



## **THE NEPEAN-CARLETON LIBERAL NEWS**

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### **The Convention**

The Liberal Party of Canada emerged from its convention in Montreal with a new leader and a new determination to stop the Conservative government of Stephen Harper.

Nearly 5,000 Liberals gathered in Montreal and the two objectives – leadership and election readiness – dominated discussions among delegates. Even though there were eight candidates for leader and each had supporters, there was a respectful tone to the proceedings and a determination to leave the convention a united party.

Much has been made in the press about the split between the supporters of Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien. But this convention went a long way to heal the divisions and remind Liberals of the values that bind them together and the need to stop the truly destructive policies of the Harper Conservatives who are not Progressive Conservatives or Tories but a new entity in Canadian politics drawing their lead from the far-right of the Republican Party in the United States.

The convention was marked by campaigns for party office, policy sessions and seminars on techniques of running local campaigns but the overarching question was who would become leader.

Delegates eagerly anticipated the speeches of the eight candidates – Martha Hall Findlay, Joe Volpe, Scott Brison, Ken Dryden, Stephane Dion, Gerard Kennedy, Bob Rae and Michael Ignatieff. The candidates demonstrated for Canadians the array of talented people in our party and their ideas about Canada.

There were electrifying moments in the speeches.

Martha Hall Findlay showed why she won the admiration and support of so many people with an outstanding speech.

Joe Volpe spoke on behalf of all the immigrants who came to this country and have been able to contribute to its growth and advancement through their hard work and display of the Canadian values of courage, persistence, optimism and fortitude.

Scott Brison gave a detailed policy speech on energy and its development and the Canadian economy, again demonstrating why he is considered one of the leading thinkers on economic issues in the party.

Ken Dryden gave a stirring and moving speech about what it means to be Canadian and to be part of this vast and varied land with its geographic mosaic and the people who share the landscape. Delegates were moved deeply by Mr. Dryden as he demonstrated the soulful quality of the best in Liberalism.

Gerard Kennedy spoke to a new generation of Canadians who will be the inheritors of this country and our party, reminding them of the social conscience that has always animated Liberals.

Stephane Dion was by turn witty and erudite in French and English, calling on Liberals to come together to defeat the Conservative government in the next election so Canada can once again stand as a leader that keeps its word in international forums.

Bob Rae electrified the delegates by speaking from the heart, without a podium or a prepared text. He spoke about the similarity of his values and Liberal values and presented himself for consideration as leader as someone with flaws but who would be a leader in the best tradition of the party of Laurier, King, St. Laurent, Pearson, Trudeau, Turner, Chrétien and Martin.

Michael Ignatieff spoke of the great tradition of the Liberal Party, its values and its role in creating Canada and the need to stop the destructive force of the Harper Conservatives who have torn up the Kyoto climate treaty, the Kelowna Accord and the national child care agreements negotiated by Ken Dryden with all the provinces.

The speeches showcased the amazing candidates of the Liberal Party and left delegates ecstatic about fighting the next election with this group of leaders in the Liberal Party.

There was a sense that, as voting day on Saturday began, that delegates were moving collectively toward a consensus decision.

At this point, we must point out the shameful behavior of the Conservative Party members who were guests as the convention as observers. Not content with that role, cabinet member John Baird and Michel Fortier and their aides such as Tim Powers passed out buttons to delegates denouncing some of the candidates for the leadership. It is one thing to go as a guest to another party's convention and take partisan positions with the media but it is truly classless to go and insert yourself in the proceeding by trying to sway delegates one way or another in a leadership contest.

After four ballots, a final runoff between Michael Ignatieff and Stephane Dion produced the result you all know.

Stephane Dion won the affection and support of delegates because of his long service to the Liberal Party and to Canada as a minister in the Chrétien and Martin governments. He is also on the right side of the environmental issue (in contrast to the Conservatives) and that won delegates to his side as well as his honesty, integrity, undeniable charm and obvious intelligence. These qualities and an optimism and authenticity that Stephane Dion exudes will make him attractive to Canadians right across the country. The Liberal Party delegates, in their wisdom, have made an outstanding choice. Canadians will recognize that and the party will prevail in the next election.