

Notes for a Speech by  
MPP Lisa MacLeod  
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It is great to be among old friends and fellow Progressive Conservatives.

It is great to be in Nova Scotia where I grew up and went to school—where I have roots both in terms of family and values.

Values which I have taken with me.

And values that are shared by Progressive Conservatives in Ontario and throughout Canada.

They are values that we learn as children and are thankful for in our adult life.

Those are the values of honesty, hard work, respect and knowing that a penny earned is a penny saved.

It is Family.

Those things that guide us in our daily lives—largely old rural values that stand the test of time anywhere.

I want to thank Jim David and PC Leader Karen Casey for inviting me to speak here today.

I also want to thank my old and dear friend Rob Batherson, your new PC Party President for his hospitality and most importantly for this wonderful homecoming.

As Rob said, I was born a Nova Scotian worked for the PC Party of Nova Scotia and then went off to Parliament Hill before getting elected as an Ontario Member of Provincial Parliament.

I followed the grassroots values and work ethic my Dad and his contemporaries used here to win both a coveted nomination and my seat...twice.

I learned from the best and I'm happy to be here to share with you my insights today.

Our provinces and our parties have many things in common.

We have been in a rebuilding process in Ontario since 2003.

We've admittedly had a few stumbles and setbacks that I think can provide sound and important guidance for the Nova Scotia PC Party.

In fact, after speaking to many delegates last night I see so many similarities to where we in the Ontario PC Party have been and where you are today.

The rebuilding process undoubtedly starts with your grassroots- with the stuff kitchen tables and church basements are made of.

As in Ontario, reconnecting with those who support our party in good times and bad and consulting them on the road ahead is an important step that cannot be overlooked in the rush to regain power.

We've launched a province wide policy process that will form the basis of our next election platform. We also have members of our caucus traveling throughout Ontario in their critic portfolios, hosting town hall sessions.

Politicians are really good at talking, but when you're in opposition, when you are fighting to become relevant again, it is the listening that counts.

Equally as similar are the issues and the type of opponent we are facing.

For instance, Nova Scotia and Ontario each have a premier who said one thing to get elected and once he got into the Premier's chair did another.

We both have premiers that have spending problems and who want more of our tax dollars- which is particularly painful to watch, given it was our governments- in Ontario under Harris and Eves and in Nova Scotia under Cameron, Hamm and MacDonald who brought fiscal restraint and respect for the tax dollar to the fore of their government agenda's.

Nova Scotia and Ontario both have premiers who continually leave hard working everyday Canadians with the very sad feeling that they have disingenuous leaders without a credible plan for today or tomorrow.

Both are promise breakers, who told their electorate what they wanted to hear not what they could deliver.

Both have never seen a tax dollar that they did not like or want.

One NDP and one Liberal but both the same.

We will soon be getting the HST—Nova Scotia is already there. But I will come back to this.

Mark Muisse, West Nova's former MP once said to me that if you do not stand for something that you will fall for anything.

Words that as a relatively young politician I am still trying to digest. But they are words of great wisdom- from a Nova Scotia politician I to this day admire.

As the late Senator J. Michael Forrestall once said, as a Conservative you have to have principles.

A grit or a Dipper can stand for anything but the mark of a conservative is to have principles that guide you through the good times and pull you through the bad.

He would always tell me: It is not easy being a Progressive Conservative.

He would also remind me and everyone around him that after the dark days post '93 that there would be a conservative government in Ottawa again. I'm proud to say he lived long enough to see it.

From Robert Stanfield and John Hamm we learned that quiet dignity and an underlying wish to better the lives of Nova Scotians has been a driving force in the this party's history.

The dignity and honesty of Robert Stanfield is legendary in this province and in all of Canada.

He is widely admired to this day.

My uncle served in his cabinet, a fact and connection of which my family is eternally proud.

But every Nova Scotian has a Robert Stanfield story and connection because he was connected to Nova Scotians.

There is not one person in this party or Province who does not have a John Buchanan story.

When he was premier he had a plan.

He set out in terrible economic times to build infrastructure from one end of this province to the other.

He invested in the off shore.

It was a strategic vision that has brought Nova Scotia prosperity.

The NDP are now spending in part his legacy and in part your tax dollars.

One of my fondest Christmas memories was to see the Buchanan family Christmas card and to reconnect with this great Nova Scotian and his family.

When I went to Ottawa in search of my dreams, it was John Buchanan who hired me and introduced me to life and politics in Ottawa.

I may be biased but Donnie Cameron will always be my cousin.

He was a man who believed in the power of business to move the economy.

He knew that small business and industry drove the economic engines of this province.

He built on the work my uncle did under Stanfield on the industry file.

I know because of my father that Donnie knew the value of family.

He was never afraid when I needed help in life or advice to step up to the plate.

As a Pictonian and New Glaswegian—I am here as Dr. John Hamm’s greatest living fan.

I was honoured to nominate him when succeeded Jack MacIssac as the Pictou Centre MLA.

A man of unimpeachable integrity.

A man who was respected by Nova Scotians because they felt his honesty and dedication to hard work.

It is not by accident that John Hamm is the man so closely associated with the concept of “democracy.”

A quiet country doctor who built a legacy of taking this province into the 21st century and at that time became one of the most successful leaders in Canadian history in a minority government.

And when Prime Minister Stephen Harper had to pick a Defence Minister to take us through this brutal war against those who burn school houses, throw acid in the faces of little girls and who brutalized every segment of their own society who dared disagree with them---he picked Peter MacKay.

A Nova Scotian.

These are some of the men who built the PC Party and Nova Scotia.

It is their collective values and vision that have set agenda’s and transformed government’s.

These are the same leader’s who have rebuilt parties, and who have governed this province.

I took the time to call Dr. Hamm, Senator Buchanan and Donnie Cameron this past week.

I had a very useful refresher in grassroots politics, a reminder of what it means to be a Progressive Conservative and why it is so important to connect with your party- past and present- and with your constituency.

They reminded me, and I hope I can convey to you a simple yet sturdy message:

It is Tip O'Neill's simple yet profound thought that all politics is local.

It was often repeated in my home and around the campaigns I worked on in Pictou County by my father- a former vice president in the PC Party of Nova Scotia and his longtime friend, and my mentor former MLA Jack MacIssac.

For them it wasn't just a statement or a famous quote, it was their political creed.

It stands the test of time.

It holds true regardless of constituency or province.

It's a creed that serves rebuilding political parties well when it is followed.

If there ever is a compelling reason to vote for a PC Party it's because we are traditionally the party of grassroots activism.

When we listen to our members and our constituents as a whole, when we speak in clear and concise language and when we do as we say we will do, we win.

None of this is of course new to anyone in this room.

You have one of the great grassroots organizers still in your PC Caucus- Alfie MacLeod.

He was instrumental in rebuilding this Party in the lead up to the 1999 election.

He can also tell you no seat should be out of play.

Just ask him what it used to be like to run as a PC candidate in Cape Breton.

But today, you see the success of the Party in that beautiful part of the province.

And what of Halifax?

Never cede ground here.

I remember being told the PC Party couldn't win seats in metro...I bet Mary Ann MacGrath, Jane Purvis, Tim Olive, the late Terry Donahue and above all John Buchanan has something to say about that!

Your PC heritage is everywhere around you.

You have been here before, this is just a minor setback, it's an opportunity to reconnect with your roots, with your heritage and with the people of this province.

It's always a challenge to regain the trust of the electorate after they've hired someone else to do your job, but I know this room and this party is up to it.

In Ontario, we have emerged united and strong behind our new leader Tim Hudak.

Six short months ago, we were a party chasing headlines, not making them.

We were 16 points behind Dalton McGuinty's Liberals.

And we had just come out of a divisive and painful period in our great party's history.

Today, it is Tim Hudak and the PC Caucus driving the agenda at Queen's Park.

We've dispatched our MPPs across Ontario for town hall sessions to reconnect with Ontarians and we've increased our membership from 4,000 to 40,000.

It's starting to show in the polls, too.

Today, we've made up that 16 point gap and then some.

The Liberals are now trailing us.

We've taken advantage, no question, of the scandals that have plagued the second term Liberals, but we've also moved passed internal divisions- which are among the dangers in any opposition party- and we're standing up for small business, for middle class families and for seniors.

This brings me back to the HST.

In Ontario today, Dalton McGuinty has rammed through the largest single sales tax increase in Ontario's history. He'll take in \$3 Billion more per year by taxing haircuts, homeheating and gas- at a time when our economy can't afford it.

And when people of our province can't afford it.

It comes to about \$1000 more per person.

We think it's an unfair tax burden—there are many levels of government but one taxpayer.

This is a tax on those who can least afford it.

As the Revenue critic it has been my job to fight this tax grab.

I have been fortunate to travel Ontario to talk to the people of my province.

To listen to them.

And to give them a platform in the Ontario Legislature, because their government is so greedy for their tax dollars, they've forgotten to listen to the very people who raised the Liberals from opposition to government.

I think there is an opportunity for your Party.

You should lead the charge against the proposed massive sales tax hike that Darrell Dexter wants to bring in at the expense of seniors, middle class families and small business.

I cannot speak for Nova Scotians, but I know my widowed mother can't afford Darrell Dexter's tax grab, nor can my younger sister's family- they're just starting off.

By fighting this taxgrab, you can once again become the defender of those in need, those who work hard and those who play by the rules.

You can once again champion those elements of society that struggle as hard as they may and that cannot defend themselves.

We as conservatives do not like taxes because we are the champions of hard working families.

Who stands to defend the working class—the everyday taxpayer?

The Progressive Conservatives.

Who stands to champion the interests of seniors and people on fixed incomes who can least afford more tax?

The Progressive Conservatives.

Who stands to protect rural values and way of life?

The Progressive Conservatives.

Who is there to support small business and industry and make our communities the place to work and succeed?

The Progressive Conservatives.

It was the party of Bill Pyle, Ollie Bowen, Danny MacLeod and Johnny Abbass.

It is the party of Batherson, Casey, Armstrong and David.

And it is the party of every Nova Scotian.

You have been here before. You will rise again.

Thank you.