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Potential Corporate Donations Legislation

Niagara Falls - Friday 20 December 2002

Akaash Maharaj

has released the following response to press enquires on the potential for an election to be triggered by legislation barring corporate and union donations to political parties:

"I believe that reasonable limits on individual, corporate, and union contributions to political parties is a worthy objective, especially if we are to remedy widespread public cynicism about the interrelationship between private contributions and public policy.

"However, I can not believe that there is any realistic possibility that the government would provoke a caucus revolt and trigger a general election over this issue by bringing forward legislation before it creating a democratic consensus among Canadians and MPs.

"Liberals recognise that we have a duty to be patriots before we are partisans, and it would be unthinkable for us to impose our internal divisions upon an unwilling public through a premature and unnecessary election. Moreover, the government could hardly go to the people because of a declared inability to govern its caucus, and still ask the people to trust it to govern the nation.

"I believe that the key to managing this unusually long leadership transition is to ground ourselves in the first principle of politics: that ethically, political office must be a means towards an end and not an end in itself. That the Liberal Party might not be able to unite around a single personality over the next year will be of no consequence if we unite around a common set of ideas and policies. In the context of a rightfully emboldened backbench, however, if such a common agenda is to be real, let alone cohesive, it must be built in concert with Members of Parliament rather than dictated to them.

"The alternative would be the spectacle of a party that might remain formally in office but that would be effectively out of power."

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www.Maharaj.ca

For interviews, please contact:

David Zurawel

Akaash Maharaj Campaign

416.413.4743

david.zurawel@maharaj.ca