

David Merner
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Dear Delegate,

As President of the Liberal Party of Canada riding association in Victoria, I am looking forward to welcoming you to the convention in Victoria on November 4, 5 and 6. I hope this convention will be remembered for years to come as the rebuilding convention. Our success with our rebuilding work over the next two years will determine our party's future and ultimately shape Canada's future. In order to do everything I can to ensure that success, I am running for the presidency of the LPCBC. By way of this letter, I ask you for your support on Sunday, November 6 when you vote for a new LPCBC President.

Over the past four months, I have attended Liberal gatherings in Chilliwack, Coquitlam, Elk Lake, Esquimalt, Harrison Hot Springs, Kamloops, Kelowna, Mission, North Vancouver, Vancouver Centre, Vancouver East, Vancouver South, Saanich-Gulf Islands, Sidney, Surrey, and my home riding of Victoria. Each one was inspiring. Liberals are all saying that it's time to rebuild our party.

"Lost Liberals" are returning. Those of us who never left are feeling reinvigorated. People are rededicating themselves, putting their time, energy and money into the rebuilding work. We want active riding associations that engage members in fundraising events, membership renewal drives, policy development sessions and all the other essential activities of party renewal. Liberals want to see an active LPCBC President, Executive and staff who will ensure that all 36 of our ridings have the tools to rebuild. Let's use the convention to regroup, let's set ambitious targets for ourselves, and then let's get to work.

As the riding President in Victoria, I have a track record as a person who knows how to build and serve a talented grassroots organization. If you elect me as President of the Liberal Party of Canada (British Columbia), I will dedicate myself to engaging every member in every riding so we can reach out together to our families, our communities and our future. You will hear from me regularly on our rebuilding efforts, you will see me in the ridings I have not yet visited over the last four months, and you will have a President who serves grassroots Liberals as we rebuild together.

If you have any comments or questions or would like a copy of my CV, please do not hesitate to call me at (250) 294 6749 or to email me at david@magma.ca. I look forward to any advice you may wish to share and I hope I can count on your vote on Sunday, November 6.

Yours sincerely,

David

David Merner
President, Victoria federal Liberals

PS. Our convention provides an important opportunity to say "thank you" to all our volunteers and staff. This includes outgoing members of our Executive, staff who have moved on to other challenges, and winners of our volunteer awards. I am looking forward to saying thank you and to celebrating together!

Lessons Learned from the Presidential Campaign Trail: Comments from Grassroots Liberals

We need to connect with Canadians. To do that, Liberals need better grassroots organization. The party staff and Executive must focus on providing support to our front line volunteers. Let's focus on funding outreach workers and paying the travel costs for volunteer mentors, so we can rebuild in every riding in the province. The mentors can support the people doing the work on the front lines in each riding: presidents, fundraisers, membership chairs, communications chairs, organization chairs, and data chairs. Let's adopt a "no riding left behind" strategy!

Liberalist is key to our future. It is the key to identifying our core vote, those who might be convinced to join us, those who will never join us, and those who will donate!

We need to take the tarnish of the Liberal brand. That will require professional marketing expertise. Also, every single member of the party should be able to make a fifteen or thirty second "elevator pitch". We should each be able to explain why we are Liberals.

We need to communicate more effectively and work together more effectively. That means: (a) regular national calls for volunteers on specific issues like outreach, the Victory Fund, and Liberalist; (b) regular calls for the riding Presidents, so they can let the Executive and staff know about their needs, as well as hold each other accountable for progress in each riding; and (c) clear communication from the President, the Executive and party staff on what they're doing.

We are good at talking, but not great at taking action to really change things. We have to be bold, and think big about changing the party. After all, what have we got to lose?

The bad news is that May 2, 2011 will go down in Canada's political history as the biggest defeat the Liberal Party of Canada has ever experienced. The good news is that all the opportunists have now left the party, and we can rebuild from the ground up by focusing on the public interest.

We must get away from "top down", leadership-focused, self-interested, navel gazing, and focus on connecting with voters in the voters' language and on the voters' issues.

Between elections, we should adopt a "no riding left behind strategy". Every single riding of the 36 BC ridings should have an active riding President and riding Executive. If a President needs help, we have to provide the help. If they refuse help when they need it, then maybe we need a new President.

The role of the BC party President, party Executive, and party staff in Vancouver should be to provide the support, services and tools needed by riding Presidents and Executives to connect with Canadians in our communities.

We should not be wasting our time on lengthy constitutional or policy debates. We need to make sure that we have a competent, effective party where the trains run on time.

BC ideas can lead the way nationally for the Liberal party. For example, the microtargetting initiative we started in South Vancouver Island should be a first step toward a national microtargetting strategy. We didn't have enough data to make it work well in this last election, but gathering data and using it wisely is critical to success.

We're on the same track as the UK Liberals in the 1920s and 1930s. If we are not able to connect with Canadians, we will not survive as a party. This is a time for real organizational transformation including the idea of opening our membership to all Liberal voters for free, as well as the idea of using a primary system to elect our next leader.

We need to close the gap between the riding associations and the folks in Vancouver by including creating regional Vice Presidents to support six or seven ridings. Also, we should consider regional field offices, or at least regional outreach workers working out of their home offices.

We need to focus on leadership. Don't get me wrong. We don't need to focus on the national leadership. We need to focus on how each one of us can be a leader. The key question is what can each one of us do to rebuild the Liberal Party of Canada, to connect with Canadians? Then we just do it.

Microtargetting data can make the difference between winning and losing, but we need good data and we need to know how to use it. Liberalist is a fantastic tool, but it's only as good as the data.

Nous sommes un pays bilingue. C'est une force pour le parti Libéral et il ne faut pas l'oublier.

We need to use social media, not to tell people about us, but to connect with people so they we can listen and learn from Canadians. Let's develop our policy agenda through online "wikis"!

Canadians want to vote for a party that shares Canadian values. We want a party that we can trust. Why do people vote for Harper? Because they trust him more than they trust us.

Great parties are not great parties because they win elections. Great parties are great parties because of what they give back to our families, our communities, our country and our future.

Our policy development process is disregarded by the party elites. Let's open it up by establishing a Foundation under the wing of the Liberal Party, to develop innovative policy ideas.

Let's not try to be like the NDP or the Tories. The reason they are successful right now is that they are making every effort to be just like us! So let's stick to our core values – openness, evidence-based policy-making, free markets that are properly regulated, and social justice for all. We are the party that brought Canadians from coast to coast to coast, Medicare, Canada Pension Plan, and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. Let's be proud of that great legacy to Canadians, and build on it.

Fundraising is job one. We have to focus on the Victory Fund – those small monthly donations are the reason the Conservatives are killing us in the fundraising competition.

Every riding should have a riding Action Plans or Strategic Plan, with clear, measurable targets. Everyone should be to help the riding associations to set clear targets, and then meet those targets.

If you have new lessons learned to share, please email David Merner at david@magma.ca