

John Fraser
Interim Leader, Ontario Liberal Party
Campaign Debrief Keynote
Length: 1922 words

CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY

Bonjour tout le monde, merci beaucoup pour cet excellent accueil.

Thank you, everyone...for that great Liberal family welcome.

And thank you everyone for making the trek down to the Sheraton for our campaign debrief session this morning.

It's an important conversation for us to have, because as we move forward, we need to understand how we got here and whats next

this morning helped us do that.

My son James and his wife Sarah got married last night, and it was so wonderful to celebrate his wedding with our family.

Now I'm back here in Toronto with my other family...my Liberal family.

And while this isn't a wedding, these events always feel like a family reunion.

And I don't care what anybody says—you just can't get enough family in your life.

You know, when you're in Question Period, there's a lot of heckling...

...and things can get heated.

So the other day, we we're chirping back and forth with the Tories, and one of them called us the "Hateful 8"... because there's 8 in our caucus.

I couldn't believe it

The "Hateful 8."

Now I'm sure they thought that was pretty clever.

I'd like to say for the record—when I look out at this room, hate is the opposite of what I see.

I see connectors. I see innovators. And I see builders.

Because that's who we are as Liberals.

And you know, the number 8 is considered lucky in many cultures.

Now I know what you're thinking...after the last election, we don't feel very lucky.

We need to put things in perspective though, because we've got a few things going for us that we didn't have in 2018.

First, because of all the hard work by the leadership team, we are in solid financial shape.

We don't have nearly as much campaign debt, and we should be able to pay it off quickly.

Next, we beat the NDP in popular vote.

It's small comfort ... I know,

it's important to remember that the seat result doesn't match the support we got

More votes ... and a quarter of the seats

Finally, we held on to our raw vote, while both the other parties lost theirs.

The Conservatives lost over 400,000 voters compared to last time, and the NDP lost over 800,000. That's more than the entire city of Hamilton!

My point is, even though it may not feel like it, we actually played a great game.

We did a lot of things right... the stats sheet shows it

It was like hitting the posts a lot and the puck just not going in in the net

And we were able to play a great game because we had great people like you show up to help.

You talked to voters...

You brought food for volunteers...

You became monthly donors....

If you hadn't laced up, we wouldn't have been able to play at all.

And we're not just talking about the last election. We're talking about the last four years.

Because when we got together like this after the 2018 election, a lot of people had written us off.

They didn't think we'd survive.

They said we wouldn't make it.

And you know what our family did?

We proved them wrong.

We paid down a \$10 million dollar campaign debt.

And raised millions for the next

We ran a leadership leadership contest and won two by-elections

All with a skeleton crew and a shoestring budget.

And we assembled and supported a fantastic group of candidates in the election.

All because we came together as a family.

the Caucus and their staff, Party staff, Executive Council, riding associations and volunteers...

Past and present...

We're still here, because you helped get us here.

So thank you,

I'd like to say a special thank you to all of our candidates in the last election, especially to those of you who are here with us today.

We had a really incredible team this election, and they worked so hard and sacrificed so much to represent their communities.

I want to thank you all for your continued dedication. We're going to need it as we move forward together as a Party.

It's an honour to once again be our party's interim leader – and I'm grateful for all of your support.

Now some of you told me you thought interim leader was a tough job to take on ... let me tell you though... the permanent job comes with a lot more responsibility and pressure.

Nobody wanted to win the last election more than Steven Del Duca, and ... to continue the hockey analogy ... he gave it 110%.

I'm proud to call Steven my friend ... and I greatly admire his strong desire to serve his community.

Merci Steven pour votre dévouement, et nous vous souhaitons un succès continu dans votre campagne pour devenir le maire de Vaughan

Thank you, Steven, for your dedication, and we wish you continued success as you campaign to become the Mayor of Vaughan.

And that brings me to another thing I want to point out. If you look around across the province, there are a lot of Liberals running in municipal elections in October

That speaks volumes about our values, and the strength of our grassroots.

So I urge you to go out and support your local candidates in October.

And finally ... I want to point out that we elected an outstanding team of MPPs. They're really impressive.

We've got a lawyer, an ER doctor, a physicist,

A top banker, a former cabinet minister,

Two former city councillors, with years of experience

And me—the guy who used to bag your groceries.

All of them are leaders who want to serve their communities, and it's an honour to lead them.

And they are going to need your help over these next four years...and I know they will all be there to help you, too.

When you think about it, right now is a great time to get involved.

I got asked the other day how I first became involved in politics.

I met John Turner when I was nine in the 1968 federal campaign, and that's when the seed was planted.

And it was as a teenager that my dad helped that seed grow.

When I would get home late at night after, y'know, doing things that teenagers do, my dad would always still be awake.

He never slept until we were all home safe.

And we would sit on two love seats across from one another and we would have these amazing conversations about all kinds of stuff.

Literature, philosophy, theology, current events...and politics.

It wasn't until I saw John Turner debate Brian Mulroney in 1988 over the Free Trade deal that I decided to get up off the couch and really join the conversation myself.

Because the Free Trade Debate was a very important conversation for us as Canadians at the time.

And even though I came around on free trade, I needed to be part of that conversation.

Right now, Ontario Liberals are about to have some pretty important conversations too

We have to decide how we want to pick our next leader.

We have to think about who we want to be as a party.

We have another by-election to fight in Hamilton.

And we have to ask Ontarians how we can help them build a better future.

We have to give everyone a seat at the table for this conversation—and I mean everyone.

Look ... I've been a Liberal ... for a long time

what I know is it's always time for new people,

New people with new ideas about how to reach Ontarians, to step up and have their moment.

If you're a young person or someone who's new to politics, we need your ideas, your energy, and your leadership.

And as a Party, we need to give you the training and tools you need to succeed.

And to the folks like me who have been around a while, of course we need you too. We need your wisdom and your experience.

And as veterans, we also need to be willing to listen, willing to mentor... willing to change...willing to make space

and even be willing to step aside when the time comes.

Renewal is a good thing. It's a necessary thing.

So get involved with your riding association. Run for the board.

Host a fundraiser with your friends. Invite a caucus member or your past candidate.

Send an email to Mandy, Mike, or Carter at the Party and ask how you can help.

We've all got to come together as a team, because Ontarians are counting on us to fight for them.

Doug Ford talked a pretty good game during the election about getting it done.

But on too many things, he is making it worse.

He's passed Bill 7, which gives hospitals the power to threaten seniors and their families with huge hospital bills if they won't consent to a placement in a long-term care home...

...that could be far away from the most important people in their lives.

Doug Ford won't repeal Bill 124, which capped pay raises for nurses at 1 per cent.

1 per cent. In the middle of the pandemic.

Bill 124 has done more damage to the front lines of health care in this province than any other piece of legislation I can remember.

And then he acts surprised when surgeries get canceled and test results get delayed because they're short-staffed.

As if it wasn't a direct result of his actions.

And this summer, when ERs and ICUs were being shut down across this province, we couldn't find the Minister of Health for five weeks.

Five weeks. In the middle of a health care crisis. That's no way to run a health care system.

And now Doug Ford's solution is to open the door to more for-profit health care services.

He wants to build a different health care system.

One where if you have money, you can pay your way to the front of the line.

One where more money is going to profits... not patients.

That goes against the basic principles of universal health care

That's why Ontarians are counting on us, because we've got to defend public health care and fight for their future.

And we're going to continue to fight for great public schools for our kids,

A real plan to fight climate change,

And an economy where everyone has opportunity.

You know, there's another reason 8 is a pretty good number for our Party.

It was the eighth of January, 1857 when Grits and reformers came together in Southwestern Ontario to create the Ontario Liberal Party.

They were fighting for democracy, to unite Ontario and Québec into one country, and to build our country up.

And even 165 years ago, those Grits and Reformers built our movement basically the same way we need to build it today...

By going out into their communities and talking to people.

Because that doesn't happen in the Legislature. It happens out there, in small towns and urban community centres...

In school gyms and local library conference rooms...

And neighbourhood coffee shops and networking events.

It happens when we listen to people about the realities of their lives...

Their struggles and their triumphs.

From the very beginning, we've been connectors, builders and innovators.

It's our history, and it's who we are.

We're the January 8s.

And it's time for us to connect...

And build...

And innovate again.

Thank you.