

Locally grown ideas become national policy –

FEDERAL LIBERALS COMMIT TO CANADA’S FIRST NATIONAL FOOD POLICY

Federal Liberals have committed to helping Canadians eat healthier, home-grown food through a new national food policy based on healthy eating, safe food, sustainable farm incomes, environmental farmland stewardship and international leadership.

“This national policy has its roots right here in the greater Victoria region,” says federal Liberal candidate Renée Hetherington. “It was championed by Liberals in southern Vancouver Island at the 2008 Liberal policy convention and it includes the forward-looking ideas many local farmers and community leaders have long championed here.

“Our region leads the way with a focus on local foods and support for the farming community. We’re surrounded by vineyards, orchards and market gardens – yet we still produce only about five percent of our food locally.

While farmers and the agri-food sector provide one out of every eight jobs in Canada and generate \$42 billion in annual economic activity, the economic crisis has strained our rural communities – our farms – to the breaking point. The new National Food Policy focuses on:

- **Sustainable farm incomes**, with a Clean Slate Commitment to build practical, bankable farm programs in partnership with farmers;
- **Healthy living**, including an \$80-million *Buy Local Fund* to promote farmers’ markets and home-grown foods, and a \$40-million *Healthy Start* program to see 250,000 low-income children have access to healthy foods. ,
- **Safe Food**, by implementing all of the Weatherill report recommendations and investing \$50 million in improving food inspections and ensuring imported foods meet our tough domestic standards;
- **Environmental farmland stewardship**, by strengthening Environmental Farm Plans, improving fertilizer and pesticide management, and rewarding farmers for their role in clean energy production and protecting wildlife habitat; and
- **International leadership**, to promote Canadian food internationally and expand Canada’s share of high-value export markets while also fostering food security in Africa and the world’s poorest nations.

A former cattle rancher herself, Hetherington endorses the priority on sustainable farm incomes. “Most importantly for farmers, we will work with them to build new programs from the farm up, not Ottawa down. We’ve listened to farmers who have told us that we must wipe the slate clean and work with them to create practical, bankable, regionally-flexible programs.”

“Local farmers and farms across Canada produce the healthiest, safest, highest-quality foods in the world. We need more of their food on our dinner tables, which is what our National Food Policy aims to do,” concludes Hetherington.

“Both our health *and* our economy depend on it.”