

SPEECH

HONOURABLE MAXIME BERNIER, PC, MP

CAMPAIGN LAUNCH

STE-MARIE, QUÉBEC

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CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

(Sentences in italics were in French in the spoken version)

Dear friends,
Dear friends from Beauce,
Dear friends who travelled to be here with us today,
Dear friends who are watching from all across Canada. Good morning.

Today, I begin the most important race of my life!

As you know, I am a runner. This is one of my passions.

My first race in politics began more than ten years ago, on December 6, 2005, when I announced that I would be the Conservative candidate to represent the people of Beauce in the Federal Parliament.

You put your trust in me. You elected me, and re-elected me, with some of the largest majorities in Canada. It's you, the people of Beauce, who gave me my momentum.

Yes, I'm someone who likes to run! Three years ago, with the help of many volunteers who are in this room today, we organized the Great Crossing of the Beauce. I ran 107 kilometres in 13 hours, from south to north of this magnificent riding. We raised \$160,000 for our food bank. That's the spirit of the Beauce!

You are the ones who supported me along the way, in every town and village, even when I wasn't sure I could finish. And you are the ones who supported me through both good and difficult times over the past ten years. I could not have achieved anything in Ottawa without you.

The Beauce is a place where people take charge of their own lives. The Beauce is a place full of builders and entrepreneurs.

It is thanks to the Beauce values of self-reliance, integrity and entrepreneurship, that I had the moral strength to forge ahead. Universal values, that I learned here while growing up, that I have defended in Ottawa.

This place is where I got my first impulse to run for politics. Today, I am beginning the most important race of my life. You could call it the Great Crossing of Canada! To raise support for a new vision of this country's future.

A major race is a team effort. To succeed a runner needs the physical and psychological support of many people.

This is why, once again, I will need you. You, all my friends and family in this room. You, Jacques and John, my campaign co-chairs. You, Alex, my fund-raising committee chair.

You, my team and volunteers already getting busy in every province. You also, the Conservative supporters in every city, town and village across this great country that I'm going to visit in the coming year.

For the past ten years, I have knocked on almost every door even outside election times, in every corner of the Beauce, to get to know you, to understand your concerns, so that I could better represent you in Parliament.

Over the next twelve months, I will meet as many Canadians as possible, from all regions of the country. But, there are many more doors in Canada! I won't be able to be here, at home, as much as I would like. I will need all your support. Are you ready for the next leg of this race?

What is this new vision of Canada's future that I want to share with Canadians, as I travel across the country? It's based on four key principles: freedom and responsibility, fairness and respect.

The vision of Canada that I want to share with all those Canadians that I will meet during the next couple of months is a vision based on four fundamental principles: freedom and responsibility, fairness and respect.

Freedom is the fundamental Conservative value that draws us together here today. Freedom is nothing less than the basis of our civilization. Only in free societies is there human dignity and equality of rights, social pluralism and cultural dynamism, scientific advancement and economic prosperity.

What made Canada a prosperous country and a great place to live, a country where immigrants from everywhere in the world want to come, is that we have been for a century and a half one of the freest societies in the world.

Some people fear freedom because they believe it means freedom to do anything you want. But that's not what freedom is about. To be free you must take responsibility for your actions and respect the freedom of others.

Freedom and responsibility are inseparable principles. Freedom is the fundamental value that unites us, Conservatives. It is the basis of our civilization. It is what made Canada one of the most prosperous countries on the planet.

Unfortunately, government never stops growing and diminishing our freedom. We work for six months every year to feed this government. And it's not enough for Justin Trudeau's irresponsible government, who will burden future generations to the tune of 100-billion dollars over the next five years to pay for new spending, even if we are not in a recession.

Government keeps growing, and our freedom keeps shrinking. We can barely do anything nowadays without having to ask a bureaucrat for permission, as if we were irresponsible children.

Today, almost half of all economic activity is controlled by the state. Half of your salaries are disappearing in taxes. You work almost six months every year to fund spending by federal, provincial and municipal governments.

Government is getting so big that it has to force future generations to pay for its current programs, even when we are not in a recession. The new Liberal government in Ottawa will need to borrow \$110 billion over the coming years to fund all its new programs. And the worst thing is, this government is proud of it! They are proud of their irresponsible actions!

A big government is a government that diminishes our freedom and treats us like irresponsible children.

A big government is a government that is itself irresponsible and spends money it doesn't have.

There are five parties represented in Canada's Parliament. Four believe that government should get bigger. Only one, the Conservative Party, trusts you to be in charge of your life.

Another problem with big government is that it is fundamentally, irrevocably unfair.

A big government takes money from a small entrepreneur here in Ste-Marie-de-Beauce to give it to a big corporation run by millionaires who can afford lobbyists in Ottawa. Is that fair?

A big government forces citizens to be content with inefficient government services by preventing private alternatives to emerge. Is that fair?

A big government forces consumers to pay more for goods and services by protecting industries from competition and creating barriers to trade. Is that fair?

A big government crushes private initiative and the dreams of young entrepreneurs by creating barriers to entry and making capital scarce. Is that fair?

A big government reduces opportunities for everyone by killing job creation with excessive taxes and regulation. Is that fair?

The more a government pretends to solve problems with these reckless policies, the more injustice, inequality and unfairness it creates.

A government that tramples our freedoms, a government that spends our money irresponsibly, a government that treats us unfairly, is a government that does not respect us. The least we can expect from our government is respect!

The other key principle that I want to discuss with Canadians, as I travel the country during the next 12 months, is respect.

The Liberals want to create a new program, a new regulation or a new tax to solve every problem. They believe they have the solution to everything, and they want to decide what is good for us with our own money.

What I want to offer is a government that will respect the choices that Canadians make. A government that will reduce spending and allow Canadians to make their own choices.

The Liberals want to increase the size of government, and the size of the public debt. They want your children, and grandchildren, to pay for their irresponsible decisions.

What I want to offer is a government that will respect taxpayers, that will respect future generations. A government that will eliminate the deficit, pay down the debt and reduce taxes for everyone.

The Liberals want to intervene on health care, on education, on daycare services, on municipal infrastructures. Their vision of Canada is that everything should be controlled from Ottawa.

What I want to offer is a government that respects the Constitution, that respects the division of power, that respects provinces. A government that respects our history and our diversity.

Imagine a country where these principles of freedom, responsibility, fairness and respect are the basis of all political decisions. I want to fight for this ideal, with passion and conviction.

We have the best ideas. We have the best solutions to make Canada a freer and more prosperous country. We have to defend them openly, with passion and with conviction.

I know that I can convince a majority of Conservatives, and a majority of Canadians, to support this vision. That's what I'm going to do over the next twelve months. That's why I want to become the leader of the Conservative Party.

Friends, my next race begins now! Let's lace up! It is a long road ahead and I need you all again to give me the momentum to carry me across the whole country, all the way to the finish line. With victory in our hands.

Let's go!