

Leadership hopeful Bernier stops in Bolton

By Bill Rea

Making things easier for the entrepreneur will also improve the economy of Canada.

That's what Maxime Bernier is promoting in his quest to be the next leader of the Conservative Party of Canada.

Bernier, the MP for Beauce in Quebec, brought his leadership campaign to various spots in the Greater Toronto Area (GTA) Tuesday, including a brief stop in Bolton, at Fines Ford Lincoln. There, he was greeted by several luminaries, including dealership proprietor Bob Fines, Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Johanna Downey.

"I like what I'm doing," he commented during the stop in Bolton, adding he enjoys the chance to communicate with people, both those who are members of the party and those who aren't. "They like the message."

Calling himself a "Conservative who believes in individual freedom," Bernier was stressing the need to end corporate welfare and use the money that's saved to reduce taxes for entrepreneurs.

He said the issues he's hearing most about from people concern the economy. The is concern over the lack of economic growth, which he said should be at least three per cent annually. The growth has been around 1.2 per cent over the last two years. That means an economic platform is very important, especially considering that unemployment stands at about 15 per cent for those aged 15 to 30.

Bernier said his policies will lead to more private investment, as entrepreneurs will want to invest. He said that will lead to more economic growth.

He also stressed the importance of fairness in his campaign, stating that no one area of the country will see benefits over the others.

"I won't do anything special for a region of the country," he said. "I'm against that."

Bernier said there are four themes to his campaign; individual freedom, responsibility, fairness and respect.

"Imagine a country where these principles of freedom, responsibility, fairness and respect are the basis of all political decisions," he's quoted as saying on his campaign website (www.maximebernier.com). "I am going to fight for this ideal, with passion and conviction. I know that I can convince a majority of Conservatives, and a majority of Canadians, to support this vision."

Bernier is in his fourth term as an MP. He served in several cabinet portfolios in Stephen Harper governments, including Industry, Foreign Affairs, and Small Business and Tourism.

His website lists several other plans.

He said a carbon tax will "kill jobs." He is also calling for an end to trade barriers between provinces, and for aggressively pursuing free-trade deals. Bernier is also planning to balance the federal budget within two years of taking power.

"Debt and deficits are nothing more than deferred taxes on our children and grandchildren," he stated on his website. "At some point, the bill will come due for the reckless spending from the Trudeau Liberal government. That is why it is important to present a balanced budget within two years of taking office, commit to only running balanced budget, and legislate a debt repayment schedule. This is the right plan."

Other plans include getting the federal government out of health care, getting the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) out of the telecom industry to allow for more competition, privatizing Canada Post and privatizing airports to help lower travel costs.

Seen as one of the front-runners in a 14-way race for the leadership, Bernier is hopeful he can draw enough support come the May vote.

"I'm working hard for it," he remarked, adding it's the party membership who will decide. "Things are going very well."



Bob Fines welcomed Conservative Party of Canada leadership hopeful Maxime Bernier to Fines Ford Lincoln Tuesday, along with Mayor Allan Thompson and Councillor Johanna Downey. Photo by Bill Rea