

**2008 Federal Election Campaign
Questionnaire on Municipal Issues**

Riding:
Cambridge

Candidate's Name:
Gord Zeilstra

Candidate's Political Party:
Liberal Party of Canada

1. How will you and your political party involve municipalities – from rural communities to large urban centres – as partners on federal issues that have a direct impact on local governments and their citizens?

Canada's cities and towns are the engines of our economy. A new Liberal government will provide our cities and communities with the support they need to build and strengthen the sustainable infrastructure that keeps our economy strong. The Urban Communities Caucus was created to help the Liberal Party address the needs of Canadian communities, and reach out to cities across the country. The Liberal Party of Canada conducted extensive consultations from December 2007 to May 2008. The Caucus traveled to 14 cities across Canada to discuss issues with municipal leaders and stakeholders. The participants in the round tables cited housing, transit, infrastructure, and municipal funding as the key issues that need to be addressed. The Caucus issued a report called "Foundations for a Nation" which calls on the federal government to take an integrated approach to municipal issues; to harmonize federal, provincial and local action on a number of issues including housing, mental health, drug addiction, transit, and recreation.

In particular the report calls for:

- sustaining funding for housing at current levels,
- developing a national housing plan, and
- creating infrastructure programs for transit, recreation, border infrastructure, small municipalities, and strategic infrastructure.

Most importantly the report calls on the federal government...

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2. Will you and your political party commit to providing municipalities with a source of additional, sustainable and permanent infrastructure funding that grows with the economy? If so, how do you propose to provide that funding and when will such a plan be implemented?

Canada faces an infrastructure deficit in the hundreds of billions of dollars. A Liberal government will invest aggressively to reduce that deficit. The Liberal Party has unveiled an unprecedented infrastructure plan that provides sustainable funding to municipalities in the following areas;

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- providing a gas tax transfer for Ontario to be indexed to nominal GDP growth so that Ontario municipalities have the funding certainty they need to keep up with economic growth. Over the course of our 10-year plan, municipalities will see almost \$25 billion transferred to them;
- A new Liberal government will commit over \$70 billion to infrastructure over the next 10 years and divert unanticipated annual budget surpluses to infrastructure projects.
- To tackle the infrastructure deficit, all unanticipated surpluses over and above a \$3-billion contingency fund will be spent on infrastructure.
- All agreements that have already been signed between the federal and provincial governments will be honoured. This commitment provides greater certainty and transparency on our infrastructure priorities.
- at least \$10 billion for strategic infrastructure, particularly green infrastructure such as clean water, sewage treatment, and clean energy grids;
- at least \$3 billion for a dedicated Small Communities Fund, to ensure that all Canadians...

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- 3. Will you and your political party commit to the creation of a National Transit Strategy that will provide municipalities with the necessary resources to build, expand and operate their transit systems? If so, what role will municipalities play in the creation of that strategy and what additional funding will be made available for municipalities looking to improve their transit systems?**

Developing a National Transit Strategy and a Municipal Transit Strategy is central to the Liberal Party's platform as the means to deal with the critical infrastructure deficit. Providing long-term funding for infrastructure to improve public transit, roads and bridges, is essential, so we can raise our families in healthy, vibrant cities and communities. A new Liberal government will commit to provide a 10-year \$70-billion plan to invest in all our communities and develop an *Infrastructure Bank* to help finance long-term infrastructure projects in Ontario's. A key element within that plan is at least \$8 billion for a National Transit Strategy that will enable our cities to expand their transit systems and green their transit fleets.

- 4. Will you and your political party commit to formally involving municipalities in the creation of a national housing strategy that will provide sustainable and predictable funding to municipalities for affordable and supportive housing – including the renewal of funding for all federal housing programs before March 2009? If so, what specific role will municipalities play in the creation of such a strategy?**

The Urban Communities Caucus was created to consult with municipalities in order to continue the Liberal party's commitment on infrastructure renewal. A new Liberal government is committed to the principle of consultation, collaboration and financial support with all partners in addressing the critical issues of infrastructure renewal. The results the

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Caucus produced, "Foundations for a Nation", which calls on the federal government to take an integrated approach to municipal issues; to harmonize federal, provincial and local action on a number of issues including housing, mental health, drug addiction, transit, and recreation to specifically involve municipalities in the creation of a national housing strategy that will provide sustainable and predictable funding to municipalities for affordable and supportive housing. The following highlights some of the commitments a new Liberal government will provide:

- a. up to \$10,000 in refundable tax benefits to Canadian families for investments in energy-saving retrofits to their homes. This will improve energy efficiency, contribute to the fight against climate change and save Canadians money;
- b. introducing an interest-free *Green Mortgage* program for up to an additional \$10,000 for homeowners making eco-friendly improvements to their homes.

5. How will you and your political party engage municipal governments in meeting our national climate change and clean air objectives?

The Liberal Party of Canada's plan for the environment and the economy is a **Green Shift** that will cut income taxes, put a price on pollution, fight poverty and position Canada to be a leader in the 21st century global economy.

"Canadians know that we need to be bold, not blind, to the challenges we are facing today, especially climate change," said Mr. Dion at the unveiling of the plan. Calling his plan "as powerful as it is simple," Mr. Dion said, "the Liberal Green Shift will cut taxes on those things we all want more of - such as income, investment and innovation - and shift those taxes to what we all want less of: pollution, greenhouse gas emissions and waste."

Upon forming a government, Liberals will put a price on fossil fuels, like coal and natural gas, starting at \$10 per tonne of carbon dioxide and rising to \$40 per tonne over four years. No new taxes will be levied on gasoline at the pump, since there is already an excise tax in place which equates to \$42 per tonne of carbon dioxide.

Using the revenue generated through carbon pricing, a new Liberal government will implement measures like:

- Significant cuts to the first three marginal rates of income tax;
- A new, universal child tax benefit worth \$350 per child, per year, on top of all existing child benefits;
- An \$850 increase to the employment tax credit, which will also be made refundable and targeted at lower-income Canadians;
- A more generous Working Income Tax Benefit to help Canadians over the welfare wall;
- Additional tax credits and incentives for business to encourage innovation and green investment;

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- An increase to the Northern Residents Deduction, and indexation going forward; and,
- An immediate Green Rural Credit worth \$150 for every rural tax-filer.

The Green Shift will be part of a broader environmental plan to help Canadians reduce their...

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6. What will you and your political party commit to doing to enhance early learning and child care, so that they are more affordable and accessible, in communities across Canada?

A new Liberal government will partner with the provinces and territories to create new quality early education and child care spaces that families need. Parents know – and studies show – that early education and child care helps their child grow physically, socially, intellectually and emotionally. Early education and child care is part of how many parents are able to achieve a work-life balance and provide exciting educational opportunities for their children. Unfortunately all too often, children are stuck on waiting lists because of a shortage of spaces. And as every parent knows, no space means no choice. The provinces and territories will find a new partner in a new Liberal government as we work with them to rebuild what was torn down by the Conservatives. The new Liberal government will commit to:

- creating 165,000 new early education and child care spaces that are centered on the quality, universally-inclusive, accessible and developmental (QUAD) principles, giving families a real choice;
- introducing a new \$350 refundable child tax credit for all families that is on top of all current benefits;
- creating a new Guaranteed Family Supplement for families with children, below the poverty line, worth \$1,225 a year more per family

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7. As our local economy continues to transform, what concrete measures will you and your political party commit to taking to help to strengthen our regional economy?

The Liberal Party has always supported regional economic development, helping businesses and communities throughout all regions to reach their full potential. Specifically, for the region and the province of Ontario a new Liberal government will commit to support for Ontario's economy by meeting needs for all regions which includes concrete measures for local businesses by:

- increasing the competitiveness of Canadian small businesses by lowering the small business tax rate to 10 per cent from 11 per cent;

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- lowering the corporate tax rate to 14 per cent by 2013, making Canada one of the most competitive business jurisdictions in the world, driving the Canadian economy and creating jobs;

And by further addressing the needs of Ontario by:

- addressing Ontario's priority is the "Move Ontario 2020" transit plan for the greater golden horseshoe area. Our proposed infrastructure plan meets Ontario's call for a federal commitment of one-third of the cost;
- creating our Infrastructure Bank that provides low-cost financing for major projects as a vehicle that will allow Ontario to do more with already announced funds;
- ensuring Ontario will also benefit from our additions to the gas tax transfer. Under our plan, the transfer will now be indexed...

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