

Notes for remarks by Deborah Coyne

**on the occasion of her nomination as the federal Liberal candidate for the riding of
Toronto Danforth**

March 24, 2007

Well, once more into the breach.

We all know why we are here.

It is most certainly **not** to listen to me speak for long on the need for good government and good citizenship. Good government with bold and visionary national leadership.

Good citizenship that requires engaged committed citizens working together in the public interest, exercising the responsibilities that go along with the rights of citizenship, and asking at least as much of ourselves as we do of our governments.

But everyone in this room knows all this.

You have taken the time to come out on a Saturday afternoon because you care deeply about this country. You care about what we are building together, and what kind of world we are leaving for our children and grandchildren.

The Liberal Party – our party – is the party that is responsible for building the most fascinating, cosmopolitan multiethnic society in human history, of which Toronto Danforth is a perfect example.

The Liberal Party is the party of Medicare, unemployment insurance, the Canada Pension Plan, the Canadian flag, the Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Justice, equality, diversity – these are the core values that have driven Liberal Party policies and underpinned a progressive, dynamic Canada since World War Two.

Liberals know that the true test of a progressive compassionate national government is our ability to achieve social and economic justice for those on the margins of society, to take care of our most vulnerable.

The Harper government rejects all this. The Harper government is in the business of putting the national government out of business. The Harper government does **not** defend our core values and a progressive, dynamic Canada. The Harper government has clearly failed the test of helping out those on the margins of society.

As proud Liberals and Canadians, we must now stand up clearly to those who would drag Canada down, those who would abdicate the federal government's critical role in protecting and promoting justice, equality and diversity.

Now we are getting ready for another election. And whether it comes next month or next year, the challenge is the same:

We must stop Stephen Harper from pretending to move to the centre, obtaining his majority government by stealth, and then irreversibly dismantling the national government.

We must put an end to one of the most divisive, manipulative, mean-spirited governments in Canadian history.

The latest Harper budget illustrates even more clearly the Harper strategy of transferring more and more power to the provincial governments, especially Quebec, and promoting initiatives that divide us rather than unite us in moving forward. Provinces have been set against other provinces, Canadians against Canadians.

On the environment, Harper continues his pretend greenery. When his initial proposal with the Clean Air Act flopped, he shuffled a minister, repackaged some Liberal programs and called himself green. But despite nice-sounding initiatives like EcoTrust Fund and EcoEnergy, Harper is as incoherent as ever on the critical issue of the environment.

We are nowhere near having a Minister of the Environment on a par with the Minister of Finance, so that ecological principles are integrated every step of the way into our budget, investment and planning processes. We are nowhere near complying with Kyoto and making Canada the greenest country on the planet.

The Harper government continues to be consumed with petty politics, outdated ideologies, power plays to find the Holy Grail of a majority government, costly and useless opinion polls to gauge, not important matters, but merely the popularity of the government.

Harper has attempted to demonize our Liberal leader Stéphane Dion with negative ads, and uses bully tactics on everything from the extension of the Afghanistan mission to a review of the anti-terrorism legislation, to respecting human rights in conflict zones.

Clearly Harper has taken a page out of the George Bush “shut up and sing” approach to persons like the Dixie Chicks who spoke out against him. Harper’s version is: “shut up and vote for me”.

Canadians know better. Canadians know that the most authentic, committed and passionate and principled leader in the field is Stéphane Dion. Canadians concerned about the environment know that Stéphane Dion delivered as much as he could in the previous Liberal government, and, as prime minister, will deliver that much more.

Stéphane Dion’s recent proposal for a carbon budget and a cap and trade system has been widely praised. John Bennett, the Climate Action Executive Director said: “This is great. It’s hard to ask for anything more.” Matthew Bramley of the Pembina Institute’s climate-change program said: “This is the strongest proposal for regulating industrial greenhouse gas pollution made by any political party in Canada.”

Canadians can see through the pretend greenery of Stephen Harper and John Baird. We see through the mean-spirited leadership, the aim of which is to buy off provinces and people with Canadians' own money.

Indeed we have reached new lows of cynicism in politics with Stephen Harper.

News reports now regularly state very matter-of-factly that: it remains to be seen if a certain proposal is enough to buy off the provinces or certain persons or groups.

Since when do we so easily accept that politics is no longer about principle, vision, the national interest, national purpose, and is simply about pay-offs?

In the face of the Harper challenge, it is now critical for all progressive-thinking Canadians to cooperate and coalesce to the greatest extent possible. Bob Rae knows this and that is why he has abandoned the NDP, and joined with the great Liberal Party to stop the Harper manipulation and machinations. The Liberal Party is the only national party which can bring together progressive-thinking Canadians to stop Harper and to build a strong Canada.

And this brings me to Jack Layton.

I remember many people saying to me during the last election that they just had to give Jack another chance to see whether he could exercise the NDP's leadership responsibly, in the national interest.

Well, what has Jack achieved, in addition to giving us the Harper government?

- The end to the national childcare program.
- The end to the Kelowna Accord to achieve greater justice and equality of opportunity for aboriginal Canadians.
- No progress on the environmental front and our compliance with Kyoto.
- No further progress on social housing.
- And so forth and so on.

Now the NDP, under Jack Layton's uncertain leadership, is negotiating with Harper and effectively holding the door while Harper unravels the national government, too scared to engage in an election because the NDP base is now seriously challenged by the Green Party.

Jack Layton seems to think a photo-op is policy. Jack Layton seems to think a photo-op is action. Like having his blood-tested for toxins this summer. But will he or his party be

able to do anything about ensuring sustained meaningful action to reduce widespread toxic chemicals in our environment? **Not at all.**

Jack and the NDP like to take the easy irresponsible way out – bring our troops home from Afghanistan, negotiate with the brutal Taliban. Even well-respected former NDP Director, Robin Sears has said that the NDP position on Afghanistan is “ludicrous and embarrassing to the ghosts of David Lewis and Tommy Douglas.”

Jack and the NDP say – stop the Portlands Energy Centre – we do not need it – we can avoid another blackout if we just conserve more energy. Again, the easy irresponsible way out. Of course we need to conserve more. But we also need, in the meantime, a source of power within Toronto to get us from here to there.

So, the responsible position being taken by our provincial Liberal government is to construct as clean a plant as possible. As Jack Gibbons, Chair of the Ontario Clean Air Alliance points out, the Portlands Energy Centre will reduce air pollution in Toronto by eliminating our need for power from U.S.-based dirty coal fired generators, a major source of Toronto’s smog. The PEC will also only operate about 40 percent of the time to meet the needs in the city.

The responsible position of the federal Liberal party is to get serious about reducing greenhouse gases, finding cleaner sources of energy, and focus on serious measures to ensure conservation and greater energy efficiency. And I will commit myself as the federal representative of Toronto Danforth to ensure that, in exchange for doing our part to deal with Toronto’s critical energy needs, the development of the Toronto Danforth waterfront is given the very high priority it deserves on the part of all levels of government.

Both Jack Layton and Stephen Harper are the plastic politicians, ready for the morticians at the wax museum.

Indeed Jack is never in the riding – he is a phantom. Although today, for a few hours, he is gracing the Queen Street opera house with his presence at his nomination meeting. So I guess now Jack is the Phantom of the Opera.

Our Liberal leader, Stéphane Dion is the sincere, authentic leader who, in his own words, will govern for the next generation, not just the next election.

Stéphane Dion is the leader who will encourage us to live intelligently and frugally, **not** wastefully, who will help build a Canada where achievement is measured by our commitment and responsibility to our fellow citizens, **not** by our level of consumption.

In the forthcoming election, I am confident that Canadians will choose sincerity over shallowness; authenticity over plastic; principled commitment over manipulation; honesty and integrity above all else.

I am confident that Canadians will elect Stéphane Dion as the next prime minister of Canada.

As your Liberal candidate in Toronto Danforth and next Member of Parliament, I intend to speak out forcefully, and get action, on all issues of concern to all of us living in this great riding. These include:

- the arts and cultural community, ignored by the Harper government;
- the many families in need of quality child care;
- the environment and greater energy efficiency and conservation;
- small businesses who need a national sales tax and fairer levels of taxation;
- our seniors, our disabled and all those in need of a decent level of income and standard of living;
- community safety, community policing and all the infrastructure and support required to ensure real equality of opportunity for all Canadians.

I welcome the privilege of being your Liberal candidate in the next election and your next Member of Parliament, and to giving Toronto Danforth the representation it deserves.

We are on a mission in this riding. We are going to win it back. There is going to be a strong Liberal voice for the people of Toronto Danforth in the next Parliament, and that voice will be your voice.

Thank you very much.