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**Akaash Maharaj Releases a General Letter to Liberals
On Renewing the Liberal Party of Canada**

Toronto – Wednesday 25 January 2006

*Akaash Maharaj
urges Liberals to band together
to reclaim the Party of Laurier, Pearson, and Trudeau*

Dear Colleagues,

I hope this note finds you well, and rebounding from the election. Monday evening was certainly a trying pass in the Liberal Party's history, and we will have to walk an arduous road before we emerge from this dark night of the soul. Accordingly, I am writing to urge your assistance in initiating the process of renewal, to restore our Party as a vessel for liberal-democratic ideals worthy of our heritage and deserving of the confidence of Canadians.

Ultimately, Canadians did not turn away from Liberalism; instead, the national campaign lacked the courage of Liberal convictions. The convulsions in national opinion up to election day demonstrated that Canadians wanted desperately to vote for the Party of Laurier, of Pearson, and of Trudeau, but reluctantly came to the conclusion that that Party was not on the ballot.

Our Party's long association with power has made us a magnet for Liberals of convenience, who have too often supplanted Liberals of conscience. However, Canadians are not the fools that some political operatives take us for. We recognise those who seek power as an end in itself rather than as a means to advance the public good, and we choose accordingly.

Fortunately, fair-weather Liberals will be the first to flee the shadow of adversity. Those of us who remain must not repeat past errors of believing that we can effect change merely by exchanging Party leaders. If there is no fundamental reform and grassroots rejuvenation of the Liberal Party itself, then no matter how talented or well intentioned the next leader may be, that person will remain a prisoner of the ills that beset our Party.

Democracy must be more than just a way of choosing leaders; it must be a way of governing ourselves.

The Party must embrace a culture that holds it a virtue to tell our leaders what they need to know, not merely what they want to hear. We must reject all notions of victor's justice in the aftermath of a leadership race. We must cast off the illiberal impulse to equate dissent with disloyalty. We must be patriots before we are partisans, and realise that we serve our Party best by serving our country first. Above all else, we must engage in a process of reflection and candid debate, to nourish and re-energise ideas and ideals that will define and advance a Liberal agenda for the nation.

There are those who argue that this represents too much change; that facing an unstable minority government, the Party must retrench, not renew or reach out; that now is not the time for the politics of principle to displace the politics of empty ambition.

But in my view, it is always the right time to do the right thing. And as the results of the election amply demonstrate, those who would sell our Party's soul for power will leave us with neither.

In the coming weeks, we will all have a chance to begin this process in our local communities and in informal networks of Liberals across Canada. I am eager to perform my duty towards the cause of Liberalism, and I urge you to share the challenge during our Party's moment of destiny.

I hope we will have a chance to work together, and I remain at your disposal if I can be of any assistance to you.

With best wishes,
Akaash

- 30 -

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