

Martin tries novel approach with caucus [CA] ^[1]

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EXCERPTS

Paul Martin is trying a novel approach for his first meetings with the Liberal caucus - he isn't attending.

Instead, Liberal MPs taking part in a two-day retreat being held Wednesday and Thursday in Ottawa are running the show.

"He has challenged our caucus to do what we have to do to gather ideas, set priorities" said Stan Keyes, the Liberal caucus chairman.

Mr. Martin told the caucus that he wants them to decide what should be contained in the upcoming Throne Speech.

"It's a constructivist approach," Mr. Keyes said. He said it allows for prioritizing issues and making trade-offs between departments if necessary.

The meetings are being led by trained facilitators who work in the Liberal research bureau. Members are being split into groups to discuss policies.

As well, a pollster addressed caucus members Wednesday morning, Mr. Keyes said, and told them that the Liberals will continue to rate high in the polls if Canadians feel that the government is listening to their concerns.

Top priorities that have been identified include health care and waiting lists, Mr. Keyes said.

Ontario MP Judy Sgro, who may be tapped to take on the urban affairs portfolio, said the approach is attractive to MPs.

Priorities issues likely to be discussed with respect to the speech include how much money to put toward health care, child care and housing, she said.

- reprinted from The Globe and Mail.

Region: Canada ^[2]

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