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Conservative Voice

Stephen Harper  2004

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Dear Mr. Williams,

Thank you for your letter of February 24, 2004 requesting answers to a wide range of questions on issues of concern to the Newfoundland and Labrador Government. I was pleased to meet with your caucus last week to discuss these issues in person.

I trust that you and your caucus found our time together as productive as I did. I look forward to continued discussions about issues of concern to you, your caucus and the people of Newfoundland and Labrador.

I thought it would be worthwhile to respond directly to your question in writing as well. I have kept the responses below brief, and would welcome any additional clarification you would seek.

As I discussed at your caucus, a fuller explanation of my policy in Atlantic Canada can be gleaned from my policy paper released earlier in the Leadership campaign entitled, *An Economic Revitalisation Plan for Atlantic Canada*, which discusses many of these issues raised in your letter.

OIL AND GAS

Will you support Newfoundland and Labrador's claim to 100 percent of our offshore oil and gas provincial revenues, making the province the true "principal beneficiary" as intended under the Atlantic Accord?

Yes. I would support the exclusion of non-renewable resource revenues from the Equalization formula.

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support transferring at no cost to Newfoundland and Labrador the 8.5 percent Hibernia shares the federal government owns through the Canada Hibernia Holding Corporation, provided the arrangement allows for Canada to recover its initial equity investment from profits?

On behalf of the people of Canada, the government of Canada is the shareholder of these shares. I support the eventual disposition of these shares that maximizes the value to Canadians.

Will you support giving Newfoundland and Labrador jurisdictional control and ownership over petroleum and other economic resources in the offshore as a means to achieve greater prosperity for our province and more opportunity for our people?

I favour giving Atlantic Canada (as well as British Columbia) greater control over offshore resources such as fish and non-renewable resources.

EQUALIZATION

Will you support calculating equalization entitlement based on ten-province standard?

Yes, in concert with removing non-renewable resources from the formula.

TRANSFERS

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support the restoration of federal transfers to the provinces for health care, post-secondary education and social services to 1994-95 levels adjusted for inflation?

I supported the Health Accord agreed to by all provinces to increase funding for health care.

Will you support the allocation of future transfers on the basis of need rather than population numbers alone?

The Equalization program already incorporates a measure of need.

FISHERIES MANAGEMENT

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support giving Newfoundland and Labrador direct and meaningful say in the management (i.e. allocation and harvesting) of fisheries stocks in the ocean territory adjacent to the province?

Yes.

Will you support imposing custodial management on the continental shelf immediately outside Canada's 200-mile exclusive economic zone where such action is warranted to preserve fish stocks from international unsustainable harvesting practices?

Yes.

HYDRO POWER

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support efforts to develop the hydropower resources of the Lower Churchill River system for the primary benefit of Newfoundland and Labrador, including the provision of Federal Government guarantee if necessary to proceed with the project on a stand-alone basis?

I support the further development of hydropower resources in Newfoundland and Labrador.

Will you support initiatives that make amends for the grossly lopsided Upper Churchill power contract that was signed after Ottawa refused to support a reasonably priced power corridor for Newfoundland and Labrador to wheel electricity across Québec to external markets?

Yes.

HIGHWAYS AND FIXED LINK

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support the completion of the Trans-Labrador Highway and raise it to an acceptable standard?

I would transfer control over 3 to 5 cents of the federal gas tax to provinces and municipalities so that they have the necessary funds to make infrastructure investments. These gas tax revenues would enter the equalization formula to ensure that the distribution is fair across Canada. I also support continued federal investment in national highways.

Will you support efforts for the repair, replacement and maintenance of key transportation infrastructure in the province on a timely basis?

I would transfer control over 3 to 5 cents of the federal gas tax to provinces and municipalities so that they have the necessary funds to make infrastructure investments. These gas tax revenues would enter the equalization formula to ensure that the distribution is fair across Canada.

Will you support the construction of a fixed link across the Strait of Belle Isle to give this province the continuous land-based connection to the North American highway grid that most residents of the nine other provinces enjoy, and which will complete the Trans Canada Highway from coast to coast?

I would transfer control over 3 to 5 cents of the federal gas tax to provinces and municipalities so that they have the necessary funds to make infrastructure investments. These gas tax revenues would enter the equalization formula to ensure that the distribution is fair across Canada.

MILITARY TRAINING

Will you as leader of the Conservative Party of Canada support efforts to restore and enhance military training activities at 5-Wing Goose Bay, which has served for many years as key to NATO international flight training base?

I have committed to an immediate injection of \$1.2 billion into defence spending, with further increases to bring our spending in line with similar countries around the world.

I would like to thank you again for allowing me to discuss these issues with your caucus. I look forward to a good working relationship in the days ahead as we both work towards growth and prosperity for all Canadians!

Sincerely,



Stephen Harper
Conservative Party of Canada Leadership Candidate