

Martin touts urban renewal [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Paul Martin says one of the hallmarks of the next federal government will be a determined national effort to help hard-pressed cities.

Martin, poised to become Liberal leader at a party leadership convention in November and prime minister early next year, said yesterday that Canadians want a new government to throw off the old ways of doing things and refocus the country's energy on problems such as urban renewal.

"I think they want to see us bringing the cities into the national debate," Martin said on CBC-TV. This is because Canadians "know how important those cities are - big and small."

And Martin, who became Liberal leader-in-waiting in a landslide vote at the weekend, said his government will be "absolutely determined to accomplish national goals."

He said bolstering the economy and maintaining strong social programs are mutually reinforcing goals.

"That's where you get this blend of the economic and the social policy," Martin commented, adding the governments have to carefully channel their funds into social and educational programs that will help Canadians prepare for the modern, knowledge-based business world of the 21st century.

"Everybody understands that the nature of a strong economy flows from the degree of education that your population has," he said. So governments must promote early childhood development programs, skills development and "lifelong learning" through adult education. There's a whole new world out there and, in my opinion, we've got to come to grips with it far better than what we have."

Recognizing the modern role of cities in Canadian society, the federal government and the provinces must co-operate to develop secure and increased tax revenues for municipalities, he has said. One way he has proposed doing this is dedicating a portion of the federal tax on gasoline to cities.

- reprinted from Toronto Star

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