



The Daily Gleaner

September 13, 2008

Time to Demand Leadership on the Climate Crisis

I recently read a great book by Lee Iacocca, the President of Ford during the 1960's and 70's and CEO of Chrysler during the 1980's. He was responsible for bringing us the Ford Mustang, K-Car and minivan (to quote Meatloaf "two out of three ain't bad"!). The book is called "Where Have All the Leader's Gone?" It focuses on the current vacuum of political leadership in the United States, but, to be honest, it could also apply to Canada. It is a well-written and very frank book; perhaps he has earned the right to be direct and politically incorrect at the age of 84!

Mr. Iacocca makes a great observation near the end of the book about politicians and elections. To quote him:

"The problem with the way we run elections is that candidates tend to appeal to the child in us, not the adult in us. They try to play Santa Claus. They promise us the moon and the stars...As adults we know that money doesn't grow on trees, so when your favourite candidate starts telling you he's going to cut your taxes, fund your college education, and give you cheaper prescription drugs (or shorter health care wait times in Canada), you ought to be thinking, What's the trade-off? What will I have to give up to get what I want? There is no free lunch. For everything you get, you have to give something back."

Many of the issues facing the U.S. are, not surprisingly, similar to issues facing Canada, including the quality and cost of education, health care, the economy and climate change.

And now that we are facing another election on Canada in a few weeks I suggest that you do the following when your candidate knocks on your door and asks for your vote. Look them in the eyes and ask them what they know about the climate crisis and ask them what they and their party are going to do about it.

Before you read any further, keep this in mind: you hand over between twenty percent and forty percent of your hard earned paycheque - don't you think you have a say in how that money is spent? It is not 'government money', it is your money. And one of the primary responsibilities of the government is to provide security for Canadians, today, and for future generations. So how can they best do that with your money?

Addressing climate change is critical to the future security of Canada. Not tackling climate change will put the sovereignty of our north at risk as the ice melts and access to natural resources becomes easier for other countries to explore. Not tackling climate change will further jeopardize New Brunswick's forestry industry, increasing the risk of infestation, as is now happening in the west. Not tackling climate change will accelerate the risk of sea level increase, storm surges and further coastal erosion, all of which will have a serious impact on New Brunswick.

Addressing the climate crisis means that the federal government must spend your hard earned money wisely by helping you become more energy efficient, by investing in renewable energy and ultimately helping grow a new green economy. All of these actions will help Canada become a world leader in addressing one of the most critical issues facing the world today.

Do not let the politicians treat us like children as they play Santa Claus. Ask them the hard questions - about climate change and what their party is going to do about it - when they come to your door looking for your vote in the coming weeks. They want to get elected so they can spend your money and stay in power and/or get in power. Hold them accountable. Make sure they spend your money wisely when it comes to the climate crisis. Do it for your children - they are the ones who are inheriting this planet from us.

Peter Corbyn is a co-founder of GreenNexus.com and a board member of The Climate Project – Canad