

**REPORT FROM**  
**ALFRED APPS, NATIONAL PRESIDENT**  
**TO THE MEMBERS OF THE**  
**LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA**  
**June 2011**

FELLOW LIBERALS:

I AM PLEASED TO REPORT TO YOU ON THE RECENT ACTIVITIES OF YOUR NATIONAL BOARD AT THIS EXTREMELY CRITICAL MOMENT IN OUR PARTY'S HISTORY.

EXACTLY ONE MONTH AGO, ON THE MORNING OF MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, LIBERALS ACROSS CANADA AWOKE TO DEAL WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE WORST ELECTION DEFEAT IN OUR HISTORY – INCLUDING THE DEFEAT OF OUR LEADER IN HIS OWN RIDING.

THAT VERY DAY, MICHAEL IGNATIEFF ANNOUNCED THAT HE WOULD BE STEPPING DOWN AS LEADER.

HIS ANNOUNCEMENT, TOGETHER WITH A FORMAL LETTER THAT FOLLOWED CONFIRMING HIS RESIGNATION, IRREVOCABLY SET SOME EVENTS IN MOTION UNDER OUR CONSTITUTION.

FOR GOOD OR ILL, THE NATIONAL BOARD IS CURRENTLY THE SUPREME AUTHORITY OF OUR PARTY BETWEEN CONVENTIONS. IT IS A BODY WHICH CONSISTS OF THE ELECTED OFFICERS OF THE PARTY NATIONALLY AND FROM EVERY PROVINCE AND TERRITORY ACROSS THE COUNTRY, FROM ALL FOUR OF OUR PARTY COMMISSIONS AND FROM THE CAUCUS.

AS PRESIDENT OF THE PARTY, I SERVE AS CHAIR OF THE NATIONAL BOARD. FORTUNATELY FOR ME, GIVEN THE UNPRECEDENTED DIFFICULTY IN WHICH WE FOUND OURSELVES, I HAVE BEEN ABLE TO DRAW UPON THE HUGE AMOUNT OF EXPERIENCE, WISDOM AND GOODWILL AROUND THAT TABLE – A SHARED DETERMINATION TO DO WHAT WAS AND IS RIGHT FOR OUR PARTY.

THE CONSTITUTION IS CRYSTAL CLEAR THAT THE NATIONAL BOARD HAD TWO UNAVOIDABLE AND IMPORTANT TASKS TO ACCOMPLISH AT MEETINGS TO BE HELD WITHIN 27 DAYS OF THE LEADER'S ANNOUNCEMENT OF HIS RESIGNATION.

FIRST, WE HAD THE RESPONSIBILITY TO APPOINT AN INTERIM LEADER OF THE PARTY "IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CAUCUS" - NOT JUST AN INTERIM LEADER OF THE CAUCUS IN PARLIAMENT, BUT AN INTERIM LEADER OF THE ENTIRE LIBERAL PARTY OF CANADA WITH ALL THE POWERS OF A PERMANENT LEADER.

SECOND, WE HAD THE OBLIGATION TO CALL A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP SELECTION VOTE WITHIN 5 MONTHS OF SUCH MEETING. A VOTE THAT WOULD BE CONDUCTED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN ACCORDANCE WITH NEWLY ADOPTED 'ONE-PERSON, ONE-VOTE' ELECTION RULES, WEIGHTED BY RIDING.

THIS IS WHAT OUR CONSTITUTION MANDATES.

ON THE EVENING OF MAY 3<sup>RD</sup>, I THEREFORE CALLED AN INFORMAL TELEPHONE MEETING OF THE VOTING MEMBERS OF YOUR NATIONAL BOARD TO DISCUSS THE SITUATION. I REMINDED THEM OF THEIR DUTIES AS BOARD MEMBERS AND DREW THEIR ATTENTION TO THEIR RESPONSIBILITIES UNDER THE PARTY'S CONSTITUTION.

BOARD MEMBERS INCLUDING MYSELF WERE ALREADY BEING FLOODED WITH INPUT FROM THE PARTY ACROSS THE COUNTRY – FROM CAUCUS MEMBERS, FROM RIDING PRESIDENTS, FROM CANDIDATES AND FROM OTHER LIBERALS EVERYWHERE. THE NEAR-UNIVERSAL MESSAGE I AND THEY WERE HEARING COULD BE SUMMED UP AS **“DON’T RUSH. GO SLOW. WE ARE IN A SERIOUS AND PRECARIOUS POSITION. IT IS IMPORTANT TO DO THINGS RIGHT, NOT FAST. WE HAVE THE TIME. WE NEED TO THINK.”**

FROM THAT VERY FIRST MEETING, THREE THINGS WERE CLEAR TO THE ENTIRE NATIONAL BOARD.

FIRST, THAT ANY DECISION ABOUT THE INTERIM LEADERSHIP WOULD BE INEXTRICABLY LINKED TO ITS DECISION ABOUT THE TIMING OF A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP PROCESS.

SECOND, THAT OPINION FROM ALL QUARTERS OF THE PARTY INCLUDING THE CAUCUS WAS ALREADY FOURSQUARE AGAINST MOVING IMMEDIATELY INTO A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP SELECTION VOTE, SOMETHING THAT SEEMED IMPOSSIBLE FOR US TO AVOID GIVEN THE CLEAR LANGUAGE OF THE CONSTITUTION.

THIRD, THAT WE NEEDED TO LISTEN CLOSELY AND CAREFULLY TO THE PARTY BEFORE MOVING FORWARD. AND WE HAD TO DO SO IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THERE WERE NO FORMAL CONSULTATIVE MECHANISMS AVAILABLE, OTHER THAN THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS.

SO I ENCOURAGED ALL MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL BOARD TO CONSULT FURTHER WITH THEIR CONSTITUENCIES OVER THE FOLLOWING DAYS IN WHATEVER WAY THEY COULD AND, AS A BOARD, WE AGREED THAT I SHOULD CONVENE A MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS FOR INPUT EVEN THOUGH WE WERE NOT REQUIRED TO DO SO UNDER THE CONSTITUTION.

I ALSO SCHEDULED A FORMAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR MONDAY, MAY 9 – A WEEK FOLLOWING THE ELECTION AND TWO DAYS PRIOR TO THE FIRST MEETING OF THE NATIONAL LIBERAL CAUCUS.

IN THE INTERVENING WEEK, SEVERAL THINGS HAPPENED.

EACH MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL BOARD CONDUCTED THEIR OWN PROCESS OF INFORMAL CONSULTATION AND EACH RECEIVED UNSOLICITED INPUT FROM GRASSROOTS LIBERALS FROM ACROSS THE COUNTRY.

AS PRESIDENT, I WROTE A LETTER TO EVERY LIBERAL MEMBER SEEKING ADVICE AND INPUT AND RECEIVED NEARLY A THOUSAND RESPONSES.

WE CONSULTED WITH THE OUTGOING LEADER AND WITH THE CAUCUS LEADERSHIP.

WE SOUGHT ADVICE FROM THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS ADVISORS OF THE PARTY TO DETERMINE WHETHER THERE WERE ANY OPTION OPEN TO US TO ENABLE THE DEFERRAL OF OUR PERMANENT LEADERSHIP SELECTION VOTE.

I CONVENED A SPECIAL MEETING OF THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS.

OVER THE COURSE OF THAT WEEK, THROUGH EMAIL TRAFFIC AND OTHERWISE, A CLEAR CONSENSUS BEGAN TO EMERGE.

THIS IS MY DISTILLATION OF WHAT WE HEARD FROM LIBERALS.

LIBERALS EVERYWHERE RECOGNIZE THAT TIME IS ON OUR SIDE. THEY SEE THAT, FOR THE FIRST TIME SINCE 2004, OUR PARTY IS NOT FACING A MINORITY PARLIAMENT. THEY KNOW THAT THE POSSIBILITY OF GENUINE RENEWAL IS NO LONGER PRECLUDED BY THE INHERENT STRICTURES EITHER OF POWER ON THE ONE HAND OR OF AN IMMINENT ELECTION ON THE OTHER. THEY UNDERSTAND THAT, FOR A COUPLE OF YEARS AT LEAST, OUR PARTY WILL NOT BE REQUIRED TO FUNCTION AS IF IT WERE IN PERMANENT CAMPAIGN MODE. THEY WANT US TO GO BACK TO THE DRAWING BOARD BECAUSE THEY FINALLY SEE THE SAME WINDOW FOR REAL CHANGE AND RENEWAL THAT EXISTED FOLLOWING THE ELECTIONS OF 1957 AND 1984. THEY DO NOT WANT US TO MISS THAT OPPORTUNITY.

FOR THAT VERY REASON, LIBERALS FROM ALL OVER CANADA MADE CLEAR THEY DO NOT WANT TO MOVE INTO A FAST LEADERSHIP VOTE. THEY DO NOT WANT THE PARTY TO PUT THE PROVERBIAL CART BEFORE THE HORSE. ALMOST WITHOUT EXCEPTION, THEY WANT AN EXTENDED PERIOD OF POLICY RE-THINKING AND ORGANIZATIONAL RE-BUILDING TO OCCUR FIRST, FOLLOWED IN DUE COURSE BY A WIDE-OPEN AND PROFOUNDLY DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP RACE ON A FAIR AND LEVEL PLAYING FIELD WITH NOTHING PRE-DETERMINED OR PRE-COOKED BY PARTY INSIDERS – A RACE ENDING IN A VOTE BASED ON UNIVERSAL SUFFRAGE THAT WOULD NOT ONLY ACCOMPLISH A GENERATIONAL TRANSFORMATION OF THE PARTY'S LEADERSHIP BUT ALSO A GENERATIONAL RENEWAL OF THE PARTY'S MEMBERSHIP INCLUDING ITS BROADER ENGAGEMENT WITH ALL CANADIANS. AFTER CHURNING THROUGH 4 LEADERS IN 8 SHORT YEARS, MANY LIBERALS EXPRESSED RESENTMENT AND FATIGUE OVER THE CULT AND CONFLICT OF LEADERSHIP WHICH, MANY ARGUED, HAS DOMINATED OUR PARTY AND POISONED OUR CULTURE FOR TOO LONG. THEY WANT TO SELECT A NEW AND PERMANENT LEADER AS A UNITED PARTY IN AS OPEN AND DEMOCRATIC A MANNER AS POSSIBLE, AND FOR THE LONG HAUL.

AS THE CULMINATION OF THE FIRST PHASE OF PARTY REBUILDING, LIBERALS MADE CLEAR THAT THEY WANT TO PROCEED WITH A FULL-BLOWN BIENNIAL CONVENTION TO FOCUS ON POLICY RENEWAL, AS WELL AS ON ORGANIZATIONAL REFORM AND MODERNIZATION. RECOGNIZING THAT IT HAS BEEN 6 LONG YEARS SINCE WE HAVE CONVENED A NATIONAL LIBERAL CONVENTION WHICH HAS NOT BEEN PRE-OCCUPIED WITH LEADERSHIP MATTERS, MANY PARTY MEMBERS YEARN FOR A WIDE OPEN CONVENTION IN WHICH ALL LIBERALS EVERYWHERE CAN PARTICIPATE, WHETHER THEY ARE INSIDE THE ACTUAL CONVENTION AUDITORIUM OR NOT. THEY WANT A CONVENTION WHERE OPEN DEBATE IS NOT CONDEMNED

AS DISSENT, AND WHERE POLICY IDEAS THAT FIT INTO A LONG-TERM LIBERAL VISION ARE NOT DISCARDED JUST BECAUSE THEY DON'T FIT NEATLY INTO OUR NEXT ELECTION PLATFORM. THEY WANT TO USE THE BIENNIAL CONVENTION TO OPEN THE DOORS OF OUR PARTY WIDE TO THE NEXT GENERATION OF CANADIAN LIBERALS.

AND LIBERALS EVERYWHERE WANT TO PRECIPITATE A DRAMATIC CULTURE SHIFT IN OUR PARTY NOW, REFLECTED BY A COMPLETE OVERHAUL IN OUR DECISION MAKING MECHANISMS – A MORE RADICAL PARTY DEMOCRACY, ENABLED AND EMPOWERED BY THE BEST IN MODERN TECHNOLOGY. THEY WANT A PROCESS LEADING UP TO OUR BIENNIAL CONVENTION THAT IS DRAMATICALLY MORE FLUID AND FLEXIBLE THAN THAT ENABLED BY OUR TRADITIONAL APPROACH TO POLICY DEVELOPMENT. THEY WANT A STRUCTURE FOR MAKING PARTY DECISIONS THAT IS HORIZONTAL AND MERITOCRATIC FOR ALL, RATHER THAN ONE THAT IS HIERARCHICAL AND ACCESSIBLE ONLY TO THOSE WHO ARE PERCEIVED AS ENTITLED 'INSIDERS'. THEY WANT TO BE ABLE TO ADVOCATE POSITIONS AND DEVELOP RESOLUTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION IN A COMPLETELY TRANSPARENT MANNER – RESOLUTIONS THAT DO NOT HAVE TO GO THROUGH SEVEN VEILS OF OPAQUE SCRUTINY CONDUCTED BEHIND CLOSED DOORS, RESOLUTIONS THAT WILL BE PRIORITIZED FOR DEBATE THROUGH A PROCESS OPEN TO ALL LIBERALS IN ADVANCE OF THE CONVENTION.

LIBERALS BELIEVE IT IS TIME FOR SOME DEEP REFLECTION ON THE CONTEMPORARY APPLICATION OF OUR VALUES, FOR SOME SERIOUS FORWARD THINKING ON WHAT WE SHOULD BE FIGHTING FOR AND FOR SOME BIG AND BOLD NEW IDEAS THAT CAN SERVE AS BEACONS TO GALVANIZE OUR MILITANTS.

IN ADDITION TO RESOLUTIONS SPONSORED BY RIDING ASSOCIATIONS, PTAs AND COMMISSIONS, THEY WANT TO SEE RESOLUTIONS DEVELOPED INFORMALLY OVER KITCHEN TABLES, IN COFFEE SHOPS, PUBS AND IN INTERNET CHAT ROOMS. IN EFFECT, LIBERALS AND ESPECIALLY THOSE OF THE NEXT GENERATION, WANT TO SEE THE PARTY MOVE THROUGH A PHASE OF GENUINE GRASSROOTS DIALOGUE AND FERMENT – A PERIOD OF 'CONSTRUCTIVE CHAOS' OR 'MANAGED MAYHEM' WHICH BREAKS DOWN THE BARRIERS TO POPULAR PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGES ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE THEIR ISSUES MATTER AND WHO WANT TO BE HEARD.

AND TO DRIVE THIS CULTURE OF CHANGE, LIBERALS WANT THE PARTY TO FOCUS AGGRESSIVELY AND ESPECIALLY ON RE-ENGAGING WOMEN, YOUTH, ABORIGINALS AND NEW CANADIANS WITH VERY SPECIAL AND CONCERTED ATTENTION TO QUEBEC. THEY WANT TO SAY GOODBYE TO A PARTY DOMINATED SO HEAVILY BY "MIDDLE AGE WHITE GUYS" LIKE MYSELF.

IN THE INTERIM, WE ALSO HEARD THAT LIBERALS WANT A LEADER WHO WILL PUT OUR STRONGEST POSSIBLE FACE FORWARD IN PARLIAMENT AND, AT THE SAME TIME, ACT AS IMPARTIAL STEWARD OF THE WIDER PARTY THROUGH ITS CRITICAL FIRST STEPS OF REBUILDING - A LEADER WHO CAN RECLAIM AND ARTICULATE THE PROGRESSIVE CENTRE FOR LIBERALS ON THE ISSUES OF THE DAY, DAY AFTER DAY AND MONTH AFTER MONTH.

MOST LIBERALS ALSO WANT A LEADER WHO CAN CREATE THE ROOM – THE POLITICAL SPACE - REQUIRED FOR THE BROADER DEBATE WE NEED. THEY WANT A LEADER WHO WILL STAND ABOVE THE CROWD OF PUTATIVE ASPIRANTS FOR THE PERMANENT ROLE AND HOLD THE PARTY TOGETHER IN PARLIAMENT AND IN THE COUNTRY AS IT ULTIMATELY MOVES TOWARD ALL OF THE PRODUCTIVE AND COMPETITIVE TENSIONS UNLEASHED BY A FULL BLOWN AND WIDE OPEN DEMOCRATIC CONTEST FOR THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP. LIBERALS WERE SEEKING AN INTERIM LEADER WHO, HAVING FORSWORN THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP, COULD FOCUS DIRECTLY AND EXCLUSIVELY ON THE TOUGH DECISIONS THAT WILL BE REQUIRED OF OUR PARTY IN THE COMING MONTHS - A LEADER WHOSE ONLY AMBITION IS TO HELP RIGHT THE LIBERAL SHIP FOR THE LONG TERM.

MANY LIBERALS ALSO REMINDED NATIONAL BOARD MEMBERS THAT THE PARTY HAD NEVER IN LIVING MEMORY APPOINTED AN INTERIM LEADER WHO WOULD BE CONTESTING THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP – AND FOR GOOD REASON. THE INTERIM LEADER HAS ALL THE POWERS OF A PERMANENT LEADER UNDER OUR PARTY’S CONSTITUTION INCLUDING CONTROL OVER CAUCUS APPOINTMENTS AND MANY PARTY ASSIGNMENTS, ACCESS TO PARTY FUNDS AND COMMUNICATION RESOURCES, AS WELL AS MEMBERSHIP AND DONOR LISTS – POWERS THAT, WHETHER ABUSED OR NOT, WOULD FUNDAMENTALLY UNDERMINE, OR AT LEAST APPEAR TO UNDERMINE, ANY IMPRESSION THAT THE CONTEST FOR THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP WAS BEING CONDUCTED ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD.

THE SITUATION OF THE LAST LEADERSHIP SELECTION PROCESS IN 2008/2009 WAS PUT FORWARD AS A COUNTEREXAMPLE TO THE VIEW THAT AN INTERIM LEADER HAD NEVER CONTESTED THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP. IN FACT, THOSE CIRCUMSTANCES DO NOT PROVIDE A COUNTEREXAMPLE. THE FORMER LEADER HAD RESIGNED IN THE MIDST OF A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP RACE TO SUCCEED HIM FOR WHICH THERE WERE THREE DECLARED CANDIDATES. THE PARTY IN PARLIAMENT WAS FACING A MINORITY GOVERNMENT VULNERABLE TO DEFEAT AT A POINT OF PARTICULAR TENSION IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS. SUCH A DEFEAT WOULD HAVE RISKED AN ELECTION WHICH LIBERALS WOULD OTHERWISE HAVE HAD TO WAGE WITHOUT A LEADER. IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, THE TWO OTHER CANDIDATES FOR THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP ELECTED TO WITHDRAW VOLUNTARILY FROM THE CONTEST AND, AS A CONSEQUENCE, THE EQUIVALENT OF AN ACCLAMATION OF AN INTERIM LEADER FOLLOWED. THIS WAS LATER TO BE CONFIRMED AS A PERMANENT APPOINTMENT BY THE PARTY IN CONVENTION - BUT IN CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE THERE WAS NO CONTINUING CONTEST FOR THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP.

THIS PROCESS WAS NECESSARILY IMPERFECT AND WIDELY REGARDED AS SUCH. FOR THAT REASON, IT WAS FREQUENTLY OFFERED BY LIBERALS AS A REASON WHY THE NEXT SELECTION PROCESS FOR A PERMANENT LEADER SHOULD BE WIDE OPEN, FULLY DEMOCRATIC AND PARTICIPATORY. TO BE CLEAR, THE SITUATION IN 2008 WAS NOT ONE WHERE THE INTERIM LEADER CONTESTED THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP INASMUCH AS NO SUCH CONTEST EVER OCCURRED ONCE THE OTHER TWO DECLARED CANDIDATES HAD WITHDRAWN.

RECOGNIZING THAT FRANCOPHONE CANADIANS, ESPECIALLY THOSE FROM QUEBEC, HAVE LONG BEEN AN ESSENTIAL ELEMENT OF OUR HISTORIC NATIONAL PARTY BASE – VOTERS WHOSE CONFIDENCE WE MUST RECOVER IF WE ARE TO RECOVER TRULY NATIONAL STANDING - LIBERALS ALSO SAID THEY WANTED THEIR INTERIM LEADER TO BE BILINGUAL. THE PARTY THAT ENACTED OFFICIAL BILINGUALISM, ENTRENCHED IT IN THE CHARTER OF RIGHTS AND HAS MADE IT A PRACTICE TO SELECT BILINGUAL LEADERS CONTINUOUSLY FOR OVER FOUR DECADES HAD NO DESIRE TO TURN BACK THE CLOCK.

FINALLY, LIBERALS WERE CLEAR ON THEIR THINKING ABOUT ANY POSSIBLE MERGER OF THEIR PARTY WITH ANY OTHER CANADIAN POLITICAL PARTY. WHILE EVERY ASPECT OF THE FUTURE OF LIBERALISM IN CANADA REMAINS A LEGITIMATE MATTER FOR INTERNAL PARTY DEBATE AND DISCUSSION AND WHILE EVERYONE IS ENTITLED TO HAVE AND TO VOICE THEIR OPINION, LIBERALS SPOKE OUT LOUDLY AND CLEARLY THAT SUCH MATTERS ARE NOT AND CANNOT BE A MATTER FOR NEGOTIATION OR OTHER FORMAL ACTION UNLESS AND UNTIL SUCH STEPS ARE FIRST AUTHORIZED BY A DEMOCRATIC VOTE OF THE PARTY GATHERED IN CONVENTION - NOT BY THE INTERIM LEADER, NOT BY FORMER LEADERS, NOT BY THE NATIONAL BOARD AND NOT BY ANY LIBERAL ACTING IN ANY OFFICIAL CAPACITY OR WITH ANY APPARENT AUTHORITY ABSENT A DEMOCRATIC MANDATE TO DO SO.

ON THE QUESTION OF THE TIMING OF THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP SELECTION, THE CONSTITUTIONAL AND LEGAL AFFAIRS ADVISORS OF THE PARTY CONFIRMED THAT THERE WAS AN OPTION OPEN TO THE PARTY TO ENABLE DELAY OF THE VOTE. SPECIFICALLY, THE FRAMERS OF THE PARTY'S CONSTITUTION HAD ANTICIPATED THE NEED TO DEAL WITH SPECIAL SITUATIONS BETWEEN BIENNIAL CONVENTIONS BY PROVIDING FOR THE AUTHORITY TO CONVENE AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION TO DEAL WITH EXTRAORDINARY MATTERS. MOREOVER, WE WERE ADVISED THAT THE CONSTITUTION HAD BEEN AMENDED TO ENABLE A VIRTUAL CONVENTION TO OCCUR BY SPECIFYING THAT ELECTRONIC OR INTERNET BALLOTING WAS ACCEPTABLE AND BY NOT REQUIRING THAT THE CONVENTION OCCUR IN A SINGLE PHYSICAL LOCATION.

WITH ALL THIS INPUT IN HAND AND IN CLOSE CONSULTATION WITH THE CAUCUS LEADERSHIP, YOUR NATIONAL BOARD MADE CLEAR TO THE NATIONAL CAUCUS THAT IT INTENDED TO (1) SEEK PARTY APPROVAL FOR A SIGNIFICANT DEFERRAL OF THE PERMANENT LEADERSHIP VOTE AND (2) EXERCISE ITS DISCRETION UNDER THE CONSTITUTION TO APPOINT AN INTERIM LEADER WITH DEFERENCE TO THE CHOICE OF THE CAUCUS, PROVIDED ONLY THAT THE CAUCUS CHOICE MET CERTAIN BROAD MINIMUM CONDITIONS WHICH ARE DISCUSSED ABOVE AND ARE NOW WELL KNOWN. THE ONLY QUESTION THAT REMAINED WAS NOT WHETHER WE WOULD SEEK TO DELAY A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP VOTE, BUT FOR HOW LONG THE INTERIM PERIOD SHOULD LAST.

THE RESULTS OF THE NATIONAL BOARD'S DELIBERATIONS WERE FURTHER REFINED THROUGH ADDITIONAL CONSULTATIONS WITH THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS, PARTY COMMISSION EXECUTIVES, DEFEATED CANDIDATES AND, AGAIN, WITH THE CAUCUS LEADERSHIP. ALTHOUGH THERE WAS A VARIETY OF OPINION AS TO THE BEST TIMING FOR A PERMANENT LEADERSHIP

VOTE, RANGING FROM THOSE WHO THOUGHT WE SHOULD PROCEED WITHIN ONE YEAR TO THOSE WHO SUPPORTED A DELAY OF MORE THAN TWO YEARS, THE OVERWHELMING WEIGHT OF THE INPUT FROM ALL QUARTERS INDICATED THAT A RELATIVELY NARROW WINDOW COMMENCING 18 MONTHS OUT FROM THE LAST ELECTION WOULD BE OPTIMAL. THE GENERAL VIEW WAS THAT THIS TIMEFRAME WOULD GIVE THE PARTY A FULL YEAR TO FOCUS ON THE BIENNIAL CONVENTION AND IMPORTANT QUESTIONS OTHER THAN LEADERSHIP, WHILE GIVING THE NEXT NATIONAL BOARD A SOLID FEW MONTHS TO SORT OUT MORE DETAILED PLANS FOR THE SECOND PHASE OF PARTY REBUILDING BEFORE CALLING A LEADERSHIP VOTE. AT THE SAME TIME, USING SUCH A TIMEFRAME, THE PARTY COULD BE ASSURED THAT ITS NEXT PERMANENT LEADER WOULD BE IN PLACE MORE THAN TWO YEARS PRIOR TO THE EARLIEST ANTICIPATED DATE FOR THE NEXT ELECTION, WHILE PROSPECTIVE CANDIDATES FOR THAT POSITION, INCLUDING ANY WHO MAY NOT BE SITTING IN THE CURRENT CAUCUS, WOULD ALSO HAVE AMPLE TIME TO PREPARE AND ORGANIZE A SERIOUS BID.

**A CLEAR CONSENSUS HAVING EMERGED, YOUR NATIONAL BOARD PROCEEDED WITH THE SETTING OF AN EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION ON JUNE 18, 2011. THE ONLY PURPOSE OF THIS EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION IS TO ASK LIBERALS TO APPROVE TWO SPECIFIC, ONE-TIME ONLY, CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS THAT WOULD ENABLE A BIENNIAL CONVENTION TO OCCUR ON JANUARY 13-15, 2012 AND A LEADERSHIP SELECTION VOTE TO OCCUR ON A DATE TO BE SET BY THE NATIONAL BOARD, ON FIVE MONTHS' NOTICE AND IN CONSULTATION WITH THE CAUCUS AND THE COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS, BETWEEN NOVEMBER 1, 2012 AND FEBRUARY 28, 2013.**

IN THE EVENT THAT THE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS ARE NOT APPROVED BY THE REQUIRED 2/3rd MAJORITY OF DELEGATES, A LEADERSHIP SELECTION VOTE WILL OCCUR IN ACCORDANCE WITH, AND AS PRESCRIBED UNDER, THE CONSTITUTION ON SATURDAY OCTOBER 29, 2011.

IN EFFECT, IN CALLING THE EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION, THE NATIONAL BOARD HAS PROPOSED THE MAJOR MARKER OR MILESTONE FOR EACH OF THE FIRST TWO PHASES OF OUR PARTY'S REBUILDING PROCESS. PHASE ONE WOULD BE THE PROCESS LEADING UP TO THE BIENNIAL CONVENTION IN JANUARY 2012. PHASE TWO WOULD BE THE PROCESS CULMINATING IN THE ELECTION OF A PERMANENT LEADER IN LATE 2012 OR EARLY 2013.

ON MAY 25, 2011, THE NATIONAL BOARD VOTED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPOINT THE HON. BOB RAE AS INTERIM LEADER IN FULL CONSULTATION WITH THE CAUCUS, IN COMPLETE CONFORMITY WITH THE GUIDELINES SET BY THE NATIONAL BOARD AND OTHERWISE IN STRICT ACCORDANCE WITH THE PARTY'S CONSTITUTION. WE WERE DELIGHTED TO MAKE THIS APPOINTMENT.

THE CHOICE ABOUT OUR FUTURE IS NOW TURNED OVER TO LIBERALS ACROSS THE COUNTRY AT THE SPECIAL CONVENTION - OPENLY AND DEMOCRATICALLY. LIBERALS CAN EITHER PROCEED WITH A QUICK SELECTION PROCESS FOR A PERMANENT LEADER IN OCTOBER OF THIS

YEAR, OR THEY CAN MOVE FORWARD ON THE TIMETABLE WHICH IS PROPOSED BY THE NATIONAL BOARD.

AS PRESIDENT, I AM GRATEFUL FOR THE WRITTEN AND ORAL INPUT WE HAVE RECEIVED OVER THE PAST MONTH FROM OVER 3,000 DEDICATED LIBERALS, EVEN WHEN THAT INPUT WAS CRITICAL. AND I AM ESPECIALLY THANKFUL FOR THE ENGAGEMENT AND GOOD WILL OF YOUR NATIONAL BOARD WHICH WORKED THROUGH ALL OF THESE ISSUES AND INPUT TO FIND A CONSENSUS WHICH, THROUGHOUT THE PROCESS AND IN THE FINAL RESULT, WAS VIRTUALLY UNANIMOUS.

I HAVE CONVENED A MEETING OF THE NATIONAL BOARD FOR JULY 9, 2011, AT WHICH TIME, WORKING CLOSELY WITH OUR INTERIM LEADER AND CAUCUS, WE WILL ADDRESS THE FOLLOWING KEY CHALLENGES:

1. A PROCESS FOR CONDUCTING A NATIONAL ELECTION POST-MORTEM ENGAGING CAUCUS, CAMPAIGN PERSONNEL, DEFEATED CANDIDATES, PARTY OFFICERS AND OTHER LIBERALS;

2. THE NEAR-TERM FINANCIAL AND OPERATIONAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE PARTY REQUIRED DUE TO OUR REDUCED STANDING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND IN RESPONSE TO THE REDUCTION IN OUR PUBLIC SUBSIDY AS A RESULT OF OUR LOWER VOTE TOTALS IN THE LAST ELECTION AND THE IMMINENT REDUCTION AND LOSS OF THE PER VOTER SUBSIDY ON ACCOUNT OF THE PENDING BUDGET;

3. A PROGRAMME FOR BUILDING UP OUR MEMBERSHIP AND FUNDRAISING BASE OVER THE BALANCE OF THE COMING YEAR;

4. THE PROCESS PURSUANT TO WHICH RANK AND FILE LIBERALS WILL BE ENGAGED IN DEVELOPING, CONSIDERING AND PRIORITIZING POLICY AND CONSTITUTIONAL REFORM RESOLUTIONS FOR DEBATE AND DETERMINATION AT THE UPCOMING BIENNIAL CONVENTION; AND

5. PLANNING FOR THE NEXT BIENNIAL CONVENTION ITSELF.

THE SILVER LINING OF OUR RECENT DEFEAT IS THE OPPORTUNITY FOR A COMPLETELY FRESH START AND FOR GENUINE CHANGE, COUPLED WITH SUFFICIENT TIME NOT ONLY TO UNDERTAKE OUR IMPORTANT WORK OF REBUILDING, RENEWAL AND REFORM WITH DUE CONSIDERATION AND CARE, BUT ALSO TO ENGAGE LIBERALS EVERYWHERE IN THAT PROCESS.

OVER THE COMING MONTHS, YOUR NATIONAL BOARD LOOKS FORWARD TO RECEIVING YOUR INPUT ON THESE AND OTHER QUESTIONS AS WE MOVE FORWARD TO BUILD A BETTER AND STRONGER LIBERAL PARTY FOR THE YEARS TO COME.