

HEATHER CARTER'S BLOG

WEDNESDAY, NOVEMBER 28, 2007

Understanding the Early Years in Niagara



A breakfast forum was hosted by the Early Childhood Community Development Centre this morning in St. Catharines. Data was presented on the results of a survey of neighbourhoods in the Niagara Region. An instrument called the Early Development Instrument was developed to measure 'readiness to learn in school' and the results are based on an overall sample size of 3,014. Glory Ressler, Coordinator, Understanding the Early Years Niagara Region, and Tiffany Gartner, Data Analysis Coordinator, Ontario Early Years Niagara Region reviewed some fascinating results of the survey. The following conclusions were reviewed.

- almost 1 in 4 Niagara children are not ready for learning
- poor scores impact future success and, eventually, community health and prosperity
- larger percentages of children living in poverty are vulnerable
- the largest number of children at risk live in middle/upper income families
- small changes for a large proportion of the population will have the most impact
- neighbourhood makes a difference - not always in a predictable manner
- access to resources also seems important
- low scores, differences and surprises can inspire further study and action.

BLOG ARCHIVE

▼ 2007 (31)

▼ November (5)

[Understanding the Early Years in Niagara](#)

[Hon. Carolyn Bennett Celebrates 10 Years](#)

[NWG Women's Group Off to a Great Start](#)

[Walt Addresses Laurier Liberal Ladies](#)

[Taking the Lead on Poverty Reduction](#)

▶ October (5)

▶ May (7)

▶ April (3)

▶ March (9)

▶ February (2)

▶ 2006 (5)

ABOUT ME

HEATHER CARTER

Frustrated with the partisan antics in the House of Commons and cuts to federal programs, I entered into politics as the Candidate for Niagara West-Glanbrook in the 2006 election. On March 17th, 2007 I was acclaimed as the Candidate for the next election, and I had the honour of being the first woman candidate in Ontario. Since the 2006 election,

As with all good studies we have completed in Niagara, what counts now is what we do with the information. It's time for our individual communities to learn more about the local information and then decide how to work together to ensure that every child has the opportunity to develop his/her full potential. As Thomas D'Aquino, President of the Canadian Council of Chief Executives said "If Canada is to succeed in forging a creative economy, we cannot afford to waste the talents of a single Canadian."

In the photo from left to right: Heather Carter, Aaron Bell, Ojibway Storyteller, Glory Ressler, Coordinator, Understanding the Early Years Niagara Region and Dr. Robin Williams, Medical Officer of Health and Commissioner of Public Health.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 10:58 PM 0 COMMENTS

SUNDAY, NOVEMBER 25, 2007

Hon. Carolyn Bennett Celebrates 10 Years



The Hon. Carolyn Bennett celebrated her 10th Anniversary of being the Member of Parliament for St. Paul's riding in Toronto. Paying special tribute to Carolyn at was former MP of the riding Barry Campbell, Bob Rae, Candidate for Toronto Centre, Irwin Cotler, MP for Mount Royal, Ken Dryden, MP for York Centre and Sue Barnes, MP for London West. Carolyn is my mentor and I am so lucky! Everyone spoke about her enthusiasm, adherence to principled leadership, and promotion of building the party from the grassroots and democracy between elections.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 10:56 PM 0 COMMENTS

I have worked hard at being a prominent liberal voice in the riding and I am a strong proponent of Democracy Between Elections. I am involved in a number initiatives focusing on education, poverty, family enterprise, labour market development and community service and I have hosted community forums on issues of concern for the residents of the Niagara region. Currently, I am involved with the following organizations: Niagara College Foundation, Niagara Training and Adjustment, West Niagara WrapAround, Rotary Club of Fonthill, and the Niagara West-Glanbrook Federal Liberal Riding Association.

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[Youthography](#)

NWG Women's Group Off to a Great Start



The first inaugural meeting of the NWG Women's Group took place today at The Gables in Grimsby. About forty women from all walks of life came together to discuss the possibility of becoming a Club registered with the Liberal Party's Women Commission. In the photo from left to right: Katherine Medcalf, Rhonda Michalovicz, Linda Henry, Britt Traynor, Heather Carter, Alison Grewal, Helen Wilson, VP Women's Commission, Elizabeth Elliott, and Selvum Pillay, VP Laurier Liberal Ladies. Lynne Steele, former Riding President of York-Simcoe is in the front row.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 10:39 PM 0 COMMENTS

FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 23, 2007

Walt Addresses Laurier Liberal Ladies



Walt Lastewka, MP from 1993 to 2006 and Federal Candidate for St. Catharines addressed the Laurier Liberal Ladies today. Walt delivered a fabulous speech to the group of about seventy at the

Howard Johnson Hotel at noon. In the photo from left to right: Joyce Morocco, Niagara Falls, Walt Lastewka, Heather Carter and Lina Seniuk, President, Laurier Liberal Ladies.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 9:43 PM 0 COMMENTS

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 10, 2007

Taking the Lead on Poverty Reduction

Today, I attended a great event at the Learning Enrichment Foundation Centre in Toronto. Our leader Stephane Dion took a courageous step in announcing an ambitious poverty strategy. What gives weight to the announcement is the targets set. Under liberal leadership during the next five years, there will be a reduction in the number of Canadians living in poverty by thirty percent and the number of children by fifty percent. Currently, 3.4 million Canadians live in poverty of which 788,000 are children.

The plan calls for the use of a broad range of public policy instruments to ensure the targets are met including changes to the Working Income Tax Benefit, the Canada Child Tax Benefit, and the Guaranteed Income Supplement.

This poverty reduction plan affirms the liberal progressive strategy for Canada and gives Canadians a clear alternative to the uninspired and regressive policies of Harper and the conservatives.

I will never forget the debate I was in during the last election at Saltfleet High School in Stoney Creek. Someone asked what I was going to do about poverty, given Hamilton's high poverty rate. I remember being shocked when the woman told the audience and candidates about the number of children, particularly, that were living in poverty in Hamilton. I decided that I better learn as much as I could about poverty and that this was an issue of national importance.

Today Dion called on the staff and board members of the LEF and all Canadians to hold his feet to the fire, indicating that unless one aims high, accomplishments are few. This was a welcome announcement - a big and bold plan at a time when Canadians are hungry for a grander vision. I am so proud.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 8:46 PM 0 COMMENTS

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 20, 2007

Fundraising Training in Niagara



Adam Smith, Senior Manager of Grassroots Fundraising for the Liberal Party of Canada spent the day with a number of dedicated liberals from Niagara. Adam travelled from Ottawa yesterday and spent some extra time with our group from Niagara West-Glanbrook discussing fundraising ideas. What a valuable session it was! As you can see from the photo, we enjoy each other's company. From left to right: John Caron, Pat Butcher, Heather Carter, Adam Smith, Bill McFarland and Shirley Decaire.

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 10:54 PM 0 COMMENTS

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 18, 2007

Is Dean Listening?

Dean Allison, MP for Niagara West-Glanbrook is in Ottawa now, confident that he has a good understanding of the concerns of constituents in the riding. In a recent MP Report from Dean, he indicates during the summer months, he consulted with constituents and the three re-occurring themes were Afghanistan, justice and taxes.

During the same summer period, The Strategic Council* conducted a national survey. Canadians were asked "What is the most important issue facing Canada today – that is the one that you are most concerned about?" The results are interesting and, with the exception of the Afghanistan issue, highlight a different list of

priorities. The biggest concern - at 23% of the respondents – was the environment, followed by healthcare at 16%, and terrorism (which includes all mentions of Afghanistan,) at 10%. The issue of taxes was way down the list – at 3% and crime/violence at 2%.

Like Dean, during September I manned a booth at the Smithville, Lincoln and Binbrook Fairs. We conducted a poll of attendees, asking them the question “What is the most important issue facing Canadians?” Our list was extensive with a total of 12 items; respondents were given one vote only and the opportunity for to write down other issues that did not appear on the list. The three priorities across all the Fairs were consistent. The number one issue was very clear: healthcare. The second priority was the environment, followed by education as the third issue. At the Smithville Fair, priorities number two and three switched places, with voters rating education slightly higher than the environment. It should be noted that the provincial issue of faith-based education funding was on people’s minds at the time and many individuals checked off “education” because they were either for or against funding of faith-based education. However, many individuals indicated that it was the cost of post-secondary education that was of concern when they chose the education issue as the most important issue.

If we are to take out the education choice because of the confusion over the faith-based funding issue, a provincial matter, we then look at the fourth issues down the list. At the Smithville Fair, the issue of taxes was a distant four at 5%. At Lincoln and Binbrook, crime came in fourth at only 8%. (In comparison, healthcare represented 45% and the environment 23% of the top five priorities.)

So what are we to make of the findings? First of all, there is a great amount of consistency between the national survey and the very informal survey done at our booths for the two top priorities. Healthcare and the environment share number one and two positions. Canadians and residents of Niagara West-Glanbrook are concerned about the state of our health care system and climate changes that are affecting our environment.

The results beg the question: Why didn’t Dean Allison identify the same top two issues during his consultation with constituents this summer? Did the issues not come up? When a constituent raised the issue of the healthcare crisis that we are facing, did he merely pass the buck to the province? What about the environment? Surely, Dean is receiving feedback that it is time for the government to act

on the impending crisis and the climate changes we are witnessing.

The overriding characteristic of this government is its bulldozing ahead with its own agenda. And we have seen that Harper will stop at nothing to ensure that his minority government's own priorities are given importance with little or no consultation with the other parties. During the last 18 months, MPs have been muzzled, parliamentary committees have been shut down by the Conservative Committee Chairs, and a Playbook manual has been distributed to all Conservatives outlining the ways to disrupt committee proceedings. Important priorities like the health of our citizens and the commitment to our environment are being ignored. I hope that you join me in urging Dean Allison, our representative of priorities in Niagara West-Glanbrook, to not fall prey to a narrow agenda that does not reflect the concerns of our residents. Although 36% of Canadians voted for the Conservatives during the last election, 100% of the people living in the communities across the riding expect that, in the democracy that we enjoy in Canada, Dean will listen to every voter's concerns.

*The Strategic Counsel survey that tracks the concerns of Canadians from May 2005 to July 2007 can be found at http://www.thestrategiccounsel.com/our_news/polls/2007-07-16%20GMCTV%20July%2012-15.pdf

POSTED BY HEATHER AT 12:38 AM 0 COMMENTS

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