

THE 2005-2006 CAMPAIGN: A NEW BEGINNING – JUST BARELY

ANALYSIS OF THE 2006 FEDERAL ELECTION



January 24, 2006

HIGHLIGHTS

Slim Tory minority. Canadians chose change, but in typical Canadian fashion, a minority means that they chose conditional change. Prime Minister-Elect Harper will have to select which part of his election platform he can move to implement given the minority status of his Government. Based on his past, it is likely he will strive to move pragmatically and look for ways to extend his political base.

Martin steps down as Liberal leader. The Liberal leadership campaign is underway. Liberals face the additional challenge of finding a place for themselves on a crowded political spectrum.

NDP support strengthens. Much of the NDP gain was at the expense of the Liberals. Expect the NDP to try to occupy the centre-left. This raises the question whether the Liberals, the next time around, will be able to position themselves credibly as a left-of-centre alternative.

Bloc's popular support weakens in Québec. The relentless march of the separatists has stalled. A significant portion of the Bloc's support has been exposed as a protest vote and not a real sovereigntist vote. The Tory resurgence in Québec means that there are two federalist voices in the province -- this is good for Canada!

The West has a voice in Ottawa. "The West wants in", was the refrain, and it's now in, with all the responsibilities that come with political power. Westerners will bring fresh perspective to the national discourse and also learn the reality that Canada is a tough country to govern. After almost thirty years, a westerner will lead Canada. Western alienation should now be a thing of the past -- this is also good for Canada.

A potentially fractious Parliament. With another minority government, parliamentarians of all political stripes will be challenged to make it work and avoid the divisiveness of the previous Parliament. That said, minority governments are unstable by their nature and no political Party should be expected to miss an opportunity to exploit any weakness that presents itself.

STANDINGS

CONSERVATIVES		LIBERALS		BLOC QUÉBÉCOIS		NEW DEMOCRATS		INDEPENDENTS	
Seats	Pop. Vote	Seats	Pop. Vote	Seats	Pop. Vote	Seats	Pop. Vote	Seats	Pop. Vote
124	36.3%	103	30.2%	51	10.5%	29	17.5%	1	0.6%

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OVERVIEW: A FINE BALANCE

After 12 years of Liberal Government, Canadian voters chose change, but gave the Conservatives a very narrow victory. Like elections in 1957-58, 1984 and 1993, Canadian voters decided that the governing Party had over stayed its welcome. However, because voters in the large urban centers of Toronto, Montreal and Vancouver resisted the Conservative message, the Conservatives could not win a majority. In effect, the Conservatives were elected conditionally. They must prove themselves to urban Canada and reinforce their impressive breakthrough in Québec (a recognition of the Conservatives' return to a more traditional, more decentralist national alternative) if they are to fashion a majority government in the future. The good news for the Conservatives and Prime Minister-Elect Harper is that these voters are now listening.

For election-weary Canadians, it is unlikely that there will be another election anytime soon:

- the Conservatives' narrow margin in the House of Commons will require Prime Minister Harper to carefully pick his priorities and his fights and he needs time to build a base;
- the Liberal defeat and Paul Martin's immediate move to step down means that Liberal in-fighting and re-organization will occupy their attention as will their efforts to find the financial resources to operate a national Party;
- the NDP success will require lots of time and work before it can be consolidated into a long-term base instead of 'borrowed' votes; and
- the Bloc's entire raison d'être has come into question for the first time since it was formed.

In short, it is not in the interest of any of the Party's to face voters any time soon. That said, minority governments are unstable by their nature and no political party should be expected to miss an opportunity to exploit any weakness that presents itself.

RESULTS BY PROVINCE

PROVINCE	CONSERVATIVE		LIBERAL		NDP		BQ	
	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006	2004	2006*	2004
BRITISH COLUMBIA	17	22	9	8	10	5	0	0
ALBERTA	28	26	0	2	0	0	0	0
SASKATCHEWAN	12	13	2	1	0	0	0	0
MANITOBA	8	7	3	3	3	4	0	0
ONTARIO	40	24	54	75	12	7	0	0
QUÉBEC*	10	0	13	21	0	0	51	54
NEW BRUNSWICK	3	2	6	7	1	1	0	0
NOVA SCOTIA	3	3	6	6	2	2	0	0
PEI	0	0	4	4	0	0	0	0
NUNAVUT, NWT, YUKON	0	0	2	3	1	0	0	0
NEWFOUNDLAND	3	0	4	5	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	124	99	103	135	29	19	51	54

* 1 Independent elected in Québec in 2006

THE CONSERVATIVE CAMPAIGN

The Conservative Campaign was as disciplined and focused as the Liberal Campaign was helter-skelter. Aware of the electorate's desire for change and disgust over Liberal scandals, the Conservatives were also aware that Canadians had reservations about their agenda and the image of their leader. In seat-rich Ontario, the Conservatives needed to prove themselves as a 'safe' alternative and Mr. Harper needed to define himself -- before the Liberals or media pundits did it again.

The Conservative election Campaign really started with the Conservative Montreal Policy Conference in March 2005. It was there that the two founding Parties were really merged, and there that the party of Confederation was re-created. However one views the result, the first big difference between 2004 and 2006 was the creation of a policy document. This process of debate and consensus forced both the Party rank and file, and the Conservative Caucus and leadership to mature. The resulting policy resolutions presented a moderate conservative agenda that reflected compromise without abandonment of principles.

The policy conference also allowed the Party membership and leadership to mature. The policy conference attracted almost 4,000 party members, and, as importantly, it saw the return of many leaders and activists from the old Progressive Conservative Party. It sent a clear signal that Stephen Harper had succeeded in uniting the Conservative Party under his leadership.

The next important step was creating a united election team. Given that internal party infighting can be challenging for any political party and certainly one with the Conservative Party's history, Mr. Harper began an internal party reorganization to broaden the campaign team while still maintaining his own tight control on overall policy and strategy. Few commentators

seemed to realize what was taking place as Mr. Harper fashioned a truly national team.

While the media was heaping scorn on his summer barbeque tour, Mr. Harper was meeting voters and campaign workers. The focus on the Ontario heartland may not have impressed media folk in downtown Toronto, but it was central to re-shaping Harper's image in the province that had denied him victory in 2004.

Finally, the decision to launch a policy a day once the Election was called allowed Stephen Harper to define his image and his agenda on his own terms. Using all the latest online tools and a well prepared and incredibly disciplined 'war room'; the Conservatives began re-defining their image one policy and one day at a time. Taking a page out of Bill Clinton's play book, the Conservative's policy and language focused on working men and women and families. Clinton used this approach to bring his party in from the 'left'; Harper used it to bring his party in from the 'right'.

As the Campaign progressed, Canadians started seeing a Stephen Harper who was different from their pre-conceptions in both style and substance. Contrary to some media stories, the big shift that took place in Ontario was not among the wealthy, but among middle and lower middle class Canadians in the smaller urban centers, suburbs and rural areas. They responded to both the image and the substance of the Conservative agenda.

The failure of the Liberals to respond during the initial two weeks was a gift to the Tories. Paul Martin and the Liberals were virtually nowhere to be seen. When they did appear, it seemed they were without any apparent overall strategy or message.

In the months following the 2004 election, Mr. Harper had worked hard on building a base in Québec courting both the newly federalist ADQ and former Conservative leader Jean Charest and bringing a number of experienced Québec

politicians on board. As the polls started to show a shift to the Tories in Ontario, B.C. and Atlantic Canada, Québécois started to take a second look at Stephen Harper. Impressed by his Québec speech on the fiscal imbalance, a large number of Québécois who were voting for the Bloc to protest Liberal misdeeds began moving back to the Tories. The old 'bleu' vote was back, particularly in the region around Québec City and western Québec. Conservative success in Quebec was ultimately the biggest political story of this Election.

There is a tipping point in every campaign and the experts will argue about when it occurred in this one, but it is clear that the voters wanted change and felt comfortable enough with the kind of change Mr. Harper and his Conservative team offered to elect a new government to power – at least conditionally.

THE LIBERAL CAMPAIGN

When Jean Chrétien introduced publicly financed election campaigns, few realized what a poisoned gift this was to his Party. The Liberals had come to rely on large corporate donations. When their popular support fell in 2004, Party finances were strained. This financial reality may help to explain the limitations on their campaign efforts in 2005-06. With limited funds and a long campaign period, the Liberals were forced to guard their meagre financial resources. At the same time, the Bloc could count on federal funding (to be spent in only one region) and the Tories could rely on a well-oiled fund raising machine built on small individual donations from a committed party base.

The unsuccessful Liberal Campaign however, cannot be explained away by a lack of funds. The Campaign itself may have been based on flawed assumptions about Stephen Harper and the Conservative Party, the voters' desire for change, and the media:

- *Stephen Harper and the Conservatives would spend the pre-Christmas phase of the Campaign attacking Liberal "corruption" and this would overshadow any platform release.* The Liberals did not bank on the Tories releasing their Platform on a daily basis. The virtual absence of the Liberals during this phase gave Stephen Harper a chance to define himself in the minds of Canadians and second, it gave the Tories the opportunity to feed the media 'beast'. The news was all Tories all the time with the Liberal Campaign so unfocused that media found it very difficult to write about or cover it.
- *Stephen Harper would run out of steam and could not hide from his Reform Party roots.* The Liberals were not watching the developments across the aisle since the 2004 election and found that they were up against a disciplined campaigner and a unified party. Unfortunately for the Liberals, the old fear factor did not play in 2005-06. The negative advertising campaign actually became a story itself and the attacks were initially turned back on the Liberals.
- *After Christmas, the talk of scandal would be old news and the Liberal Platform and the Liberal vision for Canada would win the day.* As it turned out, the Liberals were wrong about what voters would be discussing over Christmas. It wasn't turkey stuffing recipes; it was politics – more precisely change, the Conservative agenda, income trusts and a tragic murder. The income trust issue simply reminded voters about scandals past.
- *The media would do a 'job' on Stephen Harper.* Some might say that the Liberals' confidence in their ability to handle the media was a reflection of the same arrogance that had alienated that

same media. The media was soured on Liberals before the Campaign began and didn't come out and play. The Campaign turned out to be media pay back time.

- *All good Liberals would rally to the cause or stay neutral.* In fact, some Chrétienites stayed on the sidelines or worse, fed the media with damaging revelations or overt criticisms. There is nothing the media loves more than a disgruntled former insider and inside party fights.

After Christmas, when it dawned on the Liberals that most of these assumptions may have been wrong, they reached back to the 2004 Campaign playbook.

- Negative 'attack' ads were featured prominently in the Liberal Campaign.
- Paul Martin portrayed the Liberals as representing the mainstream of Canadian thinking. This resonated in the major urban areas: with women and others who were concerned about the rights of women with respect to abortion and the right of gays/lesbians to marry.
- The Liberals evoked the 'Trudeau pact' between the Liberal Party and immigrant communities which went a long way to explain the Liberals continuing its hold on Toronto-area seats.

The Liberal attack ads were controversial, but appeared to work. Late Election efforts helped solidify Liberal support from among urbanities, women and multi-cultural groups. This support was also solidified by Harper's end-of-campaign musings about the Supreme Court. Despite running a near perfect Campaign, comments about the courts and the abortion issue hurt the Conservatives in urban areas.

THE NDP CAMPAIGN

Layton's almost flawless Campaign persuaded many Liberal voters from the last election to park their votes with the NDP in order to ensure Harper is held in check. This led to significant gains, both in popular vote and in number of seats. The NDP held in Atlantic Canada and enjoyed significant gains in Ontario and BC.

During the Campaign, Layton repeatedly pointed to the NDP's cooperation with the Liberals in the last Parliament as an example of how New Democrats are willing to work with other Parties on an issue-by-issue basis to pass good legislation. Layton will have to strike deals with Harper's government to again move the business of the House forward. Harper will need the NDP to strike a balance in the House of Commons and to showcase that he indeed is not as scary as the Liberals painted him to be during the Campaign. One possible early issue could be electoral reform where both have a keen interest, but differ significantly on key points.

Harper may also use the NDP as a conduit to gain Bloc support. Harper will not want to be seen to be negotiating with separatists, but could get the NDP to lead initiatives that the Bloc would support.

The Liberals lost ground to the NDP in key regions that are important to both Parties. There may be little opportunity for the two Parties to forge any type of working alliance until the Liberals have a new leader. Layton's biggest challenge will be to balance how cooperative he is willing to be without selling out NDP ideals and risk getting swamped in the next election.

The NDP will likely pick its battles with the Conservatives carefully and will look for opportunities to get on the opposite side to the Liberals on key areas (corporate tax cuts, for example) to continue to differentiate themselves on the left-side of the spectrum.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT

The Conservative Approach

The Conservative victory was built on a policy platform targeted squarely at middle class voters and family values. Building on a strong base in Western Canada, the Tories were able to carry smaller towns and rural areas across Ontario and in British Columbia and Atlantic Canada. The new Government's agenda and concerns will reflect this reality. The West is in and this is the party of Main Street, not Bay Street.

The general approach of the new Conservative government will likely be low-key, disciplined, and business-like reflecting the approach of its leader. The tight discipline of the Election Campaign will likely be carried over into the new Government with a strong focus on implementing Campaign promises.

The Tories remember well how hubris led to the downfall of Joe Clark's Minority Government so the new Harper Government will pick its issues carefully. Given the narrowness of the victory margin, Prime Minister-Elect Harper will carefully choose those issues where he is most likely to build Parliamentary support. At times this will mean looking to disaffected Liberals, the NDP and even the Bloc.

Mr. Harper's own political journey from Progressive Conservative staffer to Reform Party MP who united first a feuding Alliance Party and the newly merged PC and Alliance Parties will inform how he runs this Government. People should remember that it was Stephen Harper who led the fight to rein-in the social conservatives who had coalesced around Stockwell Day; it was Stephen Harper who led the effort to build a Conservative Party platform that moved the Conservatives towards the center; and, it was Stephen Harper who

fashioned the internal rapprochement with former PC leaders. His past success at fashioning a principled consensus within an often unwieldy conservative movement bodes well for his future. Clearly, he understands the stresses and strains of dealing with competing factions and knows how to unify competing factions. In Parliament, he will now face an even more difficult task.

The Conservative Policy Agenda

In moving forward with their agenda the Conservatives will have to carefully choose those issues where a voting majority can be found. On other issues of concern to Conservatives there may have to be some changes to the specifics if these policies are to garner sufficient support in the Commons. We can expect the following initiatives to move forward:

- **Lowering the GST by 1%:** This was a central Conservative promise and Liberals will be hard pressed to oppose this change given their past opposition to the GST.
- **Changes to the *Criminal Code*:** Conservative proposals to toughen sentencing and parole provisions will be able to win sufficient support in the Liberal caucus as no one wants to be seen as weak on crime. It can be expected that there will be some additional provisions related to dealing with youth support programs.
- **Federal Accountability Act:** This will easily gain the support of both the Bloc and the NDP in large part because it has the biggest impact on those in government and therefore has little downside for either Party.
- **Medical Waiting Times Guarantee:** This was a central Conservative issue and almost all the Parties will have trouble opposing this initiative.
- **New defence spending and Arctic and sovereignty initiatives:** There will be likely

sufficient support in the Liberal caucus to undertake a significant investment in the defence sector and the NDP will be supportive of initiatives in the North.

- **Mass transit tax credit:** The Liberals will be hard pressed to oppose this initiative designed to lower the cost of monthly transit passes.

Each of these promises will have either direct or indirect impact on business. The **GST** reduction could have an impact on capital purchases by consumers; **accountability** measures will have a significant impact on all companies who deal with government with particular emphasis on how **federal procurements** are handled and how companies account for grants and loans received from the government; and, the waiting times guarantee will require the Provinces to make changes in how hospitals operate or face even higher costs.

Given the commitment to **defence** issues and projecting a Canadian presence in the Arctic and the offshore fishery, there will be significant capital expenditures on ships, planes, helicopters and related systems.

All of the previous Government's commitments in relation to **gas tax** allocations to municipalities and investments in **infrastructure** will be honoured. The new tax credit for transit passes and incentives for low income housing should be well received in urban areas. In addition, the priority given to dealing with the fiscal imbalance suggests that the Provinces and municipalities might have access eventually to new sources of funding that were previously absorbed by Ottawa. Harper can, however, expect a united front of major city mayors to lobby strenuously to make good on elements of agreements that were being negotiated on housing and day care spaces from the former government.

The Conservative proposal on **child care** was central to their political strategy and reflected core views about how best to implement social policy. While neither the NDP, the Liberals, nor the Bloc agree with the Conservative's approach to child care policy, all Parties will want to show some progress on this issue and we would not be surprised to see a child care motion passed that incorporates some elements from both the Liberals' and Conservatives' proposal.

The Conservatives made a number of tax related promises beyond the GST promise, including: allowing the roll-over of assets without **taxation** as long as the proceeds are reinvested; reducing the business tax rate from 21% to 19%, and eliminating the business surtax. While ownership limits (e.g., in the telecom sector) were not a Campaign issue, it can be anticipated that the Conservatives will be less doctrinaire on such matters so long as issues of real national sovereignty are not at stake.

On **trade issues and foreign policy**, the Conservatives can be expected to seek a steadier approach than the politicized tone of Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien. The often openly anti-U.S. rhetoric of the Liberals will be replaced by a more constructive approach. Current trade disputes in areas affecting the agricultural and forestry sector will be given priority, as will issues affecting cross border trade, security and asserting Canada's sovereignty in the North. On larger international issues the Conservatives can be expected to take positions that are more reflective of a conservative world view.

On **environmental issues**, don't expect the Conservatives to denounce the Kyoto Protocol, but also don't expect them to push to meet Canada's Kyoto obligations, either. Expect the Conservatives to look for negotiated agreements with the Provinces, separate and apart from Kyoto, to address environmental issues.

TRANSITION AND THE CABINET TEAM

With Paul Martin’s visit to the Governor General’s Office today, the transition to the new Government is underway. Senior PCO officials are in contact with Harper’s transition team of former senior bureaucrats and experienced politicians. The new Prime Minister will likely be sworn in within the next two weeks (once the votes are confirmed). Briefing binders await new Ministers whose names should be known in the next several weeks.

A new session of Parliament is expected to begin in the March/April time frame. The Throne Speech, which sets the stage for the new session, will likely be a reiteration of principal Campaign promises. A short spring session of Parliament will be taken up with things such as the new *Accountability Act* and other measures which can set the tone for the new Conservative Government.

The Conservative victory has given Mr. Harper a wealth of MPs from which to fashion a Cabinet including many with significant experience at the provincial level. He will have no problem finding a strong Cabinet with representation from all parts of Canada. Some Conservative MPs to watch include:

Maritimes	Ontario	The West	
Loyola Hearn (Nfld.)	Jim Flaherty	Vic Toews (Manitoba)	Dianne Ablonczy (Alta)
Peter MacKay (NS)	John Baird	Brian Pallister (Man)	Jason Kenney (Alta)
Greg Thompson (NB)	Bev Oda	Carol Skelton (Sask)	Rahim Jaffer (Alta)
<u>Québec</u>	Peter Van Loan	Rona Ambrose (Alberta)	Chuck Strahl (British Columbia)
Lawrence Cannon	Diane Finley	Monte Solberg (Alta)	James Moore (BC)
Maxime Bernier	Gord Brown	Jim Prentice (Alta)	Jay Hill (BC)
Jean-Pierre Blackburn		James Rajotte (Alta)	Stockwell Day (BC)
Josée Verner			Gary Lunn (BC)

The other challenge facing Mr. Harper will be staffing the Prime Minister’s Office and the various Cabinet offices. Fortunately, the Conservatives can look to individuals with experience at the provincial level and there are many who had experience in the Mulroney years who could provide immediate assistance.

THE FUTURE FOR THE LIBERALS

Notwithstanding a poor Campaign, it is undeniable that the Liberals remain a force to be reckoned with in Canadian politics with major urban ridings still painted a convincing red. Trudeau held Clark to a minority in 1979, and being the kind of Party it then was, the Liberals simply started confidently planning for the inevitable re-occupation of the Langevin Block. This is unlikely to be the exact scenario this time.

This time, recriminations over the Election loss will infect internal Liberal Party politics in the months ahead. Paul Martin’s Election night decision to step aside clears the air to a large degree. The choice of an interim leader will be Martin’s last act. Some leadership camps will be proxies for the Martin camp and Chrétien camp in the months ahead as each group wrestles for control of the Party.

A new Office of the Leader of the Opposition will be formed with an interim leader pending a leadership convention. The remaining MPs and former cabinet Ministers suddenly liberated from PMO supervision will be free to pick their issues with which to attack the new Government.

Don’t feel too sorry for the Opposition Liberals. In a minority, the Opposition has lots of room to define issues and to be scrupulously vigilant. Stars will be born who will be prepping for a new leader and deciding who to support, or perhaps deciding to throw their hat in the ring themselves.

The Liberal Leadership hopefuls are a mixed bag of seasoned politicians, legends in their own minds and intriguing new, but politically inexperienced faces. The list of hopefuls is long: Frank McKenna, John Manley, Allan Rock, Maurizio Bevilacqua, Scott Brison, Belinda Stronach, Herb Dhaliwal, Brian Tobin, Michael Ignatieff, Joe Volpe, Martin Cauchon and Geoff Regan. Even former Ontario NDP Premier, Bob Rae could round-out this interesting field. But limited funding should reduce the field quickly to McKenna, Manley, Ignatieff and Bevilacqua. For whoever ultimately takes the helm it will be the beginning of a long road back as the Liberal Party needs to rebuild and deal with a resurgent NDP on the left and an entrenched Conservative Party straddling the centre-right.

CONCLUSION

The 2006 Federal Election is now one for the history books. But this was no ordinary election. The Election outcome marks a blow for one political dynasty and the rebirth of another. It is useful to remember that it has been the past few elections which have been an historic anomaly as the fracturing of the Progressive Conservative Party in the 1990s denied Canadians the opportunity to choose a national centrist party alternative at the polls for over 12 years.

The emergence of the new Conservative Party has restored a needed political balance in Canada. It was able to move towards the political center without abandoning principles that are important to its members and a growing

number of Canadians who felt ignored by perceived elites. This Election was significant in other ways as well. Rumours of the demise of the NDP turned out to be premature as the NDP emerges stronger and will nip away at a wounded Liberal Party. In Quebec, the Tory surge denied the separatist Bloc Quebecois bragging rights. While they secured a large number of seats, the Bloc's share of the popular vote fell and a new federalist voice gained traction in Québec---all good outcomes for Canada. In Western Canada long time alienation was dealt a blow by the success of Stephen Harper. While it may not spare us a national unity crisis down the road, this Federal Election is a set-back for those who would tear the country apart.

For the Liberals, this Election is a bitter pill, but in the longer run a good thing if the respite from power refreshes and renews the Party. That the Liberals were able to maintain a large presence in the House of Commons was no small achievement. It will be tough slogging ahead though as the Liberals find new leadership and contemplate where they fit in a crowded political spectrum.

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THE CAMPBELL STRATEGIES/ MEDIA PROFILE TEAM – NAVIGATING THE NEW POLITICAL REALITY

Campbell Strategies provides a broad range of government relations services covering all levels of government. Our unique experience enables us to effectively bridge the gap between the public and private sectors and assist our clients to communicate effectively in the political environment.

Barry Campbell served as a Member of the Parliament in the Liberal Government from 1993 to 1997. He served as Parliamentary Secretary to the former Minister of Finance, the Rt. Hon. Paul Martin.

Paul Brown was Co-Chair of the 2006 Conservative Federal Election Campaign for Ontario. From 1984 to 1988, he served in the Conservative Government of Canada as Policy Advisor to the Industry Minister, Executive Assistant to the President of the Treasury Board, and Chief of Staff to the Minister of Labour.

Mitchell Toker was a senior executive in the Ontario Public Service, where he held various positions in the Cabinet Office, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and other ministries.

Dick O'Hagan, a seasoned consultant with long experience in the public and private sectors, was an advisor in the Prime Minister's Office serving Prime Ministers Trudeau and Pearson.

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Patrick Gossage is one of Canada's most highly respected communications practitioners. He served as Prime Minister Trudeau's press secretary from 1976 to 1982 and Minister of Information at the Canadian Embassy in Washington.

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