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The Next Chapter of New Leaf Liberals: From "The Guys in a Group Chat" to a Movement for the Future

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We Were Never Just a Group Chat

To Bonnie Crombie's inner circle, we were "the guys in a group chat."

It was meant to be dismissive.

The implication was that New Leaf Liberals was little more than a handful of frustrated Liberals venting online. That we'd make some noise, disappear after the leadership review, and be remembered as a footnote in the history of the Ontario Liberal Party.

A year later, that description says far more about how we were underestimated than it does about who we actually are.

Because every movement starts with a conversation.

Sometimes it's around a kitchen table. Sometimes it's over coffee after a riding meeting. Sometimes it's during a late-night phone call with fellow volunteers. And sometimes it begins in a group chat.

The question isn't where a movement begins.

The question is whether people are willing to turn conversation into action.

That is exactly what New Leaf Liberals did.

What began as conversations between members quickly became something much larger. Volunteers from every corner of Ontario found one another. Riding association executives shared ideas. Campaigners exchanged organizing strategies. Members who had never before taken part in internal party politics became engaged in meaningful conversations about transparency, accountability, democracy, and how we could build a stronger Ontario Liberal Party.

Whether you agreed with New Leaf Liberals or disagreed with us entirely, one fact became impossible to ignore.

We were never just a group chat.

We were members who cared enough to organize.

What I Have Learned as a Riding President

Serving as President of the Oxford Provincial Liberal Association has fundamentally changed how I think about political parties.

When I stepped into the role, I quickly realized that political parties are not built in Queen's Park.

They're built in church basements, community halls, coffee shops, and on doorsteps. They're built by volunteers who give up evenings to make phone calls, weekends to knock on doors, and countless hours organizing events that rarely make the headlines.

The leaders become the face of the party.

The members become its foundation.

Over the past year, I have watched volunteers recruit neighbours who had

never been involved in politics. I've seen first-time members become organizers. I've watched people who doubted they had anything to offer become some of the strongest voices in our riding association.

None of that happened because someone from the top gave us permission.

It happened because local members believed they had the ability to build something worth believing in.

That experience has reinforced something I now believe more strongly than ever.

If we want to rebuild the Ontario Liberal Party, we cannot simply focus on electing the right leader.

We must also build stronger riding associations, empower more volunteers, and create more opportunities for members to shape the future of our party.

That work belongs to all of us.

A New Political Moment

Today, our party finds itself at another turning point.

Bonnie Crombie has stepped aside. A leadership race is underway. Over the coming months, Ontario Liberals will choose a new leader who will help write the next chapter of our party's history.

That changes the conversation.

The leadership review is behind us.

Now the question becomes what kind of party we want to build together.

That is why I was encouraged to receive New Leaf Liberals' invitation to a

strategy session focused on the next twelve months.

Not the last twelve months.

The next twelve.

That distinction matters.

Grassroots movements often reach a crossroads once the moment that created them has passed. Some disappear because they were built around one issue. Others become trapped fighting yesterday's battles.

The strongest movements evolve.

I believe New Leaf Liberals has reached that moment.

Why I Don't Believe My Fellow Liberals Should Define New Leaf Liberals by Our Opening Chapter

Every political movement has an origin story.

For New Leaf Liberals, ours was the leadership review. It was the moment that introduced many of us to one another and sparked conversations about the future of our party.

But no movement should be judged solely by the moment that created it.

Over the past year, I've had the opportunity to get to know many of the people who make up New Leaf Liberals. We've talked in meetings, on Zoom calls, in group chats, over coffee, and at party events across Ontario.

From those conversations, I've come to realize something important.

The leadership review may have brought many of us together, but it was

never the only thing we had in common.

From my experience, we share a belief that riding associations should be empowered, not simply managed.

We share a belief that members deserve meaningful opportunities to shape the future of our party, not just during leadership races or election campaigns, but every single day.

We share a belief that transparency builds stronger organizations and that respectful debate produces better decisions.

We share a belief that volunteers deserve to feel valued, new members deserve to feel welcomed, and every riding association deserves the opportunity to succeed.

Most of all, we share a belief that grassroots organizing matters.

That is why I don't believe my fellow Liberals should define New Leaf Liberals by our opening chapter.

Political movements that endure are built around shared values, not shared grievances.

The leadership review was our beginning.

It does not have to define our future.

Building Something That Lasts

The good news is that I don't believe New Leaf Liberals needs to spend time figuring out whether we should be focused on building.

From my conversations with members across the movement, that understanding is already there.

We know that the next chapter is not about reliving old debates. It is not about defining ourselves by one leadership review or one moment in our party's history.

It is about building.

Building stronger riding associations.

Building better connections between organizers across Ontario.

Building a culture where members feel empowered to contribute, lead, and shape the future of our party.

Building a political organization that understands that grassroots engagement is not something that happens only when an election is called.

It happens every day.

The opportunity in front of New Leaf Liberals is to take the energy, relationships, and lessons from the past year and turn them into something lasting.

Imagine if every riding association had the opportunity to regularly share ideas about fundraising, volunteer recruitment, membership growth, and campaign organization.

Imagine if experienced campaigners mentored first-time organizers.

Imagine if members from rural communities, northern Ontario, the suburbs, and our largest urban centres could learn from one another and build a stronger province-wide network.

That is the kind of organizing culture that creates successful political parties.

Because politics often focuses on personalities.

But winning elections is about people.

It is about the volunteers who knock on doors.

The members who make phone calls.

The organizers who build teams.

The riding associations that create community connections long before an election is called.

The future of the Ontario Liberal Party will not be built by a small group of people at Queen's Park.

It will be built by thousands of Liberals across Ontario who believe their contribution matters.

That is the work New Leaf Liberals can help support.

Not by becoming a faction focused on the past.

But by continuing to build a network focused on building and rebuilding our party across the province.

The Next Chapter Starts Now

The Ontario Liberal Party is turning a page.

So should New Leaf Liberals.

Over the next year, we will choose a new leader. We will prepare for a policy convention. Riding associations will continue rebuilding. New members will join our party. Volunteers will step forward for the very first time.

Those opportunities cannot be seized by one leader alone.

They require thousands of members willing to organize in their communities.

To some, we were "the guys in a group chat."

Today, we are riding presidents, campaign managers, executive members, policy writers, canvassers, volunteers, and organizers.

Tomorrow, we have the opportunity to become something even more important.

A permanent grassroots network dedicated to strengthening riding associations, empowering members, encouraging respectful debate, and ensuring that every Ontario Liberal has the opportunity to help shape the future of our party.

Movements are not remembered because of where the conversations began.

They are remembered because of what those conversations inspired people to build.

The leadership review may have been our opening chapter.

But the story of New Leaf Liberals is still being written.

The next chapter is about showing up, organizing, and helping rebuild the Ontario Liberal Party in every corner of this province.

I believe our best chapters are still waiting to be written.

Join the Conversation

The next chapter of New Leaf Liberals will not be written by a small group of people.

It will be written by everyone who believes that the Ontario Liberal Party can be stronger, more grassroots, and more connected to the communities we

hope to serve.

That is why I want to invite Liberals from across Ontario to join us tonight for a conversation about the future.

This is an opportunity to share ideas, ask questions, and help shape what comes next for New Leaf Liberals and the role we can play in building and rebuilding our party across the province.

Whether you have been involved for years or you are just starting to find your place in the Ontario Liberal Party, there is a place for you in this conversation.

The future of our party will be built by members who are willing to show up, organize, and work together.

Join us tonight from 8:30 p.m. to 9:30 p.m. via Google Meet:

<https://meet.google.com/nsr-xvxf-kbj>

The next chapter starts with a conversation.

We hope you will be part of it.

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