



KAZ NOVAK, THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion and Burlington's Liberal MPP candidate Joan Lougheed, second from right, answer questions from reporters yesterday.

Dion spotlights Great Lakes

Liberal leader says Tory environment plan too little, too late

BY WADE HEMSWORTH

BURLINGTON ♦ Federal Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion has identified pollution of the Great Lakes as a critical issue confronting Canadians.

After emerging from a meeting with local environmentalists yesterday, Dion said he wants to help the lakes by removing dangerous, persistent chemicals from the marketplace and replacing them with safer alternatives.

Dion met privately for close to an hour with a group that included representatives of Burlington city council, the Bay Area Restoration Committee, Burlington's sustainable development committee and Conservation Halton.

They talked about broad issues of water, air, industry, and education before Dion addressed reporters in a brief scrum at Burlington's Spencer Smith Park by the edge of Lake Ontario.

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They understand where the Canadian people are
Liberal Leader Stéphane Dion

Dion is making a series of election-style stops in southern Ontario this week, as the environment emerges as a defining issue of the next federal election.

The Liberal leader castigated the Harper government's recent announcements on the environment as too little, too late to buy much credibility with Canadians who consider it a top priority.

"In their last fiscal update of a few weeks ago, (there was) not a word about the environment," Dion said.

"Now they feel the heat. They

understand where the Canadian people are."

Having a chance to quiz the new leader of the Opposition also gave reporters the chance to canvass his opinion on several subjects of particular interest to southern Ontarians.

Dion indicated that he favours the revitalization of Canada's rail and other public transit systems, a practical working partnership with the provinces, and the creation of an independent body to resolve native land claims such as the one at the heart of the nearly 11-month conflict in

Caledonia.

Dion's strategic Burlington stop — arranged just one day earlier — put him in the riding of former Liberal MP Paddy Torsney.

She lost a close fight to Conservative Mike Wallace last year, becoming a casualty of the anti-Liberal backlash.

Torsney went on to serve as Ontario co-chair of Dion's leadership campaign, helping him to defeat heavyweights Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff.

Yesterday's stop also generated some party profile for the coming provincial byelection in Burlington, where Joan Lougheed is running for the Liberals in the race to take the seat vacated by Cam Jackson when he became mayor of Burlington in November.

Lougheed hosted the round-table meeting and described Dion as warm, inclusive and good-natured.

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