect Canada's environment. We will ensure that economic expansion is not done at the expense of our environment. And at the same time we will make strategic investments in the North to increase economic activity, literacy, education, and investment.

Food safety

a) What specific steps will your party take to restore public confidence in our national food protection system?

The Liberal Party believes that protecting the health and safety of Canadians is a primary responsibility of the federal government.

A Liberal government is committing to invest an additional \$50 million to build a more robust food safety net. This will include the hiring of additional inspectors who will ensure our food is safe when it reaches store shelves.

In addition, to ensure the long-term strength of the food safety system a new Liberal government will conduct a food safety review. This will also ensure that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has the right number of inspectors and resources.

By recruiting more inspectors, ensuring inspectors have access to the best technology and expanding inspection efforts of both home-grown and imported foods, Canadians will be able to have greater faith in the food they and their families eat. More inspection means more safety for all Canadians.

b) Will your party reaffirm the Canadian Grain Commission in its mandate as industry regulator, including properly funding and staffing the Commission and stopping all privatization of inspection services?

The Conservative government continues to undermine the authority of farmers.

They are undermining farmers with their actions towards the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB) and now with changes to the Canadian Grain Commission's mandate in Bill C-39 (An Act to amend the Canada Grain Act).

The original Canadian Grain Act states that the CGC's mandate is to "act in the interests of producers." Bill C-39, introduced by the Conservative government, removes that phrase and changes the focus of the CGC to value-added activities for the grain industry.

The Liberal Party believes that the CGC can be improved in accordance with the Standing Committee on Agriculture and Agri-Food recommendations – most of which have been ignored by this government.

Equality and Rights

a) Will your party adopt the recommendations contained in the May 2004 Pay Equity Task Force Report and introduce a new proactive pay equity law that will cover women as well as racially visible workers, Aboriginal workers and workers with disabilities?

The Liberal Party of Canada remains committed to ensuring equality in our society for all Canadians.

Under the previous Liberal government, Parliament established the Standing Committee on the Status of Women, which produced five comprehensive reports related to equality issues, including one on pay equity. In its response, we made a commitment to recognize pay equity as a human right and introduce pay equity legislation early in 2006.

Unfortunately, the Conservative government did not honour this commitment, and instead turned back the clock on social justice programs that help give voice to the most vulnerable in our society by dismantling the Court Challenges Program, and closing the Status of Women regional offices.

A Liberal government will reverse these discriminatory and ideologically-driven cuts, and will work with the provinces, territories, stakeholders, and Canadians to create a better society – one which is based on our Canadian values of justice and equality.

b) What will your party do to support women's reproductive rights?

A Liberal government will not reopen the debate on a woman's right to choose – we believe that women have a fundamental right to choose.