

October 6, 2008

Dear ACAP Humber Arm Environmental Association Inc. Board Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to survey my views as the Liberal Party of Canada's candidate in the October 14<sup>th</sup> federal election in Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte.

In your first question to the candidates, you ask what my personal infrastructure priorities would be for the region. It is my view that the personal views of an elected official should not override the understood priorities of our constituents. Based on my twelve years serving as the Member of Parliament for Humber-St. Barbe-Baie Verte, I feel confident that improvements to city and community streets, to highways and access to clean water and well managed sewer infrastructure remain the top priorities of my constituents and of our municipal leaders as does the expansion and improvement of our region's athletic and recreational infrastructure.

The mark of a responsible leader is to understand that these priorities are not always ranked in rigid priority to each other. Access to financing to complete the projects is a major factor in setting community priorities. In the second part of your question, you ask where sewage treatment for the City of Corner Brook rank. As you may be aware, at the request of the City, a municipal sewer treatment study was commissioned with the financial help of the government that I was a member of. This study determined costs of some \$36 million to complete and suggestions were made that the Liberal government's Strategic Community Infrastructure Fund could assist with up to 33% of these costs. This would be in a fashion similar to that offered the municipalities of Greater St. John's for their sewage treatment program. Following completion of this engineering study, the City of Corner Brook declined to pursue the matter further in the short term due to reasons explained at Council. I remain open to assisting the City and surrounding municipalities should they wish to resume pursuit of this initiative in the future.

In your second question you ask what I would do to advance the Corner Brook Sewage Treatment Study completed in 2006 which, of course, is the study I refer to in answer to your first question. Obviously, the city of Corner Brook is the leader of its own house. Just as I was enthusiastic to help fund and conduct this study in the first place, I remain eager to see the work behind it completed. To support the financial requirements of the project, the Liberal Party of Canada is offering perhaps by far the most generous municipal infrastructure commitment of any of the five national political parties. We are proposing a \$70 billion, ten year infrastructure plan that includes specific funds for major, and relatively expensive, strategic infrastructure projects such as Corner Brook's waste treatment. We are also proposing to offer 100% of all federal surplus revenue to the needs of municipalities and their infrastructure requirements. This funding would be above and beyond our \$70 billion municipal infrastructure plan. The offer by me to the city of Corner Brook to assist in sourcing necessary financing for this project has been made in the past and remains open today.

In your third question you ask about the Liberal Party of Canada's specific program commitments to finance municipal infrastructure.

The Liberal long-term infrastructure plan will:

- create a 10-year plan to invest \$70 billion in much-needed infrastructure;
- devote all unanticipated annual budget surplus funds beyond a \$3-billion contingency reserve to infrastructure;
- create an Infrastructure Bank to make available to each level of government low-cost financing for major infrastructure projects such as regional energy grids or high-speed rail.

As part of the \$70-billion plan, we will honour all existing framework agreements that have been signed with the provinces, because when the Government of Canada puts its name on an agreement, future governments should respect that commitment. And we will be more transparent about our priorities for the federal funding we provide.

Liberal priorities for the \$70-billion commitment will include:

- at least \$10 billion of strategic infrastructure, particularly green infrastructure such as water and sewage treatment, and clean energy grids;
- at least \$8 billion for a National Transit Strategy that will enable our communities to expand their transit systems and green their transit fleets;
- at least \$3 billion for a dedicated Small Communities Fund, to ensure that all Canadians are able to see strengthened, more resilient infrastructure;
- at least \$4.5 billion for our country's gateways, corridors and borders to ensure that Canada's infrastructure facilitates, rather than hinders, our trade and tourism industries while keeping Canada safe and secure including that of the Atlantic Gateway concept; and
- at least \$3 billion for sports and recreational facilities because an active society is a healthy society and Canada must renew and expand its arenas and other leisure facilities.

In addition to setting these clear priorities, our 10-year plan includes the transfer of almost \$25 billion to the municipalities through the gas tax transfer. This transfer will now be indexed to nominal GDP growth so that municipalities have the funding certainty they need to keep up with economic growth.

And for the first time ever, we will establish a policy to devote any unanticipated surplus - over and above a \$3-billion contingency fund to ensure fiscal prudence - to investment in infrastructure. This would have represented \$7 billion in 2007-08 alone and nearly \$75 billion if this approach had been taken over the last ten years. The top priority will be investment in sustainable infrastructure: public transit, water systems, green energy, waste management and contaminated sites.

A new Liberal government will also develop an Infrastructure Bank as an additional tool to finance infrastructure investment. This bank will provide low-cost financing for all orders of government that choose to borrow from it. It will also help finance long-term infrastructure projects such as regional energy grids or high-speed rail.

Through the Infrastructure Bank, Canadians across the country would have the opportunity to participate in the Bank's projects through the purchase of tax-free Green Bonds, which would be similar to Canada Savings Bonds, but with the money directed toward investments in renewable energy infrastructure or other investments that will clean up our environment and strengthen our economy. The returns on their investment through these Green Bonds would be tax free.

These measures will be in addition to our existing programs such as the 100% GST rebate program for municipalities.

In your fourth question, you ask about the proposed Canadian Environmental Protection Act (CEPA) amendments that would require secondary treatment of effluent discharges. Environmental protection is obviously a priority. The proposed timing for implementation and enforcement has obviously not been finalized and neither have the proposed penalties, but the Liberal Party of Canada does share a sense of urgency to these proposals. Where we differ from the current government is in our commitment to financially support municipalities to meet their proposed obligations. Obviously, the task of implementing nation-wide waste treatment options is more achievable under the financial partnering being offered by the Liberal Party of Canada's infrastructure support programs than the Conservative's which have all but abandoned support for municipal governments.

In your fifth question, you ask what the Liberal Party of Canada would do to assist communities from the negative impacts of global climate change and its local impacts. Obviously, the most marked difference between my party and others is that we accept that climate change is a real phenomenon and its consequences are real. Other parties don't.

The only real protection against climate change induced weather patterns and rising sea level is to work within multilateral fora to arrest climate change. The Liberal party of Canada is committed to reducing carbon emissions and to meet the targets of the Kyoto Protocol on Climate Change. We will also make available our municipal infrastructure programs to provide short, medium and long term mitigation of these effects as well.

In your sixth and final question, you ask about interest in coastal areas. Interest in our province's coastal areas has been present for well over 500 years. Recent interest is more targeted on vacation and leisure use of coastal areas. This type of interest can be very helpful and assist in the long-term viability of communities if done appropriately and managed well. It is essential that local residents and communities have full access to express their opinions on appropriate development levels. As a federal representative, part of my role could be to encourage municipalities to engage in the pursuit of planning and consultation in cooperation with the levels of government that have jurisdiction in municipal and regional development planning and zoning; the provincial and municipal governments of our coastal communities.

I appreciate the opportunity to respond to your organization's enquiries.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gerry Byrne". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hon. Gerry Byrne, MP