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SPECIALS ARE IN EFFECT FROM TUES. SEPT. 21 TO SAT. SEPT. 25. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO LIMIT QUANTITIES.

Opposing candidates mostly leery of newly unveiled Liberal policy

By SAL BOMMARITO
The Champion

The Liberal Party unveiled its election platform amid much fanfare last week, promising to slash spending from the federal budget in order to create 1.6 million jobs over the next four years.

The plan, dubbed Creating Opportunity, The Liberal Plan for Canada, proposes cutting \$7.1 billion from existing programs over four years and spending \$5.3 billion on new ones.

New spending would include a \$2-billion public works program, a \$720-million plan to add more day-care spaces, a \$1-billion increase in research and development spending, a \$576-million apprenticeship program and a \$275-million youth corps program.

The spending would be financed through the elimination of the \$5.6-billion helicopter contract, as well as cutbacks in defence spending, grants to business and budgets for political staff and consultants.

Contacted for their reactions to the Liberal announcement, opposing Oakville-Milton candidates were mostly critical of it.

Progressive Conservative candidate Ann Mulvale says the Liberal plan could stifle private sector initiative.

"The issue that the PC party has been advocating is that the private sector creates jobs. We have to keep an environment that gives the private sector the confidence to create jobs."

Ms Mulvale said the Liberal \$2 billion public works program assumes there will be matching dollars from provincial and municipal governments. That may not be realistic given the hard economic times, she warned.

Speaking in general about the plan, Ms Mulvale said political promises alone won't be enough to stimulate economic growth.

"Confidence in all sectors is the key" to that, she noted.

"A good number of people understand the deficit's role in getting the economy going," she added.

Ms Mulvale backs Prime Minister Kim Campbell's statement that unemployment would probably remain high for the next few years.

"(Ms Campbell) was being extremely honest with the Canadian population. That's not in conflict with our belief that the lasting jobs will be created by the private sector."

"The best form of flattery is emulation or imitation, and that's what the Liberals have done with this announcement," said New Democratic Party candidate Willie Lambert.

"We came out with our economic blueprint in February and it was ignored by the media. Now the Liberals have basically duplicated that and the media is saying it's a great idea."

The NDP plan calls for the elimination of the Free Trade and North American Free Trade agreements in favor of renegotiating individual deals for each business sector, Mr. Lambert said.

The NDP strategy also involves more government spending on research and development and the creation of an investment fund to help businesses generate more jobs, he noted.

"The (Liberal) program seemed to make sense on the service but it's typical of the smoke-and-mirror announcements you usually see during an election," said Reform Party of candidate Richard Malboeuf.

Mr. Malboeuf criticized the Liberal proposal to finance job creation by axing the government's \$5.8 billion helicopter purchase and \$1.6 billion more from defence spending.

"It could cost us up to \$1 billion for breach of contract. You can't just cancel a \$5 billion contract overnight. You've got to come up with alternatives."

On the topic of defence spending, Mr. Malboeuf said the Liberals are hard-pressed to release details of what areas would be pared. He said he's wary of how the defence cuts will impact on the country's ability to protect itself from foreign aggression.

He warned that the Liberals' \$2-billion capital works program is excessive and will probably backfire because it assumes the provincial and municipal will governments will kick in another \$4 billion. He believes that's unlikely to happen.

Mr. Malboeuf said more government spending won't solve the country's problems, it will only make them worse.

"The Liberals tried the same philosophy in the '70s. It didn't work then, and it won't work now."

He called Mr. Chretien's plan a desperate move to buy votes.

"He's making promises he can't keep. If government overspending created jobs, there'd be three jobs for every Canadian in the country. Deficit spending costs jobs."

"The private sector can't create employment with high taxation, excessive government bureaucracy and massive debt standing in its way," Mr. Malboeuf stressed.

Liberal candidate Bonnie Brown said the plan is the result of three years of consultation with party members as well as the public.

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