

Welfare council role led to political action

By Lesley Perry
of the Star-Phoenix

Before she became vice-president of federal Liberal Party of Canada, Alice Molloy spent five years on a national council of welfare that lobbied on behalf of low-income groups.

She describes the experience as a political turning point. It convinced her that government policies can effect social change.

The 36-year-old Saskatoonian translated that credo into direction last November when she decided to run for the two-year job as vice-president of the party she had been peripherally associated with for years.

Molloy is one of four vice-presidents. The party has a French-speaking male and female and an English-speaking male and female in the position.

The road to the first political job Molloy has held began with her career as a social worker.

She spent six years at the Saskatoon Mental Health Clinic in the '70s and while she was also politically involved during that period through her husband, Saskatoon lawyer Tom Molloy, she says her work taught her about the social effects national policies had on people.

Through that experience Molloy's name reached Monique Begin, federal minister of health, who in 1977 appointed her to the 21-member national council of welfare.

The council, made up of professionals and people from low-income groups, prepares papers on matters such as medicare, pensions and taxation.

The reports go to Begin and

Profile

Alice Molloy

across the country to wherever they are requested.

"That period was a major influence. The experience really demonstrated to me how much people are affected by policy and that people should be more concerned about the political process that makes policies."

Apart from her political life, Molloy is also mother of four daughters and holds two degrees, in arts from the University of Saskatchewan and a master's in social work from the University of British Columbia.

The Watrous-born daughter of a farm machinery sales representative also worked for the Catholic Family Service Bureau and since serving the maximum length on the national council of Welfare now sits on the University of Regina senate and Saskatoon French School board of directors.

Molloy was also appointed to the Saskatchewan Association of Social Workers and is a volunteer at the Mendel Art Gallery and chairman of the Saskatchewan-Poplar Crescent Community Association.

She says her decision to get involved in politics is just a continuation of those experiences in social services.

While the Liberal Party has had several female vice-presidents in

the past, it elected its first woman president this year — Iona Campagnolo.

Molloy says that was also a factor in her decision to become part of the Liberal team.

"She is a very dynamic, interesting person and these are exciting times for the Liberal Party. Also the government is facing a real challenge."

That challenge, Molloy admits, is re-gaining the confidence of a public that blames the government and Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau in particular for mounting deficits and a plummeting economy.

But, reasons Molloy, much of the fault for the economy lies outside this or any other federal government.

"I think the party is going through rough times, as any government would have during these rough economic times, but I have a feeling that people look for slick, easy answers to massive problems when really a lot of the problems are international."

In answer to public criticism for the prime minister's one-fingered salute to residents in Salmon Arm, B.C., Molloy said that is just his personality and has nothing to do with his policies or abilities.

"I think he does things impulsively; that is his personality. . . but unfortunately, like in Salmon Arm, that antagonizes people."

While Molloy predicted Trudeau will bow out before the next general election, adding the Progressive Conservatives will give the Liberal Party a run for its money, she said



— S-P photo by Richard Marjan

Alice Molloy combines family and political responsibilities.

her choice for the next prime minister is Pierre Trudeau.

Her second choice?

“A woman prime minister is long overdue in Canada and there are all

kinds of capable women, Iona (Campagnolo) would make a good one and Flora MacDonald, although she is a different political color, she is of that calibre.”

A woman leader would do just as well because to the vice-president of the federal Liberal Party, “there isn’t much difference between men’s and women’s capabilities.”