

MP'S REPORT: My Duty, My Decision

By Leona Alleslev, MP
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Decisions like this are not easy, but I need to share with you, my constituents, why I had to make this change. When I became an officer in the Royal Canadian Air Force, I swore an oath to give my life for Queen and Country ? to serve and defend Canada, and the values for which it stands. A country, its sovereignty, and values are fragile. Vigilance in defending our nation's freedom, and service to country, is who I am at my core. When I left the military, I hung up my uniform, but I never ?unswore? my oath. And now I serve Canadians by representing the people of Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill as their Member of Parliament.

I stand today, deeply concerned for the future of our country. After three years of hope and hard work, I find myself asking: ?Am I doing everything I can to serve my country and work for real change for Canadians?? Canadians expect ? and deserve ? nothing less. The citizens of my riding ? and all Canadians - need a government that delivers foundational change for the things that matter. The world has changed dramatically in the last three years. We find ourselves in a time of unprecedented global instability. We are seeing fundamental shifts in the global economy, while trade relationships, international agreements, and defence structures are under threat. Canada faces a perfect storm of serious challenges at home and abroad.

Here at home, we see large amounts of capital investment leaving Canada while tax structures, federal infrastructure problems and politics prevent us from getting goods to market, deter companies from expanding and undermine our competitiveness. For the first time in many years, Canadians don't believe that tomorrow will be better than today and that their children's future will be better than theirs. This is not a strong economy.

Beyond our borders, our position remains vastly diminished. Our foreign policy is disconnected from our trade relationships and our ability to deliver on our defence commitments is undermined by politics. And on the world stage Canada has yet to rise to the occasion. The world has changed, and Canada must change with it.

We don't have the luxury of time. We must recognize that foreign policy, trade, defence, and our economy all depend on each other and can't be viewed separately.

As a former Air Force Officer, a global business consultant at IBM, an aircraft manufacturing manager at Bombardier, and a small business owner, I understand the role and impact of government actions on Canada's economy.

To have a strong economy and a strong country we need strong Federal leadership to rebuild our nation's foundations; tax reform, employment reform, federal infrastructure, a comprehensive foreign policy, and a modernized military to reassure our allies and defend Canada's interests at home and abroad.

Our parliamentary system consists of political parties. However, political parties are only made up of the people who are in them at the time and must also be judged by what the country needs at the time. Today, we find ourselves at a tipping point in our country's history.

It's my duty to stand and be counted. Our country is at risk. My attempts to raise my concerns with this government were met with silence.

The government must be challenged openly and publicly. But for me to publicly criticize the government as a Liberal, would undermine the government and ? according to my code of conduct be dishonourable.

After careful and deliberate consideration, I must withdraw from the government benches to take my seat among the ranks of my Conservative colleagues and join Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition whose role it is to challenge and hold the government to account. The Leader of Her Majesty's opposition is committed to delivering foundational changes to strengthen Canada's economy, and a comprehensive foreign and defence policy that ensures our global competitiveness and security.

I look forward to working with my Conservative colleagues who are unafraid to do the real work to tackle the priorities of our time. I want to thank my Liberal colleagues for the opportunity to work with them and for their friendship, but my oath is to country, not party, and my sacred obligation is to serve my constituents. I look forward to working with my Liberal colleagues, across the aisle, to shape the future of the country for all Canadians.

Most importantly to you, my constituents, I want to re-assure you that I am the same person today that was elected on October 19, 2015. I believe in a strong, ethical Federal Government that unites us as Canadians. To achieve what you, my constituents demand of me, I must change political parties.

I must do what is right, not what is easy.

I ask you, the citizens of Aurora - Oak Ridges - Richmond Hill, to continue to hold me to account as I serve you and work as part of a new team focused on the fundamental challenges facing our riding and our nation.

And to all Canadians across this country ? I say:

Challenge your Member of Parliament. Demand that they work for you to strengthen our country's foundations, foreign policy and global security. Do not accept the status quo.

This is a time in our nation's history where we must act with urgency. We must all have the courage to do what is right not what is easy.

Our country is at stake.