

Tuesday, August 27, 2002.

Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien
Prime Minister of Canada
Langevin Block
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A2 Via fax and e-mail

Dear Prime Minister,

Congratulations on your recent announcement stating your intention not to seek a fourth term as Prime Minister of Canada. This announcement brings a degree of closure to your long service in public life and more importantly, allows the Liberal party - which presently serves as government - to re-focus on the business of governing the nation. Of course we will continue to disagree and vigorously oppose several aspects of your agenda for Canada ... such is the nature of debate in a free and democratic society.

However, the forthcoming Liberal leadership race yields a great opportunity to translate the words of the government's new focus on ethics and transparency into concrete action by raising the bar and setting a new legacy benchmark for leadership campaigns conducted by parties in power. Mr. Prime Minister, you can single-handedly establish this legacy by insisting that Ministers of the Crown who wish to pursue the leadership of your party resign their cabinet posts upon formally announcing their intentions.

You have signaled your desire to embark upon an ambitious agenda of "inclusion" and "innovation" over the next 18 months and I trust you will agree that this task requires the full and undivided attention of your Ministers. Recent leadership campaigns in Saskatchewan and Ontario were replete with examples of Cabinet ministers abusing government flying privileges and using the cover of government consultations to further their personal political ambitions. Quite frankly, Canadian taxpayers deserve better.

If you are worried that having several top ministers in key portfolios step away from the Cabinet table diminishes the government's capacity to govern, I direct you to your words (widely reported) from a media scrum in Saguenay at the conclusion of your caucus meeting last week.

In stressing your focus that Cabinet ministers should focus on governing, you noted that : "They can't organize campaigns and actually raise funds. If they want to have the same advantages as Mr. Martin, they can do the same thing as Mr. Martin - resign. There will be quite a few guys willing to take their place."

Mr. Prime Minister, I believe our suggestion is sound, appropriate and easily implemented. It requires the political will of one person, you. It would set a new and welcome standard for government. Should you wish to discuss this idea further, I remain open to meeting with you at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Walter J. Robinson". The ink is dark and the signature is fluid, with a long, sweeping underline.

Walter Robinson
Federal Director