

Report of the resolutions adopted at the Policy Conference

Held November 21 - 23, 2008

Toronto Airport Marriott

Ontario Liberal Party





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February 2009

Dear Fellow Liberals — Friends:

Our recent Policy Development Conference in Toronto was a great success thanks to the hard work and active participation of you and Ontario Liberal Party members from across the province. I deeply value all the thoughtful suggestions and ideas you shared with us on the crucial issues of poverty reduction and prosperity.

While the conference gave delegates the opportunity to provide input and feedback that was critical to the policy areas of poverty reduction and prosperity, I know that many, many months of hard work preceded it. I want to thank each and every one of you — delegates, riding association members, volunteers — for your vital contributions from day one.

I also want to express my warm thanks to everyone who generously gave of their time and energy to put such an exceptional weekend together. Well done!

I feel privileged to lead a party like ours. I sincerely appreciate the tireless work you do day in and out in your ridings to make our party the best it can be. Thanks again for all your efforts. Please accept my best wishes.

Yours truly,

Dalton McGuinty
Leader of the Ontario Liberal Party
Premier



February 2009

Dear Liberal Friends,

Thanks to the turnout of over 380 Liberal delegates, the 2008 Policy Conference was an outstanding success. Back in July 2008, a call was placed for ridings across Ontario to submit resolution proposals based on our sub-themes, all relating to the overarching theme of Prosperity and Poverty Reduction.

Through the policy process we managed to consolidate all submissions into six resolutions, one for each of the sub-themes. At the Policy Conference delegates made changes to strengthen and enhance the resolutions. We are pleased to announce that all six resolutions were passed by voting delegates and are now Ontario Liberal Party policy.

The policy process is an integral part of the Liberal experience and is essential to Party renewal in these changing times. As well, it is an opportunity for members, such as you, to contribute ideas to the Party. It is a prime example of grassroots involvement.

We were pleased at the turnout of Party members at this conference. Your involvement provided rich and lively discussion about the direction our province is headed and what we, as Liberals, can do to make Ontario a better place.

Once again, thank you for your participation in the policy process and we look forward to seeing your continued involvement.

Sincerely,

Gordon F. Phaneuf
President

Carol Golench
Operational Vice President – Policy



February 2009

Dear Members of the Ontario Liberal Party Family:

I would like to extend my sincerest thanks for your contributions in shaping one of our McGuinty government's key priorities in public policy.

Thank you for bringing your insights to the *Poverty and Prosperity* policy convention in November, as well as your work in riding associations throughout Ontario.

As you know, we launched Ontario's first-ever Poverty Reduction Strategy on December 4. We put forward our plan to break the cycle of poverty – focusing on children and their families. It was truly the culmination of our collective hard work.

As Liberals, we've always known that tackling poverty is our moral obligation. But it's just as much an economic imperative. As the Premier says, we need everyone at their best for Ontario to succeed.

We've launched our strategy and laid out the framework. We have set bold, ambitious targets that will be measured each year. But I am asking for your continued commitment to our poverty reduction agenda. We'll reach our targets if everyone plays a role. I urge you to continue in engaging your local communities. Build on the conversation we've opened up throughout the province.

Together, as Liberals working with everyone at the table, we're breaking the cycle of poverty in Ontario.

Sincerely,

Hon. Deb Matthews, MPP

February 2009

The Ontario Liberal Party's Policy Conference held at the Toronto Airport Marriott on the weekend of November 21st to 23rd was a remarkable success! Over 380 party members from across the province attended the conference which focused on consultation with party members and the passing of six resolutions related to our theme of Prosperity and Poverty Reduction.

After the Opening Ceremonies on Friday evening, the conference started with the caucus availability session. The Premier, the Cabinet and Caucus were on hand to answer a variety of questions from delegates, providing a great start to the weekend's events.

Saturday morning began with an excellent address from the Premier which introduced the theme for the weekend. This was followed by a session by the Hon. George Smitherman and Hon. Deb Matthews on *Creating Opportunity*. Minister Matthew's presentation helped layout the government's goals and approach to reducing poverty in our province. The breakout sessions (both morning and afternoon) were very productive as well with Ministers leading discussions related to the six sub-themes of the conference. We thank all the following Ministers and MPP's:

- Hon. Deb Matthews and Hon. Kathleen Wynne (Every Child Counts)
- Dr. Reza Moridi MPP and Liz Sandals MPP (Navigating the Transitions)
- Hon. Jim Watson (Strengthening our Local Communities)
- Hon. John Wilkinson (The Green Economy)
- Hon. Michael Bryant (The Skills Opportunity)
- Hon. George Smitherman (The Infrastructure Foundation)

Saturday's luncheon featured guest speaker Mark Chamberlain, Chair of the Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction. His illuminating and inspiring address illustrated that poverty is not insurmountable, and that it takes vision and real leadership to tackle this issue.

On Sunday morning delegates voted on and adopted six amended resolutions as developed at the conference. As well, during the provincial council meeting that morning, OLP President, Gord Phaneuf, presented the Exceptional Service Policy Development Recognition Award to Howard Brown. Finally, a round of regional meetings concluded the weekend, led by the Regional Vice Presidents.

This report and relevant documents are also available on the Liberal Toolkit. Our political outreach department will be in touch with riding presidents to provide access to this secure intranet site.

Summary of Policy Conference Sessions

Highlights:

Plenary Session – Creating Opportunities

- Presented by Hon. George Smitherman and Hon. Deb Matthews

Background Information

- We want to create a province where every person has the opportunity to achieve his or her full potential and contribute to and participate in a prosperous and healthy Ontario.
- Our goal is to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, leading to an initial focus on tackling child poverty.
- We can't afford poverty.
- Poverty costs us all
 - Lost productivity, lost tax revenue
 - Higher costs for social assistance, health care, and the justice system.
- Reducing poverty increases our collective prosperity- more tax revenue and fewer social service costs.

What we are doing

- Introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit
- Lower class sizes, higher student achievement
- Quadrupled support of school breakfast and lunch programs
- 22,000 more child care spaces
- More postsecondary student aid, return of non-repayable grants
- 28% increase to minimum wage since 2003, growing to a 50% increase by 2010
- Over 22,000 affordable housing units and 35,000 housing allowances
- Fair access to professions and trades for internationally-trained
- Social assistance rule changes to help recipients move into the workforce
- Breaking the Cycle – We know that one of the best ways to reduce poverty is to break its intergenerational cycle. By giving children the tools to stay and thrive in school, we will be reducing poverty for future generations. This will also focus on supporting the families and communities in which these children live.
- Smarter Government – We know that we need to better organize how we develop and manage government programs. We need a more person-centred approach and we need to ensure that we are using the best evidence to guide our investments.

Breakout Session – Every Child Counts

- Presented by Hon. Deb Matthews and Hon. Kathleen Wynne

Background Information

- We will build a comprehensive poverty reduction strategy around the Ontario Child Benefit. We will work with partners to develop indicators and targets to measure and address child poverty.
 - 2007 Liberal Platform
- The evidence says that the best way to reduce poverty in the long-term is to break the cycle of poverty. That is why we are focusing on children. But we know that children live in families, and families live in communities.

What we are doing

- Introduction of the Ontario Child Benefit
- Expansion of Student Nutrition Programs
- Lower class sizes
- Significant investment in public education

Breakout Session – Navigating the Transitions

- Presented by Reza Moridi MPP and Liz Sandals MPP

Background Information

- The impact of globalization has created significant shifts in the Ontario economy. Manufacturing and forestry sectors have been detrimentally impacted by these shifts. At the same time, other industries have benefited such as information technology, construction, energy and health care.
- The government cannot control the global shifts affecting Ontario's economy, but it can seize the economic opportunities they create and can, through its economic plan, help make these changes positive for families and businesses.
- Ontario's economic advantage is its highly educated workforce. The government has accordingly invested heavily in programs that increase the knowledge and skills of its people in order to enhance Ontario's position as a destination of choice for global investment.

What we are doing

- Investing in Post Secondary Education
 - Investment in post secondary education is linked to higher productivity, better health, innovation, civic engagement, and economic growth. This is why investing in our people is a cornerstone of Ontario's economic strategy.
 - In a global economy, Ontario's labour market and businesses are increasingly dependent on workers with post secondary education.
 - Reaching Higher Plan - \$6.2 billion investment in post secondary education – the largest investment in post secondary education in 40 years

- Strengthening Employment Services
 - Employment Ontario is the province's \$1 billion integrated employment and training network.
 - Training Programs include:
 - Academic upgrading- includes Literacy and Basic Skills training and/or earning high school diploma/ equivalency
 - Ontario Skills Development Program- offers short-term training (under 6 months) for unemployed workers who want to upgrade their skills and get back to the workforce as quickly as possible
 - Second Career- a long-term training program (up to two years college, three years including academic upgrading) for laid-off workers to retrain for highly skilled occupations in their communities
- Budget – Skills to Jobs Action Plan
 - Building on the success of our investments in postsecondary education and Employment Ontario, the McGuinty government invested \$2 billion in the 2008 Budget on our Skills to Jobs Action Plan.
 - Student Access, Student Excellence - \$465 million over three years to increase student assistance and opportunities, including investments of \$385 million for an annual Textbook and Technology Grant benefiting approx. 550,000 full-time students, \$27 million for a new Distance Grant designed to assist with transportation costs for students from rural and remote areas, more than \$16 million to enhance the successful Pathways to Education program to more cities, \$3.5 million for Youth Science Foundation Canada and \$1.5 million for Let's Talk Science to inspire young people to pursue science and technology careers
- Enhancing Apprenticeship and Skilled Trades
 - 110,000 apprentices are learning a trade today-50,000 more than 5 years ago.
 - There has been a 25% increase in new apprenticeship registrations since 2003.
 - Over 30,000 employers participate in apprenticeship training.
 - We are investing in state of the art equipment for apprentices and journeypersons.

Breakout Session – Strengthening our Communities
- Presented by Hon. Jim Watson

Background Information

- We have already created the Provincial-Municipal Review, an affordable housing program, a \$100 million Capital Repair Fund- Social Housing, and Rent Bank Support.
- We have also uploaded from Municipalities responsibilities for
 - Ontario Works
 - Court Security
 - ODSP
 - ODB

What we are doing

- Creating or repairing 22,000 units of affordable housing
- Providing 35,000 rent supplements to Ontario families
- Preventing over 16,800 evictions to date with a \$23.8 million investment in the Ontario Rent Bank since 2004
- We are stabilizing funding to the Rent Bank at \$5 million per year for 5 years.
- Investing \$6.6 billion in municipal infrastructure over the last three years, including \$1.1 billion invested for infrastructure projects across Ontario

Breakout Session – The Green Economy
- Presented by Hon. John Wilkinson

Background Information

- Economic growth, wealth creation and prosperity founded upon the principles of sustainability: *economic growth that does not exploit finite resources and creates good-paying jobs in industries that reduce carbon and toxic emissions.*

What we are doing

- Five Pillars of approach:
 - Support Excellence and Create Value
 - Focus Investments
 - o Advanced health technologies
 - o Digital Media and ICT
 - o Bio-economy and Clean Technologies
 - Promote an innovation-friendly Business Climate
 - Attract, create and retain Highly-Skilled Talent for jobs in the new economy
 - Government as a Catalyst for Innovation

<p>Breakout Session – The Infrastructure Foundation - Presented By Hon. George Smitherman</p>

Background Information

- The infrastructure deficit remains large in almost every sector, including transportation, the legacy of three decades of under-investment.
- Infrastructure investment is needed to respond to the growing size and sophistication of the Ontario economy and population growth.

What we are doing

- Our government has significantly increased investment in infrastructure. This year, we are investing \$9.9 billion in infrastructure funding throughout Ontario.
- Infrastructure investment has more than doubled since 2002-03.
- Growth has been particularly strong in the transportation and health sectors.
- We will
 - Match infrastructure investment with the growth plan
 - Invest in the green economy
 - Focus on promoting economic growth and job creation through infrastructure investment
 - Strengthen the transportation network to ensure an efficient flow of goods and people
 - Fix what needs to be fixed
 - Make sure every dollar invested comes with a return.

<p>Luncheon Speaker</p>

Summary of Marc Chamberlain's Address

- He is the Chair of the Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction.
- His speech highlighted the urgency of the issue of poverty – challenged the government to go beyond 25 in 5 (the current government's goal).
- He talked about working with all partners in Hamilton:
 - They have come together to try and make Hamilton the “Best Place to Raise a Child”;
 - He shared the story of “Crazy Daisies” - a woman who coped with mental illness and wanted to start a business to provide florist services to corporations. The business is a success and it also does educational work with corporations to explain the issues of mental health and psychiatric survivors.
- We need everyone at their best. It is good for our economy and good for Ontario.

Sub-theme: Every Child Counts

Title: Providing Support for Early Childhood Development

Whereas good health and a sense of well being is an integral part of good education; and

Whereas children of the working poor and of those on social assistance are at risk of not coming to school ready to learn and not being able to take full advantage of the educational opportunities that the school provides; and

Whereas mental health issues among children and youth can be effectively treated through community supports that are imperative in order to enhance future quality of life and economic opportunity; and

Whereas research on early childhood development identifies intervention at an early age as key to a child's future development and concludes that parenting is identified as a key factor in early childhood development;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports assistance for parents, guardians and caregivers by providing early intervention for children in partnership with other community network support services such as social workers, mental health workers, public health nurses and neighbourhood police liaisons to staffs of elementary and secondary schools, where and as needed, and that the government reinforce and extend parent education programs in our schools.

Sub-theme: Navigating the Transitions

Title: Towards a Lifelong Learning Strategy

Whereas lifelong learning is a process which stimulates and empowers human potential by providing the knowledge, skills, values, attitudes and understanding needed by individuals to remain successfully employed throughout their lifetimes; and

Whereas lifelong learning is an effective strategy in ensuring continued employment and reducing poverty; and

Whereas the Province of Ontario currently provides a number of worker retraining and skills development programs, such as Employment Ontario, the Second Career Strategy, apprenticeship training, and retraining support for individuals on social assistance; and

Whereas worker retraining, lifelong learning and unemployment assistance is critical in ensuring that laid-off workers are able to transition quickly back to employment; and

Whereas the Province of Ontario can take further steps to promote the links between learning and work and to create incentives for individuals and employers to participate and invest in learning; and

Whereas the federal Employment Insurance program currently discriminates against workers in Ontario, to the point where a laid-off worker in Ontario receives approximately \$4,600 less annually than workers in other provinces;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports the development of a Lifelong Learning Strategy, designed to help transition unemployed workers back into the workforce, incorporating and expanding current provincial worker training programs, while asking the federal government to improve the Employment Insurance program to ensure equality for all workers in Ontario and the rest of the country.

Sub-theme: Strengthening Our Local Communities

Title: Community Hubs and Schools

Whereas communities are in need of more space for community activities whether for sports activities, help for parents and seniors, child care and/or play-based pre-school activities; and

Whereas a successful transition from youth to adult is critical in creating a foundation for healthy communities that provide stronger contributions to our economy; and

Whereas research shows that both rural and urban youth faced with poverty have a higher likelihood of being a school dropout, unemployed, under-skilled, homeless, or disconnected from their community, conditions which can potentially lead to an increase in crime, stress, bullying, suicide, substance abuse, and unwanted pregnancy; and

Whereas the Best Start initiative is a success; the same long-term focus and investment must be made specific to youth, based on shared best practices, consolidated research, policy development and system-wide learning; and

Whereas places and spaces for youth provide the most consistent, central and barrier-free points of access for youth and youth programs in rural communities; and

Whereas a coordinated, multi-sectoral approach, with all levels of government, which contributes to an integrated plan with strategic direction for all youth service delivery, will mitigate the silo phenomenon, harmonize youth transitions and grow a bright and younger Ontario;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports rural and urban youth and community spaces by encouraging the use and preservation of school sites and facilities as community hubs in the evenings, on weekends and during vacation periods, and by the regular evaluation of this program using measurable targets and evidence-based outcomes.

Sub-theme: The Green Economy

Title: Leveraging for a Green Future

Whereas the economy is a natural extension of the environment and is therefore dynamic and will adapt to changes in the environment; and

Whereas because of both decreasing supply and increasing demand we are only now at the beginning of what will be a long-term rise in the financial cost of fossil fuels; and

Whereas the future of Ontario's electrical energy pricing stability rests on the need to avoid dependency on depleting hydro-carbon sources, such as coal, oil and gas and to migrate to renewable sources that offer stabilized costs over many decades into the future; and

Whereas Ontario needs to transition to an energy efficient economy in order to stimulate future economic growth, while preserving a healthy environment for our children; and

Whereas buying locally grown food is better for the Ontario economy and its environment as Ontario has some of the best farmland in the world; and

Whereas, by acting first, Ontario has an opportunity to become a global leader in creating and exporting environmentally-friendly technology;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports the adoption of a green economy strategy that sets an example and provides appropriate incentives to encourage:

- scientific research into the Green Economy;
- energy conservation;
- further development of local renewable electricity generation;
- transition to the production of more environmentally sustainable products and out of the production of environmentally unsustainable products;
- an increase in efficiency in the way we use energy;
- greater use of Ontario-grown food, biofuels and biomaterials;
- development of made-in-Ontario technologies for reducing the reliance on fossil fuels and the emission of greenhouse gases.

Sub-theme: The Infrastructure Foundation

Title: The Reduction of Highway Traffic

Whereas the long-term prosperity of Ontario hinges on efficient transportation across difficult terrain in challenging climatic conditions; and

Whereas the highway infrastructure load is unduly burdened by traffic that could effectively be switched to rail or water transportation; and

Whereas rail is one of the most efficient and effective forms of mass transit connecting communities across the province; and

Whereas there are currently few programs to reward local sourcing or innovative solutions to reduced shipping and driving (e.g., packaging reductions, local reprocessing of garbage, E-business, telecommuting, etc.); and

Whereas the season for winter roads and their use for transporting goods in and out of the north continues to shrink;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports the promotion of a program designed to reduce the need for highway transportation and to transition to other, more efficient options, including northern and rural communities, by:

- providing for and encouraging investment and maintenance;
- undertaking an analysis of how best to stimulate ways of reducing the burden on both road infrastructure and the environment;
- expanding passenger and freight railway systems;
- advancing integrated transport solutions;
- investigating solutions and options to better support integrated water-borne transportation;
- considering the use of the regional transportation model across Ontario.

Sub-theme: The Skills Opportunity

Title: Developing and Promoting a Highly-Trained Workforce

Whereas Ontario possesses a well-educated, highly-skilled and highly-trained workforce, thanks to the investments made by the provincial Liberal government since 2003; and

Whereas Ontario's workforce can be leveraged to attract new and more investment in order to have a competitive and productive economy; and

Whereas industries, especially those in new and emerging technologies, invest in areas where the population is best-educated; and

Whereas Ontario cannot afford to waste anyone's potential ability, especially the skills of new Canadians;

Be it resolved that the Ontario Liberal Party supports:

- continued investment by the Government of Ontario in its people in order to ensure that Ontario can compete in the global economy;
- an environmental policy that "jump-starts" investment in innovative technologies and corresponding "green" job training;
- the vocational evaluation and the retraining of workers looking to move to areas with a shortage of skilled workers through the Second Career Strategy and other skills training programs to identify and utilize transferable skills;
- more flexibility on a case-by-case basis to extend greater training time and funds to better equip individuals to meet the needs of the labour market while ensuring that Ontario continues to attract new high-value and high-skilled industries.