



City of London Federal Election Candidate Questionnaire

London
CANADA

Reply by Paul Van Meerbergen, Conservative candidate, London North Centre

Background information and links will be available on the Federal Candidate Questionnaire page of the City of London website at www.london.ca.

1. How will you and your Party involve municipal governments as partners in federal and provincial policy, program and budget deliberations on issues that have a direct impact on local governments and their citizens?

A: By consulting with municipal associations on a regular basis. Moreover, municipalities typically represent themselves on federal issues to the Government of Canada without much prompting.

2. Will you and your Party support maintaining funding for existing municipal infrastructure programs? Will you and your Party commit to develop and fund – in collaboration with provincial and municipal governments – a long-term collaborative plan to create financial sustainability and find revenues that grow with the economy, equivalent to One Cent of the GST, to eliminate the 123 Billion dollar municipal infrastructure deficit within 20 years, and to plan for the 115 Billion dollars required to fund unmet infrastructure needs?

A: The Harper Government already assists municipalities financially. In addition, the federal government recently initiated a \$50 million infrastructure program, along with \$6.2 billion infrastructure plan with the Province of Ontario.

3. Will you and your Party develop and implement a National Transit Strategy in order to provide adequate resources for capital expenses, to appropriately integrate land use and transportation planning to ensure that development supports transit, to develop tax incentives to create demand and to engage in innovative research to increase ridership?

A: It strikes me that a transit strategy is the job of the LTC and the provincial government. However as you know the Harper Government has made transit passes tax deductible, and gas tax funding has been made permanent.

4. Will you and your Party work with the Ontario government to continue to support social housing providers beyond the scheduled expiry of all federal housing and homelessness funding programs in March 2009? Will you and your Party commit to developing a long-term National Action Plan for Housing to eliminate homelessness, expand the stock of affordable non-market housing, reduce the backlog in core housing needs, preserve and modernize Canada's existing social housing stock, and extend and revise the Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program?

A: I presume federal support for social housing will continue. In addition, CMHC continues to have a big role in housing development for the nation.

5. How will you and your Party involve municipal governments in meeting national climate change and clean air objectives?

A: The federal government through the Department of the Environment works closely with the Canadian Federation of Municipalities.

6. Will you and your Party commit to clarifying federal/provincial and municipal responsibilities on Community Safety and Policing programs and in ensuring that appropriate resources exist for municipalities?

A: I personally support federal assistance for community policing.

7. What support and resources will you and your Party provide to Canada's Cities and Communities to enable them to continue to deliver essential services related to the attraction, retention and integration of immigrants/newcomers?

A: The Government of Canada provides ongoing support for the settlement of immigrants and newcomers.

8. Affordable, accessible early learning and child care is a sound economic investment in the future of that child, the community and the country. What will you and your Party do to enhance early learning and child care?

A: The federal government has numerous initiatives on child care, including the following:

Delivered choice and support to parents through the Universal Child Care Benefit: \$1,200 per year in direct support for every child under six – over \$3.7 billion in 2006 and 2007 to help parents with the cost of child care.

Invested \$250 million per year to assist the provinces and territories in creating new child care spaces

9. What will you and your Party do to tackle the issue of poverty? A number of Provinces are currently working on anti-poverty strategies. Will you and your Party work with them to ensure that we have a holistic approach?

A: Our best poverty strategy is ensure a sound economy, lots of jobs, low inflation, and rising personal incomes.

10. What will you and your Party do to restore or replace the federal programs that support our arts and cultural industries?

A: The federal government spends about \$3 billion per year on arts and culture.

11. What steps will you and your Party take to preserve and enhance our parks, trails and open spaces? What measures will you and your Party take to ensure that everyone has access to affordable recreation, sport and parks facilities and programs? What will you and your Party do to support youth engagement? How will you and your Party use recreation and sport to promote community safety?

A: The Harper Government has offered very considerable aid to the development of new national parks in Canada, while it maintains the existing national parks.

12. What will you and your Party do to address the obesity epidemic and support active living?

A: The federal government through the Dept of Health offers education programs on human health. And the Harper Government offers a tax credit for the cost of organized sports activities for children.

13. What will you and your Party do to amend the Canada Health Act to include specific funding formulas for Long Term and Specialized Care and Mental Health Rehabilitation?

A: The federal Dept of Health provides sound programs for long term and specialized care and mental health rehabilitation.

14. How specifically will you and your Party work with the Ontario government to address *Ontario's Fairness Campaign* and to strengthen Ontario's capacity to fund programs that build stronger healthier communities?

A: I am sure very actively.

15. How will you and your Party commit to strengthening the regional economy of Southwest Ontario?

A: Economic Growth & Job Creation

In spite of the current economic downturn, particularly in our manufacturing sector -- the result of a rising Canadian dollar -- the Canadian economy has fared comparatively well under the Harper Conservatives. It is easy to manage a national economy when exports are at record highs and your leading trading partner is in high growth mode. Despite the American economic downturn, we here in Canada are getting through with no official recession in sight.

And why are the fundamentals so sound in Canada? The Harper Government is sustaining modest government surpluses and no deficit budgets; the Government has helped to keep inflation under control; real disposable income continues to rise moderately; we have a healthy and vibrant energy sector, and most important, the Harper Conservatives have reduced taxes and kept spending under control.

Indeed, 2009 is said to be a growth year, according to the Governor of the Bank of Canada.

The Harper Government is **guiding Canada's economy into a re-bounce for rising economic growth.**

As long as we don't start experimenting with a wild-eyed carbon tax or "carbon-free economy" nostrums, Canadians and Londoners will soon begin to experience renewed prosperity. Disciplined, focused, economic management is the best course of action.

Keeping Taxes Low

I have fought tirelessly to **keep taxes down** as a councillor at city hall, and I intend to do the same in the House of Commons.

The federal tax burden was relieved with the election of the Harper Government in 2006. We now have a **28% reduction in the GST**, from 7% to 5%, truly a marvellous change to our tax code. But we need to stand on guard against the **Dion Liberals who are just itching to reverse this precious advance in fiscal sanity.**

And there are more tax cuts and tax benefits. The Harper Government announced a \$2000.00 child tax credit and \$1000 working income tax benefit in the March 2007 budget, plus an increase in the lifetime capital gains tax exemption to \$750,000, and a rise in the age limit from 69 to 71 for converting pensions and RRSPs. The basic personal exemption on taxes has been raised to \$9600. The lowest personal income tax rate is down to 15%. Taxes have been cut on small businesses, and the Prime Minister is pledging to raise the accumulated revenue maximum to \$500,000 for private enterprises to capture the low small business tax rate. The job killing capital tax has been eliminated, and the Prime Minister is pledging a two-cent-a-litre cut in the excise tax on diesel fuel, used by farmers, fishers and truck drivers.

These are broad-based and targeted tax cuts and credits. Prime Minister Harper promised tax cuts and he delivered. More can be done, and I will work with the Finance Minister to do just that.

16. Will you and your Party commit to supporting enhanced rail infrastructure, including high speed passenger rail for Southwest Ontario and the Quebec City-Windsor Corridor?

A: It is under active consideration.

17. What other actions will you and your Party take to strengthen the competitiveness, prosperity, and quality of life of Canada's cities and local municipal governments?

A: I intend to do all I can to promote international product and service expansion for London area businesses when I'm in Ottawa.