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Ghiz unveils measures to make government more accountable

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Liberal leader plans 'thorough reconstruction' of how provincial government will work at bureaucratic, legislative levels

KENSINGTON Any Liberal cabinet minister caught misusing their government credit card will be fired, Liberal Leader Robert Ghiz says.

Ghiz was in Kensington where he announced measures he would take to make government more accountable.

Mitch Murphy is the PC candidate now representing Kensington.

He was the subject of a Liberal attack ad early on in the campaign centering on Murphy misuse of his government credit card more than 125 times.

If something like that came up, I would ask the minister to step aside, Ghiz said. They say that they made a mistake. Who makes a mistake like that 125 times? It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever.

You are a minister of the Crown. You are a representative of the people of Prince Edward Island. You have to be accountable to your constituents and to all people of Prince Edward Island. You need to make sure that you are following your own laws, your own rules and your own regulation.

If you cant do that, you should not be serving.

Ghizs comments were followed by a round of applause by supporters who gathered for the news conference at the District 20, Kensington-Malpeque, Liberal headquarters.

The Liberal party is planning a thorough reconstruction of how the provincial government will work.

At the bureaucratic level, the Liberal party wants the head of the Civil Service Commission to be approved by the legislature, not the premiers office; ministers will be required to approve the top candidate put forward from the Public Service Commission in all classified competitions rather than choosing from the top five; and

vacancies for all full-time appointments to boards and agencies will be publicly advertised.

At the legislative level, Ghiz wants to establish fixed election dates after full public consultations are held; require audited financial statements three months before the fixed election date; and end the practice of putting MLAs on Executive Council committees, a move the Liberal leader says will restore a greater measure of independence to private members.

Every single backbench MLA now receives an additional \$5,800 for sitting on Executive Council committees.

Politicians will come and go, parties in power will thrive and diminish. But our public service is a bedrock institution, and it must rely on a strong foundation which has the independence and professionalism required to resist the ad hoc demands of partisan politics.

Ghiz is also promising that the legislatures public accounts committee will begin full public hearings into the collapse of Polar Foods and the loss of \$31 million in taxpayers money.

But Ghiz stops short of promising a public inquiry, something hes been calling for as leader of the Opposition.

Ghiz did say . . . if the committee determines that a public inquiry into these matters is required, a new Liberal government will do so.

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