

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Next Steps for PCs

Provincial PC Party of Ontario: Next Steps

By Stephen Somerville

After the recent provincial electoral debacle in which the provincial Tories snatched victory ? or at least a good opportunity at victory ? from the proverbial jaws of defeat, it is time for the party to get off the mat and move forward.

The executive of the party is proposing to choose a new leader next May.

While a new leader is obviously required since former leader Tim Hudak stepped down in July, the timing for this is wrong.

There are a lot of party volunteers who are not happy with what happened during the election campaign or the direction that the party seems headed in.

As the Liberals have a solid majority with no election until 2018, the PC Party has a chance to reflect and recalibrate.

What they should be doing, not holding a leadership yet but a province-wide crying and bitching session so members can ? collectively - get all the bile out of their system.

The PC Party should arrange a convention. Charge any party member or anyone who wants to attend \$20 and then meet in a hockey arena or hotel room somewhere around the GTA. Hopefully, maybe 1,000 to 2,000 people would attend such an event. This would begin the healing process.

It would be a good idea at such a meeting that the Vice President responsible for policy, in conjunction with the Party President, lay out a timetable for real policy debate and development over the next few years.

There should be meetings within the local riding associations where policy resolutions are first developed and then slowly prioritized and refined over the coming years so that we don't have the faith-based platform problem again or the 1 Million Jobs fiasco that we had in the last provincial election.

Party members need to feel that they are actually part of the process and that they are being heard.

Although I would have liked to see serious policy development begin before the leadership process has started, this is now not possible.

At least one of the declared leadership candidates, North Bay PC MPP and former finance and energy critic Vic Fedeli has provided some initial things for party members to think about.

Last month, he proposed five constitutional amendments that would address the following.

Clarify the Leader's Role in the Constitution

Election Platform Ratification

Leadership Review

Private, Democratic Balloting

Membership Represented in Caucus

Let's take a brief look at number two on his list ? Election Platform Ratification.

I agree 100% with what Mr. Fedeli wrote:

?Over several losing election campaigns we have had the repeated issue of policy surprises in the party election platform. Despite assurances of 'no surprises' in the most recent campaign, we were again caught off guard by the contents of the platform.

?Caucus members most of all must stand behind the election platform and support it during the campaign. This is a difficult task if the majority of Caucus does not believe in its direction or cannot support its major planks. Caucus must have the confidence of knowing the planks of the election platform that it will be called upon to support.

?Similarly, the Policy Committee of the Party was set up to provide a link between the Leader and Caucus and the Political Advisory Councils; its job is to ensure that the policies approved by the membership through the policy development process are respected.

The Leader is ultimately responsible for the election platform, its contents, style, and strategy. This is necessary in order for the Leader to best lead the Party and fight the campaign. A good leader with a good platform will not have trouble gaining support for that platform by Caucus and by the Policy Committee.

?The Leader must therefore have the election platform ratified by the Caucus and by the Policy Committee of the party before it is released to the general public.?

Adopting this Constitutional Amendment would be a good start to regaining the trust of the rank and file and also to rebuilding enthusiasm within the provincial PC Party.

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