

Tory leader Scheer says Trudeau ?lots of sizzle, not much steak?



Written By MIKE PICKFORD

Having led the Conservative Party of Canada now for 12 months, Andrew Scheer is hoping to do the same thing on a national scale come October 2019.

Approaching his first anniversary as Conservative leader, Mr. Scheer spent time at Downey's Farm Market in Caledon last Saturday (April 28) speaking to local residents about some of the issues they feel are most important heading into the election. Sitting down with the Citizen, the man who hopes to become Canada's 24th prime minister has big ideas for a country he believes can, and should be doing much better.

?The purpose of being here today is to meet and greet as many people as I possibly can and get a feel for what they think is important ahead of next year's election,? Mr. Scheer said. ?Here in Caledon and Orangeville, people brought up the carbon tax, the escalating price of fuel and concerns that costs will continue to go up more and more. We also still have a lot of people who feel burned by the Liberal government's attack on small business last year.?

That attack was led by Finance Minister Bill Morneau who, at the time, indicated Canadian small business owners received unfair tax breaks, something he vowed to look into and, potentially, correct. It was one in a long line of Liberal gaffes that Scheer believes will steer voters back towards the Conservative party next year.

Other issues brought up by area residents included discontent over Bill C-71, the Liberal government's new gun legislation. ?There is a big awareness of the fact that this bill targets law-abiding gun owners and does nothing to fight gangs and criminals in major centres like Toronto and Vancouver,? Mr. Scheer said.

And if there was discontent over Bill C-71, there was genuine anger regarding the lack of high-speed internet for rural residents across Caledon and Dufferin County. ?The Liberals made a big, flashy announcement regarding high speed internet for rural residents and then there's been no follow-up since. For people here and across Canada, that's a big, big concern,? he said.

And while Mr. Scheer didn't go into too much detail regarding his platform, it was clear to see him as a man on a mission. He told this reporter his number one goal was to improve the quality of life for all Canadians, and he had some genuine ideas on how to actually do it. He spoke about how the Conservatives would boost the economy by supporting small business, take drastic action to fix a ?broken? immigration system and attempt to tackle a national housing shortage that is pricing young Canadians out of the market.

Regarding immigration, Mr. Scheer stated the system needed to be 'fair and compassionate' for all who want to live in Canada. 'We have numerous cases right now where people are jumping to the front of the queue? It's not fair to people who had to go through the proper channels, and isn't fair for people currently going through the process.'

He condemned Prime Minister Trudeau for what he called a lack of direction and leadership regarding the 25,000 Syrian refugees that entered the country last year. Mr. Scheer noted he had recently met with Toronto Mayor John Tory, who shared that many of those refugees now find themselves in homeless shelters throughout the city.

'Mr. Trudeau had no plan to welcome those refugees, no plan to help the cities, no plan for accommodations, no plan to help these people learn the English language,' Mr. Scheer said. 'I'm afraid that people are finding, with Mr. Trudeau, there's lots of sizzle but not much steak there.'

Mr. Scheer stated he would like to see an immigration system that follows due process, allowing people to apply to enter Canada under the proper channels, while providing refugee aid to individuals in 'real danger'.

On the housing market, he says the 'one size fits all' plan the Liberal government has rolled out in an attempt to alleviate issues in urban centres such as Toronto and Vancouver has done nothing for growing communities like Caledon. He says the Conservatives would look for ways to help young people save money for a deposit, while working with financial institutions to make mortgages more affordable. While those two points will be priorities, the number one issue, Mr. Scheer says, is increasing the supply in popular areas.

'We need to bring more inventory to the market. I've already spoken to many provincial and municipal politicians about linking federal funds with incentives around developing new units, getting more supply on the market,' Mr. Scheer said. 'That has to be part of the conversation. It's a little early to come out with specifics, but the intention is we can't continue to have a system where it takes years and years and years to get new units onto the market, otherwise we'll continue to see homeownership being out of the reach of more and more Canadians.'

Touching on national defence, Mr. Scheer said he has already committed to spending two percent of the GDP on the Canadian military. He criticized the Liberal's continued uncertainty over purchasing new jets for the air force and condemned Mr. Trudeau for simply following the United Nation's recommendations for overseas deployment.

'We believe that Canada's deployment should be based on a set of criteria that defends Canada's national interests. The Liberals just launched a mission in Mali because the UN told them that was what the priority was,' Mr. Scheer said. 'I don't believe the UN should be dictating our foreign policy or our defence policy.'

As his national tour continues, Mr. Scheer said he will be sharing his platform with Canadians across the country, seeking to reassure them that a brighter future is just around the corner.

'As we develop specific policies in general, you can look forward to a government that will put people first. We need to stop pushing costs for today's political spending on future generations of Canadians. It's not fair ' you wouldn't do it to your kids, your parents wouldn't do it to you,' Mr. Scheer said.

'My parents aren't leaving me with big, big debts and I hope to leave my kids with more than just credit card bills. It's not fair to have the government doing this to our kids. This is a practice that desperately needs to end.'