



Accountability Report ***2000 LPC Biennial Convention Resolutions***

November 2003

I hope this note finds you well. You may recall receiving from me a copy of the *Have Your Say* booklet, the guide to the Liberal Party of Canada's national policy process, during the march towards the 2000 Biennial Convention. I am pleased to now provide you with a copy of the *Accountability Report* that closes the circle on that Convention.

The policy process is a unique, defining feature of the Liberal Party of Canada, which sets us apart from all other parties in the western world: it is the grassroots members who are the final arbiters on all Party policies, not only when we are in opposition, but also when we are in government.

Ultimately, however, the measure of the process lies not in its ability to set policies, but in its effectiveness in realising those policies. High words cast long shadows over low deeds, and the very democratic weight of the Liberal policy process imposes a heavy burden of responsibility for action upon the shoulders of a Liberal government.

For this reason, I am pleased to share with you this *Accountability Report*, to complement the policy development process. For each of the forty-one resolutions adopted at the 2000 Biennial Convention, we have required the Minister responsible to give an account of the actions he or she has taken in to implement that resolution.

The response to each resolution was written or approved by the Minister concerned. I encourage you, therefore, to read their accounts with a critical eye, and to be liberal in conveying your praise or concerns to them, where you find either to be due.

From a personal perspective, serving the cause of liberalism as our Party's National Policy Chair has been a greater honour than I could possibly express here, and I am enormously grateful to the grassroots for your confidence, kindness, and support over the past six years.

Thank you!

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1. Tax Credit for Text Books

WHEREAS post-secondary education is vital to the creation of productive Canadian citizens who contribute to the intellectual and economic benefit of society;

WHEREAS the cost of obtaining a post-secondary education in Canada has increased and will continue to increase exponentially for students;

WHEREAS textbooks constitute a necessary tool for acquiring knowledge in any educational field;

WHEREAS Human Resources Development Canada has established that the average cost of textbooks purchased per student per academic year is \$630.00 and, based on this figure, the average amount spent in GST on textbooks is around \$44.10 per student per year;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to consider the creation of a GST credit on textbooks to ease the financial burden on students and learners enrolled in Canadian post-secondary institutions.

The Liberal government is committed to ensuring Canadian students have access to post-secondary education regardless of their financial circumstances.

In Budget 2000, this government increased the partial annual exemption from \$500 to \$3,000 for scholarship, fellowship or bursary income. The October 2000 budget update helped students further by doubling the amount used to establish the education credit from \$200 per month to \$400 per month for full-time students and from \$60 to \$120 for part-time students.

Budget 2001, included measures to:

- exempt from income tax government tuition assistance for adult basic education provided under certain government programs, including employment insurance;
- extend the education tax credit to individuals who receive taxable assistance for post-secondary education under certain government programs such as employment insurance;
- allow apprentice vehicle mechanics to deduct a portion of tool expenses incurred as a condition of apprenticeship. **(Budget 2001, p. 235)**

To help with the rising cost of obtaining a post-secondary education, our government established the *Canada Millennium Scholarship Fund*, which to date,

has granted approximately \$280 million to students. The Fund is expected to provide about 100,000 scholarships, worth an average of \$3,000, each year over the next 10 years.

In Budget 2003, the government proposed to create a new Canada Graduate Scholarships program at an annual cost of \$105 million when fully phased in. Canada Graduate Scholars will help renew faculties in Canada's universities and provide the research leaders of tomorrow.

The Canada Graduate Scholarships program will support 2,000 masters and 2,000 doctoral students each year, increasing the number of graduate scholarships supported by the federal government by 70% to almost 10,000. Scholarships at the doctoral level will be for three years and provide students with an annual award of \$35,000, twice the amount of the one-year scholarships provided to students at the master's level. Funding for the program will be allocated among the three granting councils in proportion to the distribution of the graduate student community: 60% to Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), 30% to Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) and 10% to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR).

2. Decriminalization of Marijuana

WHEREAS simple possession of marijuana continues to be a criminal offence in Canada;

WHEREAS marijuana laws have increasingly come under attack in the courts and in public disclosure;

WHEREAS marijuana offences are no longer looked upon as true crimes by the majority of Canadians;

WHEREAS the Contraventions Act has been recently enacted to provide for a means of punishing an offence while reflecting on the distinctions between true criminal offences and other offences;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to immediately designate simple possession of marijuana as a contravention under the Contraventions Act.

On May 17, 2001, the House of Commons created the Special Committee on Non-Medical Use of Drugs. The Committee had a broad mandate to study "the factors underlying or relating to the non-medical use of drugs in Canada" and to bring forward recommendations aimed at reducing "the dimensions of the

problem involved in such use.” The Committee’s report, *Policy for the New Millennium: Working Together to Redefine Canada’s Drug Strategy*, was released in December 2002. The report called for a renewed federal drug strategy and some form of decriminalization of possession and cultivation of small amounts of cannabis.

On March 15, 2001, the Senate created the Special Committee on Illegal Drugs. Its mandate was to examine Canada’s approach to cannabis. In September 2002, the Committee released its report. The report, *Cannabis: Our Position for a Canadian Public Policy*, called on the Government of Canada to adopt an integrated policy addressing the harmful effects of drug use.

The Government of Canada has been committed to respond to the results of these two special parliamentary committee reports. As such, on May 27, 2003, the Liberal government tabled Bill C-38 (an *Act to amend the Contraventions Act and the Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*), and announced the renewal of Canada's Drug Strategy.

Bill C-38 is intended to modernize the way Canada enforces the law, providing for alternative penalties against possession of small amounts of cannabis, and to create new, tougher penalties to target large marijuana grow operations. Under the proposals included in the bill, cannabis possession and production will remain illegal in Canada under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*. What will change is the approach to enforcement.

3. Band Council Financial Accountability

WHEREAS Indian bands and Métis organizations depend on the federal government for funding for delivery of services to their members;

WHEREAS the federal government has a fiduciary responsibility to provide services now transferred to band councils and Métis organizations under funding arrangements;

WHEREAS the fiduciary obligation to Aboriginal people has been lost in these transfers;

WHEREAS mechanisms exist for federal departments to account to parliament for funds transferred to Indian bands and Métis organizations, and for Indian band and Métis organizations to account to federal funding agencies for those funds, there is no enforceable mechanism for elected officials to account to their members for those monies;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to require that elected officials of Indian bands and Métis

organizations be required by law through funding arrangements, to be accountable to their members for funds accessed on their behalf, in an open, transparent manner by:

- 1) convening a general meeting, that includes all members, to formulate and ratify budgets for the next fiscal year;*
- 2) convening a second general meeting, upon confirmation of funding, for the information of all members;*
- 3) convening general meetings at regularly scheduled intervals to give all members an opportunity to review the progress of funded services;*
- 4) making all books and records readily available to members upon reasonable notification;*
- 5) convening a general meeting, that includes all members, to review and ratify the annual audited financial statements and programme reports for the previous fiscal year, before submission to federal funding agencies.*

As indicated in the *2002 Speech From the Throne*, the Government of Canada is working to strengthen democratic principles, transparency and public accountability within First Nation communities.

The government is committed to improving the current reporting structure with First Nations while ensuring a balance is maintained between accountability on the use of public funds and efficient reporting by First Nations.

These principles are perpetuated in the *First Nations Governance Act* and the *First Nations Fiscal and Statistical Management Act*, two pieces of legislation introduced by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC). This proposed legislation would give more power and tools to both First Nations governments and citizens.

As with all governments in Canada, First Nations are required to adhere to a common set of accountability requirements which address areas of high risk through transparency, disclosure and redress policies and emphasize local accountability for local decision making.

Although the majority of First Nation communities manage their finances in a responsible manner, where the terms and conditions of the funding agreements are not being met, INAC can intervene. Intervention measures can vary in degrees relative to the conditions not being met. Action can range **from**

withholding non-essential funds to the hiring of an outside management firm (Third Party Management) to ensure the delivery of programs and services. INAC continues to monitor the progress of remedial management plans, and in consultation with the First Nation, intervention can be reduced or phased out altogether when circumstances have significantly improved. Decisions to intervene are not made lightly, and intervention is directed towards the ultimate goal of First Nations' governments managing their own affairs in a sustainable and transparent manner.

Each First Nation is required to prepare annual financial statements, which are audited by professional accredited auditors, in accordance with INAC's Year End Reporting Handbook.

Since fiscal year end 2001-2002, First Nations that receive federal transfers must submit a separate financial statement (the Schedule of Federal Government Funding) that details how government funding was spent. This information will be made public.

Efforts to promote the continued development of financial management and administrative skills at the local level continue. Through partnerships with advisory groups and associations, INAC will continue to work with Band representatives and managers as they strive to serve the best interests of their communities.

4. Clean Air

WHEREAS fossil fuel combustion, mainly from increasing industrial activity and the use of vehicles, contributes to air pollution;

WHEREAS air pollution seriously threatens the health and environment of Canadians, causing effects including childhood asthma, other respiratory and cardiac ailments, and thousands of premature deaths each year;

WHEREAS smog is a particular concern in major urban areas and more than half of all Canadians live in areas where ground-level ozone may reach unacceptable levels in the summer;

WHEREAS air pollution is an international problem, with a significant portion of smog in Canada coming from the United States;

WHEREAS action to reduce air pollution in general will also help address other air issues such as acid rain, thinning of the ozone layer and climate change, both at home and abroad;

WHEREAS failure to adequately address air pollution continually creates new health and economic costs;

WHEREAS the government of Canada by signing the Kyoto Protocol committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to 6% below the 1990 levels by the year 2012;

WHEREAS greenhouse gases cause climate change, environmental degradation and also produce the smog that is a significant cause of sickness and mortality in Canada;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to take aggressive action to fight air pollution and to become the world's leading jurisdiction on this issue;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to ensure that these efforts to reduce air pollution include close co-operation with the governments of the United States, provinces, territories and municipalities;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to negotiate a strong and effective smog annex to the Canada-United States Air Quality Agreement.

In May 2000, the Liberal government launched the federal 10-year Clean Air Agenda, providing a regulatory roadmap for cleaner vehicles and fuels; implementation of initiatives to reduce transboundary emissions; initial measures to reduce smog causing emissions from industrial sectors; improvements to the national network of pollution monitoring stations; and, expansion of the public reporting by industry on pollutant releases.

In February 2001, the Liberal government announced an investment of \$120.2 million over four years for the development of new measures on clean air. Additional funding of \$40 million over two years to address air pollution was announced in Budget 2003.

We have declared the components of smog (PM₁₀ and its precursors, and Ozone and its precursors) to be toxic under the *Canadian Environmental Protection Act*, and we have introduced regulations to reduce the sulphur content in gasoline to 30 parts per million by the end of 2001, and in diesel fuel to 15 parts per million by 2006, resulting in a 95% reduction in the regulated level of sulphur. The sulphur in gasoline regulations alone will avoid more than 2,000 premature deaths, 93,000 cases of childhood bronchitis, and 11 million incidents of respiratory problems (like asthma attacks) over the next 20 years. In January 2003, the Liberal government also published new stringent emission standards

for on-road vehicles and engines that will come into effect for the 2004 model year.

The Liberal government also created the \$60 million Canadian Foundation for Climate and Atmospheric Sciences to strengthen our understanding of air quality and climate change science. We also created the Sustainable Development Technology Fund, which provides \$100 million over five years to support the development of innovative technologies to improve air quality.

The Liberal government continues to work with provincial governments to improve air quality. The Canadian Council of Ministers of the Environment (CCME) agreed to new Canada-wide standards for particulate matter and ozone in June 2000. These standards set the agenda for managing air quality in Canada for the next decade.

We have also worked closely with our American partners. On December 7, 2000, Canada signed an agreement to reduce transboundary smog with the United States through an Ozone Annex under the 1991 *Canada-U.S. Air Quality Agreement*. Actions under the Annex will reduce air pollution from the United States to improve air quality and the health of Canadians living in downwind areas in eastern Canada. It also commits to reducing flows of pollution from areas in Ontario and Quebec into the United States. More recently, on June 23, 2003, Canada and the United States launched three air quality pilot projects under the Border Air Quality Strategy. These joint projects will enable greater opportunities for coordinated air quality management between both countries.

The Liberal government carried forward Canada's efforts to address climate change by ratifying the Kyoto Protocol. The Climate Change Plan for Canada, launched on November 21, 2002, outlines many strategies to reduce the greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in all sectors of Canadian economy. By cutting down on GHG emissions in the transportation and fossil fuel-generated energy sectors, Canadian companies and consumers will simultaneously reduce the smog producing gases such as nitrous oxide and sulphur dioxide, as well as particulate matter levels. Canada's response to the Kyoto Protocol will thus contribute toward better overall air quality and pave way for cleaner energy production. On August 12, 2003, we announced the details of the investment of \$1 billion towards the implementation of the Climate Change Plan for Canada. This investment is part of the Budget 2003 allocation and builds on \$1.7 billion the Liberal government has invested in climate change over the past five years.

5. Child Poverty

WHEREAS one in five children in Canada live in poverty;

WHEREAS child poverty need not be defined as a child impoverished due to the lack of wealth but can be defined as any child living under the threat of hunger, illiteracy, violence, abuse, lack of education or lack of appropriate shelter;

WHEREAS poverty has a demeaning negative influence and impact on Canadian society;

WHEREAS developmental health in early life is a proven investment in the future economic prosperity and health of Canadians;

WHEREAS one in five Canadian children are hungry with that number being higher in Northern Canada;

WHEREAS there are 225,000 child abuse cases in Canada a year;

WHEREAS 50 Canadian children will die of child abuse this year;

WHEREAS as the most vulnerable members of our society, children have the right of first call on society's resources;

WHEREAS as too large percentage of Canadian children is growing up in poverty and is at risk of permanent developmental setbacks;

WHEREAS preventative intervention is the most effective, efficient manner of increasing the likelihood of individuals achieving their full social, intellectual, cultural and economic potentials;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to:

- 1) deploy a national children's agenda, based on the elimination of child poverty;*
- 2) implement initiatives of fostering readiness to learn;*
- 3) implement early detection and care for children at risk; and*
- 4) enforce national standards on child welfare.*

Combating child poverty and supporting the healthy development of all children, including those at risk, so that they are ready to learn and have the opportunity to achieve their full potential are priorities of the Government of Canada.

Overall, the Government of Canada provides over \$11 billion per year in services and programs for Canadian children.

The government continued to increase the Canada Child Tax Benefit.

Budget 2003 provides a \$965 million per year increase to the National Child Benefit Supplement of the Canada Child Tax Benefit (CCTB) by 2007. This brings the maximum annual benefit for a first child provided through the CCTB to \$3,243, \$3,016 for the second child, and \$3,020 for each additional child. This increase will amount to an estimated annual support of over \$10 billion in 2007 – more than double what it was in 1996.

The government committed \$2.2 billion over five years to the Early Childhood Development Agreement with the provinces.

The government doubled the length of maternity and parental benefits under Employment Insurance as of January 1, 2001.

Under the five-year tax reduction plan laid out in Budget 2000, families with children will enjoy an average reduction in their net personal income tax of at least 21% annually by 2004.

The government has twice increased the limit on the child care expense deduction – from \$4,000 to \$7,000 per year for each child under seven.

The government has created the Aboriginal Head Start program, which benefits thousands of First Nations, Inuit and Métis pre-school children and their families. And over the next two years, \$100 million will be provided to enhance programs such as childcare and head start.

The government is investing \$25 million over two years – a tenfold increase – in support of our commitment to significantly reduce the number of Aboriginal newborns affected by Fetal Alcohol Syndrome.

The government is increasing by \$60 million the funding in support of Aboriginal children living on reserves who have special needs at school because of physical, emotional or developmental barriers to learning.

The government is providing \$935 million over five years to help provinces, territories, and First Nations provide greater access to quality childcare and early learning opportunities. This is particularly vital for single parents or those managing on low incomes.

The government is providing \$50 million per year for a new Child Disability Benefit for low- and modest-income families that will provide up to \$1,600 per year for a child with a disability. Other tax measures will facilitate RRSP rollovers to infirm dependent children and expand the list of eligible expenses for the medical expenses tax credit.

Budget 2003 also provides a new Employment Insurance Benefit for a six-week compassionate care leave for people who take time off from their jobs to care for gravely ill or dying family members.

6. Culture and Cultural Exception

WHEREAS the Liberal Party of Canada has always recognized that artistic and cultural works have a value measured not only in commercial terms;

WHEREAS new technologies, such as the Internet, electronic commerce, telecommunications services and new media, as well as global competition call into question traditional cultural policies;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to unconditionally defend the principle of recognition of the unique-ness of cultural property and the preservation of cultural diversity;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government, in future trade negotiations, to continue its world leadership role and propose the establishment of a new international instrument with respect to cultural diversity and promotion;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to maintain, in future trade negotiations, the principle of general and self-defined cultural exception until the aforementioned objectives are achieved;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to protect the capacity of governments to intervene in cultural matters and to offer public support for the creation and development of infrastructure for production, distribution and dissemination of cultural products at the national and international level;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada ask the federal government to recognize the need to provide everyone with greater access to culture, through, for example, increased investment and strengthening of cultural dissemination networks of all kinds in the regions.

On May 2, 2001, the government invested more than \$500 million to ensure the growth and development of Canadian culture and cultural infrastructure.

As well, the Liberal government provided an additional \$60 million to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation / la Société Radio-Canada, and \$100 million to the Canadian Television and Cable Production Fund in 2001-02.

The Liberal government will also invest \$103 million over the next ten years to maximize Canada's presence in international expositions. In these expositions, we will emphasize youth cooperation, promote emerging Canadian artists, and highlight Canada's diversity.

Budget 2003 provides:

- \$150 million over two years for the Canadian Television Fund;
- \$114.5 million over two years toward a five-year Action Plan on Official Languages;
- \$20 million over two years to stimulate private sector participation in the preservation of historic places;
- \$74 million over two years toward five new Marine Conservation Areas and 10 new national parks;
- \$172.5 million for the Aboriginal Languages and Culture initiative;
- \$45 million over five years for Wellness and Amateur Sport;
- \$25 million over five years for high-performance athletes;
- \$17 million over two years for Katimavik.

Among other Liberal government highlights:

- implemented the Interdepartmental Partnership with Official-Languages Communities to strengthen links with the federal government;
- completed The action plan to substantially complete Canada's system of national parks
- announced an action plan to substantially complete Canada's system of national parks by creating 10 new parks over the next five years. This announcement was made by Prime Minister Jean Chrétien and Canadian Heritage Minister Sheila Copps on October 3, 2002;
- helped Montreal become host to the World Anti-Doping Agency;
- hosted 550 participants from 97 countries at the World Conference on Women in Sport held in Montreal in May 2002;

- developed Bill C-11, assented to on December 12, 2002, the largest change to the *Copyright Act* in over 70 years. It provides new remuneration rights for producers and performers, a compensation system for private copying and much more. Currently working on copyright issues related to the digital world;
- launched the *Canadian Feature Film Policy* in October 2000, which contributes \$100 million per year to the creation of Canadian feature films.
- helped Canada play a leadership role at the UN World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance in Durban, South Africa in September 2001;
- supported the launch of the Aboriginal People's Television Network, which is available to viewers across the country;
- provided support for the Historica Foundation to make the Canadian Encyclopedia available free on the Internet;
- initiated *Francommunautés virtuelles* to develop applications, services and French content on the Internet;
- developed the Virtual Museum to use the Internet to connect Canadians and people around the world with the collections and exhibits of more than 1,000 "real" museums across Canada;
- introduced the *Foreign Publishers Advertising Services Act* giving stability to Canadian magazine publishers and ending a long-standing trade dispute with the United States.

7. Hate Crimes

WHEREAS Canada is a country based on tolerance, understanding and acceptance of alternate lifestyles;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada has recently demonstrated tolerance for homosexuals and their place in Canadian society;

WHEREAS crimes made out of hatred of any kind and all actions that propagate hatred are equally deplorable;

WHEREAS Canada has already committed itself to the prevention of acts of hatred towards minority groups as listed in section 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada;

WHEREAS homosexuals have been subject to hatred and persecution throughout history;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to add sexual orientation to the enumerated list of identifiable groups listed under section 319 of the Criminal Code of Canada.

The Liberal government is concerned about the negative impact of hate groups on Canadian society and acted to toughen sentences for those convicted of crimes motivated by hate.

Bill C-250 was passed by the House of Commons on September 17, 2003. C-250 added “sexual orientation” to the list of groups which are protected from hate propaganda by the *Criminal Code*; sexual orientation joins the list of groups which includes people who are identifiable by colour, race, religion or ethnic origin.

This vote was a free vote, where Liberal MPs were able to vote according to their own views and beliefs. Canadians take great pride knowing that they live in a country that is internationally known for its tolerance, fairness, and equality. Further to that end, C-250 is a positive step taken by Parliament, which will help strengthen the *Criminal Code of Canada* in order to protect innocent Canadians from violence and persecution.

8. Remembrance Day

WHEREAS the sacrifices of our soldiers have preserved the rights and freedoms of all Canadians;

WHEREAS Canadians recognize the sacrifice of our war veterans as an unalienable part of our shared heritage;

WHEREAS the preservation of Canadian heritage is seen as a national concern;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada recommend that the federal government repeal Sec. 3 of the Holidays Act, and in its place pass new legislation that enshrines the 11th day of November as a day of solemn remembrance and requires that on that day, commercial businesses, with the exception of those services deemed absolutely necessary, in all provinces and territories remain closed in respect for those who lost their lives defending our nation.

The federal government, through the *Holidays Act*, has already declared Remembrance Day a national holiday. This means that all federal government institutions close in recognition of this day. The federal government cannot impose a holiday on provincial institutions such as health care facilities, school

boards, universities and colleges, etc., as it would clearly infringe on an area of provincial jurisdiction.

Only three Canadian provinces have not yet legislated Remembrance Day as an official holiday: Quebec, Ontario and New Brunswick. It is also important to note that not all veterans organizations support Remembrance Day as an official holiday. Some feel it is more appropriate for students, for example, to be in school on this day, so they may participate in commemorative activities.

9. Health Care

WHEREAS maintaining the world's best health care system is a Canadian priority;

WHEREAS technology, innovation and changing demographics present new challenges and increased health care costs;

WHEREAS the federal government has committed to reinvest in health care via the Canadian Health and Social Transfer (CHST), but has not restored CHST to previously planned levels;

WHEREAS there is a strong need for the federal government to ensure a publicly funded health care system;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada call upon federal, provincial and territorial governments of Canada to reaffirm their support for the principles of the Canada Health Act and oppose the establishment of private health care institutions for the provision of publicly insured services;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to:

- 1) reinvest in core health services by reinstating CHST to previously planned levels and improving the equalization program;*
- 2) work with provinces and territories to identify joint priorities;*
- 3) establish a nation wide technology system for the transmission of medical data and research information throughout Canada;*
- 4) in consultation with the Provinces establish a First Ministers' Council on health care to examine the status and future of Medicare in Canada;*

The Government of Canada will uphold the *Canada Health Act* and will continue to work with the provinces and territories to ensure that all governments continue to fulfill their commitment to the principles of Medicare.

In September 2000, all First Ministers committed to support the principles of universality, accessibility, comprehensiveness, portability and public administration for insured hospital and physician services. This commitment was reaffirmed in February 2003.

The federal government has made significant re-investments in health care. Budget 1999 invested \$11.5 billion to the provincial and territorial governments over five years, through the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), specifically for health. Budget 2000 provided an additional \$2.5 billion in CHST for health care, as well as post-secondary education, over four years. And in September 2000, the federal government announced an increase of CHST cash transfers to the provinces and territories by an additional \$18.9 billion over the next five years, in support of health. In 2002-2003, CHST cash transfers will reach \$19.1 billion.

On April 4, 2001, the Prime Minister announced, under Part I of the *Official Inquiries Act*, the launch of the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada and named Mr. Roy Romanow, the former Premier of Saskatchewan, as the Commissioner. The Commission was asked to recommend policies to ensure the sustainability of a universally accessible health care system, which offers high quality services to Canadians over the long term. Mr. Romanow tabled his final report in the House of Commons on November 28, 2002.

In February 2003, the Prime Minister convened a First Ministers' Meeting which led to the Health Care Accord 2003. The Accord reflects the ideas of Canadians who contributed to the health care renewal debate through consultations on various federal and provincial reports. The reports produced by the Hon. Roy Romanow, Senator Kirby, Messrs. Mazankowski, Clair and Fyke were instrumental in guiding governments to this historic outcome.

The Accord was supported by a federal investment of \$34.8 billion over 5 years, including increases in transfers to the provinces and the creation of a Health Reform Fund and a Diagnostic Equipment Fund. The Health Reform Fund will provide provincial governments with the resources they need to improve access to homecare, improve the way primary health care is delivered, and ensure that all Canadians, wherever they live, have reasonable access to catastrophic drug coverage.

The Health Care Accord 2003 also commits all levels of government to establish a Health Care Council of Canada to bring together Canadians, experts and

representatives of all levels of government to increase accountability and transparency in our health care system.

Health care delivery is predominantly the jurisdictional responsibility of the provinces and territories. However, the federal government is working with the provinces and territories to improve the accessibility and quality of health care with initiatives in the following areas: patient safety, health human resources, technology assessment, innovation and research, and healthy living. The Federal-Provincial-Territorial Advisory Committee on Information and Emerging Technologies is working to advance the implementation of health technology systems while ensuring the security and confidentiality of personal health records. To move this plan forward, the federal government has established an arms-length corporation, the Canada Health Infoway Inc., to finance common health information initiatives that have potential for Pan-Canadian rollout.

10. Student Debt

WHEREAS the rising costs of post-secondary education are forcing student debt to rise at an unprecedented rate;

WHEREAS a growing number of students are defaulting on their loans. Once a student loan has been defaulted on, the federal government's assistance measures are no longer available, thereby excluding those persons who need those measures most;

WHEREAS the federal government has already shown leadership in this area through the Canada Student Loan program and the Millennium Scholarships Program. The Government also introduced a number of assistance measures, such as interest relief, in an effort to ease the negative effects of this debt load;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to:

- 1) treat the alleviation of student debt as a government priority and undertake further consultations with student organizations, academic institutions and the provinces on this matter;*
- 2) in consultation with the provinces and student groups enhance the Student Loan program to ensure it meets the needs and interests of students; consider associated programs to extend interest and relief to students;*

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to change the Student Loans Program to allow those

who have defaulted on their student loans, but have shown, through credit counselling programs or other similar means, good faith, an understanding of their responsibilities, and a willingness to repay their loans, to again have access to the assistance measures.

The Government of Canada recognizes the importance of post-secondary education to build a healthy economy and civic society by maximizing every Canadian's potential to participate. To this end, it has taken the following measures:

- a 17% federal tax credit on the interest portion of student loan payments and an extension of the repayment period to 15 years. We have also extended the interest relief period to 54 weeks and reduced the loan principal by up to \$10,000 if annual payments exceeded 15% of average income;
- doubled the amount of the education tax credit to \$400 per month for full-time students and \$120 per month for part time students;
- expanded the tax exemption for scholarships to \$3,000.

Budget 2003 included measures to strengthen the Canada Student Loans Program, including:

- putting more money in the hands of students by allowing them to keep a greater share of income earned during studies, and keep more money from merit-based scholarships;
- broadening eligibility to the Debt Reduction in Repayment program for graduates in financial difficulty, and increasing the assistance provided;
- improving access to interest relief for graduates who are in default on their Canada Student Loans, or who have declared personal bankruptcy; and
- broadening eligibility for assistance under the program to protected persons, including convention refugees.

Budget 2003 also provided:

- a new Canada Graduate Scholarships program supporting 4,000 new scholarships at program maturity; and
- an endowment to establish a new scholarship program for Aboriginal Canadians participating in post-secondary programs, to be administered by the National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation.

11. Elections Act Reform

WHEREAS the Royal Commission on Electoral Reform and Party Financing (the Lortie Commission) reported in 1991 that the nomination process is one of the greatest barriers to the election of women in Canada;

WHEREAS the Lortie Commission recommended that limits on nomination expenses and receipts for nomination expenses be included in the Elections Act;

WHEREAS only 20% of all members of Parliament are women after 75 years of political representation for women in Canada;

WHEREAS the federal Women's National Liberal Caucus has identified financial inequities in the relative abilities of male and female nominees for federal public office as a fundamental barrier to the successful nomination of women candidates;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to amend legislation ensuring that nomination campaign expenses be tax receiptable;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to amend legislation so that child and family care costs incurred during nomination and election campaigns be an allowable tax related expense;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to amend legislation to allow a leave of absence to all employees seeking a nomination or contesting an election, including entitlement to all benefits, other than salary, associated with that person's employment.

As part of the new political financing legislation (Bill C-24), the *Canada Elections Act* was amended on June 19, 2003 to include spending limits for nomination candidates. Beginning on January 1, 2004, all nomination candidates will be required to disclose their contributions and expenses to Elections Canada. The threshold for this requirement was set at \$1,000 (section 478.23). Also, nomination contestants will be subject to spending limits of 20% of the limit set for candidates in that particular riding during the last election (section 478.14). Bill C-24 (section 478.01) also includes childcare and travel expenses in the definition of personal expenses, thus exempting these from the spending limit and are therefore subject to reimbursement.

Section 80 of the *Canada Elections Act* provides that every employer of employees to whom Part III of the *Canada Labour Code* applies shall, on

application, grant any such employee leave of absence, with or without pay, to seek nomination as a candidate and to be a candidate for the period during the election period that may be requested.

Section 409 of the *Canada Elections Act* provides that childcare expenses and expenses relating to the provision of care for a person with a physical or mental incapacity for whom the candidate normally provides such care are electoral campaign expenses within the meaning of the Act.

12. Support/Tax Relief for Caregivers

WHEREAS according to Statistics Canada, 2.1 million Canadians are caring for infirm and ailing relatives and friends and this number is growing;

WHEREAS 6 out of 10 caregivers are women;

WHEREAS many caregivers have made significant financial and career sacrifices in order to care for family members or friends;

WHEREAS more hospitals are releasing ailing and infirm patients to the care of family and friends at home;

WHEREAS respite care is not universally available to all caregivers;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to fund support and respite programs at the provincial/territorial and local levels for all caregivers through a national home-care strategy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to provide compensation for those who have to give up employment to care for family or friends through a tax credit adjustment for Employment Insurance and Canada Pension Plan.

The Liberal government understands that it is important to help not only Canadians who are disabled, but also the people who care for them. While indirect tax measures like the tax credit for infirm dependants existed to provide some support to caregivers, Budget 1998 introduced a new tax credit to ensure direct support for caregivers for in-home care of related seniors and persons with disabilities.

The Economic Statement and Budget Update (October 2000) enhanced the tax assistance for caregivers of elderly parents, grandparents and infirm relatives by

increasing the amount on which the caregiver tax credit is based, from \$2,286 to \$3,500 for 2001. This increase took effect on January 1, 2001.

Further to this, Budget 2003 proposed the creation of a six-week compassionate family care leave benefit under employment insurance. On January 4, 2004, the government will implement a new Employment Insurance Benefit for a six-week compassionate care leave for people who take time off from their jobs to care for gravely ill or dying family members.

In addition to providing support to caregivers and creating the compassionate family care leave benefit, the Liberal government recently negotiated the 2003 First Ministers Health Accord, which included decisive steps forward to renew and sustain home care services in Canada.

13. Seniors' Housing

WHEREAS it is an accepted and well-documented fact that Canada has an ageing population;

WHEREAS seniors are living longer and healthier lives and have the ability and the desire to retain their independence as long as possible;

WHEREAS there is an increasing demand for appropriate housing for greater numbers of healthier seniors who no longer choose the responsibility of home ownership;

WHEREAS there are many models of living arrangements for seniors with varying degrees of independence, home care facilities and food services that are being provided by non-Canadian corporations for profit;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to support the expansion of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) activities in the provision of seniors' housing without being restricted to non-profit or social housing;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to encourage CMHC to enter into public/private partnerships for the development of appropriate housing for Canada's senior citizens.

The federal government is committed to ensuring that seniors have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. That is why it has made, and continues to make, investments in seniors housing.

Investments through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) have resulted in nearly 639,000 social housing dwelling units across Canada with approximately 200,000 of these units being committed to seniors. A \$1.9 billion annual contribution from the Government of Canada helps to preserve this social housing stock and ensures that rents remain affordable.

Most seniors prefer to continue to live in the homes and communities where they have lived for many years. The Home Adaptations for Seniors' Independence (HASI) program assists seniors, who have difficulties with daily living activities in the home, by providing them with up to \$3,500 to carry out minor adaptations to improve the physical accessibility of their homes. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) provides financial assistance to help bring substandard housing up to minimum health and safety levels, make homes physically barrier-free and accessible for persons with disabilities, and convert nonresidential properties into affordable rental housing. The 2003 Federal Budget indicated that funds for these programs will be extended through three years at a cost of \$384 million.

The Government of Canada is currently investing \$1 billion towards the creation of affordable housing, and this investment is being matched by provinces, territories and others. Provinces such as British Columbia and Alberta are using federal funding for supportive housing programs for seniors. Others are funding certain seniors housing projects through general affordable housing programs.

The Canadian Centre for Public-Private Partnerships in Housing at CMHC brings together the public and private sectors to facilitate the production of affordable housing. Since its inception in 1991, it has supported the production of over 25,000 housing units across Canada, with the majority of units being for seniors. In 2003, the Centre expanded its support to further facilitate the supply of affordable housing. New and expanded support includes: seed funding of up to \$20,000 to help pay for a variety of activities in the early stages of a housing proposal; capacity development training to assist housing providers in acquiring the information and skills they need to develop and manage housing projects; expanded consultation services to provide advice and expertise on a wide-range of housing matters; increased flexibility in mortgage loan insurance to help create new affordable housing; and interest-free Proposal Development Fund loans of up to \$100,000 to help proponents of affordable housing to develop their projects to the point of financing.

The Government of Canada, through CMHC, is contributing to the growth in housing options for seniors through ongoing research and information transfer activities. Over the past few years, research and information transfer activities have been undertaken on a broad range of topics related to seniors housing which are designed to encourage innovation in a variety of areas including: community planning; the development of new types of housing options; new

financing and tenure options to improve housing affordability; and the use of new technology, design concepts and home adaptations to improve safety, security, independence and comfort.

A number of Seniors Seminars have been held in the past two years for various industry organizations, including homebuilders to help them plan, design and build a wider range of housing options for the growing seniors population. Some seminars have been delivered in partnership with the Home Care Division of Health Canada and the Canadian Manufactured Housing Institute. CMHC is also planning to serve other audiences such as architects, planners and senior citizens organizations.

14. Aboriginal Health Institute

WHEREAS the establishment of an Aboriginal Health Institute is a Red book commitment that has not been realized;

WHEREAS Aboriginal women experience higher rates of circulatory problems, respiratory problems, diabetes and cancer of the cervix than the rest of the Canadian population;

WHEREAS Aboriginal women represent a higher percentage of cases of HIV/AIDS than non-Aboriginal women in Canada;

WHEREAS the mortality rate for Aboriginal women due to violence is three times the rate experienced by all other Canadian women;

WHEREAS Aboriginal women are three times as likely to commit suicide than are non-Aboriginal women;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada encourage the federal government to fulfil its Red book promise to establish an Aboriginal Health Institute.

Following negotiations between the Government of Canada and five national Aboriginal organizations (Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council and Native Women's Association of Canada), an Aboriginal Health Institute was formally incorporated in March 2000, and is now known as the national Aboriginal Health Organization.

The goals of the National Aboriginal Health Organization are to:

- improve and promote health through knowledge-based activities;
- promote understanding of health issues affecting aboriginal peoples;

- facilitate and promote research and develop research partnerships;
- foster participation of Aboriginal peoples in delivery of health care;
- affirm and protect Aboriginal healing practices.

In the 2003 budget, the government announced a further investment of \$1.3 billion over the next five years will be dedicated to First Nations and Inuit health programs, including new investments for nursing and capital development on reserve. This will include \$32 million for a national on-reserve immunization strategy.

These measures complement funding identified in the December 2001 budget for programs that support early childhood development, with a particular focus on First Nations children on reserves. On October 31, 2002, total funding of \$320 million over five years was announced to expand and enhance the Aboriginal Head Start program and the First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative. This funding will also intensify efforts to address Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects and to support a national survey on Aboriginal children, as well as research at the community level.

15. Canadian Unity

WHEREAS Canada is founded on the respect for rights and freedoms and the principle of mutual assistance, the sole guarantees of peace and human dignity;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government:

- 1) to spare no effort in strengthening the unity of our country, continually improving our federation so it best serves the needs of its citizens respecting the constitutional powers and jurisdictions of each level of government;*
- 2) to redouble its efforts to promote both official languages, the flourishing of official linguistic communities throughout the country, and the recognition of Aboriginal peoples' right to self government;*
- 3) to do everything in its power to encourage and support exchanges among Canadians, particularly young Canadians, so they can gain a better understanding of their country, its history, and the potential it offers them;*

- 4) *to fulfill its commitment to Quebecers, and all other Canadians, that the principles of clarity and the rule of law, as set out by the Supreme Court on August 20, 1998, will be respected;*
- 5) *to better demonstrate to Canadians the important role Canada plays in the world, with its universal values of tolerance, its support for peace, democracy, harmony among peoples and respect for cultural diversity.*

The Government of Canada announced its Action Plan for Official Languages on March 12, 2003. The following investments were announced:

- to double the number of bilingual high school graduates by 2013, \$137 million in additional funding over five years will be invested in second-language education. This additional funding will be subject to cost-sharing agreements with the provinces and territories;
- to increase the number of bursary recipients from 7,000 to 10,000 per year by 2007-2008, the Summer Language Bursary Program will receive an additional \$24 million over five years to help improve various components of the program and increase the amount of the bursaries by approximately 10%;
- to enable a greater number of applicants to participate in the Official-Language Monitor Program, an additional \$11.5 million will be invested in this program over the next five years. Monitors' salaries will be increased by approximately 10%.

Budget 2001 increased funding for multiculturalism programs by \$9 million over three years. Following the events of September 11, 2001, the Liberal government took several steps to ensure that Canadians of all races, ethnicities, religions and cultures are not targeted for hate-related activities. The Liberal government introduced and passed Bill C-36, which established stricter penalties for people convicted of hate crimes.

Exchanges Canada programs aim to help young Canadians gain knowledge and understanding of Canada, connect to one another, and appreciate the diversity and shared aspects of the Canadian experience. The Government of Canada gives funding to organizations that administer exchanges in partnership with *Exchanges Canada*. In most cases, the government will pay the travel costs for all eligible participants. Special consideration is given to encourage participation from groups traditionally under-represented in exchange programs, such as Aboriginal youth, youth with disabilities, youth from low-income families, and youth from rural or isolated regions.

In March 2000, the Liberal government passed the *Clarity Act*. The Act outlines the unavoidable responsibilities of the Government of Canada and the House of

Commons in the face of a referendum on secession. The *Clarity Act* protects the rights of all Canadian citizens in the event of another vote, and makes it clear that the Government of Quebec can ask Quebec voters the question of its choice. But the Government of Canada and the House of Commons have the duty to make their own assessment of whether the question and the majority indicate a clear support for secession before concluding that the Government of Canada is bound to enter into negotiations on the break-up of the country.

16. Globalization of the Economy

WHEREAS it is obvious that in the society of the global economy there will be even fewer jobs available than previously for those who are able to work;

WHEREAS it is our duty to ensure that all Canadians continue to enjoy the right to dignity and recognition that gainful employment procures, in the context of the society of the global economy;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada asks the federal government to reaffirm its commitment to promote and respect the fundamental right of all citizens to participate in a full and complete way in the building and development of our society;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada encourages the federal government to implement without delay a special committee made up of Members of Parliament, experts and civil servants who will have a mandate to advise the government on which strategies to develop to take full advantage of the new economic and social dynamic resulting from the globalization of the economy;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to take full advantage of all the international forums at its disposal in order to promote the development of a concerted and balanced approach to the social and economic needs of the population, as part of this new society of the global economy.

Canada is a trading nation but our links to the world community go far further than trade and investment: family ties, shared history, and a commitment to poverty reduction, sustainable development, peace and good governance across the globe.

Trade negotiations allow Canada to help shape the framework of the global economy while protecting our interests, and promoting our values and democratic principles. In keeping with Canada's attachment to democratic

accountability, the federal government has been a champion of transparency in the trade negotiations, such as the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA) and the Doha Development Agenda of the World Trade Organization (WTO). At Canada's urging, the FTAA negotiating structure features a committee to receive public submissions on trade-related concerns. This is the first time such a provision has been included in major trade negotiations from the outset.

Canada also led the way to FTAA Ministers releasing the draft negotiating texts at their 2001 meeting. Similarly, we are a leading force for increasing transparency in the WTO, to give the world's citizens a better view of the policy debates that affect them.

At home, the federal government has engaged in wide-ranging consultations with Canadians on the FTAA, the WTO and many other elements of our trade policy agenda. The government has also made available information on Canada's policies and negotiating positions. The government's goal is to receive and reflect the values, interests and priorities of Canadians in our trade policy.

Canada completed its seventh WTO Trade Policy Review in March 2003. The review concluded that Canada's trade and investment regime is among the world's most liberal and transparent, enabling trade and investment flows to expand rapidly. It has played an important role in Canada's ability to reduce its debt, increase employment and after-tax incomes, and raise living standards. Canada participated in all TPRs since 1998.

In trade and investment negotiations, Canadians attach a great importance to protecting our health, public education and social services systems. Canada's position on these matters is clear and unequivocal; these sectors are not negotiable. Canada also will not give up its right to promote cultural diversity or protect the environment, and will encourage other countries to give priority to these goals too.

In September 2003, Canada participated in the fifth WTO round of negotiations at the ministerial conference in Cancun, Mexico, to further advance our trade objectives. Unfortunately, the members could not reach consensus on many issues on the meeting's agenda. The experience of the Cancun ministerial conference provided greater clarity regarding the significant differences among members. Canada remains committed to the multilateral system and is determined to reach a common ground with the members.

Canadians recognize the important role that trade and investment can play in global development and poverty reduction as part of a coherent economic, social and political approach. The federal government continues to work on reconciling Canada's trade and investment objectives with these broader global priorities.

In June 2002, Canada committed to eliminate import duties and quotas for 48 of the world's least developed countries, which came into force January 1, 2003. Canada views increased trade as one of the vital elements of development for the world's poorest nations.

17. Atlantic Canada: Catching Tomorrow's Wave

WHEREAS Canada is enjoying tremendous economic growth and prosperity;

WHEREAS not all regions of Canada are sharing equally in this prosperity;

WHEREAS Atlantic Canada currently experiences and has historically experienced less economic prosperity relative to other regions of Canada since the adoption of the National Policy in Canada in 1879;

WHEREAS the Atlantic National Liberal Caucus has authored a report, Atlantic Canada: Catching Tomorrow's Wave, outlining an economic development vision for Atlantic Canada;

WHEREAS Atlantic Canadians agree that our economic future depends upon partnership, co-operation and a regional approach in relation to economic development;

WHEREAS the economic future of the Atlantic region depends on our ability to continue to develop our knowledge-based industries, add more value to our historic resource-based industries and adapt national policies and programs to meet the specific needs of the Atlantic Canadian economy and circumstances;

WHEREAS investment in research and development will be central to the development of a knowledge-based economy;

WHEREAS Atlantic Canada has historically received less per capita from the federal government than other regions for research and development;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to adopt a policy for the economic development of Atlantic Canada based on the strategy outlined in the document Atlantic Canada: Catching Tomorrow's Wave, a new vision for Atlantic Canada, New Brunswick, Newfoundland, Nova Scotia and Prince Edward Island to work together in the interests of the Atlantic region and its people.

The Prime Minister and all Liberal members applaud the work of the Atlantic Liberal Caucus and its report *Atlantic Canada: Catching Tomorrow's Wave*. As a result of this work and the direction provided in this report, the Prime Minister announced the Atlantic Investment Partnership (AIP) in June 2000. The AIP was officially launched in June 2001.

The AIP is a five-year, \$700 million initiative designed to build new partnerships, to increase the capacity of Atlantic Canadians to compete in an increasingly global, knowledge-based economy. It is intended to help close the region's skills, innovation and productivity gaps with other parts of Canada.

Major investments under the AIP include:

- \$300 million for the Atlantic Innovation Fund (AIF) which is designed to strengthen innovation capacity, increase the region's competitiveness and encourage the region's transition to a more knowledge-based economy;
- \$110 million for the expansion of National Research Council facilities in Atlantic Canada;
- \$135 million for a Strategic Community Investment Fund to improve access to funding for strategic community-level projects;
- \$123.6 million for Trade and Investment as well as Entrepreneurship and Business Skills Development initiatives.

In making the announcement, the Prime Minister praised the creative role of the Liberal Atlantic Caucus in developing the new Partnership. "The Atlantic Investment Partnership is a bold plan designed to ensure not only that Atlantic Canadians can take their rightful place in the new economy, but that they can make their place at home -- in Atlantic Canada," said the Prime Minister.

18. Employment Insurance Act

WHEREAS the federal government committed in the October 1999 Throne Speech to open the Employment Insurance Act to amendments with regard to maternity benefits;

WHEREAS amendments to the Employment Insurance Act made by the Progressive Conservative government between 1984 and 1993 made the employment insurance system more difficult to access by increasing the minimum number of weeks necessary to qualify and decreased the level of benefits;

WHEREAS in 1997 amendments to the Employment Insurance Act introduced the intensity provisions that reduced the benefit rate available to those workers who have made previous claims;

WHEREAS amendments to the Employment Insurance Act over the last 10 years have disproportionately affected the workers and families of the Atlantic region who participate in seasonal industries;

WHEREAS the intensity provisions adversely affect particularly those workers regularly employed in the primary, construction and manufacturing industries and in educational services;

WHEREAS the intensity provisions constitute a punitive approach to unemployment;

WHEREAS the divisor provisions currently contained within the Employment Insurance Act already offer positive incentives to cause benefit recipients to seek additional employment;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to immediately amend the Employment Insurance Act to remove the intensity provisions.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring the Employment Insurance (EI) program meets the changing needs of Canadians. In 2001, the government:

- eliminated the Intensity Rule;
- adjusted the benefit repayment (clawback) provision;
- adjusted the re-entrant rules for parents returning to work;
- enhanced the maternity and parental benefits;
- eliminated the two-week waiting period for apprentices so that they would only have to serve one week at the start of their program.

Further to this, the Liberal government in Budget 2003 proposed the creation of a six-week compassionate family care leave benefit under employment insurance. On January 4, 2004, the government will implement a new Employment Insurance Benefit for a six-week compassionate care leave for people who take time off from their jobs to care for gravely ill or dying family members. In addition, as of September 7, 2003, the small weeks threshold is increasing from \$150 to \$225. By increasing the Small Weeks threshold to \$225 from \$150, individuals will be encouraged to accept weeks of work with lower than average earnings. This increase allows people to accept part-time work without lowering the benefit rate on a future claim.

19. Canadian Armed Forces

WHEREAS the Canadian Armed Forces are increasingly being called upon to participate in peacekeeping efforts due to regional conflicts while continuing their primary responsibilities in Canada;

WHEREAS Canadian defence expenditures have fallen to 1.1% of GDP in 1999-2000 while the NATO average is 2.1%;

WEREAS this reduction has led to insufficient personnel strengths;

WHEREAS the Forces continue to experience problems with respect to quality of life issues, troop fatigue based on increasing deployments, inadequate levels and quality of essential equipment and the loss of key capabilities;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the government of Canada to embark on a five year plan to increase significantly the defence budget and reform national defence policies in order that Canadian Armed Forces personnel are provided with efficient organization, proper living facilities and terms and conditions of service, and with the quality and quantity of equipment necessary to permit the Canadian Armed Forces to perform effectively the following roles:

- 1) maintaining surveillance of Canada's territory;*
- 2) providing emergency support to civilian authorities;*
- 3) providing search and rescue services in Canada;*
- 4) fulfilling peacekeeping and humanitarian operations in support of international agencies;*
- 5) supporting NATO or other allied sponsored military activities.*

Budget 2001 committed more than \$1.2 billion to the Department of National Defence and its agencies. This money is in addition to the \$3.9 billion increase in 1999. Canada ranks 7th of 19 NATO nations in real dollars for defence spending.

With this, Defence has implemented more than 80 initiatives to improve the quality of life in the forces. This has been done through:

- reform of Canadian Forces health care services;
- improvements in pay and benefits;

- enhancement of family support services;
- improvements in accommodation.

The Department of National Defence (DND) is committed to providing state of the art equipment for the Canadian Forces for use at home and in peacekeeping missions around the world. Therefore, DND has acquired new equipment, including:

- 15 new Cormorant search and rescue helicopters;
- 4 Victoria-class submarines;
- 651 Light Armoured Vehicles (LAV III) for the Army;
- advanced air-to-surface precision-guided weapons for our CF-18s.

Significant progress in the procurement process for the new Maritime Helicopter, which will soon replace the present Sea King helicopters, has been made.

The Defence Department has also been developing Strategy 2020, a long-term planning framework launched in June 1999 that will allow us to meet Canada's current defence commitments while adjusting to emerging defence issues.

In late October 2003, the Government of Canada approved the acquisition of a mobile gun system for the Canadian Forces. Acquisition of these new vehicles is part of the undergoing transformation of the Canadian Army, and will allow us to replace the current fleet of Leopard tanks and continue to maintain direct fire capability.

Canada requires a military that is funded and equipped to help shoulder its international responsibilities. In keeping with a Defence Update, completed in fall 2002 by DND and identifying core areas for spending and reallocation, Budget 2003 makes a number of significant investments.

Altogether, Budget 2003 provides the Department of National Defence with \$395 million for fiscal year ending March 31, 2003. For 2003-04, Budget 2003 provides DND with \$1 billion in new funding of which \$800 million will be added to the base budget. These investments are a clear demonstration of the government's commitment to the Canadian Forces.

20. Aboriginal Youth Strategies

WHEREAS children and youth are a priority of the Liberal Party of Canada;

WHEREAS Aboriginal children and youth constitute the fastest growing segment of the Canadian population;

WHEREAS Aboriginal children and youth are at a greater risk than any other group in Canada because of the intolerable levels of poverty;

WHEREAS the infant mortality rate for Aboriginal people is 1.7 times that of the Canadian national average;

WHEREAS the death rate for Aboriginal youth is 3 to 4 times higher than that of the Canadian average;

WHEREAS Aboriginal children and youth commit suicide at a rate of 6 times than the Canadian national average;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada encourage the federal government to affirm and maintain its historic and fiduciary role by ensuring the well-being of Aboriginal children and youth by:

- 1) ongoing federal policy development, research advocacy and funding to support development of Aboriginal children and youth agendas;*
- 2) sufficient funding to support all Aboriginal students accepted at post-secondary institutions, professional degree programs and adult education programs;*
- 3) Aboriginal suicide prevention initiatives designed to provide resources to create new programs as well as utilizing successful existing models;*
- 4) transferring responsibility for the provision of youth programs and services for Aboriginal people at resource levels that meet the needs of all Aboriginal children and youth.*

Indian and Northern Affairs (INAC) recognizes that a strong future for Aboriginal people depends on providing a better future for Aboriginal youth. INAC is committed to providing access to First Nations youth to post-secondary education and training opportunities that are comparable to those of other Canadian students. To this end, INAC allocates over \$290 million to its Post-Secondary Education (PSE) program, which currently provides support to over 27,000 First Nations and Inuit students.

The Department is presently doing a PSE program review of policy and program redesign. The need for increased student support and the growing concern for inadequate resource levels for Aboriginal post-secondary institutes are giving impetus to this work and to the exploration of new endeavours with federal and

provincial partners, post-secondary institutes and organizations. One of these endeavours saw INAC supporting the establishment of the National Association of Indigenous Institutes of Higher Learning (NAIIHL). The Department continues to support the efforts of the NAIIHL.

The Department of Canadian Heritage is committed to preserving, revitalizing and promoting Aboriginal Canadian languages. To support this initiative, the Department announced long-term funding of \$172.5 million over the next 11 years, in the 2003 Budget.

Funding levels for post-secondary education are under review to ensure the integrity of the program and its capacity to respond to the needs and costs faced by First Nations and Inuit students at all levels of post-secondary education.

At present, decisions on individual applications for financial assistance are largely managed through First Nations and Inuit community governments or specialized institutions at the tribal, treaty or regional levels. Enhanced accountability to all members – and to First Nations youth – is a goal of the government's First Nations Governance initiative.

In addition, over the next five years \$320 million will enhance Aboriginal Head Start and First Nations and Inuit child Care, support new measures to monitor the well being of Aboriginal children and address Fetal Alcohol Syndrome/Fetal Alcohol Effects in First Nations communities.

21. National Housing

WHEREAS The Parliamentary Standing Committee on Aboriginal Affairs conducted extensive hearings across Canada interviewing many stakeholders regarding the state of Aboriginal housing in this country both on and off reserve and fourteen recommendations were made;

WHEREAS housing is a determinant of health and existing housing programs have failed to address the issues of home ownership, affordability, adequacy or core need for the Aboriginal people, which is the fastest growing segment of our population;

WHEREAS in 1992, 1994 and 1998 the Aboriginal People Commission made the inherent right to self government within the Canadian constitution a priority which expressed the “sincere desire of all Aboriginal Peoples in Canada the right to determine their own future” and negotiations to establish jurisdiction for control of Aboriginal housing are presently ongoing with the provinces;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada encourage the federal government to follow through with recommendations and the priority resolutions previously passed by this convention and transfer all jurisdiction and resources to a nationally constituted Aboriginal housing authority that be empowered to address the issues of affordability, access, adequacy, home ownership and core need for all Aboriginal Canadians in the new millennium;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada encourage the federal government to ensure that this nationally constituted Aboriginal housing authority enter into delivery agreements with all existing regional and community based Aboriginal housing authorities and be resourced to develop a new Aboriginal housing delivery program that is effective and self determining.

The government is committed to improving housing conditions in First Nation (FN) communities. Since the housing policy was announced (1996), we have been able to provide, through the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), an additional \$240 million to support First Nation housing needs. As well, in 2000-2001 we allocated a further \$33.7 million to meet acute housing needs related to safety and health. The percentage of adequate housing has increased from 41% in 1990 to 57% in 2001.

Depending on the choices made by First Nations in developing their community-based housing plans, the percentage of adequate housing could increase to 62% by the end of 2003-2004.

However, overall conditions remain below Canadian norms. The rapid growth of populations in First Nations means that overcrowding continues to be a serious problem. An interdepartmental committee and the Assembly of First Nations are working to identify the most effective means of using government resources to tackle the housing issues facing First Nations.

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) delivers a number of housing programs and related services to FN communities and housing institutions. Under CMHC's On-Reserve Housing Program, approximately 1,000 units are constructed yearly, with a current portfolio of about 23,000 units. CMHC also funds housing renovation programs which repaired 1,375 houses in 2002. The total value of commitments on-reserve was \$138.3 million in 2002-03. CMHC also supports the efforts of First Nation communities to develop institutions, which would improve the planning, delivery, financing and administration of housing programs and services.

Off reserve, the Government of Canada works on many levels to help more Canadians gain access to safe, affordable housing, spending more than

\$1.9 billion annually to address the housing needs of low-income Canadians. Aboriginal people have access to this federally funded social housing portfolio of some 639,000 units, targeted to lower-income individuals. Included in this housing portfolio are about 10,700 units that are owned and managed by urban native Non-profit housing sponsors, and 23,100 units delivered under the Rural and Native housing program. Estimated federal expenditures for off-reserve Aboriginal housing were \$177.2 million in 2002-03.

Government spending also includes funding for the housing renovation programs for low income Canadians which provides assistance to ensure existing housing meets basic health and safety standards as well as meeting the repair needs of rental housing and rooming houses and to improve housing accessibility for persons with disabilities. A portion of this funding is targeted to Aboriginal people. In 1999, as part of the government of Canada's \$753 million initiative to address homelessness, these existing programs were enhanced and provided with additional funding of \$311 million over four years. The 2003 Federal Budget indicated that these programs would be extended for three years at a cost of \$384 million.

Aboriginal people will benefit from provincial and territorial programs being delivered under the new \$1 billion Affordable Housing Initiative. A number of projects for Aboriginal people are being developed in urban areas. A total of \$80 million was targeted for remote areas and the North. Recently it was announced that \$20 million in federal funding would be provided through the Canada Strategic Infrastructure Fund for affordable housing in Nunavut.

22. Mackenzie Highway Extension

WHEREAS the Northwest Territories is one of the most underdeveloped regions in Canada;

WHEREAS economic development is dependent on the development of transportation infrastructure;

WHEREAS a national highway system, the Trans - Canada Highway, links Canadians from the Atlantic coast to the Pacific coast;

WHEREAS the national transportation system in the provinces facilitates the east-west movement of goods and people strengthening the economies of the ten provinces;

WHEREAS Canada has three coasts;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada, under the National Transportation Strategy, encourage the federal government to support the

finish of the national highway system from coast to coast to coast with the completion of the Mackenzie Highway to the Arctic Ocean.

The Government of Canada supports transportation development through the National Transportation Strategy and the development of effective transportation networks throughout Canada. Road, rail and port developments are crucial to developing the natural resource wealth held in Yukon, NWT and Nunavut.

In October 2003, the Government of Canada announced \$80 million for infrastructure priorities in the Northwest Territories. Of that, \$20 million will go to the Corridors for Canada proposal, which includes new ice bridges along the Mackenzie Valley Winter Road.

The government remains committed to participate in subsequent phases of the Corridors for Canada proposal and to see the overall projects completed as quickly as possible.

23. Devolution/Decentralization of the Northern Affairs Program

WHEREAS the Fathers of Confederation set out to build a nation that spanned the continent;

WHEREAS successive Liberal governments have striven to bring equality to all Canadians;

WHEREAS in the Canadian system of governance responsibilities fall to those in the best position to serve residents and who can best respond in an efficient and effective manner;

WHEREAS the building of a nation has been the continuous process since confederation;

WHEREAS the creation of Nunavut is the most recent nation building activity;

WHEREAS the next step in the evolution of a nation is the strengthening and inclusion of the northern territories into full membership in the federation;

WHEREAS a policy resolution was passed at the 1988 policy convention which encouraged the federal government to devolve all remaining provincial responsibilities to the Northwest Territories;

WHEREAS the Prime Minister of Canada, in a speech to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly in 1993, indicated that devolution was one of this priorities;

WHEREAS residents of the Northwest Territories are faced with minerals and oils and gas exploration and development proposals, which require urgent attention, are normally tended to, and can be best managed by, that level of government which is below the federal government;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to decentralize the Northern Affairs Program, oil and gas and mining functions, to the Northwest Territories as an interim measure to devolution;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government, in consultation with the government of the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal governments, to devolve all provincial responsibilities to northerners by 2002.

The devolution of provincial-type powers to the territorial governments provides for local control over decision-making areas key to their development. The devolution process has and will continue to involve the full participation of the territorial governments and Aboriginal peoples, consistent with the spirit of partnership, which is the foundation of *Gathering Strength*.

In the Yukon, multi-party devolution negotiations concluded on May 23, 2001. The final draft of the Devolution Transfer Agreement has been tabled in Parliament and is being reviewed by the Senate.

As a result of a Memorandum of Intent on Devolution and Resource Revenue Sharing developed by the three interested parties in the Northwest Territories, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development sought a mandate from Cabinet to begin negotiations by April 2002. Due to the difficulties in creating a territorial consensus on some aspects of devolution amongst all stakeholders, progress in the NWT did not meet the target date of 2002 for the devolution of all provincial responsibilities. Work is ongoing.

The *First Nations Governance Act* was introduced in October 2002.

24. Infrastructure Program

WHEREAS the government's original Infrastructure Program was successful in providing much needed infrastructure in partnership with other levels of government;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government as well as the provincial and municipal governments, to work together towards the creation of another infrastructure program, paying specific attention to a national highway component.

As part of its commitment to improve the economy and the quality of life of all Canadians, the Government of Canada invested \$600 million over four years on highway infrastructure in Budget 2000.

In April 2001, Minister Collenette announced the start of negotiations with the provinces and territories on the Strategic Highway Infrastructure Program to identify which highway projects would be considered a priority for funding. To date, agreements have been signed with Nova Scotia, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, British Columbia, Northwest Territories and the Yukon.

In Budget 2001, the government again showed its support for Canada's infrastructure, with the new Strategic Infrastructure Program. It is a \$2 billion program for large strategic infrastructure projects including highways, urban transportation and other large-scale projects. Working with provincial and municipal governments, the program provides cost-shared assistance to large infrastructure projects.

Infrastructure investment is an important part of our government's agenda. Good physical infrastructure is essential to our success as a nation. The last Speech from the Throne committed the Government of Canada to an additional 10-year involvement in public infrastructure. Budget 2003 confirmed this commitment and provided an additional investment of \$3 billion to continue to address strategic and municipal infrastructure needs across the country.

The long-term nature of this investment will provide municipalities, provinces and territories a solid planning horizon for their infrastructure improvements. In combination with the \$5.25 billion in infrastructure programs announced in Budgets 2000 and 2001, this brings the Government of Canada's recent investment in the nation's infrastructure to over \$8 billion. These infrastructure initiatives are now resulting in improvements to Canada's competitiveness and the prosperity of our communities.

25. Taxes and Debt Reduction

WHEREAS Canadian taxpayers have strongly endorsed the concept of tax reduction; 1988 policy convention which encouraged the federal government to devolve all remaining provincial responsibilities to the Northwest Territories;

WHEREAS the general public understands the need for debt reduction in order to reduce the interest and debt repayment burden facing future generations of taxpayers;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to endorse the concept of substantial and sustainable reductions to personal and business tax rates as well as a long-term debt reduction plan with achievable and measurable targets to be established.

The combined tax measures of the February 2000 Budget and the October 2000 Economic Statement and Budget Update will give \$100 billion of cumulative broad-based tax relief by 2004-05. They are the largest in Canadian history.

Canadians' average personal income tax burden will be 21% less by 2004-05, and even lower for families with children, i.e. 27% less.

Some tax measures initiated by our government that have helped Canadians and businesses include:

- reducing *all* income tax rates as of January 1, 2001;
- reducing further the capital gains inclusion rate to one-half, from three-quarters;
- expanding tax-free rollovers and making them available to more businesses. The size of eligible investment has been increased to \$2 million from \$500,000 and the size of small businesses eligible for the rollover has been increased to \$50 million from \$10 million;
- committing to a legislated timetable for reducing the general corporate income tax rate from 28% to 21%, with a one-point reduction in 2001, followed by a two-point cut in each of the following three years;
- permitting self-employed individuals, since January 1, 2001, to deduct the portion of Canada Pension Plan and Quebec Pension Plan contributions that represents the employer's share.

In fact, by 2005, our corporate tax rates will fall about 5% below average U.S. rates. And our sharp cuts to capital gains taxes have brought the average top Canadian rate down lower than the typical top American rate.

To further stimulate entrepreneurship and risk-taking, Budget 2003 supported businesses by increasing, over four years, the small business deduction limit to \$300,000 from \$200,000. To help small businesses further, the budget proposed to increase the annual Registered Retirement Savings Plans (RRSP) contribution limit to \$18,000 by 2006 (with corresponding Registered Pension Plans (RPP) limit increases).

Budget 2003 strengthened investment in Canada by eliminating the federal capital tax over five years. The capital tax will be eliminated completely for medium-sized corporations (defined as capital value less than \$50 million) in 2004.

Budget 2003 improves the taxation of resource income in Canada by reducing the corporate tax rate of the sector to 21% over the next five years while making changes to the tax structures of this key sector.

Since the beginning of our mandate, this government has been steadfast in its commitment to reduce the national debt. Since we began posting surpluses in 1997-98, the net public debt – the accumulation of annual deficits and surpluses – has decreased by \$52.3 billion. Servicing the debt will result in reduced interest payments that will save Canadians \$3 billion each year, money that is being used for other priorities such as health care and education.

We are committed to a prudent approach and to ensuring through the Debt Repayment Plan that both the absolute level of debt and the debt in relation to the country's income (GDP) continue to fall. The debt-to-GDP ratio has dropped to 44.2% (2002-03) from its high of 68% in 1995-96. The ratio is generally recognized as the most appropriate measure of the debt burden, as it measures the debt relative to the ability of the government and the nation's taxpayers to finance it.

Based on OECD projections of continuing surpluses in Canada and large deficits in the U.S., Canadian and U.S. total government debt burdens are expected to converge in 2004.

26. War Affected Children

WHEREAS there are many situations of armed conflict in the world in which children are either targeted as victims or recruited as combatants;

WHEREAS statistics estimate that over the last decade two million children have been killed, four million disabled, one million orphaned, ten million psychologically scarred by the trauma of abduction, displacement, detention, rape and the brutal murder of family members;

WHEREAS it is estimated that more than 300,000 children currently serve in combat;

WHEREAS the targeting of children, both as fighters and victims, is one of the most disturbing human security issues facing the world today;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to call upon the nations of the world to raise the minimum age for deployment in armed forces and participation in combat situations to 18 years of age;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to work to foster the spirit of inclusion on and co-operation to build broad based international consensus to prevent the targeting of children in situations of armed conflict;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to assist in the demobilization, rehabilitation and reintegration of war affected children into their communities.

On February 12, 2002, Foreign Affairs Minister Bill Graham welcomed the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict. Canada played a leadership role in the negotiation of the Optional Protocol and in 2000 was the first country to sign and ratify it.

The Optional Protocol strengthens international standards to protect war-affected children by raising the minimum age for participation in armed conflict from 15 to 18 years, and by establishing a ban on compulsory recruitment below 18 years. To ratify the Optional Protocol, Canada amended the *National Defence Act* in June 2000 to put into law Canada's long-standing practice of not deploying persons under 18 to areas of active hostilities.

The Liberal government is also working on the ground with children who live in countries affected by war and civil strife. Child protection is one of the Canadian International Development Agency's (CIDA) Social Development Priorities. Through CIDA's work in these countries, Canada will invest \$122 million over five years (2000-2005).

27. Canadian Agriculture Safety Net

WHEREAS Canadian farmers in recent years have been experiencing drastically low international commodity prices;

WHEREAS some Manitoba and Saskatchewan farmers have been unable to obtain a crop because of excessive moisture;

WHEREAS the significant subsidies being provided to farmers in the European Common Market and U.S.A. are distorting world markets;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government, in consultation with the provinces, to provide a long-term voluntary whole farm Gross Revenue Insurance Program for Canadian farmers.

The provinces chose to terminate their involvement in the Gross Revenue Insurance Program (GRIP) in the mid-1990s. At that time, federal-provincial-territorial agricultural ministers agreed to a three-year framework agreement on farm safety nets worth \$3 billion. This agreement provided the basis for core Safety Net Programs including fall cash advances, the Net Income Stabilization Account program, Crop Insurance and province-specific companion programs.

In early 2000, a federal-provincial agreement saw grain producers in Saskatchewan and Manitoba receive a one-time, additional injection of \$400 million in extra support in recognition of the extreme circumstances.

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) grew out of a meeting held in June 2001 between the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers. At that conference, the ministers agreed on common goals for a national action plan on agriculture. The five goals, or pillars, of the framework are: food safety and food quality, environment, science and innovation, renewal, and business risk management. Meeting the goals in these five areas will help to ensure Canada is a global leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible production. The goal of the APF is to ensure that Canadian producers and agri-food companies not only meet challenges, but also capture new opportunities for continued prosperity.

New business risk management programs provide \$1.1 billion per year in federal funding on a permanent on-going basis – up from \$600 million. The Liberal government believes in equitable treatment for all producers of all commodities, as such they will have similar access and treatment under federally cost-shared programs. Commodity-specific programs like GRIP are not consistent with this approach. Crop insurance will be expanded to cover more commodities and provide more choices, including a ‘whole farm’ option for producers. The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program (CAIS) provides both income stabilization and disaster assistance with a more streamlined application process for farmers. CAIS also allows beginning farmers to access stabilization and disaster coverage at the start of their careers.

Budget 2003 funded the \$5.2-billion, six-year Agricultural Policy Framework. In addition, Budget 2003 introduced several other measures to support Canadian agriculture by:

- allocating \$50 million to the Canadian Food Inspection Agency over the next two years;

- making a one-time investment of \$113 million for infrastructure improvements at Canada's four veterinary colleges; and
- investing an additional \$30 million over the next two years in the Canadian Grain Commission.

28. Taxation Reductions to Support Families

WHEREAS prudent and pragmatic Liberal government leadership has returned the federal government books to prosperity which allow for changes in taxation levels and government programs to be fiscally possible;

WHEREAS the Liberal Party of Canada endorses the concept of the family as the foundation of our society and supports policies that preserves and enhances family units;

WHEREAS the care of dependent relatives in their homes by family members relieves the health care and social services systems of the financial burden that such care entails and enhances our society as a whole;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to increase financial incentives for family care givers in the form of tax credits or other forms of tax relief in order to encourage and make it more financially possible for families to sustain and care for dependent relatives in their homes;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government, as soon as is practicable, to implement substantial and sustainable tax reductions focusing initially on middle and low income families and thereafter all other segments of the economy.

Some of the tax cuts initiated in the February 2000 Budget and the October 2000 Economic Statement and Budget Update that help families include:

- reducing the lowest income tax rate from 17 to 16%;
- reducing the middle tax rate from 26 to 22%;
- reducing the 29% rate to 26% on incomes up to \$100,000;
- the full indexation of the tax system;
- eliminating the 5% deficit reduction surtax;

- increasing the Canada Child Tax Benefit further so that maximum benefits for the first child would reach \$2,500 by 2004;
- increasing the amount on which the Disability Tax Credit is based to \$6,000 in 2001 from \$4,293;
- increasing the credit amount for caregivers of dependent relatives who are elderly, infirm or disabled to \$3,500 in 2001 from \$2,386; and
- providing \$50 million per year for a new Child Disability Benefit for low- and modest-income families that will provide up to \$1,600 per year for a child with a disability.

As a result of the targeted tax reductions Canadians' average personal income tax burden will be 21% less. For families with children the tax burden will be 27% less.

29. Homelessness

WHEREAS shelter is a basic human need and homelessness and lack of affordable housing is a national crisis and of significant concern for Canadians;

WHEREAS the lack of affordable housing is a major contributor to this crisis;

WHEREAS Aboriginal Peoples are over- represented in this crisis;

WHEREAS Canada's existing social housing portfolio is national asset that must be maintained;

WHEREAS the federal government has the ability and the responsibility to play a significant role in meeting the needs of the homeless, seniors, Aboriginal Peoples, inner-city low-income residents, and the over 800,000 households experiencing housing affordability;

WHEREAS the federal government has already shown foresight in adding the co-ordination of homelessness issues to the responsibilities of a minister;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to:

- 1) *reaffirm its national role in ensuring that all Canadians have access to decent and affordable housing;*

- 2) *co-operate with all levels of government in addressing the homelessness crisis;*
- 3) *make affordable housing and an end to homelessness an immediate priority in the government funding priorities;*
- 4) *recognize, through a national Aboriginal housing authority, Aboriginal self-determination in both the delivery of new housing and management of existing social housing;*
- 5) *enter into public/private partnerships for the development of appropriate housing for Canada's seniors;*
- 6) *recognize affordable housing as an integral part of building sustainable inner-city neighbourhoods;*
- 7) *work with non-profit and co-operative housing stakeholders to find long-term administrative structures that protect the existing social housing asset.*

In 1999, the Government of Canada allocated \$753 million under the National Homelessness Initiative (NHI) to help prevent and alleviate homelessness in Canada.

Under the Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI), the cornerstone of Canada's homelessness strategy, 61 communities have identified existing supports and services for homeless people, outstanding needs and gaps in the system, and priorities for action. In many of these communities, new partners are working together for the first time.

- As of March 31, 2003, more than 1,741 projects, totalling more than \$359.2 million have received SCPI funding. SCPI Community Entities have reported 439 approved projects for \$91.1 million.
- In addition, \$96.3 million have been invested in 442 projects that target youth and Aboriginal populations that are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) Community Entities have reported 120 approved projects for \$7.8 million.
- Taken together, these projects are projected to create 8,068 new beds for homeless people in Canada. In addition, over 614 sheltering facilities across Canada have received funding for the purchase or construction of new facilities or renovations and improvements of existing facilities. The facilities funded provide emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing for homeless people and those at risk of homelessness.

- Projects funded to date are also helping approximately 368 support facilities to purchase or construct new facilities or renovate or improve existing facilities for homeless people, such as food and clothing banks, drop-in centres and soup kitchens.
- Over 790 organizations across Canada have or are receiving project funding to improve or develop new support services for homeless people or those at risk of homelessness, such as psycho-social counselling, provision of housing, transportation, training and employment information, and legal and financial services.
- Through the Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative, 23 federal surplus properties have been transferred to community organizations in Newfoundland and Labrador, Ontario and New Brunswick. They have resulted in 59 houses, 92 apartments, a central centre for street outreach services to 10,000 homeless people, and a youth residential facility with outreach services.
- As of December 31, 2002, nearly \$185 million have been committed for the repair, conversion and creation of approximately 28,900 housing units or beds for low-income people through the NHI funding of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program.

In addition, over 5,000 units or beds were improved or created through CMHC's Shelter Enhancement Program funding commitments totalling approximately \$43 million. Over \$20 million was committed for emergency housing repairs (4,200 units) and home adaptations to facilitate independent living (6,300 units).

31. Federal-Provincial Balance of Powers

WHEREAS there exists a continuing challenge to the government of Canada to ensure that the Canadian federation meets the needs and aspirations of all Canadians;

WHEREAS since 1993 the federal government has made continuing efforts to clarify the roles and responsibilities of the federal and provincial governments;

WHEREAS the federal government has transferred responsibility for programs to the provincial governments where it is believed that this will make services more efficient and responsive to the needs of Canadians;

WHEREAS a strong central government is necessary for the ability of the Canadian economy to thrive in light of increasing globalization;

WHEREAS the Atlantic Provinces would be made vulnerable by any weakening of the central government;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to continue its efforts to streamline the delivery of programs and services, to do so in a manner that preserves and protects the strength of the central government to ensure that shifting the responsibility for programs and services does not further jeopardize or diminish the ability of the economy of Atlantic Canada to prosper.

Canada is a federation where governments work in partnership, while respecting each other's areas of jurisdiction as set out in the Constitution.

The Liberal government knows that Canadians want their governments to work together cooperatively with flexibility and interdependence to ensure the efficiency and effectiveness of the federation.

Our government believes that the best way to help Canadians is to minimize overlap and duplication among levels of government, and to ensure that governments can act effectively in their areas of jurisdiction.

41. Aboriginal and Treaty Rights Tribunal

WHEREAS Aboriginal and treaty rights have been recognized and affirmed in the Constitution Act, 1982 and the crown is obliged to respect the Rule of Law as a fundamental principle of our constitution;

WHEREAS Canada's comprehensive and specific claim policies are woefully inadequate to resolve the backlog of about 500 claims and other legitimate grievances of First Nations respecting Aboriginal and treaty rights;

WHEREAS the shortcomings of these policies are legion and documented by the Auditor General with the major problems being (i) inadequate funding for settlements and negotiation costs, (ii) Canada's conflict of interest in judging claims against itself, and (iii) the absence of a binding dispute resolution process to resolve disputes in a fair, neutral, and efficient manner;

WHEREAS Parliament first considered establishing an Aboriginal and treaty rights tribunal in 1963, the Liberal Party of Canada promised to establish an independent body in the 1993 and 1996 Red Books, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples recommended the establishment of an Aboriginal and Treaty Rights Tribunal in 1996, and a

joint DIAN/AFN task force on Claims Policy Reform reached consensus in 1998 on draft legislation to establish an independent claims body;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to support the enactment of legislation to establish an Aboriginal and Treaty Rights Tribunal with authority to mediate disputes and making binding decisions on Aboriginal and treaty rights to expedite the settlement of claims in a manner that will uphold the honour of the Crown.

Specifically to the question of a tribunal, the federal government has advanced Bill C-6, *An Act to establish the Canadian Centre for the Independent Resolution of First Nations Specific Claims*. The bill aims to change the current specific claim process by creating a new body to include a commission to facilitate claims negotiation and a tribunal to make binding decisions on the validity of claims and on compensation awards. The bill was adopted by the House of Commons in March 2003 and is now before the Senate.

The Government of Canada remains fully committed to modern treaty making to implement outstanding aboriginal titles and rights, as well as to respect and implement historic treaties. At present, regionally specific initiatives to aid in the recognition and/or implementation of Aboriginal and treaty rights are underway in B.C., Saskatchewan and Manitoba, and are being explored in other regions. The government remains open to the use of quasi-judicial and other facilitative institutions, with the caveat that the Aboriginal authorities concerned must arrive at an essential consensus on such options as binding dispute mechanisms and the role of provincial governments.

An example of modern treaty making is the Nisga'a Treaty, which is a negotiated agreement between the Nisga'a Nation, the Government of British Columbia and the Government of Canada. The last step needed to give legal effect to the Treaty took place on April 13, 2000, when Parliament passed the *Nisga'a Final Agreement Act*.

Another example is the Tlicho Agreement signed on August 25, 2003. The Tlicho Agreement is the first combined land claim and self-government agreement of its kind in the Northwest Territories. The Agreement will create the largest single block of First Nation owned land in Canada and provide new systems of self-government for the Tlicho First Nation (who were previously known as the Dogrib).

48. Employment and Economic Stimulation

WHEREAS the Port of Halifax is recognized as the sole Canadian port capable of competing for emerging world-wide Post Panamex shipping trade;

WHEREAS the Port represents Canada's best opportunity to compete with American east coast ports for this growing means of international trade;

WHEREAS the Port's ability to compete with American ports for post Panamex shipping depends on the ability of the Port to secure the funding for large-scale capital investment in new infrastructure;

WHEREAS competing American ports recognize the necessity of large-scale capital investment in their port infrastructure as evidenced by federal and state support shown for the port of New York's response to the Sealand-Maersk call for proposals;

WHEREAS the letters patent which established the Halifax Port Authority in March 1999 currently limit the local authority from raising capital funding in excess of \$25 million, an amount insufficient to maintain and invest in infrastructure required to compete successfully for post Panamex shipping trade;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to collaborate with provincials and municipals administrations to create a strategy for port development that recognizes the Port's unique ability to compete for growing post Panamex shipping trade;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to effect the necessary regulatory changes to the Halifax Port Authority's charter to enable it to pursue financing critical to the Port's development, including revenue bonds in excess of the current limit and private sector participation.

The success of Canada Port Authorities (CPA) is vital to the economic well being of Canada, as well as being integral to regional economic prosperity.

The Halifax Port Authority (HPA) is subject to the borrowing limits contained in its letter patent, like all CPAs. Should the port wish to increase its borrowing limit beyond the current amount, it may make a request to the Minister for such an increase. Other CPAs have requested increases in their borrowing limits in the past, and have been successful.

CPAs can currently obtain financing for capital projects through loans with private sector lenders, secured by revenues, non-federal real property and fixtures on federal land. However, the federal government does not guarantee CPA loans.

The HPA was established in 1999 under the *Canada Marine Act* (CMA). The CMA has been the subject of a review conducted by an appointed Review Panel. The report of the Review Panel was tabled in the House of Commons on June 4, 2003. Some of the Review Panel recommendations and observations concerning the CPAs are directly related to competitiveness, including borrowing limits and access to capital issues.

Transport Canada is currently assessing the CMA Review Panel's recommendations and observations while taking into account the principles laid out in *Straight Ahead - A Vision for Transportation in Canada*, released in February 2003. The views of all stakeholders will be taken into consideration in the development of potential amendments to the CMA.

60. Contract/Part-time Workers

WHEREAS large numbers of the workforce, particularly women, are employed as part-time or permanent part-time workers;

WHEREAS some employers use part-time and contract work as a cheap source of labour;

WHEREAS some part-time workers have access to benefits but few contract positions include EI, CPP, medical, dental or pension benefits;

WHEREAS the government of Canada has received reports of the Advisory Group on Working Time and the Distribution of Work, the Advisory Committee on the Changing Workplace and the Liberal Sub-Committee on the Dignity of Work;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to act upon the recommendations of the reports of the Advisory Group on Working Time and the Distribution of Work, the Advisory Committee on the Changing Workplace and the Liberal Sub-Committee on the Dignity of Work;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to examine the success of other countries, such as the Netherlands which has reduced unemployment of 7.5% to 3.2% over 10 years, increased disposable income and reduced the gap between the rich and poor;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to examine the possibility of regulating part-time and contract work to ensure that all workers are able to access, at minimum, CPP and EI benefits.

In 1996, the Government of Canada introduced provisions under the new *Employment Insurance Act* that better reflected changing labour market realities. These provisions provided more equitable treatment of claimants with different work patterns and strengthened the relationship between work effort and entitlement of benefits.

As a result of the move to the hours-based system and first-dollar coverage, 227,000 part-time female workers (who were not eligible in 1996) became eligible for regular EI benefits in 1997. Part-time workers have also benefited from the reduction of hours required to qualify for special benefits. Presently, 600 hours of insured employment provides access to parental, maternity and sickness benefits.

64. Asia-Pacific Political Co-operation on Peace and Security

WHEREAS a long-term commitment to stability in the Asia-Pacific region is beneficial for the export-based economies of Canada;

WHEREAS the Asia-Pacific area has only recently begun to figure prominently in Canadian foreign policy;

WHEREAS increased Canada-Asia-Pacific activity, through co-operative development of regional multilateral institutions and closer bilateral relations, will result in greater regional stability;

WHEREAS the Canadian initiated North Pacific Co-operative Security Dialogue (1990) and the Canadian supported regional Track II process of nongovernmental security dialogue represent serious efforts toward political co-operation;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to direct more capital funds and human resources towards raising Canada's level of participation in Asia-Pacific diplomatic and security affairs, emphasizing our strong commitment to engagement as well as to dialogue and education;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to advance the recommendations of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and International Trade sponsored report Canada-Japan

Security Co-operation Study: Broadening the Agenda and advance similar goals for co-operation with South Korea and Taiwan;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urges the federal government to help China and Indonesia achieve greater levels of human security, which is a necessary condition for these states to meet Western criteria for human rights.

As a founding member of Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation, Canada has been involved in the organization since its creation in 1989.

Through the Canada-Japan Agenda for Cooperation in Tokyo, closer cooperation on peace and security has become an important objective in our bilateral relations. Areas of cooperation between Canada and Japan in the field of peace and security are now extensive. There is an ongoing dialogue on a number of levels. Although there is no formal security agreement between Canada and Japan, our defence relationship has been growing steadily.

On December 11, 2001, China formally joined the World Trade Organization. Canada can now enjoy all the advantages of China's accession to the organization while ensuring that trade with the new member remains fair and equitable.

Canada remains very concerned about the human rights situation in China. The three major components of Canada's human rights dialogue include: the Joint Committee on Human Rights, whose last meeting was held in Beijing in November 2002; the Plurilateral Human Rights Symposium (co-hosted by Canada, China and Norway); and the Canadian International Development Agency programming. The next Joint Committee on Human Rights will meet in November 2003.

More recently, security was also on the agenda when leaders from 21 Pacific Rim economies met in Bangkok, Thailand, October 20 – 21, 2003, for the eleventh Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) Economic Leaders' Meeting (AELM). The stability and growth of the Asia-Pacific region is of vital importance to the world economy and to Canada. Leaders gathered to exchange views on the economic challenges facing the region and to provide direction to APEC's wide-ranging activities in support of trade and investment liberalization and sustainable long-term growth and prosperity.

76. Education

WHEREAS the government of Canada fosters a sense of universality and accessibility of post-secondary education through its funding to the provinces through the CHST;

WHEREAS students from coast to coast have the choice to attend any post-secondary institution in the country;

WHEREAS the government of Canada bases its funding calculations for post-secondary education on provincial population and permanent residency as opposed to the actual number of students actually attending school in the province;

WHEREAS provinces with a large number of post-secondary educational institutions and large population of out-of-province students are in effect penalized by this formula and accordingly have a significantly lower level of funding per student;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to support the revision of the federal transfer funding formula for post-secondary education to take into account the number of students actually attending post-secondary educational institutions in a particular province.

The Liberal government consistently enriched the Canada Health and Social Transfer (CHST), the transfer through which the federal government provides funding for health care, *post-secondary education* and other social services.

It is important to note, however, that although the federal government provides significant funding for post-secondary education in Canada, the administration of this funding falls under provincial jurisdiction. This means that each province can set its own priorities for post-secondary programs funded in part by the CHST.

In addition to CHST payments, the federal government provides equalization payments to less prosperous provinces. Equalization payments are unconditional grants – receiving provinces are free to spend the funds on public services according to their own priorities. In 2001-02, provinces received approximately \$10.4 billion in equalization payments from the federal government.

The Government of Canada also provides significant direct assistance to post-secondary students. The amounts on which the education tax credit is calculated were doubled in the October 2000 *Economic Statement and Budget Update* to

\$400 per month for full-time study and to \$120 per month for part-time study, effective 2001.

The 2001 Budget proposed to help more students undertake lifelong learning by extending the education tax credit beginning in 2002, to people who receive taxable assistance for post-secondary education under certain government programs, including employment insurance. The proposed changes will provide significant tax relief to approximately 65,000 Canadians upgrading their skills, and will give them access to the same tax benefits that are available to other post-secondary students. The estimated cost of this measure is \$20 million a year.

To ensure that the Canada Student Loans Program continues to meet its objectives, the 2003 Budget introduced steps to modernize and strengthen the program.

- More money will be put in students' hands through increased exemptions for income earned while in school and from merit-based scholarships. Currently, there is a single exemption of \$600 for both in-study income and scholarships. The annual exemption will be increased to \$1,700 for income earned while in school, and a separate exemption of \$1,800 will be established for merit-based scholarships.
- To enable graduates to better manage their student debt, Debt Reduction in Repayment, which is intended to assist borrowers experiencing long-term difficulty in repaying their loans, will be enhanced by:
 - increasing the income eligibility thresholds;
 - removing the current restriction limiting debt reduction to 50% of outstanding debt—borrowers will now be eligible for an initial loan remission of up to \$10,000; and
 - creating an additional reduction of up to \$5,000 one year after the initial debt reduction if the borrower is still in financial difficulty. A further reduction of up to \$5,000 will be available two years after the first reduction for those borrowers who remain in financial difficulty.

As a result of these measures, borrowers in difficult financial circumstances could have their Canada Student Loan debt reduced by up to \$20,000 over three years.

84. Canadian Wheat Boards Position with regards to Transportation Reform

WHEREAS the Canadian Wheat Board has proposed major reform to the modes of transportation of grains from western Canada;

WHEREAS the federal government has not presently implemented those reforms;

WHEREAS these transportation reforms would benefit western farmers without compromising any of the bilateral Free Trade agreements;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to support the Canadian Wheat Board's position on transportation reform in western Canada as outlined by the Keystone Agricultural Producers, Wild Rose Producers of Alberta and the Saskatchewan Association of Rural Municipalities.

Our government has taken action toward a more efficient, accountable and competitive grain handling and transportation system that will cut costs for the benefit of Western Canadian grain producers. To this end, we introduced measures in 2000, including a railway revenue cap, a tendering process for the Canadian Wheat Board (CWB), and amendments to the *Canada Transportation Act* (CTA), to facilitate the transfer of branch lines to community-based shortlines and to simplify the Final Offer Arbitration process. We also made \$175 million available for rural roads affected by increased grain transport. In addition, a transparent and continuous monitoring program was created to assess the overall efficiency of the grain handling and transportation system, including the impact of changes on farmers, the CWB, railways, grain companies, shippers and ports.

86. Canadian Farm Incomes

WHEREAS the first line of defence for Canadian farms incomes is success in the marketplace and the second line of defence is existing support programs such as Crop Insurance and NISA, which can help smooth out medium to small fluctuations in farm incomes;

WHEREAS extraordinary circumstances occur in agriculture, which drive farm incomes down below the levels that existing support programs can cope with;

WHEREAS programs in other countries, especially in the United States and the European Union, provide primary producers with subsidies many

times higher than Canadian programs, forcing some Canadian farmers into direct competition against the Treasuries of foreign countries and driving some farm incomes in Canada down to the levels of the Dirty Thirties;

WHEREAS experience proves that ad hoc responses to these problems are politically and financially expensive, and farmers need the longer-term certainty of knowing what support systems will be available to them in future severe situations;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to undertake with the provinces to create a permanent standing mechanism, to serve as a necessary Third Line of Defence for Canadian Farm incomes, with appropriate cost-sharing, with due regard to international trading rules, and with its basic terms and conditions defined in advance, to come into effect automatically when weather, market, trade or other conditions so depress Canadian farm incomes that regular programs, like Crop Insurance and NISA, are insufficient.

The Agricultural Policy Framework (APF) grew out of a meeting held in June 2001 between the federal, provincial and territorial agriculture ministers. At that conference, the ministers agreed on common goals for a national action plan on agriculture. The five goals of the framework are: food safety and food quality, environment, science and innovation, renewal, and business risk management. Meeting the goals in these five areas will help to ensure Canada is a global leader in food safety, innovation and environmentally responsible production. Consultation with stakeholders and further meetings between the agricultural ministers are ongoing as the new policy is developed.

Under the APF, new business risk management programs provide \$1.1 billion per year on a permanent on-going basis – up from \$600 million. Crop insurance will be expanded to cover more commodities and provide more choices, including a ‘whole farm’ option for producers. The Canadian Agricultural Income Stabilization program (CAIS) provides both income stabilization and disaster assistance with a more streamlined application process for farmers. CAIS also allows beginning farmers to access stabilization and disaster coverage at the start of their careers.

Budget 2003 funded the \$5.2-billion, six-year Agricultural Policy Framework, including \$600 million in transitional funding.

In 2003 a single cow tested positive for Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy (BSE). Our government, in cooperation with the provinces, our trading partners and international bodies, traced the origins of the cow. While more than 2,700 animals were destroyed and tested as part of the investigation, another case was

not found. Steps were taken to further protect human and animal health. As well, a program has been put in place to compensate farmers for the low prices experienced since trade in cattle and beef stopped.

88. Potato Inspection Fees

WHEREAS the potato industry is a major contributor to the economy of Prince Edward Island;

WHEREAS the potato markets globally are becoming increasingly competitive;

WHEREAS the federal government instituted potato inspection fees which act as user fees;

WHEREAS the Potato Producers of Prince Edward Island presently pays the bulk of these inspection fees;

WHEREAS the payment of these fees affects the ability of the Prince Edward Island potato industry to maintain its competitiveness;

WHEREAS similar inspection fees negatively affect many other producers of fresh produce across the country;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to remove, or at least to reduce, these potato inspection fees and all other fresh produce inspection fees throughout Canada.

In order to bring safe, high quality food to consumers, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) does regular food inspections. In 1995, the government placed a moratorium on increases in cost recovery fees charged by the CFIA. Since then, it has upheld this moratorium.

100. Health Care

WHEREAS the Liberal Party of Canada is committed to building a strong and more integrated system of Medicare;

WHEREAS private for profit health care has no place in Canada's publicly funded health care system;

WHEREAS many medical services previously offered with institutions have now shifted to community and family based home care;

WHEREAS the Government of Alberta has created major uncertainty in the health care sector by proposing that essential publicly funded medical services also be shifted to the private for profit sector;

WHEREAS the largest segment of Canada's population is approaching their senior years presenting serious implications of increased usage, costs and congestion of Canada's health care system;

WHEREAS Canadians and in particular Canada's youth will be responsible for these future increased costs;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to express its opposition to any provincial legislation (including Alberta's Bill 11) extending private for profit health care delivery;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the federal government be urged to take all measures necessary to prevent increasing privatization of publicly funded health care to the detriment of Canada's public health care system;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the federal government provide innovative solutions for health care delivery such as greater public coverage for medically necessary home care services, medicines, supplies and equipment;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to develop and implement a comprehensive health care strategy which allows for increased accessibility to alternative methods of medicine and preserves the integrity of Canada's universal health care system.

The preservation and enhancement of our publicly funded health care system are of utmost importance to the Government of Canada. The principles of the *Canada Health Act* (CHA) ensure that all residents of Canada have reasonable access to medically necessary hospital and physician services on a prepaid basis, and on uniform terms and conditions.

The Government of Canada is committed to the criteria and conditions of the CHA and the values that inspired Canada's single-payer, publicly financed health care system.

In September 2000, First Ministers endorsed an action plan on health system renewal, one priority of which was to strengthen home and community care as a critical component of a more fully integrated health system. As a result, the Government of Canada announced an increase of \$18.9 billion in the Canada

Health and Social Transfer (CHST) cash transfers to provinces and territories over the next five years, in support of health.

One of the emerging roles of home care has been in the area of acute care substitution as patients are discharged earlier from hospitals or treated on an outpatient basis. Future strategies and investments in these types of services should be approached in the context of an overall framework and strategy for the home and community care sector.

The federal government is committed to working with the provinces and territories to ensure the on-going sustainability of Canada's health care system. To that end, in September 2000, the federal government, along with all the provinces and territories, agreed to a broad-based action plan that addresses some of the immediate pressures on the health care system and also puts in place key elements that will sustain our health system well into the 21st century. As well, Health Canada has been undertaking developmental work to explore the policy dimensions of complementary and alternative health care and its impact on the health care system.

On April 4, 2001, the Prime Minister announced, under Part I of the *Official Inquiries Act*, the launch of the Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada and named Mr. Roy Romanow, former Premier of Saskatchewan, Commissioner. The Commission was asked to recommend policies to ensure the sustainability of a universally accessible health care system which offers quality services to Canadians over the long term. The final report was tabled in the House of Commons on November 28, 2002.

In February 2003, the Prime Minister convened a First Ministers' Meeting which led to the Health Care Accord 2003. The Health Care Accord 2003 commits all levels of government to establish a Health Care Council of Canada to bring together Canadians, interested groups and all levels of government to increase accountability and transparency in our health care system.

102. Same-Sex Spousal Benefits

WHEREAS courts at all levels have concluded that discrimination based on sexual orientation is contrary to the principle of equality as granted by s.15(1) of the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada in Vriend ruled that "groups that have historically been the target of discrimination cannot be expected to wait patiently for the protection of their human dignity and equal rights while governments move towards reform one step at a time";

WHEREAS the Superior Court of Quebec ruled that depriving same-sex couples of benefits was contrary to the Quebec Charter, and gave legislatures 180 days to amend or the Court would do it for them;

WHEREAS the Supreme Court of Canada in M vs. H. conclusively stated that the exclusion of same-sex couples from the definition of spouse unjustifiably violates equality rights;

WHEREAS British Columbia has approved for equal treatment in pension benefits and adoption, Quebec and Ontario have introduced an omnibus to include same-sex couples and the government of Canada has begun amending individual statutes;

WHEREAS the federal government has presented an omnibus bill before Parliament amending legislation to broaden any definition of common-law spouse to include couples of the same sex;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to extend to all spouses same-sex or common law the same rights and obligations as married couples;

In June 2000, the *Modernization of Benefits and Obligations Act* received Royal Assent. The Act amended 68 federal laws to ensure that committed same-sex couples receive equal treatment under the law by extending to them the same benefits and obligations that are available to common-law opposite-sex couples.

In keeping with the recent provincial courts rulings, where the courts ruled that the opposite-sex requirement for marriage violates the equality provisions in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the federal government is taking action to provide a national solution and uniformity on the issue of marriage across the country.

On July 17, 2003, the Minister of Justice referred to the Supreme Court of Canada a draft bill legally recognizing the union of same-sex couples while also upholding freedom of religion. The Government of Canada is making this reference to ensure the constitutionality of the draft bill.

Once the Supreme Court of Canada examines the legislation, and provided guidance, the Prime Minister stated that the legislation would be put to a free vote in the House of Commons.

The Liberal government views this matter as an issue of equality rights for all Canadians. We agree that legal recognition for same-sex unions is required if the equality provisions of the Charter are to be met, and we remain committed to ensuring that the freedom of religion is protected.

113. Moratorium on Cosmetic Pesticide Use

WHEREAS chemical pesticides are inherently toxic products designed to kill various life forms;

WHEREAS reliable ecological, non-toxic methods of pest control exist;

WHEREAS reports published in scientific journals point to strong associations between chemical pesticides and serious health consequences including: birth defects, brain cancer, breast cancer, childhood leukemia, stomach cancer, learning disabilities and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma;

WHEREAS the U.S. National Cancer Institute published a report highlighting the role of pesticides in cancer causation;

WHEREAS approximately 80 percent of all Canadians live and work in (sub) urban areas which allow cosmetic use of pesticides;

WHEREAS homeowners and the chemical lawn care industry use products that have never been adequately tested or monitored for their chronic, synergistic (in-combination) and other effects on human and animal health in residential areas where young children, pregnant women, elderly and other susceptible Canadians are exposed to pesticides;

WHEREAS many of the "safety tests" used to test these products are fundamentally inadequate;

WHEREAS Canada's Minister of Health is charged with "the promotion or preservation of the health ...of the people of Canada";

WHEREAS the health risks of chemical pesticide use are of growing concern to the Canadian public;

BE IT RESOLVED that the Liberal Party of Canada urge the federal government to introduce an immediate moratorium on the cosmetic use of chemical pesticides until such a time as their use has been scientifically proven to be safe and the long-term consequences of their application are known.

On March 21, 2002, the Government of Canada introduced legislation in the House of Commons to address the public concern about the use of pesticides.

This legislation, the new *Pest Control Products Act* (PCPA 2002), received Royal Assent on December 12, 2002. Regulations are currently being drafted and once complete will allow this new bill to come into force. The new *Pest Control Products Act* is expected to come into force in the spring of 2004.

The new *Act* will help ensure that Canadians are better protected from health and environmental risks posed by pesticides, and help ensure a safe and abundant food supply. PCPA 2002 modernizes and strengthens pesticide regulation and makes the registration system more transparent. The passage of this legislation is the culmination of an extensive, multi-year review of pesticides regulation in Canada and represents an overhaul of existing pesticides legislation.

The new *Act* will:

Strengthen health and environmental protection by:

- requiring special protection for infants and children;
- taking into account pesticide exposure from all sources, including food and water;
- considering cumulative effects of pesticides that act in the same way;
- supporting pesticide risk reduction, for example, by ensuring that only pesticides that make a useful contribution to pest management are registered; and
- expediting the registration of lower-risk products.

Make the registration system more transparent by:

- establishing a public registry to allow access to detailed evaluation reports on registered pesticides;
- allowing the public to view the test data on which these pesticide evaluations are based; and,
- allowing the Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) to share scientific studies with provincial/territorial and international regulators, which will enhance the process for international joint reviews of pesticides, giving Canadian growers equal access to newer, safer pesticides so they can be competitive in the marketplace.

Strengthen post-registration control of pesticides by:

- requiring pesticide companies to report adverse effects;
- requiring re-evaluations of older pesticides 15 years after they are registered;

- providing the Minister with the authority to remove pesticides from the market if required data are not supplied; and,
- providing increased powers of inspection and higher maximum penalties, up to \$1 million for the most serious offences.

The new PCPA will enhance public confidence, here and abroad, that Canadian agri-food, forestry and other products are safe.