

## Canadians deserve much better

From workers in our own community of Beaches-East York to the forestry workers in Quebec, Northern Ontario, and British Columbia, to auto workers in Southwestern Ontario and Oshawa, Canadians are feeling the pain of this global economic meltdown.

In her capacity as a Member of Parliament, Chair of the National Liberal Women's Caucus, and Official Opposition Critic for Labour, Maria Minna has met with representatives of industry and labour groups and with individual workers and families across Canada. Some of the stories she has heard are heartbreaking.



A man who has worked for an automotive parts plant in Kitchener/Waterloo for over 20 years, with 2 kids and a mortgage, is nearing the end of his Employment Insurance leaving him little choice but to sell his home, cash in his pension and retirement savings, and then apply for welfare.

Stephen Harper's dismissive opinion of the unemployed can be seen in comments to a right-wing group of Americans in June 1997: *"In terms of the unemployed, of which we have over a million-and-a-half, don't feel particularly bad for many of these people. They don't feel bad about it themselves, as long as they're receiving generous social assistance and unemployment insurance."*

Across Canada, Maria has listened to comments and proposals from industry, labour, municipal councillors, and individuals that we need to reform the current employment insurance structure, a full review of pensions is needed (since many private pension plans have suffered enormous losses) and the government needs to recognize that it has a positive role to play in the lives of Canadians.

Across Southwestern Ontario, representatives of the Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) have called for a National Manufacturing Strategy - not just for the next year, but to shape and strategize for where we want to be in the next 10, 15, or 20 years.

The federal government needs to bring key stakeholders to the table including all levels of government, management, and unions to develop an industrial strategy so Canada can be a world leader in the economy of tomorrow.

This is the only way we can revitalize the hardest hit regions of the country.

Meeting with women's groups across Canada, Maria has reiterated Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff's commitment to establish a National Early Learning and Child Care program for every child in Canada, a promise to introduce proactive pay equity legislation, invest in new quality, safe affordable housing, and re-instate gender equality as part of the mandate of the Women's Program of Status of Women Canada.

We are experiencing more than just a recession, it is a fundamental restructuring of the global economy. A new Liberal government will seize this opportunity to invest in Canadians and make Canada the smartest, healthiest, greenest, and most open-minded country in the world.