

A 21ST CENTURY LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA

WINNING CAMPAIGNS IN BETWEEN ELECTIONS



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The Liberal Party of Canada (LPC) is rich with history, fortitude and success. The

Liberal Party has been extremely influential in terms of where Canada stands today. It was the Liberal party who, in the early years, promoted Canada's sovereignty in the world; championed the social safety net; instituted official bilingualism; and proved that a nation is most strong when it is fiscally responsible and socially progressive.

The success of the Liberal Party reflects the great minds that have provided a vision for our country to follow – and believe in. Individuals such as Lester Pearson, Pierre Trudeau and Jean Chretien have led the Liberal Party to become one of the most successful democratic political parties in the world – truly a miraculous achievement. It is important, however, to highlight that despite all of the accomplishments, one thing remains the same. In politics, the hardest place to stand is at the top of the mountain.

This report is dedicated to reestablishing the Liberal Party of Canada with Canadians. Since the beginning of the 21st century, and as the past three election campaigns make explicit, the Liberal Party has been losing connection with Canadians. It is clear that many of us have reasons to explain this and, most importantly, have suggested a number of innovative ways to improve going forward. What is required and currently absent, is a document that comprises all of our innovative thoughts and ideas. Thus, the intent of this report is to capture the spirit of renewal.

The premise of this report is that the Liberal Party needs to focus on winning campaigns in between elections in order to be successful in 21st century Canadian politics. This requires active participation from every Liberal and from all levels. As such, this report is designed to be an evolving, working document that will ultimately represent the voice of Ontario's Liberals. This will be accomplished using the following steps.

The first set of additions and revisions will be made following our first meeting. This meeting would be held between now and Executive Board and will comprise past-candidates, riding presidents, LPC and LPC(O) officials, and political organizers from across the province. Time, date, and location, will be finalized. The ideas that originate at this meeting will be added to the report. A copy of the updated document will then be passed to LPC(O) staff for use at the sessions scheduled to take place at Executive Board.

The second set of additions will be made upon the completion of the Executive Board meeting. Finally, the report will be distributed to riding Presidents for discussion at their respective December executive meetings. The suggestions that arise from the executive meetings will be analyzed and then included into the final draft of the report. The final report will be ready for distribution by January 1, 2009.

It is important that we are specific and focus on the core issues that will improve our Party – effective immediately. To begin, I have prepared some topics that I believe require improvement. In an effort to begin the dialogue, I have suggested a few points for each of the conversation topics. The first topic will focus on how we can make our riding associations politically relevant – in other words, organizationally and fiscally strong. The second discussion will focus on how LPC can become stronger in between campaigns so as to ensure we are ready, nationally, for an election. Third, we will explore the various ways the Party can more effectively connect with Canada’s youth. The final topic will focus on fundraising – at both the national and riding level. Additional topics and suggestions are both encouraged and welcomed.

Despite the gravity of this report, it is essential that one thing remains clear. This is not, nor will it become, a pessimistic exercise. Ultimately, the goal is to think outside of our current existence. In saying this, the suggestion is not that everything is broken nor is it intended to be divisive. This is an exercise of modernization with the understanding that some things need to be done differently. Furthermore, this is an optimistic moment and one that reflects the history of our Party. The Liberal Party has proven that it is able to reconnect with Canadians and rise above a challenge. In other words, we did it before and we will do it again.

We will begin our discussion by focusing on the riding associations given that they are the driving force of the LPC. There exists enormous potential for our riding associations to connect with constituents, to fundraise and to effectively organize in order to be prepared for each and every campaign. It is imperative that this effort takes place between campaigns. In order for this to happen, each local association must become *politically relevant* in their respective communities.

To become politically relevant, a riding association can:

- Increase their level of in-riding *exposure* via the use of:
 - Riding association websites that are active and creative;
 - Community events, quarterly newsletters & email contact with members;
 - Clothing: Purchasing t-shirts/sweaters with the association name and party logo highly visible.
 - The key is to be *creative* and set *goals*;
- Actively search for hard working Liberals, from diverse backgrounds, to join the riding association. Have a goal to recruit one or two new executive members each year.
- Set a goal to have candidates nominated one-year prior to an election;
- Ensure that once a candidate is in place, he or she is knocking on doors and attending local events.
 - Remember, we have to give people real *reasons* to vote Liberal. A personal visit from the candidate – outside of the campaign period – is immensely powerful and helps counter the common constituent remark, “I only hear from you during an election”.
- Organization from within. Riding associations can create mailing teams, fundraising committees and telephone trees in an effort to create systems for success. You need to be organized to keep volunteers and membership levels up.

The BIG Picture: A Battle-Ready Liberal Party of Canada

Nationally, the Liberal Party needs to prepare itself more effectively in the pre-writ period. It is understood that the Liberal Party of Canada will not be successful if the riding associations lack funds and are unorganized. Conversely, the riding associations will not be successful if the national structure experiences the same problems. The latter is made worse by our electoral system.

The LPC can become organizationally and financially battle ready by:

- Repairing the disconnect between the Party nationally and the Party locally – the two need to work better, together.
 - Improve the LPC presence in the month-by-month operations of the ridings. For example, LPC could be more aggressive in encouraging the associations to be active every month. This can occur in a positive manner yet one that reflects the importance of the message.
- A national data management system that is operational and accessible in between campaigns.
 - This will allow us to continuously update our identified Liberal support.
 - We will be able combine our identified support with aggressive fundraising initiatives.
- Making sure that leadership camps refrain from running unilateral campaigns upon assuming leadership of the Party. In the end, nobody is a winner.
- Improving our policy development. We need to better ensure that the hard work of our local policy representatives is reflected in our final, and most important, policy piece – the platform.

Making the Connection Today -- for a Future Tomorrow: Canada's Youth

The future of the Liberal Party rests with Canada's youth. At present, the thoughts, activities and ideas of our party are not sufficiently resonating with the minds of young Canadians. In many of Ontario's high schools, the Liberal Party is finishing third place in student elections. It is imperative now, more than ever before, that we establish ourselves as a party that resonates with those born after 1981 - otherwise known as "Generation Y". We will be successful if we speak to this demographic in a language that is both genuine and appropriate to their needs.

We begin to work towards this end by:

- Having Young Liberal clubs in each riding;
- Engaging the students in high school through classroom speaking/presentations;
- Continue to build on the success of the Young Liberals of Canada;
- Planning youth-oriented riding association events
- Subsidize costs for attending conventions, AGMs and so forth.
- Be active in the House of Commons. Criticize the Conservatives for failing to address the issues that resonate with this generation. We simply do not hear this enough.

Winning Elections Costs Money: Fundraising

The national campaign – and far too many of our local campaigns – lacked the finances requisite for success. Whether the money would have been used to counter Conservative attack advertisements, to more effectively sell the Green Shift, or to purchase campaign literature, one thing remained constant. We lacked the financial resources to compete.

Fundraising is the single most important component for the Party's turnaround for two reasons. The first is that successful fundraising indicates that the steps we have identified above are not only in place but, most importantly, are working. Second, successful fundraising enables us to run the strong campaigns required to win our ridings and, ultimately, to form government.

We can improve our fundraising capabilities by:

- Implementing a province wide, riding association initiative called the *308 Club*
 - ***What is it?*** The 308 Club asks each individual to pay an annual, upfront minimum donation of \$100.
 - ***Why join?*** As part of their donation, members receive their Liberal membership for the year, discounts on all riding events and a complimentary annual event – exclusively for 308 club & Cheque Mate members.
 - ***The result?*** The ridings that succeed will have approximately \$61 600 in the riding account every twenty-four months.

This is not to say that it will happen over night. Even if several ridings were able to make it half way to their goal by year two, they would have approximately \$30 800 on hand. What is fundamentally important to this proposal is that the money comes in **quickly**. This is vital in uncertain electoral times characteristic of minority parliaments.

 - Not only would ridings be fiscally sound, they would also have a stable membership level to build from each year.
- Continuing to use Cheque Mate. Cheque Mate should be used as Plan B for those who are either unable to give \$100 upfront or are interested in the small, cumulative donation – which is fine!
- Victory Fund: Continue to solicit Victory Fund support improving upon the initiatives success thus far.

* **Summary will be drafted once all of the ideas have been presented.**