

**The Four Key Questions:
An Essay on Liberal Renewal**

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“The most common form of stupidity is to forget what we are trying to do.”

– Frederick Nietzsche

Introduction

Without renewal, institutions inevitably atrophy. This is what has happened to the Liberal Party of Canada. It has three fault lines which threaten to become chasms. First, in its battle to succeed in the rough and tumble world of real politics, it sometimes seems to lose sight of the core mission of philosophical liberalism – to expand the life-choices and life-chances of every individual. Second, its chosen instrument to achieve public policy change – responsive, effective government – no longer works much of the time. Third, its vehicle for achieving mass mobilization and gaining popular support, the voluntary organization of the Party itself, is losing credibility and seethes with discontent. Liberals now have a hard time answering the basic question faced by every volunteer body trying to attract members, “why should I devote my scarce time to joining your organization?” Until that question can be answered easily and truthfully, the Liberal Party is in trouble.

This essay is a personal reflection on my experience as Co-chair of the Renewal Commission of the Liberal Party. It in no way reflects the views of my Co-chairs, nor does it try to reflect a consensus among the thirty-odd Task Forces that were set to work to review all aspects of the Party’s operations. Each Renewal Task Force report stands on its own. But since being called in January 2006 by the President of the Party to volunteer to help organize a renewal effort, a process which began before the leadership contest though it has largely been superseded by it, I have had the opportunity to work with scores of dedicated Liberal volunteers and to meet or correspond with hundreds more. There was no set pattern for the Task Forces. Every chair went about the job

according to his or her own methods, some consulting exceedingly widely, others using small groups of experts. But my estimate is that between 200-300 people actively contributed to the writing of the various reports and by a factor of ten, additional interested citizens were consulted so that in the midst of a leadership campaign, 2000-3000 people took the time to contribute to the process. This was a totally volunteer exercise, too, with no financial or organizational support from the Party per se. This is a virtue, not a complaint. Since the election defeat in January 2006, each wing of the party has made a contribution. The caucus has been mounting opposition in the cockpit of Parliament, the elected representatives on the National Executive and the staff has mounted an enormous organizational effort with delegate selections in 308 ridings, numerous leadership debates and more than 5000 delegates attending the Montreal Leadership Convention. The candidates for Leadership of the Party have all attracted supporters, raised money, thought about policy, and communicated their messages. In the midst of this welter of activity, there has been a modest coming together of the volunteer wing of the Liberal Party to think and write about the nature of Liberalism itself, and the utility of the Liberal Party to serve as a vehicle for the promotion of that philosophy. The work of the Renewal Commission has only been a start, but at least it is a genuine start, and the new Leader can build on this initiative to move forward in a more concentrated way after December, 2006.

My work with the volunteer wing of the Liberal Party has left me with two dominant impressions. The first is an appreciation of the talent and enthusiasm of the men and women who make up the membership of the Liberal Party. Most are leaders in their local communities, businesses, or professions. Their critiques of position papers, promotion of new ideas and professional expertise are truly impressive. They are active, concerned citizens. The second is the unhappiness, and even anger, among Party members about how they have been taken for granted. Griping is hardly new to any political party (or any other organization), but without exception, in the hundreds of conversation and messages I have received from Party members, there is a universal theme of “nobody listens,” “the only time the Party gets in touch with me is to ask for money,” “we have not had a policy convention for years,” and the list goes on. The

disconnect between the quality of the volunteer base and their distance from decision-making has led to real and deep alienation. Such alienation is rooted not in the personality or office of any particular Leader, but is a result of the structure and ethos of the modern Liberal Party. The first step in reclaiming the support of ordinary voters is to reclaim the enthusiasm of Liberal Party members. Party reform is a necessary first step to political reform.

Tom Kent, former editor of the Winnipeg Free Press, contributor to the famous Kingston Conference of 1960, Senior Assistant to Mr. Pearson, and still vigorous and active today as a Fellow at the School of Policy Studies at Queen's University, was one of those that submitted a paper to the Renewal Commission. "Political Parties," Kent recognized, "are voluntary associations of people sharing some views about public policy." Further, Kent believes that the "Liberal Renewal is about being the effective reform party in Canadian politics, with progressive policies fitted to the times, and about persuading Canadians to elect such a party to government more often than the conservative alternative." Kent's definition raises four key questions which this essay will attempt to answer:

- I. What is the most pressing or overarching issue of our times and how should liberalism respond?
- II. What are the values that should animate progressives and determine the central mission?
- III. What human and financial capabilities are required to implement the policies that are created to reflect the value preference of liberals?
- IV. What is required to animate the volunteer base of the Party so that they will mobilize and persuade citizens of the rightness of their cause?

PART I: What is the overarching issue of our times?

A Changed World

The dominant feature of our times, which will only intensify as our children and grandchildren mature, is the overwhelming influence of globalization, spearheaded by the emergence of China and India as world powers. The effects of globalization – the shrinking of distance through communications, transport and travel – have been with us for a long time. But in the words of my former Dean at the Kennedy School, Joe Nye, it is now “thicker and quicker.” Global warming, world capital markets, Al-Qaeda, and pandemics are all contributors to, and the results of, the reduced influence of traditional frontiers and borders. A Canadian visionary, Marshall McLuhan, first spoke of a “global village.” And in this village, Canadians are hugely impacted by environmental, economic, technological, and cultural trends over which we have no control. Therefore, we will have to anticipate, learn, and adapt if we are to thrive and endure. Using new techniques of communication to help us do this, as the Renewal Task Force on the Internet argues, is one response. Even the most cursory survey of the impacts of globalization on the subject matters studied by the Renewal Commission, (for example, the Renewal Task Force on the Internet), shows its mega-influence:

- Globalization enables a worker in Bangalore to supply services in Waterloo, Ontario at a tenth of the cost of local labour;
- Globalization advances the spread of a virus that originates in South China to Toronto within days;
- Globalization integrates financial markets as billions of dollars of capital and trade every day, thereby reducing the ability of any central bank to withstand the judgments of the market;
- Globalized communications broadcasts the quality of Western life and culture worldwide, thereby creating both an intense desire by many in the developing world to emigrate, and an equally intense revulsion among just as many about threats to local culture and mores

How thirty million Canadians, rich in resources, used to the good life of North America, traditionally safe and secure, guarded by three oceans, react to this new “flat” world of instant travel, trade and communications will be the challenge of our times.

Beyond the general impact of world integration, three great powers are leading the globalization charge, and Canada will have to develop a strategy for each. We share North America with the United States, our superpower neighbour. China, beneficiary of 5000 years of history, has emerged from the indignities of the 19th century and the madness of Mao, to become a centre of international commerce. India, only slightly less ancient than China, and once the richest civilization in the world, has burst out of its cocoon, and with a billion people, millions of whom speak English, is now growing at 8% annually. Europe, Russia, and Brazil can all make a claim for world status, too, but my view is that our future will largely turn on the American-Chinese-Indian axis. Historically, it has always been a challenge for the international system to accept one new world player in any balance of power system. In the 21st Century, we will have to accept two – India and China – and this will require adaptation from us all, but mostly from the United States, who today is the undisputed superpower.

The North American Base

In mastering the globalized world of the future we must start by securing our base in North America. This means that we must reduce, as much as possible, the economic impact of the 49th parallel. We must also enhance a Canadian domestic advantage through public policy and the livability of our cities. We must also contribute our fair share to the common defense. A Renewal Task Force, chaired by Frank McKenna, examined the Canadian-American partnership in detail. A smart relationship vis-à-vis the United States, McKenna maintained, does not mean that Canada cannot conduct an independent policy. It does mean, however, that Canada must carefully pick its spots when we feel we must disagree, and then communicate its policy clearly. Stéphane Dion has captured this concept nicely with his comment that the United States is a friend and ally, but not necessarily a role model.

Sharing North America means that we should understand the United States, and, if we can get their attention, they should understand us. A starting point would be to get over the conceit that we know the United States well. While Canadians may shop in Minneapolis or holiday in Florida, we have little understanding of the new dynamics of the great republic. On September 11, 2001, I was teaching my Harvard class, and I will never forget the moans of my colleagues when they realized that the flights that had crashed into the twin towers had taken off from Boston. The psyche of Americans is forever changed – the United States has been attacked in their lifetime and they will never forget it. Canadians must realize this fact and relearn what we think we know about the United States. To that end, I propose that American, Canadian, and Mexican scholars jointly create a course on North American history, and that we encourage every school district to adopt it. Further, we should link every Canadian high school with schools in the United States and Mexico to encourage joint electronic exchange on the content of the course. A mass twinning program could extend from the school system to involve cities, mayors, governors, etc. Centres for American studies should also be prominent on Canadian campuses. We live beside the most dynamic society on earth. It is imperative that we understand the Americans better than anyone else.

Joint education can lead to mutual understanding and increased cooperation. For example, energy cooperation can lead to shared interests. Canada has the second greatest oil reserves in the world. And, unlike Saudi Arabia or the Middle East, the leading exporters to the United States, we are close and friendly. Americans know that their energy dependence on the Middle East is a potential vulnerability. We could create a potential grand bargain between our two countries on the environmentally-sustainable development of the oil sands. How the oil sands develop is for Albertans to decide, of course, given that it is their resource. (Peter Lougheed, in my opinion, has had the most intelligent things to say about how this should be done, including, for example, Alberta increasing its royalties). The Pembina Institute, an Alberta based research institute, has raised a series of environmental questions about the tar sands, especially on the use of water in the process. The government of Canada should work together with the province of Alberta to ensure that Alberta's environment is protected as the development of the oil

sands proceeds. If the government of Alberta so wishes, Canada should share the costs and use whatever powers it has in its jurisdiction to jointly move forward with the sustainable development of this strategic resource.

If Canada and Alberta can make environmental sustainability part of the oil sands equation, this is a potentially large positive investment which could pay dividends for future Canadian-American cooperation. With a go-forward sustainable oil sands development plan, Canada could then offer a Resources Security Pact to the United States. In exchange for a guaranteed supply of oil from existing conventional sources and future tar sands development, Canadian resources would be exempted from the countervail powers of the Congress. Canada would use energy to tempt the United States Congress to end the harassment of agriculture and softwood lumber exports. Through the existing Free Trade Agreement, the United States already has oil export guarantees. But it has no guarantee that the resource will be developed in a timely and comprehensive fashion. A Resources Security Pact would be in the long term interests of Alberta, Canada, the United States, and most of all, Alberta's natural habitat. It is always perilous to forecast the reaction of Congress, but a report of the US-China Economic and Security Review Commission, recently submitted to Congress, worries about China's statist approach to the global market place – manipulating its currency, subsidizing strategic exports, and seeking direct control of energy assets worldwide. The report says that in its quest for secure energy supplies, China is befriending dictatorships around the world. With the United States worried about China locking up foreign energy resources, it may be very interested in guaranteeing American access to Canada's future supply.

China

Canada has a long and positive track record in China, going back to Norman Bethune in the 1930s, and Pierre Trudeau's recognition of the Communist regime in 1970. Nearly one million Canadians are of Chinese origin (and almost the same number of South Asians), a potentially huge Canadian advantage, as the Renewal Task Force report on Diversity pointed out.

China is growing economically by 8% to 10% a year and its impact, globally, is like throwing a large boulder into a still pond. Today, for example, Canada has 600 cars per 1000 population while China has 10 per 1000. It is predicted that China's total auto ownership will jump from 20 million today to 140 million cars by 2020 – a positive development for the auto industry, but a very difficult one for the environment

We need a two-part strategy in dealing with China. First, people-to-people exchanges, scholarships, and business partnerships should be encouraged. As many Chinese citizens as possible should be exposed to a real democracy and to our thriving civil society. The peaceful transition of China from autocracy to democracy is one of the great potential “what ifs” of world history, and anything Canada is able to do to help this along would be useful. Inviting large numbers of Chinese students, for example, to study our legal system, especially the Charter of Rights, could have very beneficial long-term impacts within China itself.

So Canadians must work on developing friendships with the Chinese people. But the same does not apply to the Communist regime. We must be very careful in not assisting groups that are merely fronts for the government. The Communist regime abuses its own people, and supports autocracies abroad. There is no question that life in China has greatly improved in recent decades, and freedom is not as restricted today and does not compare to the horrors of Mao and the Cultural Revolution. But civil liberties are still not respected and the current regime has embarked on a severe crackdown on journalists, internet users, and dissidents. While many Canadian businessmen fret about raising human rights abuses, they should also realize that there is no such thing as property rights in China. The state-owned business sector in China, far from being autonomous, still follows the dictates of the Party. The Communist regime cannot be isolated; it must be dealt with because it controls China. But it is also a mistake to treat it as if its dictatorial tendencies do not matter. The future of the regime will be decided within China. But any Chinese Gorbachevs who want to reform the party from within should be able to argue that such reform will bring with it international legitimacy. It is a mistake to give the current regime such legitimacy as a “free” good. In particular, Canadian assets should not be allowed to be sold to state-owned Chinese companies.

Security considerations should be added to the criteria of Investment Canada. Human rights should be raised in a forceful and regular way with the Communist leadership so that they know that such values are central to Canada and central to the relationship. Our strategy toward China should be to engage but never kowtow.

India

India is on its way to becoming an economic powerhouse alongside China. But it is a democracy and that makes all the difference.

In Canada's Golden Age of foreign policy in the 1950s, India was our most important partner in Asia. Lester Pearson wrote in his memoirs that prime-minister Nehru was "one of the most subtle and difficult men whom I had ever met, an extraordinary combination of a Hindu god and an Eton-Oxford type of Englishman."

Canada began its first development program at the Colombo Conference in 1950 where Nehru was the star performer. Canadians appreciated Nehru's independence. When John Foster Dulles asked the Indian prime minister, "Are you with us or against us?" Nehru replied, "Yes."

Such relationships will not be easily replicated today. But there are two main assets which can be deployed. The first is the Indo-Canadian community, nearly one million strong (proportionally far greater in size than the influential Indian diaspora in the United States). This community can be Canada's bridge to the emerging South Asian giant. The second is the shared commitment of India and Canada to pluralism, federalism, and democracy.

With 18 official languages and nearly 1 billion people, India is the most diverse country on Earth. It is also the largest mass democracy. Despite the distance in geography, Canada and India share a value frame that quickly allows Canadians to contribute to Indian debates about state-central relations, language policy, etc. Eloquent in English, skilled parliamentarians, practitioners of the common law, and members of

the Commonwealth, Indians equally feel at ease with Canadians. And if they are from the Punjab, they usually have relatives in Canada.

To move from warm feelings to actual projects, our new government should consider the following:

- There is already a Canada-India joint working group on counterterrorism. A more wide-ranging security dialogue is needed.
- Canada has made a long-term commitment to Afghanistan – few states know as much about Afghanistan as India. Canada's military and diplomatic leaders should regularly exchange information and expertise on South and Central Asia. To appreciate the new India, we must understand their strategic imperatives.
- Existing Canada-India organizations like the Shastri Institute and the Canada-India Business Council should be strengthened. Long-term, secure funding for these bridge-builders is critical.
- A joint Indo-Canadian technology investment fund should be created to encourage joint ventures in the vital information technology field.
- India's great need is energy and Canada is an energy power. Working groups should be formed for hydro, coal, oil and gas, nuclear and renewables to increase investment in and exports to India.
- Canada's visa policy, especially for Indian students, needs to be made more accessible. Higher education co-operation and exchange is vital.
- There should be an exchange on comparative public policies on multicultural, diversity, equalization grants from the centre to regions, etc. We have much to learn from each other.
- One of India's greatest successes is the creation of world class research institutes. Canada's need for such investment is highlighted in Marc Garneau's Renewal Task Force Report on Science and Technology. We should learn how the Indians built this capacity.

- Canada should promote India's accession to the G-8 club of democracies, and it should support too, India's membership on the Security Council of the United Nations. A democratic India and a democratic Japan are important counterweights to an autocratic China.

Ashoka, the greatest of Indian Kings, proclaimed in the third century BC, that "this is my rule: government by the law, administered according to the law, gratification of my subjects under the law and protection through the law." Pluralism and a commitment to the rule of law is an ancient Indian wisdom which Canada and India share. From these values, a modern partnership is ready to be born.

PART II: How should the Central Mission be Defined?

The Responsibility Imperative

A third of the world's population resides in China and India and these two billion people are rapidly educating themselves. How will Canada cope with this phenomenon and does the philosophy of Liberalism provide our guide? The Task Force on Prosperity, for example, while acknowledging Canada's recent success in eradicating budget deficits, advocates for major reductions in Canada's overall debt so that future governments will have the flexibility to respond to a fast changing, globalized world. On one hand, the simultaneous emergence of two new world powers will stoke up demand for Canada's natural resources, but on the other, the competition now being experienced in our manufacturing sector will expand to the white collar service of professional sectors. Every Canadian job in the trading sector will be at stake and however much natural resource extraction contributes to Canadian wealth creation, it creates relatively little employment. Therefore, as a complementary thrust to resource-riches, most of the Renewal Policy Task Forces concentrated on a human resources/knowledge strategy. Knowledge is our most important commodity and as Janice Stein has written, it "is an infinitely renewable resource." A human resources productivity strategy forms the core of the Liberal renewal plan. It starts with early childcare learning, it emphasizes language training in the school years so Canadians can compete in a global world, it

advocates the widest possible access to university/college higher education, it recommends that apprenticeships be given the same status at higher education (and thus, worthy of equal support), it recommends that literacy remediation be a national priority and not a target for cuts, it wants lifetime learning to become a reality instead of a slogan, and it wants to continue to use the talent and expertise of seniors by giving them opportunities to volunteer or to stay in the workforce if they so choose. A human resources productivity strategy means that Canada must continue to be a magnet for immigrants but as the Hon. Sarmite Bulte, Chair of the Renewal Task Force on Immigration, points out, Canada is losing its advantage in immigration because we have allowed an impossible backlog of 800,000 immigrants to pile up. How can we honestly talk of raising immigration targets when we cannot even process those already in the queue? A human resources productivity strategy would bring into the labour force disadvantaged Canadians, like the disabled, many aboriginals and the poor, so that Canada does not waste the talent of a single human being. Such Renewal themes were also part of the campaign of every Liberal leadership candidate, perhaps best captured by Gerard Kennedy's description of an "enterprising Canada."

But it is one thing to posit an "enterprising Canada" or a "learning society" and it is another to achieve it. To help each citizen achieve their potential government can offer incentives and targets, but each one of us must take responsibility to prepare for the future and improve our life chances. We need personal reformation more than laws. Here too, liberalism offers an answer – one that requires attention to one of the most neglected strands of the liberal tradition, the priority of fraternity or community.

The philosophical tradition of liberalism began in the 17th Century with John Locke and became an evangelizing force in the 18th Century with the French Revolution's call for "Liberty, Equality, and Fraternity." Liberty and equality have been the touchstones of the tradition and these true values often contend (one of Pierre Trudeau's last essays, for example, was precisely on this debate with Trudeau recommending that public policy devote itself more to equality of opportunity). However, the third pillar of the Trinity, the need for "fraternity," or to use a more modern word, community, is the concept which I think guides us best for the 21st Century. A

communitarian approach emphasizes what we owe to our neighbour rather than what we demand for ourselves. It puts the priority on responsibilities not rights, investment not consumption, and sharing rather than taking. As Amitai Etzioni writes, “if communities are to function well, most members, most of the time, must discharge their responsibilities because they are committed to do so, not because they fear lawsuits, penalties, or jails.”

So, as the InterAction Council has declared, “it is time to talk about human responsibilities.” This insight forms the core of the three Renewal Task Forces on Faith; Values; and Ethics. Applying this framework to the rest of the Renewal Task Forces, I have drawn an illustrative list of what an ethic of responsibility would portend. Defining our duties as parents, neighbours, and citizens is a worthy and complicated task that deserves national debate. Think of the origins of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. In the 1950s, Frank Scott and Pierre Trudeau began the intellectual work of making the case for the Charter, in 1960 John Diefenbaker championed a Bill of Rights, and from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s, Canadians debated whether such a Charter should be enshrined in the Constitution where it would assume the status of a supreme law. We need a similar process for a Charter on Human Responsibilities. Parliament should strike a Joint Committee of the House of Commons and Senate and invite philosophers, religious leaders, ethicists, and ordinary Canadians to make representations. A starting point would be an examination of the InterAction Council’s “A Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities.” Parliament should eventually pass its own Declaration or Charter on Responsibilities, not as a law, but as a moral guide on how we should behave. Canada should then take such a Charter to the United Nations where a Declaration on Human Responsibilities could serve as a companion piece to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. A Charter on Responsibilities should include the following points:

The Responsibility to Tell the Truth

Democracies survive on trust. Trust depends on truth-telling. Why do we have so little of it? St. Augustine, in his great discourse, On Lying, classifies eight kinds of lies and his fifth is one endemic to our politics which is done “with desire of pleasing by agreeableness in talk.” A case in point is the Harper government’s decision to repudiate

its campaign pledge not to tax income trusts. Thousands of individual Canadians made investment decisions based on the Conservative promise. Hundreds of mid-sized Canadian companies had followed Canadian law only to be side-swiped when huge enterprises became too greedy and decided to go down the income-trust route to avoid paying tax. Individual investors and good-faith companies should not be penalized by this Conservative deception. A new Liberal government should reverse the Conservative decision and grandfather existing trusts, put a size cap on trusts with tax-exempt status, or extend the four year grace period. St. Augustine hoped to prevent deceptions that were “erring and rash.” A start would be to reverse the Conservative deception on income trusts.

The Responsibility to Protect

The first duty of the state is to protect its citizens from harm. The Renewal Task Force reports on Foreign Policy, chaired by Andrew Cohen, and National Security, chaired by the Hon. David Collonette, rightly recommend that Canada greatly increase our international capacity by strengthening the military to at least 70,000 regulars and by increasing our foreign aid assistance to the international standard of 0.7% of GNP.

Within this greater security capacity, there are two dimensions that especially promote the responsibility to protect. Benjamin Disraeli, the great 19th Century Prime Minister of Great Britain, said for “the happiness of the people, and the power of the country, the care of public health is the first duty of the statesman.” Yet prior to the SARS outbreak in 2003, Canada spent only 2% of its health expenditure on public health. The World Health Organization estimates that a new pandemic could cause up to 50 million deaths worldwide, and Canada’s Public Health Agency has estimated that an avian flu pandemic could strike 4 to 10 million Canadians with over 50,000 deaths. If this calamity happened, it would mean more deaths than Canada’s armed forces endured in World War II (42,000). We must be better prepared.

The essences of emergency preparedness are prevention, reaction, and recovery. To prevent pandemics it is best to prevent them from occurring or spreading at the source. The World Health Organization needs \$1 billion a year to fight avian flu and to

help developing countries with emergency preparedness. As Canada moves toward a significant increase in foreign aid (we are at 0.3% of GNP today, not 0.7%, as recommended by the Renewal Task Force on Foreign Policy), much of this should be spent on public health and education, thereby saving lives abroad and preventing outbreaks at home. Further, there is a need to increase the capacity of the Canadian armed forces and the priority of the reserves should be highlighted. We should aim to enlist at least 50,000 reservists, not only to serve abroad, but to help with natural disasters at home. An enhanced role for armed forces in “aid to the civil power” or emergency preparedness would require bases to be in all regions across the country (you never know when or where an emergency will break out) and it would put a premium on transport and training.

The responsibility to protect also applies abroad in situations where Canadians are may not be directly affected. A case in point is the international trafficking of women and children. Each year more than 500,000 human beings are trafficked for the sex trade or child labour. It is a scourge greater than the trafficking of slaves in the 19th Century. Unlike slavery, it is an issue that seems to go under the world’s radar. At the World Cup this year in Germany, for example, brothels were routinely constructed to assist the sex trade and to exploit trafficked women, many from East and Central Europe. The Winter Olympics in 2010 will be a similar magnet for traffickers unless Canada resolves immediately not to let it happen. Canada should also match the United States in providing funds for organizations fighting this new variety of human bondage. The Renewal Task Force on Public Safety and Justice recognizes human trafficking as a new and pernicious form of slavery and, as such, it is one of the most serious human rights issues in the modern world.

The Responsibility to Share

The Task Force on Social Policy Renewal contains all the elements of a communitarian ethic. Not only should we help those in need, but those in need also should take responsibility for helping themselves. What we require are incentives to change behaviour. Thus helping the disadvantaged to save for education or housing (acquiring assets) is the key to breaking the cycle of poverty. A tax credit for the

working poor, championed by Scott Brison, for example, would provide an incentive to escape from the “welfare trap.” The Seniors Renewal Task Force makes the good case that we are facing a demographic time bomb and doing little about it. The baby boom generation is like a human tidal wave sweeping over every institution – schools, housing, and, soon enough, nursing homes and health care. Baby boomers are like a basketball being ingested by a python, slowly moving down to the tail. We need to invest now in the housing and services infrastructure for seniors, and the oft-repeated commitment to create a catastrophic drug coverage plan must finally be realized. Bob Rae has also made the protection of Canadians from escalating drug prices one of the centerpieces of his campaign.

Justice, sharing and fully using Canadian human resources meet at the crossroads of restitution to our aboriginal peoples. The Renewal Task Force on Human Rights, while examining issues of law, also included an expansive section on poverty. The Task Force on Social Policy Renewal values inclusion as a major theme. But inclusion and giving every Canadian a share in our bounty applies least to Canada’s first citizens, the aboriginal peoples. One in four aboriginal children is growing up poor. Crises in housing, water quality and education, especially on remote reserves have been documented again and again. The Kelowna Accord, one of Paul Martin’s greatest achievements, sought to tackle these problems with a major investment of \$5 billion. Every Liberal should demand that the Kelowna Accord go forward. However, there is another dimension to aboriginal equality that was not central to the Kelowna Accord and needs just as much work – that being the plight of urban aboriginals. They flock to Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Regina and many other communities seeking work. While cities offer diversity and opportunity, they lack the social support networks essential for smooth integration. Gone, too, are the native governments that support them on the reserves. Canada needs a cities strategy and, within that priority, it is imperative that an urban aboriginal plan be embedded.

The Responsibility to Learn

To compete in a global world, Canadians must constantly learn – learning shouldn’t stop just because we graduate from school. In 1988, Canadians were promised

a massive training program to assist them with the transition to North American free trade. This program never materialized, leaving many Canadians alone to cope with this new economic reality. Liberals know that Canadians cannot be protected from the worst consequences of globalization, but at the same time, should not be left to face the winds of globalization alone. We can help individual Canadians to help themselves, by providing them with the skills to cope with these changes, and this can only be accomplished through encouraging continual and life-long learning. But it is not enough to preach, there should also be incentives. Canada already has Registered Education Savings Plans, where the interest earned is tax free to pay the tuition of the young. This benefit should be extended to every Canadian who wants to save for retraining, night courses, or educational leave. Led by Ken Dryden, every Liberal leadership candidate has supported early childhood care and learning, and all have supported plans to reduce the debt-burden for students. However, I think the commitment to learning should go farther. Rather than channeling higher education assistance to the provinces, and then from the provinces to universities and colleges, the federal government should provide a grant to any Canadian for higher education. Money intended for higher education has been spent by some provinces on highways (not information highways). A direct grant to students would ensure that federal assistance is received by the intended target and it would have the additional benefit of encouraging student mobility.

Further, Canada's two official languages are a tremendous asset in a globalized world. Those who know two languages find it easier to learn a third. The federal government already has an action plan to promote the official languages, but more needs to be done. Universities once had a language requirement to enter as they still do for math. A great mistake was made in the 1960s when universities were allowed to erase this requirement. Language fluency is one of the keys to thriving in a globalized world. Recently the federal government has been investing in the research capacities of universities – it should include a large dividend or incentive for any institution that makes a sincere effort at teaching in both official languages. Moreover, Francophone and English-speaking students would gain from living for a year in the other language milieu, therefore, any student taking part in an exchange or a “junior year” in a university or

college operating primarily in a second language should have his or her tuition paid. Instead of viewing our official languages as a problem to be managed, we need to see them as assets to be exploited.

The Responsibility to Participate

Citizenship is a precious heritage for self-governing men and women. Justin Trudeau's Task Force asks "how do we better engage young Canadians in civic life?" This has also been a main theme of Michael Ignatieff, who has talked of the "spine of citizenship." But the simplest expression of citizenship – voting – has not interested a significant portion of our citizens, especially the young, for a long while. We need to restore history and civics to our school curriculum so that students can gain knowledge and understanding about our democracy. As recommended by the Renewal Task Force on Foreign Policy, we need a new Democracy Canada institution to encourage Canadian expertise to be used abroad in the interest of good governance.

The Youth Renewal Task Force led by Justin Trudeau has also promoted the exciting idea of a National Youth Volunteer Program where every Canadian young person will have a one term volunteer experience, either at home or abroad, to help improve communities. Volunteerism is a mark of a healthy civic culture and should be supported strongly. One way to do this is to change the tax system. Canada has a generous tax credit to encourage citizens to support political parties financially – this incentive should apply equally to all charitable giving. By encouraging Canadians to support the voluntary sector we would both be giving incentive for individuals to step up and accept their responsibility to care or to donate more thereby and we would be helping vital organizations in their efforts to help children, promote the arts, and build communities.

The Responsibility to Preserve

Preserving the environment from future erosion while working to improve air quality, water quality, and the natural habitat should be a core principle of a responsible society. I have already discussed the necessity of maintaining Alberta's environmental quality as the tar sands develop. We need to focus on improving the quality of the Great

Lakes and to prohibit the bulk export of fresh water. The Renewal Task Force on Sustainable Development, which consulted with a large number of Canadians, has many detailed suggestions on climate change and many other environmental issues. Stéphane Dion has also released a comprehensive 50 page report on his Environmental Action Plan.

Desiree McGraw, Chair of the Environmental Sustainable Development Task Force advocates that “sustainable development – which balances economic, environmental and social objectives – should become the ‘triple-bottom line’ of all Liberal policies at home and abroad.” The “triple-bottom line” expressly depends upon a heightened sense of responsibility and community. Stewardship of the environment demands adhering to a collective good rather than the individual “good” of driving an SUV; the municipal “good” of lower property taxes while raw sewage is pumped into rivers, lakes, and in the case of the City of Victoria, the Pacific Ocean; the provincial “good” of coal burning power production while thousands suffer from respiratory disease and childhood asthma reaches alarming numbers; or the state “good” of a few wealthy nations consuming unabashedly while hundreds of millions in Africa and Asia suffer absolute poverty.

A responsible approach to the environment will make the point that such efforts are not cost free. We must assume and accept that “green” effort will cost us more in taxes, at the gas pumps, and in adjustment costs for business. This is where the responsibility to tell the truth and to preserve the environment mesh.

The Renewal Task Force on Cities also made environmental preservation a major theme. We need more investment in public transit and we need to use the market mechanism to reinforce socially desirable ends (fewer SUVs, and electronic pricing, as in London, England, to prevent gridlock by attaching a cost individual transportation). All of the federal gas tax should be reallocated back to cities and municipalities to spend on public transit.

While cities drive the economy, attract immigrants, promote diversity and encourage creativity, the Cities and Culture Renewal Task Forces underscore the notion

that culture is not a luxury but a magnet for the “creative” class which brings, in turn, growth and enterprise.

Large mega cities, however, are not for everybody, and intelligent growth will preserve green-space, medium sized communities, and the rural way of life. My grandfather farmed in Saskatchewan and I loved visiting his farm. Cynics may scoff, but there is something special about the bond between the land and the steward. The Renewal Task Force on Agriculture was not an exercise in nostalgia but rather argued that Canada’s ability to grow our own food was a strategic necessity. Preserving rural communities and ensuring that farmers can make a living is crucial to the Canada of the future as gasoline and transportation costs rise in a world of energy scarcity. The availability of local farmers’ markets may become a very attractive option to long-distance, long-hauled produce. A focus on import replacement, with emphasis on Canadian value-added, is essential and viable.

PART III: What capabilities are required?

Implementation Not Promises

In creating a responsible and just society, however, Liberals have a problem that philosophical conservatives do not. Modern conservatism is distrustful of government and uses the market system of individual choice whenever it can. Thus, Conservative governments are great tax cutters. Liberals, on the other hand, prefer investing in social infrastructure rather than consumption and the mechanism to direct that investment has traditionally been effective, positive government. Jennifer Robson writes in the Renewal Report on Social Policy, for example, that “Canadians are looking for a government that promises and delivers change. They don’t want small government that does little or nothing. They don’t want big government that moves pedantically and ineffectively, trying to do too much.” Liberalism’s dirty secret (and it is not so secret these days) is that government doesn’t seem to work well much of the time.

The Renewal Task Force on the Public Service argues that the goal of an effective and responsive public service is the necessary precondition for progressives achieving

their goals in health care or the environment. Yet, several Renewal Task Forces also accumulated a long list of government horrors – 800,000 potential immigrants waiting for their applications to be processed, the vast overruns on the gun registry program, etc. This point was brought home at the recent International AIDS Conference in Toronto where orators like Bill Clinton roused the delegates with calls for a global commitment to rid the planet of this scourge. But at the same time, federal Minister of Health Tony Clement admitted that Canada's "Access to Medicines Regime," a bold policy designed to produce generic drugs to help poor countries fight diseases like AIDS, has been a total bust. Delegates learned that two years after Jean Chrétien's "Pledge to Africa Act" was passed in Parliament with great fanfare, not a single pill has been exported. AIDS claims 8,000 lives daily, so Canada's failure to implement its pledges is a particularly shocking example of what has now become commonplace – government no longer seems to work. Canada started with a flawed WTO process and then made it worse by adding several complexities. To cap it off, if a compulsory license is granted, this state of grace lasts only two years, then the entire rigmarole must be repeated. The generic drug debacle is only one of a long series of good ideas strangled at birth by a system that no longer seems capable of producing results. The gun registry was a useful idea, but the huge cost overruns and cover-ups have made it an easy target for criticism. Our soldiers are in desperate need of equipment, but the procurement process is so convoluted that it takes decades for anything to be delivered. Aboriginals in remote areas continue to be sickened by poor water quality despite years of effort. Even if the prime minister is personally committed, as Chrétien was on AIDS, the system still produces a Rubik's Cube of frustration. We have a public policy implementation gap at least as large as any leadership or resources gap.

The centrality of fixing the implementation gap becomes even more poignant because improving government effectiveness and arguing for investment, not consumption, is likely to be one of the great debates of the next election. The Conservatives have already cut the GST by 1% at a cost to the Federal Treasury of \$5 billion. But a working income tax credit that would give an extra \$2,400 a year to a citizen making \$13,000 a year would cost just \$3.2 billion. The Conservatives are also

thinking of another 1% cut to the GST. This \$5 billion could implement the Kelowna Accord for aboriginals, create a national system of childcare and early learning, or increase the Canada Child Tax Benefit to \$4,800 per child to reduce child poverty. Beyond social policy, infrastructure spending to increase competitiveness will be just as expensive. The “Gateway to Asia” transportation initiative of \$500 million for ports, for example, could easily be doubled or tripled and it still might not be enough. The Ontario government has announced a Gateway to North America infrastructure program to remove bottlenecks at Windsor and Niagara Falls. Infrastructure needs of Canada are well over \$60 billion. Franklin Roosevelt said that “taxes are the price we pay for civilization.” Liberals must be ready to debate the value of social infrastructure investment which contrasts, starkly, to the Conservative’s vision of small government and lower taxes.

But, if tax-cutting is a necessity, or the best tool available to achieve change, there are far more productive tax cuts than reducing the GST. Employees and employers were overtaxed for years – the Auditor General estimates by \$40 billion – by inflated contributions to the Employment Insurance fund. Returning this money to the Employment Commission would allow it to reduce contribution levels, thereby creating incentive for jobs or to extend the coverage of Employment Insurance to the vast numbers of workers who no longer have the security of being involved in the plan. In short, Liberals have a strong case to make to Canadians that it is better to invest than consume, but only if they can reassure them that such investments will be made in a timely and effective way. Eyes may glaze over when the subject of reforming the public service is raised, but for progressives, it may be the most important topic of them all.

What is to be done? The Task Force on a Professional Public Service is certainly right that the “public service must be valued and strengthened.” Given that within the next 10 years, 30- 40 % of Canada’s 170,000 public servants will retire, Tim Reid, the Chair of this Task Force highlights that “this is a massive succession planning and implementation challenge.” How will we attract good young people to the public service and keep them there?

There must be a reform within the public service, in parliament and in our methods of engaging citizens. One of the greatest weaknesses of recent management in the public service is the rotation culture of deputy ministers. Ministers are not expert in policy specifics, but rather expert in communications and public opinion. The experts are in the permanent public service. But if deputy ministers are rotated every three years, how can they be expert in anything? When I first came to Ottawa as a very junior assistant to Walter Gordon, I was witness to the qualities of the legendary mandarins of the post war era. There was nothing about the Department of Finance that Simon Reisman did not know or James Grandy about Industry or Al Johnson about health and social policy. These people had spent their professional lives honing this expertise. Professional and sector specific expertise must once again become the key to rising to the top.

Next, if we recruit and then retain policy expertise, we must focus on policy results, not just on financial audits. We have become audit-crazy, or to more precise, the only serious audits that we do are to “follow the money.” While important, they should not be pre-eminent. We need audits on effectiveness, not just on whether financial controls are in place. An “audit, audit, audit” culture stops innovation and creativity dead in its tracks. To right this imbalance and have an on-going assessment of what is happening on the ground, I would create an “Effectiveness Unit,” staffed by seconded invitees from within the civil service, outside policy experts, with a Chair who would report directly to the Prime Minister. Cabinet agendas are filled to the brim with communications strategies, PR considerations, and new policy announcements. I would add, as regular items on the Cabinet Agenda, implementations studies on what we are actually achieving (or not) organized by the Effectiveness Unit. We should not have to wait for years after an event for the Auditor General to tell us when there is a mess.

Parliament, too, has to be strengthened. The Hon. Tony Valeri, chair of the Task Force on the Role of Parliament, recommends how individual members of Parliament and the Committees of Parliament could be made more effective. In comparison with the U.S.A. Congress, for example, the Library of Parliament has few staff resources. The House of Commons Foreign Affairs and Defence Committees have one or two

researchers: compare this to the U.S. Congress House Armed Services Committee which alone has 25 professional staff, plus the ability to call on the Congressional Research Service, the Congressional Budgeting Office and the Government Accountability Office (a potential staff of about 700 to 800 if needed).

If Parliament is to play a greater overseeing and policy role, its committees will have to have more expert resources and the influence of Committee Chairs should begin to rival that of Ministers. Parliamentarians have to be responsible too: on every problem the opposition inevitably calls for ministers to resign and there is very little understanding of the boundaries between ministerial responsibility and public service responsibility. A Code of Responsibility should define the matters and be debated by Parliament. In the inevitable future political debates, these at least would be well understood and defined standards of codes of conduct.

The Voluntary Sector, in my experience, is often more supple, imaginative, and frugal than government departments dealing with the public and solving problems. The Sector, as a whole, should be strengthened by more generous tax incentives for giving. But beyond the service-delivery role of NGOs, we should also experiment with a new form of citizen engagement. Citizen panels or “deliberate democracy” initiatives that invite volunteers to study complicated issues should be tried, not only on issues like electoral reform, but on other areas where tradeoffs are difficult, such as health. Such citizen panels would be advisors to Government and Parliament. If the Internet and television were used to bring these debates to a wider audience, citizen engagement would improve. Later in this essay I call on the Liberal party to have a “day of deliberation” – however, the responsibility to deliberate on issues of national importance should be a task for all Canadians to tackle.

On that note, I propose that a holiday in February be declared as Citizen’s Day. This day should focus on discussion of critical issues in schools, church basements, trade union halls, etc. It would not be a requirement to join (many would still go skiing) but around the water coolers on the Tuesday after the long weekend citizens might be discussing the issues of the day rather than hockey scores.

Part IV: How to Restore the Party?

Giving the Liberal Party Back to the Volunteers

Just as the government must reform, so too must the Liberal Party. Three Renewal Task Forces studied that party's Structure, Finances and Election Readiness. The Task Force on Fundraising represents all three groups studying the Liberal Party when it writes: "the perception of many Canadians is that the Liberal Party of Canada exists to win elections. This must change. Canadians must come to see that the Liberal Party of Canada exists to make the lives of every Canadian better." Each of the task forces pointed out problems in party engagement in general, and with the Liberal Party in particular. The Task Force on Fundraising, for example, compares the approximately 15 million Canadians who voted in the last election and notes that only 0.72% of eligible voters made a political contribution. Within the Liberal party, only 23,000 of its 200,000 members are donors. In pointing out the weakness of the grassroots base the task force asks: "How can we convince Canadians to support our Party if we cannot convince our own members to give? In the Charitable Sector, the rule is that you cannot ask a donor to give until you ask yourself to give. The same should hold true for the Liberals."

Power, therefore, has to be shifted away from the centre, towards the constituencies and the members who form the volunteer backbone of the party. Tom Kent, in a paper submitted to the Commission, believes that such reforms should start with the allocation of funds. He writes:

In today's politics, power is where the money is. Most party money now comes from federal taxes. It's provided to the party as such, to its central organization. My proposal is that it should be seen as belonging to the membership. Annual votes of the members should determine what proportion of the public funding is retained in the constituencies, for local use, how much is transferred to the national organization for purposes it defines and justifies. Public money would be spent with accountability to the party membership, not by authoritarian decision at the top.

A recent survey reveals that 60% of Canadians believe the Liberals are not ready to govern again. The Liberal party will have to earn trust, not assume it. A signal of real change will be how the party prepares for the next election. Policy errors are almost always due to secrecy and groupthink. Open debate, from a variety of sources, flushes out mistakes quickly. Therefore, in preparing a platform for the next election, the new Liberal leader should take the 30-plus reports of the volunteer Renewal Commission and have them debated by every riding on a dedicated "Day of Deliberation." Then, the main themes that arise from such discussions should set the agenda for an expert thinkers conference to add policy detail and nuance. Lastly, this participatory process should lead to a punchy platform ratified by the party as a whole at a national convention. Beyond this process, further structural changes are needed to permanently open up the policy stream to party members:

- A portion of the existing taxpayer credit that goes to finance the parties should be dedicated to creating a think-tank, independent of the leader's office, whose job it will be to think about party philosophy and policy on a daily basis.
- Power should flow down to the ridings to give an incentive for people to volunteer. A Council of Riding Presidents should meet annually and be the party's main legitimizing group in-between national conventions.
- On a regular basis, certainly before the annual meeting of the Council of Riding Presidents, the independent think-tank should prepare a questionnaire on critical policy issues (like income trusts) that would be sent to every party member, with the results of the survey to be debated at the council.

An ideal policy process would then involve the think-tank preparing position papers by January, to be debated in ridings through March, with a survey to be sent to all party members in April, with its results to be presented to the annual Council of Riding Presidents in May.

Anne McLellan, Chair of the Renewal Task Force on Women, also has important things to say about gender balance and diversity in the party. The traditional electoral

success of the Liberal party results from the votes of women and volunteer work within the Liberal party is largely done by women. Yet the spirited Martha Hall Findlay will be the only woman on the leadership ballot when the party meets in Montreal. While women make up 51% of the population of Canada, they make up only 20% of the federal Liberal caucus. In the Commons as a whole, 64 women MPs were elected in 2006, one fewer than in 2004. Women running for the House have fallen from 476 in 1993 to 373 in the last election. Canadians pride themselves on how well we do in various international rankings. But on the measure of women in legislatures, Canada ranks only 44th. Canadians, for example, are in Afghanistan fighting for democratic equality, but the Afghan legislature has 27% female membership, while our House of Commons have 21%! Who needs to learn a lesson from whom? Canadian parties are voluntary organizations, but as Kent writes, they are largely financed by taxpayers. If parties accept the public's money, they must also abide by national values, such as the Charter of Rights' guarantee of gender equality. The party financing formula should be structured either to penalize parties that do not run at least 50 % women candidates, or give additional resources to parties that do so. The party also has a tradition of alternating French and English leaders. It should also adopt the practice of alternating male and female party presidents. But so far, Iona Campagnolo is the only woman to have held that position. The Renewal Task Forces recommend improvements to child care, health policy, human security, etc., and the best way of ensuring that such promises are realized is to have a House of Commons with at least half its members female. Gerard Kennedy is one leadership candidate who has endorsed these ideas and suggested even more in his renewal plan for the Liberal party.

Don't Open Up the Constitution

The Liberal Party became dominant in Canada because it once took a chance. In 1887, at a time of religious bigotry and the fallout over the hanging of Louis Riel, the Liberal Party chose Wilfred Laurier to lead it. Laurier was not only a superior leader but by reaching out to the French speaking minority of Canada, Liberals showed a generosity

of spirit that eventually rewarded them electorally. Restoring the party's credibility with Francophones is an essential task of renewal.

There is no question that French-speaking Quebecers are divided over their relationship to English-speaking Canada. Approximately 25% of the province's citizens are either strong federalists or strong *independentists*. The remaining 50% are "soft" nationalists who identify primarily with Quebec, but worry about the costs of separation. These are the voters that Robert Bourassa so successfully wooed over many years.

Quebec's division over the Canada connection and the resulting large body of swing voters produces enormous election volatility. In recent elections, for example, the Liberal Party's results have ranged from a low of 21% of the vote in 2006 to a high of 44% in 2000, averaging around 35% over the decade. The Conservatives received 22% of the vote in 1997, fell to 6% in 2000, but bounced back to 25% in 2006. The Bloc enjoyed 38% of the vote in 1997 and 42% in 2006, averaging over 40% in the past decade. Such volatility, however, is not new. Before Pierre Trudeau gradually squeezed out opponents to make Quebec into a Liberal fortress in the 1970s, the situation was quite similar to today. In 1962, for example, the Conservatives had 29% of the vote, the Liberals had 39%, and the *Creditistes* of Réal Caouette, 26%. The key difference today, of course, is that the Bloc is not just populist, as Mr. Caouette was, but has an agenda to pull Quebec out of confederation.

French-speaking Quebecers want to live the good life in North America, in French. They want neither to endure economic stagnation (in the 1880s, for example, hundreds of thousands immigrated to New England to escape depression), nor will they accept anything less than French language predominance within the province. Like people everywhere, Quebecers want recognition of their worth, autonomy to make their own lifestyle choices, and a better life for their children and grandchildren. This point has been well made recently by Antonia Maioni, when she stated that "Quebec's blues have to first be addressed from within, but it is clear that a change in the federation that reflects an understanding of the particular needs of Quebecers is an essential part of that process." A party which can deliver on recognition, autonomy, and optimism is the party which will solidify the existing federalist base and add to it a significant percentage of the

“soft” nationalist vote. Opening the Constitution is one possible way of achieving recognition, but is fraught with risk since the exercise is so difficult and the consequences of failure would be incalculable. Another option is to develop a new approach – federalism with a human face – that will achieve the goals of recognition, autonomy, and optimism within the existing division of powers and administrative capacities of the federal government. This is the approach that animates the Renewal paper on Federalism by Martin Cauchon – significant change, but caution about opening the Constitution. The Task Force on Education, too, proposes policies to strengthen Canada’s language capabilities which will improve our prosperity but will also have the benefit of recognizing that the French language and those who speak it make Canada a distinct and wonderful place.

There are those, however, for whom this is not enough. A motion recently passed by the Quebec Liberal Party seeks to recognize Quebec as a nation and to “officialize” its status in the Constitution. The sincerity of those who propose opening up the Constitution must be respected. But we can question their judgment. Ken Dryden discussed exactly this point in a recent speech at McGill University: “We know now in a way that we didn’t even know after Meech Lake and Charlottetown we cannot go down the Constitutional road with Quebec unless we know – know beforehand – that we will succeed. We have no right otherwise.”

Dryden is simply correct that “the whole approach is wrong.” Yet, in response to the Quebec as a nation initiative and the mischief desired by the Bloc Québécois as it prepared to present a motion to that effect in the House of Commons, Stephen Harper introduced his own motion that “this House recognize that the Québécois form a nation within a united Canada.” There was a mood of self-congratulation as all concerned thought they had blunted the Bloc. But there are one or two inconvenient facts. What exactly is a Québécois nation? Is it French-speaking Canadians? Is it French-speaking Quebecers? Aboriginal Quebecers? Quebecers who live in Westmount? I lived in Montreal for many years and when the St. Jean-Baptiste Society organized marches with crowds chanting “Quebec for the Québécois,” I was under no illusion that they were including me.

Historian Michael Bliss helps clear up this mystery: “Let there be no misunderstanding about concepts of nation and nationality. The only two meanings of “nation” are (1) a human group bound together by ethnic ties, i.e. ties of blood; (2) a territorial unit that exercises political independence.” There are many ethnic, or cultural, groups within Quebec, so the “Québécois” “nation” in the motion cannot fit the first of Mr. Bliss’ definitions. What if “Québécois nation” refers to all those who live in Quebec, i.e. Quebecers? But, if that is the case, are Manitobans a “nation” too? Do we really want a Canada defined by ten provinces, or “nations,” two territories, or “nations,” and 600 aboriginal “nations,” thrown in for good measure? Or, is the game really a replay of the old “*deux nations*” debate, in which Quebec theorists in the 1960s defined Canada as being made up of two equal nations – one French-speaking, centered in Quebec, and the rest of us?

Quebec is not a nation: it is a province; within our federal state, it is a legally recognized political community with many groups and identities contained within it. Francophone Québécois may be a nation – certainly many, perhaps most, think so – but the Cree in Northern Quebec and the Mohawks also believe themselves a nation. There is nothing wrong with this form of self-identity as long as we do not try to define and enshrine such a slippery concept into law.

This is more than semantics. The House of Commons may be happy to pass a motion that has no basis in logic (see my admonition above on “The Responsibility to Tell the Truth”) but other assemblies are more fastidious. The Council of Europe, in a report of January 2006, for example, after studying the issue for two years, concluded “that it was difficult, not to say impossible, to arrive at a common definition of the concept of nation.”

If people want to define themselves as a nation, fine. Self-identity can take many forms. Just do not try to define the concept in law. But if anyone is under the illusion that this semantic sleight of hand is the end of the story, they underestimate the tenacity of Quebec nationalists. Gilles Duceppe says he will support Mr. Harper’s motion because it serves “Quebec’s superior interest.” “It is always better, when we are fighting for a sovereign Quebec,” he told the media, “that Canada recognizes that Quebecers are a

nation. That is a plus.” Party Quebecois leader André Boisclair, not to be outdone, has chimed in: “Distinct society is now a null-and-void notion. There is no going back... it will give us a powerful tool for the international recognition of a future sovereign Quebec.” The next step in this debate will be a cascading number of demands, from Quebec nationalists, to put constitutional flesh on the “nation” bone. We are being drawn willy-nilly into the dead-end of Constitutional negotiations. Or if the state or the province of Quebec gains no additional autonomy or resources from a declaration about a “Québécois nation” then once again we will hear the cry of “betrayal.”

The Bloc will do anything to discredit federalism, so they were happy to create mischief with a motion that Quebec is a nation. The Conservatives hope to improve their electoral position in Quebec, and Mr. Harper, forgetting his past in the Reform movement, thinks his championing of the motion will appease Quebec nationalists. The Liberals are involved in a leadership race, where delegate votes from Quebec are crucial. The NDP has been for special status since 1960, so they are happy to go along for the ride. Everyone is chasing the elusive votes of Quebec nationalists. On that axis, apparently, all of our political class spins.

But what about the Canadian majority? A CBC-Environics poll from November 2006 revealed that 57% of Canadians did not think Quebec was a nation, and 70% opposed Constitutional recognition (83% of the respondents outside of Quebec oppose Constitutional recognition). Even in Quebec, 34% of the respondents did not think Quebec was a nation; in comparison, the Liberal Party received 21% of the vote in Quebec in 2006 – do we need a calculator to do the electoral math? The CBC poll shows that there is still an overwhelming majority of Canadians who favour One Canada. And what about the Liberal Party in particular, the traditional defender of One Canada, since Pierre Trudeau? Another poll, the SES National Survey, determined that “Quebec as a nation” was a particular albatross for the Liberal Party: 16% of Canadians would be more likely to vote Liberal if the Party recognized Quebec as a nation, but 40% would be less likely. In Ontario, the key swing province, 10% would be more likely to vote Liberal, and 54% would be less likely. For a party that puts a premium on winning, these results should give the Constitutional enthusiasts pause.

Pierre Trudeau believed in a Canada where individual citizens had rights and responsibilities that could be defined. He believed in a civic state of individual rights holders, not a state defined by ethnic nations. In 2006, we are back to the future. Once more, though more wearily, Liberals should take up the defense of One Canada, against the siren song of *deux nations*.

The agenda of the Renewal Commission is ambitious. We agree with John Ibbitson, that “sometime, not too long ago, while no one was watching, Canada became the world’s most successful country.” But past success does not guarantee future success. The world has changed and global competition will be fierce. To meet that challenge, we must focus on investments, strengthening communities, and attending to our responsibilities. We must be interested in results, not promises. We must promote truth-telling, not spin. We should not travel down Constitutional dead ends. We believe, along with Vaclav Havel, that “Vision is not enough. It must be combined with venture.”

Note on Sources

The various Renewal Commission reports cited can be found at www.liberal.ca, including a complete list of Renewal Task Force chairs and members.

Recent works that have influenced my thinking include the Conference Board report, Canada by Picasso: The Faces of Federalism by Roger Gibbins, Antonia Maioni, and Janice Gross Stein; Joe Nye's Soft Power; John Ibbitson's The Polite Revolution; Graham Fraser's Sorry I Don't Speak French; John Lornic's The New City; and Amitai Etzioni's The Spirit of Community. The Universal Declaration of Human Responsibilities can be found at <http://www.interactioncouncil.org>. Tom Kent's paper "What Liberal Renewal Requires" is dated 10 June 2006. Michael Bliss' article "Canada Under Attack" is in the National Post, November 25, 2006. The CBC-Environics poll was conducted in early November, 2006 (www.cbc.ca/news/background/public-opinion), and the SES National Survey was conducted between November 5 and 9, 2006 (www.sesresearch.com).