



Listening Project

REFLECTIONS FROM CANDIDATES ON THE 2018 CAMPAIGN

“We have a very strong party. We have to go back to our roots. We have to go back and listen. [...] That is what we go forward on.”

- 2018 Candidate

A LETTER TO THE ONTARIO LIBERAL PARTY

On June 7, 2018, we suffered a devastating loss. The Ontario Liberal Party entered the election as a majority government and emerged with only seven seats, losing official party status. The majority of caucus members lost their seats, and not a single new candidate across Ontario was elected. A central theme of the election was a desire for change. Ontarians wanted a change, and they got it.

For candidates across the province, it was a difficult election. Many knew of the challenge ahead before the election began — and yet a talented, diverse, energetic and committed team of candidates stepped forward. This slate included long serving caucus members, longtime Liberals running for the first time, and new members.

Collectively, the OLP's 2018 candidates invested countless hours knocking on doors, connecting with volunteers and donors, attending events, meeting with community groups, and - most importantly - listening. They heard what was on the minds of Ontarians, and know the dynamics of the election unique to their riding.

We believe that we can learn something from listening to these candidates. In the time since the election, we reached out to the OLP's 2018 slate of candidates to hear what they have to say. We believe this should be just one part of a much broader party-wide listening effort to inform the rebuilding work ahead.

This report captures a summary of what we heard. It strives to share candidates' insights, feedback, and advice. If one thing was clear from this process it was this: candidates remain deeply committed to the Ontario Liberal Party, and continue to believe that our party is a powerful force of good for the people of Ontario. We could not agree more.

It is our privilege to share what we heard from candidates with you. We trust that you, too, are listening.

The Candidate Listening Project Team

Listening Project Team

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THANK YOU
FOR BEING PART
OF THE TEAM!

INTRODUCTION

In July 2018, a team of volunteers came together around a simple, shared objective: to reach out to all 124 Ontario Liberal Party (OLP) candidates who ran in the 2018 election. The purpose of this outreach was to ensure that all candidates had an opportunity to share insights and perspectives on the election, based on the election experience in their riding, and to inform the broader rebuilding process ahead.

Through weekly conference calls, the Project Team developed a list of interview questions, established a way to collect and compile the interview data, and organize the outreach effort. By late July, invitations were sent to all candidates to participate in interviews.

A total of 63 interviews (51% participation rate) were conducted in August and September 2018. This included candidates from all regions of Ontario, and a balance of current and former caucus members and new candidates. 51% of interviewees were women. A total of 17 candidates led the process as interviewers, also including a diversity of perspectives and experiences. The process to interview, record, submit and analyze the interviews represents more than 100 hours of work from the Project Team.

This report summarizes what we heard during this process, captured in four parts:

1. **Central Themes** - a summary of the main themes which emerged from the conversations with candidates;
2. **What We Heard** - a question-by-question summary of the candidate responses, highlighting insightful patterns and trends where present;
3. **Recommendations** - a specific list of actionable recommendations for the OLP, intended to be constructive and useful; and
4. **Next Steps** - an offer on behalf of the Project Team, and 2018 candidates, to stay engaged in the OLP and support the rebuilding process ahead.

Central themes

1. WE STOPPED LISTENING.

What happened in the 2018 election? Through conversations with candidates all across Ontario, one shared sentiment rises to the top of the list: the sense that the OLP had “stopped listening” and “lost touch” - not just with our base, but with the electorate in general. In the words of one candidate, “It comes back to putting power and agency in the hands of the people. That’s why we lost - we stopped listening to the grassroots, and we lost who we are.” In another candidate’s words, “people stopped believing that the party cared about them.”

2. PEOPLE DIDN’T KNOW WHAT WE STOOD FOR.

Effective communications are critical in any election campaign - and candidates found that voters were not clear about what the OLP stood for in this election. We did not communicate our plans for Ontario and Ontarians effectively enough. The platform was complex and comprehensive, but not well understood at the door. “Our message was too wonky; not real enough.” More specifically, many candidates felt we did not successfully communicate what differentiates the OLP from the NDP to voters. Given the difficult climate of the election and simple messaging of opposition campaigns, this lack of identity was seen as a fatal weakness in the campaign. As one candidate said, “there was a real consistency of message from those *not* voting for us.”

3. PARTS OF ONTARIO FELT LEFT BEHIND.

The sense that the OLP often did not reflect Ontario’s regions in its priorities or policies was shared by many candidates - particularly those in northern and rural ridings. “People thought the Liberal government only cared about Toronto.” Understanding the diversity of needs and interests across Ontario is key to building and maintaining their support.

“I kept hearing, ‘we wish we could vote for you but we just can’t this time.’”

- 2018 Candidate

4. OUR LEADER WAS UNPOPULAR, AND WE DID NOT MEANINGFULLY ADDRESS IT.

“Opposition parties were relentless in getting their message out early - like, 2015 - in the form of character assassinations on the Premier.” Candidates broadly acknowledged the Premier’s unpopularity as a central challenge of the election. Many candidates expressed a similar experience: “People would say they didn’t like the Premier, but they couldn’t identify exactly *why*.” Underlying bias, sexism and homophobia were cited by many candidates. Regardless of the cause, the Liberal brand did not effectively navigate or overcome this challenge during the campaign.

5. PEOPLE WANTED CHANGE.

After 15 years of Liberal leadership, voters were ready for a change. This message was heard by candidates in every region. “People said they just wanted a change in government. They said they know they picked the wrong guy to do it, to take over; but, we needed a change.” In another candidate’s words, “Time for a change, I’d hear. We didn’t have a message for why we didn’t need to change. People had made up their minds when the writ dropped that it was anybody but us.”

6. WE WEREN’T READY FOR THE RACE.

Candidates also cited internal challenges within the OLP as a weakness of the campaign. Two central themes emerged. First, many candidates found the campaign “disorganized” or “unprepared,” citing specifics such as late nomination meetings. Second, more work was needed to strengthen the dynamics of the team, including building trust and fostering open dialogue. In the words of one candidate, “people were funnelling information up the chain, but the decision makers did not trust their team.”

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18 CANDIDATE

What We Heard



QUESTION 1: Why did you decide to run for the Ontario Liberal Party in the 2018 election?

Candidates have various reasons for choosing to run, but most share a few core motivations: to make a difference and serve their communities; to contribute to a party that reflects their values; and, to advance policy initiatives that benefit Ontarians. In the words of one candidate, “I believed in what the government had been doing and in the plan moving forward. I believed in the leadership.”

Common responses to the question included:

- **Support for Liberal core values** - candidates clearly demonstrated a deep commitment to the core values of the OLP as a chief motivation for running. In the words of a new candidate, reflecting a sentiment shared by many others: “through my life, the Ontario Liberal Party has best represented my values.”
- **Belief that candidate would be a good representative** - some candidates indicated a thoughtful assessment of the other candidates seeking office was a part of their decision to run. In the words of a former caucus member, “even though the polls were dismal, I felt I was a stronger candidate than the opposition. I couldn’t abandon the riding.”
- **Commitment to key policies** - the desire to champion specific policy advancements was also mentioned by many candidates. One caucus member specifically mentioned the Basic Income Pilot and Cap-and-Trade as two initiatives which he believed in and led to his decision to run. The challenging political climate was also cited as a motivation. “I had no problem defending the platform. They were great ideas. I wanted to defend them - especially given the overall climate against the government. It was time for me to do this, and to stand up against the hate.”

QUESTION 2: How was your experience with the Party during the nomination process? Do you have any suggestions on how the process, or experience, could be improved?

Many candidates experienced challenges with the nominations process, and had much to say about ways to improve it. Common themes included:

- **Nomination meetings happened too late** - both candidates who were acclaimed and in contested nominations indicated that the nominations were too late, and did not provide adequate time for candidates to knock on doors. For those with long nomination processes, resources and funds were strained and could have been used more effectively. Waiting for “celebrity candidates” was cited by several as a reason why candidates (as well as volunteers, donors, and voters) were unclear of their standing far too close to the election.
- **More transparency and consistency needed** - candidates would like to see clear expectations set for everyone involved much earlier in the process. Many candidates felt that too much of the process “happens behind closed doors” and disadvantages grassroots candidates. The vetting process was also cited as an issue, as for some candidates it felt disorganized. A single point of contact for each nominee would make the process and communications more effective.
- **The role of the PLA is unclear** - candidates felt the central party appears to drive the nomination process, which can add to local discontent from the PLA. Some candidates also spoke of a lack of support from the PLA.
- **Lack of new candidate support** - more “onboarding support” for new candidates would be helpful, or a mentor program to connect new candidates with returning candidates to support them through their first election campaign.
- **Seeking qualified candidates** - several candidates spoke of the need for a better vetting process including standard human resources practices where a nominee’s skills, experience, public speaking ability, etc. are examined.

QUESTION 3: How well prepared was your riding association and/or local campaign team for the election? Did you run into any challenges with respect to fundraising, the ability to recruit and train volunteers, or otherwise?

When asked to rate the local preparedness for the election on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being well prepared, the average score given from candidates was 3.4 - reflecting overall preparedness with room for improvement. Common responses to this question included:

- **Need for more PLA involvement** - many candidates would like to see their local PLAs doing more between elections, particularly with respect to fundraising and engaging volunteers. The challenge was particularly pronounced in ridings with a change in candidate. In the words of one new candidate, “fundraising was very difficult. The riding association prior to me was basically the group of supporters of the previous candidate. Once he was gone, it was very difficult to really get the riding association going.”
- **Fundraising was challenging** - many candidates expressed difficulty in raising funds, and felt this was left to the candidate rather than a shared responsibility with the PLA. The new rules also posed a challenge. In the words of a returning candidate, “I couldn’t fundraise. The unions and organizations that supported me in the past could not figure out how to support me this time. [...] We changed the fundraising rules without understanding the impact.”
- **Lack of support from central campaign** - many candidates expressed that they felt they needed more support from the central campaign team. This varied widely depending on riding. In the words of a first time candidate from Eastern Ontario, “We had no help from the OLP. It was even a hinderance sometimes, with comments like, ‘you’re not going to win anyway.’” A discussion about the roles of the candidate, the PLA, and the central OLP team with respect to election preparedness would be helpful in advance of the 2022 election. Greater ongoing collaboration between the central campaign team, the party and local campaign teams would also be beneficial.

QUESTION 4: How helpful were the riding services to your campaign? Which riding services did you, your riding association and/or your campaign team draw upon? Which services were most helpful?

When asked to rate the helpfulness of the riding services on a scale of 1 to 5, with 5 being very helpful, the average score given from candidates was 2.7. Candidates in the Greater Toronto Area found the riding services more helpful (average score of 3.1) than did candidates in the rest of Ontario (average of 2.3). Frequent comments included:

- **Riding services package came too late** - many candidates felt that the riding supports were not available until too late in the election to be useful. Many candidates had participated in debates before the debate binders were distributed, and so they ended up producing the materials on their own.
- **Materials needed to be more localized** - a number of candidates felt the key messages were not useful given the local context of their riding. Even former caucus members, who would already be familiar with the issues and investments in their riding, expressed dissatisfaction. “We did our own thing. We didn’t wait for the central campaign team.” Another returning member expressed a similar sentiment. “We had our own material, our own products, and we knew what local information would be useful. We ran on local issues and had a local platform.”
- **Liberalist was helpful, but could be improved** - candidates identified Liberalist as the most useful part of the riding services supports, but some felt that could use improvement, particularly in ridings with high resident turnover. The ability to track specific concerns, record voter feedback, track volunteers and update voter information were cited as specific improvements which would be helpful.
- **Need for more two-way communication with the centre** - a lack of listening from the central team was flagged as a core frustration for many candidates. In the words of one candidate, “No one in the centre was listening. We’d hear, ‘we have a path to victory’, but we were never shown the path.”

QUESTION 5: This was a difficult election for Liberal candidates across Ontario. What common themes or messages did you hear at the door from voters in your riding? Did these shift over the course of the election? If so, when?

When it comes to issues heard at the door, there was a great degree of consistency across Ontario. The common messages identified by candidates were as follows:

- **“You can’t stop Ford”** - polling data early in the campaign, and leading into it, suggested that the OLP wasn’t the strategic vote to stop Doug Ford. Candidates who lost to NDP candidates cited this message strongly.
- **“How are you different from the NDP?”** - the budget tabled before the election made it difficult to differentiate the OLP from the NDP. In the words of one candidate, “we moved too close to the left. There was a big group of middle class voters who are traditionally Liberal and they don’t know who represents them anymore.”
- **“The Leader”** - candidates heard support at the door for them as the local candidate, but voters would say they “just couldn’t support the leader.”
- **“It’s time for change”** - as one candidate said, “two years ago, folks made their minds up that the Liberals had to go. It was death by a thousand cuts.”
- **“Hydro”** - whether the cost or privatization of hydro, it was an issue cited by many candidates.
- **“Corruption and scandal”** - the gas plants were often raised as a part of this larger theme. “It was a message that the NDP and PC had been communicating for years. The election didn’t overcome it.”
- **“The debt is out of control!”** - candidates cited a view that the OLP were “not good money managers,” and the lack of a balanced budget and additional spending programs made it difficult to differentiate from the NDP.

QUESTION 6: What do you think led to the outcome of the 2018 election?

Candidates have a unique vantage point from which to examine the election, and comment on the reasons for the outcome. Many candidates indicated that they knew that it would be a challenging election before it began (in the words of a former caucus member, “The election was lost at least two years before [it started]”). Here is a summary of candidates’ assessment of what led to the election outcome, in order of most common responses:

- **The party “lost touch” with the electorate and base (54%)** - this was expressed by more than half of candidates (54%) as the reason for the 2018 election defeat. In one candidate’s words, “We lost touch with the people. We focused too much on things that people don’t care about.”
- **Poor communication (39%)** - many candidates cited poor communication. In the words of one candidate, “[We were] never able to communicate the decisions that were made. The Hydro One file - we didn’t explain what this actually meant for Ontarians.” A sub theme of this response was reference to social media, and the opposition’s strong use of social media to discredit the government (mentioned by 12% of candidates).
- **Dislike of the leader (37%)** - the unpopularity of the leader was the third most frequently cited response, and was felt most strongly by returning candidates (twice as likely to be cited by incumbents compared to new candidates). This response was also most common in suburban areas (50% of suburban candidates referenced perceptions of the leader). Candidates acknowledged hearing underlying sexism and homophobia at the door.
- **Time for a change (28%)** - one returning candidate summarized this point succinctly. “[There was] fatigue of the OLP. It was a change election.”
- **Distress with the shift to the left (17%)** - the fifth most frequent response was to cite the shift toward the left (raised twice as often by suburban compared to urban candidates). 13% of respondents specifically cited a lack of strategy with respect to differentiating the OLP from the NDP.

QUESTION 7: [For returning candidates] Did this election feel different from previous elections? If so, how?

Returning candidates indicated that this election did, indeed, feel different from previous elections. One candidate stated it this way: “The anger on the right was palpable. The venting and the vitriol was new. I haven’t seen it before.” Common responses included:

- **“Cold shoulder at the door”** - returning candidates could feel a difference in the mood of voters during the campaign. In the words of one candidate, “There was nothing at the door. People were polite, but there was nothing there. Undecided, undecided, undecided ... which was really, ‘I’m not voting for you.’”
- **Lack of party identity** - some candidates referenced that the OLP campaign lacked a distinct identity with voters. “People didn’t know why they should vote for a Liberal. We didn’t talk about our history. We were framed by the opposition about our legacy, as a negative legacy. We should have framed it as a positive legacy. We should have reminded people of what we accomplished.”
- **Loss of momentum** - candidates did not feel the momentum of previous elections, and struggled to overcome the emotional and reactive responses people were having to the OLP. This resulted in challenges with raising funds and engaging volunteers.
- **Communications challenges** - candidates felt they did not have opportunity to voice concerns and be heard by the central campaign. Having limited opportunities to speak on the candidate calls was referenced. Some candidates felt this hindered the overall campaign, as concerns with the strategy were not expressed and addressed early enough. “We were waiting for the Tories to mess up [and] we thought we could ignore the NDP. [...] We were not fighting where the battle was.”

QUESTION 8: If you were to make recommendations on how the Ontario Liberal Party should rebuild after the 2018 election, what would they be?

Candidates emerged from the 2018 election with many reflections and specific recommendations for the future of the OLP. The two most common recommendations were as follows:

- **Return to the grassroots** - more than 75% of candidates referenced this idea in their response, with some calling for “the most extensive consultation in the party’s history.” Other recommendations included sending the OLP executive into communities across Ontario, and hosting more events outside of Toronto.
- **Redefine the role of PLAs** - confusion over the role of PLAs can be addressed by clarifying - and perhaps reimagining - how PLAs can build active, strong networks at the local riding level. Candidates also felt that PLAs could play a stronger role in organizing regional activities.

A number of other **specific recommendations** were made, including:

- Hold earlier nomination meetings, and ensure candidate selection occurs early enough to allow for successful local campaigns;
- Engage the slate of 2018 candidates between elections to support the rebuild;
- Focus on increasing communications, including policy communications about the activities of the current government;
- Shift back to the centre, and differentiate the party from the NDP;
- Position the OLP as the reasonable alternative to the Conservatives and NDP well in advance of the next election;
- More outreach to diverse ethnic and cultural communities;
- Broader engagement on policy (with some calling for a return to the Common Ground platform);
- Appoint “deputy leaders” in each region to help with regional communications;
- More engagement of youth; and
- Select “an exceptional new leader” before the next election.

QUESTION 9: What do you think your region will be looking for from the Ontario Liberal Party going forward?

When speaking about the future of the OLP, candidates showcase a high level of optimism about the opportunity ahead to rebuild the party. Some feel this can happen in the next few years; others felt it needed to be a more ongoing renewal process. In all parts of Ontario, candidates indicated that they sensed an interest and readiness to support the rebuild. In the words of one candidate, “People are still ready to support the party [but] the party has to help itself to get reorganized and to regroup.”

Interestingly, there was remarkable consistency in the responses from candidates to this question regardless of their geographic location. Here are specific items candidates believe their ridings and regions will be looking for from the OLP going forward:

- **Strong leadership** - candidates identified leadership as the top expectation from their regions into the future. This was the top response, and was consistent across all regions of Ontario.
- **Connection to the grassroots** - candidates reiterated the importance of grassroots engagement, consultation, and transparency. More regionally-driven and locally-relevant policies were also mentioned by candidates across Ontario (a candidate from Northern Ontario spoke about the need for greater understanding of the realities of campaigning in the north; a candidate from Southwestern Ontario wanted to see a strategy specifically for the Southwest, etc).
- **Move to the centre** - many candidates indicated that the Ontario Liberal Party should “reclaim the centre” in policies on transportation, housing and healthcare, and with more focus on fiscal responsibility.

QUESTION 10: Do you see yourself as a part of the future of the Party, either as a candidate in 2022 or in other ways?

The 2018 slate of Ontario Liberal Party candidates, overwhelmingly, remain committed to the party.* When asked if they see themselves as a part of the future of the party:

- **59% responded with a clear “YES”** - the majority of candidates (almost six in ten) are already committed to remaining engaged in the party and/or seeking the nomination again in 2022. In the words of one candidate, “In every way, shape and form, I will be involved.” Another candidate responded ‘yes’, stating “this is my 30th year as an Ontario Liberal Party member, and Ontario needs a rebuilt, revitalized Ontario Liberal Party.”
- **31% are considering** - this group of candidates are unsure of their future plans. Some indicated that they want to see where the OLP is headed in the coming years; others indicated that they will need to see how well running again would fit within their personal or professional commitments in the future. A common response was, “it’s too early to say.” This group remains open to running again and/or continued engagement.
- **10% say “no”** - one in ten 2018 candidates have decided not to run again, for a variety of reasons. In the words of one candidate, “I’m not sure I’ll run again. I’d rather get a younger person. I’m [in my 60s] and that’s four years from now.” Even candidates without plans to run again want to see renewal in the party.

*Note: 51% of 2018 candidates completed an interview through this Listening Project process. The percentages presented here reflect the responses of this group. They may or may not reflect the total group of 2018 candidates. Candidates who chose not to participate in an interview may be less likely to run again and/or stay engaged in the OLP - but this remains unknown.

QUESTION 11: What kind of engagement would you like to see going forward - for yourself, for your team, or your riding, or otherwise?

When asked about ways to engage going forward, three main suggestions emerged:

- **More grassroots engagement** - as with Question 8, candidates again raised a desire to see the OLP “get back to basics” and pay greater attention to local and regional interests in how the party evolves. Defining what “grassroots” means would also be a helpful starting point, and may allow bigger thinking about on the ground engagement.
- **More focus on youth** - candidates felt strongly that the OLP needs to do a better job of speaking to issues which matter to youth, and understand the rebuild as a long term effort. Getting (and keeping) youth engaged should be a central focus.
- **Communications overhaul** - a great emphasis on listening and open communications was viewed by candidates as a central part of a successful rebuilding process. Both email and face-to-face communications are considered important, although serving different purposes.

A number of other **specific recommendations** were made, including:

- Weekly emails to update members on the happenings at Queen’s Park;
- Bring back regional barbecues, so members do not have to travel long distances to convene with one another;
- Recruit former Queen’s Park staff members to join riding associations, as they have the skills and expertise to be instrumental in rebuilding these groups;
- Have past ministers and caucus members participate in local fundraising events to capitalize on their popularity;
- More PLA and volunteer training between elections;
- Develop a skills matrix for PLAs, identifying the specific skills that are needed for success (eg. communications, financial expertise, etc); and
- Make it fun! “Social events can be a powerful way of rebuilding the OLP family as a group of likeminded individuals.”

Recommendations

1. LISTEN, LISTEN, LISTEN.

The top recommendation emerging from candidates for the OLP is simple: listen. “It’s time to get back to serious grassroots discussions. We need to listen to people; to really hear them.” Many candidates spoke of the need for a comprehensive outreach strategy to spark conversations all across Ontario: with supporters and non-supporters; within all regions of Ontario; in all types of ridings. Listening projects targeted to specific groups of people such as riding associations, donors, volunteers and staff were recommended. Most importantly, when these conversations happen, the OLP needs to demonstrate that it is receiving the message. “People want to know they are being listened to.” Putting listening into action will demonstrate that the OLP heard the message of the 2018 election.

2. CLEARLY DEFINE WHO WE ARE.

Ontarians need to clearly understand what the OLP stands for - and so do we. There were many recommendations from candidates for the party to “reclaim the centre” or recapture “our place as the pragmatic middle ground.” Others felt that identifying the future ideological positioning should be subject to the comprehensive, Ontario-wide outreach strategy identified in Recommendation #1. Either way, we need to clearly define to voters who we are, what we stand for, and why we represent the best option forward for Ontario.

3. RE-ENERGIZE OUR BASE.

The OLP needs to re-engage our base of supporters, and candidates felt strongly that this should begin with PLAs as key grassroots organizations with close connections to local volunteers, donors and supporters. Clearly defining the role of PLAs in the OLP rebuild - and empowering them to be active voices in this process - would mark a major step forward towards improved regional representation and more grassroots engagement.

4. COMMUNICATE MORE EFFECTIVELY.

Future success depends on our ability to effectively communicate. This includes communications within the OLP, particularly during the rebuilding process; and, with Ontarians, to build back their trust and support. Specific recommendations included “maintaining authenticity” and presenting messaging to reflect a “balanced, reasonable approach” to policy creation. Fewer fundraising emails and more policy emails (“profiling the good work of our Group of Seven!”) were also recommended by many candidates as a way to make communications more relevant.

5. CHOOSE AN EXCEPTIONAL NEW LEADER.

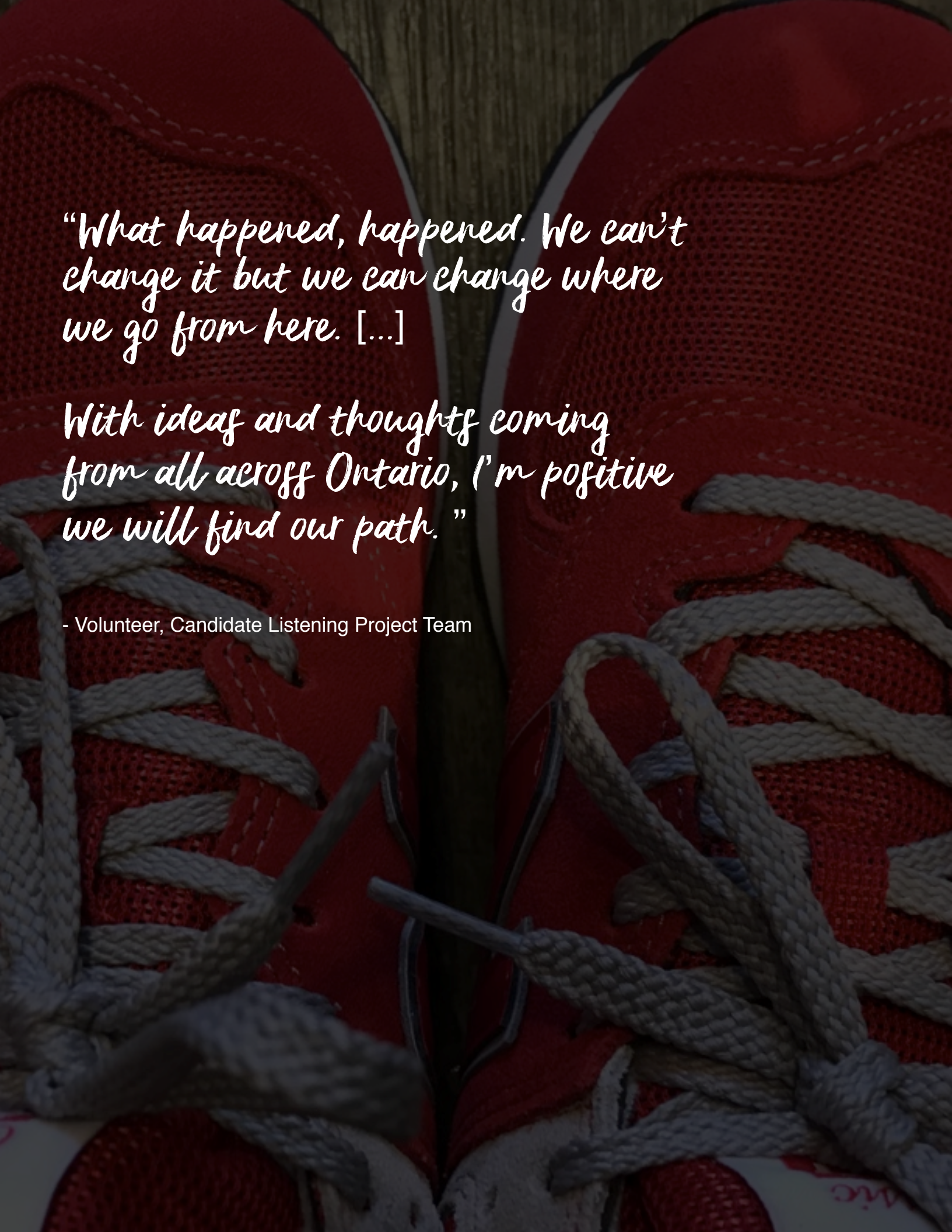
Candidates were well aware of the need for a new leader well in advance of the next election, and the importance of this selection for the success of the OLP in 2022. The new leader will need to inspire and motivate those inside and outside of the OLP. “We need an exceptional new leader that can appeal to our grassroots and pull in new demographics.”

6. NOMINATE CANDIDATES EARLIER.

It is no surprise that candidates feel strongly about earlier nominations going forward. Having a nominated candidate gives each riding “a voice” - someone who is the clear spokesperson for OLP policies on the ground, and who can rally support (including volunteers and donations). Candidates recommend that a Candidate Search Committee is established well before the 2022 election with a mandate to establish a plan for having nomination candidates identified in all ridings, and nomination meetings held, as early as possible to allow for maximum visibility and voter engagement in the riding.

7. FUNDRAISE, INTELLIGENTLY.

There is no question that significant resources will be required to support the OLP rebuild, and prepare for the 2022 election. Training to prepare PLAs for the needed fundraising efforts ahead is strongly recommended, as well as finding creative ways to re-engage our base and seek their financial support for the work ahead.



“What happened, happened. We can’t change it but we can change where we go from here. [...]

With ideas and thoughts coming from all across Ontario, I’m positive we will find our path. ”

- Volunteer, Candidate Listening Project Team

Next Steps

This Listening Project was an effort to engage and hear from the 2018 candidates, with a broad objective of supporting the OLP rebuild ahead. This offer stands. The Project Team, and many past candidates generally, are eager to stay engaged in the OLP and contribute to its future success. We suspect we are not alone in this interest. There are many individuals and groups who remain highly invested in the future success of the OLP. It is time for us to come together, and share in the work ahead.

To advance the recommendations of this report, we propose the following next steps:

- Affirm our commitment to listen actively, by embarking on a variety of broad consultation exercises. Not all of these need to be centrally led; others can be grassroots initiatives to connect with specific groups;
- Convene regional meetings to hear from PLAs and our traditional supporters;
- Executive council should develop a strategic action plan for the next 3.5 years with timeliness to address the recommendations emerging from our and other groups' recommendations; and
- Commit that, by January 2022, we have a new leader, candidates in place, a clear plan for Ontarians, money in the bank, and are seen as the sensible alternative to govern Ontario.

We have no doubt that the Ontario Liberal Party is a significant part of the future of the Province of Ontario. It is time for us to come together, to listen to one another, and to move forward.

In the words of one 2018 candidate and a volunteer on this project, “we will find our path.”

September 2018